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Com. Vimal Ranadive addressing the first state level convention of Bihar State Anganwadi Karamchhari Sangh

AIDWA Expresses Shock at the Dastardly killing of Rajiv Gandhi

Vimal Ranadive Vice President and Brinda karat secretary of AIDWA have issued the following press statement on 21st May 1991.

The All India Democratic Women's Association expresses its deep shock and and grief at the dastardly killing of Shri Rajiv Gandhi, former Prime Minister and President of the Indian National Congress. It is an act committed by the enemies of the country who want to see a divided, weakened and unstable India. It comes at a time when the nation is already faced with an over-deepening crisis, its unity under attack from divisive separatist and communal forces. The activities of these forces have already deeply vitiated the general political climate of the country. The need of the hour is to rise above narrow political considerations in the wider interests of India.

The AIDWA adds its fervent appeal to the calls for peace and calm. It extends its deepest condolences and sympathy to Ms. Sonia Gandhi, her son, daughter and other members of the bereaved family.

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On Election Results of 10th Lok Sabha

Once again we find ourselves facing a hung parliament after the 10th Loksabha elections. No single party has got an absolute majority. Congress won 227 seats, while the BJP-Shivsena combine won 119 seats. The third combination of NF and Left parties in fact won the second position after Congress(I), winning 129 seats, the CPI(M) alone won 35 seats. The assassination of Shri Rajiv Gandhi, on May 21st at Sriperumbudur in Tamilnadu allegedly by LTTE, no doubt threw people, political parties and mass organisations into turmoil. They condemned the brutal murder of Shri Rajiv Gandhi, organised hartals and condolence meetings while the Election Commissioner announced postponement of the elections to June 1991.

Attacks on CPI(M) and Mass organisations

During last 5 months, many important political developments have taken place. The first round of elections on May 20th went off somewhat peacefully. But the second round of elections and afterwards, murders, burning of the houses, molestation of women, destruction of property of CPI(M)-Left supporters and leaders have taken place. It was surprising and atrocious that the sad death of the leader of Congress(I) party was made a plea to attack the opposition parties and their leaders and activists, especially in Tripura, West Bengal Kerala and Tamilnadu with no leader of the Congress party coming out with any statement, or with authority asking these hooligans to stop such nonsense. Many members of CPI(M), women especially in Tripura were attacked in Agartala town, their homes were burnt, the offices of the parties and press were destroyed. Destruction on a large scale took place also in Andhra Pradesh when Shri N T Ramarao went on a hunger strike. The sympathy caused by Rajiv's murder was meant to be utilised for

for getting more votes. But this did not help them as the party expected. Because, despite all these events, the tally of the Congress votes did not go beyond 220 seat.

Emergence of BJP—A serious Concern

The main slogan of Congress in the election was 'stability for the Country', which was taken over by BJP after the murder of Rajiv Gandhi. The BJP-Shivsena alliance went all out for Ayodhya-Ramjanambhoomi and construction of Ram temple. Many riots took place at many places in UP before the elections, the BJP raising communal passions by taking out processions Shilanyas and Rathayatra. The menacing rise of BJP to become the second largest party in parliament and forming state govt. in UP is a cause of serious concern despite the fact that it lost in MP, HP and Rajasthan on a large scale. Janata Dal, the major constituent of NF, though came out well in Bihar its showing in UP and Orissa was not upto the mark.

The NF-Left parties slogan of defeat Cong. and defeat BJP raised the issue of delinking punjab elections from that of the rest of the country. After the death of 22 candidates and a large number of political workers in Punjab, the Chief Election Commissioner postponed these elections to 25th September. The CPI(M) withdrew from the Tripura elections since there was no stop to the killings of the party activists. Despite several appeals against it, the elections were held in Tripura. The Election Commissioner was partisan in his approach.

Victory of the Left Front

We are proud that the Left Front in West Bengal once again came to power for the fourth time, in the Assembly elections. This fact was appreciated even by the bourgeois press. The most unfortunate results came from Kerala.

It was a set back no doubt and not expected by the people as a whole. It appears, though the difference in per centage of votes between the LDF and UDF is only 2 to 3, the sympathy wave and the shifting of BJP votes to Cong(I) also played a big role in Kerala elections.

The hung parliament with strength of Cong. being 227, and with the increasing strength of BJP in Lok Sabha with 119 or so, a very complicated and difficult situation has come. But it is also a fact to be remembered that the NF-Left parties combine with 129 seats stand as the second force and if they act unitedly and work on common issues facing our country, we will be able to advance and can fight for our demands concerning the people.

Role of Women in the 10th Lok Sabha Elections

It appears from the preliminary reports received here that women played a significant role in the elections. They held street corner meetings, 'Baithak' meetings, worked in cultural squads, made door to door campaigns from morning to night, spoke in the meetings and so on. One thing has to be noted about the election of Kanpur where Com. Subhashini was our candidate. A special squad of women comrades from Delhi AIDWA went for propaganda. They had to face a number of difficulties, including physical attacks, abuses and filthy language. They were not allowed to enter in many areas because of curfew and riots. Despite these hurdles they worked courageously. The BJP propaganda was poisonous and filthy against our candidate.

In Bengal and Kerala women were going for door to door campaigns. After the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi it was difficult to work but they did. They passed condolence resolutions in the meetings, expressed grief. After few days they again went which gave them courage to face the elections and vote for those who protect their rights, stand against communalism, against price rise and other economic issues. From the report Com. Susheela

Gopalan gave, those women in her constituency who were not prepared to speak after the assassination and were shedding tears, did come round and voted for us after our proper approach and deliberations. This was our sustained work among them on their issues brought them round again after such a shock. In Bengal it was creditable that the Left Front put up 21 women comrades for the Assembly and most of them have won by good margin. The social caste factor came in the election in a big way at all the places including Kerala. As per the report from Rajasthan, it was interesting to note that while working among SC, ST, drinking of water from the houses also became a subject of controversy.

If our women comrades are prepared to drink water from the houses of SC, the other upper castes, if they come to know will go against us and vote for BJP or other parties. This shows the inherent prejudices existing among both SC and upper castes for years together. Even after the women comrades insisted that they would drink water from S.C, they would not offer out of fear from the upper castes! This shows the strong casteist prejudice among men and women, and also the serious work we have to do among these sections to give them social justice. They have been neglected, insulted and discarded by the upper caste Hindus. Bihar results show that they voted en-masse for the NF-Left combine and won.

Gains for Women's Movement

The important gains for our movement is the election of Com. Susheela Gopalan, Malini Bhattacharya and also those who have been elected in the Assembly of Bengal and Kerala. This time the parliamentary work for our comrades is going to be tough. The communal party like BJP-Shivsena and the Congress party, there may be difficulties ahead for us. But the long experience of Com. Susheela in the Parliament and in mass movements will be helpful

to raise the problems of women and working women, along with so many important issues raised in parliament on foreign policy, price rise, construction of Ayodhya Mandir, Punjab, Tripura, etc. She has been elected as a deputy leader of CPI(M) group in Loksabha. We congratulate those women members in Parliament and assembly who have been elected on CPI(M) and left parties platform.

The tasks before us

The NF-Left parties together and mass organisations including CITU, Co-ordination Committee of Working Women, AIDWA and others always placed the programme against communalism, exposing the role of BJP as a danger to our national unity and integrity. Since the BJP has come as a big force in Parliament and formed govt. in UP we have to take a serious note of this danger. Already the UP Govt and Central Govt is discussing the Rammandir issue and its implications. Though we always stated it should be settled through negotiations with concerned parties or in the court, the UP Govt is going ahead and the VHP has given slogan to build the temple at the same place while the minority community has come out against it. The secular minded women and men are more concerned about the unity of the people and it is our task in UP and other states to keep the communal harmony while isolating the BJP, VHP and other communal parties and organisations. We have to take note that women in general are more prone to the communal propaganda since this present set up of society is based on feudal and obscurantist views with religion entering into politics, BJP and other religious bodies try to win over women for their politics. It is the our first task to take up the programme to counter such propaganda.

The NF left parties took up the issues such

as unemployment, right to work, price rise, the issue of unorganised workers and so on. It also took the question of reservation for women in Panchayats and jobs, land to the tiller. These issues are live issues for us all. The question of mechanisation and technology replacing men and women was taken up and propagated. The achievements of West Bengal and Kerala Govts in distribution of land, public distribution system, panchayat results and participation of women in it were the results for the present gains in the elections of W. Bengal. These issues were raised even in Kerala, Dist Council elections, which gave good results. Though sentiments against Mandal Commission were expressed by the upper castes, we always stood for the justice for the SC and ST by suggesting some changes. All these issues are still live and we have to move forward to take them up.

The present deep economic crisis taking of IMF loan and devaluation of Rupee twice in 3 days despite adverse conditions placed on our country is bound to affect common men women tremendously. The conditionalities of the IMF loan will be many. The price rise in consumer goods, petroleum products, rise in railway fare and so on will be a big burden on the people. Already workers, common people and CITU and left parties have given call to resist these attacks. The working women too should not lag behind. The increasing price rise and general worsening conditions, will bring working women and women in general to launch class struggles against their employers, and the Congress govt. The CITU and our Co-ordination Committee have to lead these struggles to bring these sections into the class battle of total working class trying to change the co-relation of class forces in the near future.

Management of BHEL (Delhi) Rejects Demands of Women Employees

There are about 200 female employees working in Delhi based office of Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. They are agitated over the step-motherly treatment given to them management.

Day by day, injustice to women are increasing, making it difficult for them to continue in their jobs. The whole environment is being polluted by these injustices in this male dominated organisation where all the decisions including those which are solely connected with women are being taken by men.

It is astonishing that one of the best public sector undertakings in our country which is earning crores in profits is discriminating between male and female employees in many ways despite laws like the "Equal Remuneration Act" etc. Following are some of the instances of discrimination towards women workers in BHEL :

(a) Since 1985 BHEL in giving uniforms to its employees. But the cost of uniforms differs in case of male and female employees. In 1985, when the cost of uniforms per male worker in the year was Rs. 798.44, the women's uniform was worth only Rs. 718. In 1986, the difference was about Rs. 76. In 1988, the difference became Rs. 109 while in 1991 it stands at Rs. 97/-. Though the women workers sent a memorandum to the management, no action has been taken. The DGM. Mr. Nanda, threatened some women employees who signed the memorandum. The women demand that equal amounts should be spent on both the set of uniforms and there should be a women representative also in the committee which selects the items. The Women employees requested the All India BHEL Employees Union also to take up the matter. But the

union could not persuade the management to have a dialogue on the subject. The union's secretary was warned not to be associated with the issue.

(b) Women attendants are not being given all the facilities which are being enjoyed by male attendants viz uniform, etc.

Demand for Creche Ignored

(c) Though all BHEL Units outside Delhi is having this facility, the management has refused to provide creches to women employees in Delhi despite repeated demands and memorandas. According to Govt of India office rules, the creche facility is to be provided in the offices where 30 or more women are working at a place. This matter was suddenly dropped by the management.

(d) Every govt office is providing separate common rooms to women, but the BHEL management has turned down this request.

(e) BHEL management is harassing the women workers by not sanctioning the abortion leave even if it is recommended by the doctors. The expenditure incurred on these cases are being sanctioned but no leave is sanctioned. Attending the office in such conditions becomes risky.

(f) In the case of maternity leave, management sanctions the leave after the birth of the child. While it should be the discretion of the mother to avail the leave before or after the birth of the child. It is true that as per the doctor's advice, if she can work until the delivery, it is better for the mother and the child. She can look after the child for 3 months after the birth. Therefore, maternity leave should be given according to the choice of the mother and

the doctor's advice. 'This demand also is ignored by the management.

No demand of the women workers is achieved without struggle and mass action. The collection of cent-percent signatures of women workers on the memorandum as well as the future preparations for launching wider struggle by the women with the help of the union shows that the management has to come down to settle these demands of the women employees soon.

[The following letter was written on behalf of AICCCWW secretary Vimal Ranadive in support of the demands of BHEL women workers—Ed.]

Shri P S Gupta
Chairman & Managing Director
Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd.
Siri Fort, New Delhi-49

Dear Sir,

I am constrained to draw your attention to the joint letter signed by 186 women employees of BHEL, Delhi alleging discrimination in the supply of clothes, chappals etc. The difference in the purchase of these items for men and women are considerable. It is surprising to see how a public sector organisation like BHEL is behaving towards its women employees even in such matters, leave aside the discrimination in remuneration, promotional opportunities, etc.

It has also come to my knowledge that the DGM (Admn) of BHEL has started ha-rassing a number of women employees who has signed the representation.

The signatories to the memorandum has also demanded that one woman representative should be included in the committee set up to make the purchases of the items.

In view of the genuineness of the demands raised by the women, I hope you will intervene in the matter and help the women in achieving their demand and to stop harassment of the women by the DGM (Admn).

Thanking you,

AIDWA Expresses Serious Concern At the Decision of Devalue of Rupee

Smt. Vimal Ranadive Vice President of AIDWA issued the following statement to the press.

The AIDWA expresses serious concern at the Narasimha Rao Government's decision to devalue the Rupee twice in quick succession in order to please the IMF. Clearly the 'hard decisions' that Mr. Rao and his new Finance Minister are talking of are prompted by the IMF and the IMF option, as is clear from the experience of the last decade, will mean unprecedented inflation, wage cuts, reduction in expenditure on social welfare measures and concurrently, a denial of the basic right to organise. As in the past, women shall be some of the worst sufferers.

The AIDWA calls upon women to oppose this decision and protest against the havoc it will wreck on the Indian people. At the same time it is necessary that we draw the attention of women and the people in general to the fact that the IMF's is not the only option open to us. There is an alternate set of hard decisions and structural reforms, starting from land reforms, strengthening of the public distribution system onwards, which in fact would ensure both economic advance and political stability, based on a more democratic social order. The IMF loan is a conscious political choice and not a fait accompli as the Congress-I is making it out to be. It is both anti-people and likely to be an effective weapon in the hands of those forces which want to destabilize India.

Appeal to the President

BY WOMENS'S ORGANIZATIONS ON CONSTITUTION OF NATIONAL COMMISSION ON WOMEN

To,
The President of India
Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi

Sir,

1. This memorandum on behalf of of national women's organizations is a follow up to the telegram we have sent you earlier today. We would like to draw your attention to press reports that the Government of Shri Chandra-shekhar has decided to constitute the National Commission for women and that the names of the members-nominated by his Government are to be announced in a day or two.

2. We are extremely disturbed and concerned about these reports, which if true, will be a clear violation of the rules laid down for the functioning of an interim, caretaker Government by the Election Commission. The caretaker Government has no right to constitute such a commission or to nominate its members.

3. We would like to point out that whereas the caretaker Government has only about three weeks left to function, the members of the Commission have to serve a term of three years. Clearly only a Government which has the backing of a an electoral mandate has the right to constitute such a commission which holds a special importance in the struggle for gender equality.

4. We therefore urge upon you, the President of India, to intervene and prevent the caretaker Government from taking a step which is in clear contravention of its rights and jurisdiction, besides having extremely adverse implications for women's struggle for justice.

Thanking You,

Yours sincerely

All India Coordination
Committee of Working Women : Vimal Ranadive

All India Democratic
Women's Association : Brinda Karat

Centre for Womens's
Development Studies : Lotika Sarkar

Joint Women's Programme : Jyotsna
Chatterjee

Mahila Dakshata Samiti : Ranjana Kumari

National Federation of
India Women : Vimla Farooqi

Young Women's Christian : Mary
Association Khemchand

29.5.1991

The Following Letter is Addressed to the Minister of Women and Child Development

Sub : Termination of services of Anganwadi
Workers in Jodhpur, Rajasthan.

Dear Sir,

The services of 5 Anganwadi workers of Jodhpur has been terminated by Smt Prabha Tak, Dy. Director between 16.2.91 on the plea that they refused to distribute stale food among the rural children after the expiry date which was not fit for human consumption. The following are women whose services were terminated :

1. Jaspal Kaur	16.2.81
2. Ratan Kanwar	"
3. Nirmala	23.2.91
4. Jammeela	"
5. Ansuya	25.2.91

Instead of appreciating the alertness and devotion of the workers concerned the department has acted in an authoritarian manner. Smt Jaspal Kaur is the President of the Anganwadi Union of Jodhpur, which is a registered

(Cont'd on page 17)

First State Conference of Anganwadi Women Employees in Bihar

The first state conference of Anganwadi women and employees was held in Bihar in Sikandara, Mungher district on May 5th 1991. Delegates from 20 districts of Bihar participated in the conference. Besides the delegates, many men and children of the sevikas and Sahayikas came along with them and heartily participated. A reception committee was formed earlier for the preparation of conference in which the workers of Bihar Health Employees Karmachari Sangh and Bihar non-Gazetted Karmachari Mahasangh have taken lead. The conference was held at a local Shri Krishna Mahavidyalaya where a big pendal was erected and arrangements to serve breakfast, tea food and boarding etc was done at the nearby nursing rooms. The reception committee has made very good arrangements for the delegates.

The conference began with a flag hoisting and offering flowers on the martyrs column by Com. Vimal Ranadive, President of Anganwadi Federation. The delegates too offered flowers on the "Shaid Vedi". The following names for the presidium were suggested by the chairman. Ms. Susheela Devi, Shri Madan Mohan Prasad, Ms. Rampukari Devi and Ms. Sarita Sinha.

The inauguration of the conference was done by Com. Vimal Ranadive, Com. Ramanika Gupta, the CITU leader Com. Sudhabindu Mitra, JMS greeted the delegates. Com. Chandi Prasad, Vice Prsident of CITU while addressing the delegates welcomed the holding of the conference which would form into a state committee of Anganwadi women. Com. Radha Raman Sinha, general secretary of the "Janswath Karmachari Sangh, and Sarita Sinha, vice president of the Sangh greeted the conference and promised all help to fight for their demands. Com. Rampukari while addressing the Anganwadi women explai-

ned their wretched conditions and promised to help them to build the organisation. Com. Shiv Shankar Singh, the organiser of the conference in Sikandara said he was very happy to greet the delegates. Com. Susheela Devi while addressing the gathering appealed to build up the organisation soon. In her inaugural speech Com. Vimal Ranadive said "I am happy to inaugurate the conference of Bihar Rajya Anganwadi Women which was long due. The present gathering of women workers and helpers coming from different parts of the state once again shows the urgent necessity of uniting all the forces under one banner to fight for their demands." She then explained about the formation of the All India Anganwadi Workers Federation recently in Udaipur and welcomed the joining of this new Bihar unit into that Federation. The important demand of anganwadi women is to accept them as a Government employees who are in fact working under the Central Government. But they are treated as "social workers" and given an "honorarium". She said, it is not honorarium (Mandhan) but "Apamandhan" an insult for the women, who work five hours or more and serving for the upliftment of women and children in the rural and urban areas. She explained how women in Anganwadi faught for their demands under the Governments of Congress, the V P Singh and lastly Chandrasekhar Govt. and failed to convince them about their just demands, unless half of them are retrenched. She ended her speech by informing them that "Now women all over India have been organised under their federation and have formed All India Samyukta Sangharsh Samithi" of five different organisations, which is fighting for their demands and soon meet the Minister to place a memorandum".

The discussion on the report placed by Smt Shanti Misra was very encouraging and resourceful which conveyed, the formation of the Anganwadi union was necessary to fight for their demands.

Welcoming the guests and the delegates, Shri Satyanarayan Das the President of the Reception Committee said, "to get together of all the sevikas and Sahayikas is one of the happiest occasion today which shows the strong will to fight for their demands. I remember that during 1988, the Anganwadi women in Bihar fought 75 days strike under the leadership of Smt Shanti Misra, which showed the strength of the union. After all these struggles and demands today we come here for holding our first conference. "He said" the main demand of the Anganwadi women is recognition as the Government employees. For that they have to come together to fight for the demand. These sevikas have done well to inform others about their conditions who have come here united.

"It is really a welcome step to organise the formation of Anganwadi Sevika Sangh, and they will be successful in this and that he has no doubt".

Smt. Shanti Misra, the General Secretary of the Reception Committee greeted all the delegates and observers on the occasion of the formation of the first conference. Turning to their unbearable conditions, she said we are now tired of requesting to grant our demands to the authorities. Now, it seems they have become deaf. Only my own appeal does not reach their ears. I ask you, one question Do you all know as to why the authorities have become so deaf? And what are the reasons for it? This is because our isolation from the common movement. Today we have all risen to demand in one voice and fortunately we got guidance from Mahasangh. I am sure, unless we are all united we will not get our demands. She ended her speech by saying "Let this Government not listen to our demands, but let us be ready to fight on our united strength and compel it to

accept our demands.

About fifteen women delegates participated in the discussion. Every woman in fact, was wanting to speak on their pathetic conditions they are facing in Bihar. But the presidium decided that one from each district would speak. In the speeches of the delegates which were full of enthusiasm and pride for starting the organisation, many facts were revealed such as corruption of CDPO's, the many fold work of the sevikas have to do, the compulsion to bring the cases of family planning lest they are discharged as well as the TA not available for the sevikas, while attending office works. Each speech was itself a story of the worst happenings in Anganwadi centres under the gracious name "honorarium" and work "as social workers". Many speakers had to cut short the speeches due to short of time.

A charter of demands was placed before the delegates and passed. It was also decided that the new formation of the Anganwadi union should be named as Anganwadi Sevika and Sahayika and of Karmachari Sangh which will be affiliated to All India Anganwadi Federation.

All the discussions were over, the panel for the committee was placed in consultation with Shri Praful Kumar Singh, Arjun Singh and others. The following office bearers were elected unanimously. President: Smt. Susheela Devi—(Samastipur)

Vice Presidents: Smt. Suneeta Devi, Smt. Susheela Hansda, Smt. Janaki Devi, Smt. Girija Devi.

General Secretary: Smt. Shanti Misra
Jt. Secretaries: Smt. Sheela Sinha, Smt. Rama Vadehi Devi, Smt. Parbati Devi Working
Secretary: Smt. Dharmashila Devi—(Patna)

Treasurer: Smt. Subaadra Singh—(Patna.)

The following three members were elected for the All India Gmmmitter of Anganwadi Women's Federation: Smt. Susheela Devi, Smt. Shanti Misra, Smt. Sheela Sinha. After giving thanks to the delegates, guests and others, the conference came to an end with the slogans of zindabad for the federation.

Visakhapatnam Insurance Corporation Women Hold Meeting

Smt. Padmaja Vazag

Insurance Corporation Employees Union, Visakhapatnam Division a unit of AIIEA has organised a meeting for the working women in the city on the eve of the visit of Com. Vimala Ranadive, Secretary All India Working Women Co-ordination Committee on 2nd May, 1991. The meeting has been presided by Com. M. Padmaja, LIC Employee. Com. Punyavati, Secretary, Andhra Pradesh Working Women Committee, addressed the gathering. Working Women of LIC, GEC, University teachers, P & T, Municipal Corporation, E.V. Yard and Anganwadi women attended the meeting in large numbers.

Com. Vimal Ranadive addressed the gathering. She appealed to women to vote for the NF-Left combine. Though the meeting was fixed in a short time, the hall was full with about 250 women in attendadce.

Com. Vimala Ranadive said "Working women Co-Ordination Committee established in 1979 has made a lot of progress. The organisation got recognition not only from the Govt of India but also from the world bodies like WFTU. Today, it is the only organisation in India undertaking struggles on working women's problems. Various categories of women workers, from low paid Anganwadi to better paid Airhostesses are waging struggles for their rights under its guidance.

Women are compelled to work because of uncontrolled price rise for the last few years. So we are demanding right to work for all. We have to struggle for this in coming years.

Today women workers are not paid equal wages with men. Airhostesses are to retire at the age of 45 years. The monthly wage of Anganwadi women workers is only between

Rs. 200-335 (That too, it is not a wage but an honorarium). Besides, they are subjected to sexual harassment by their higher authorities. The maternity leave is granted to working women for the first two children only. We are not against family planning. But we feel that deuying of the benefit to those who give birth to more than two children is a punishment. Though discussions are held with various Governments on above problems no solution is found so far. The nature of treating women as commodity is deep rooted in our society. To improve the conditions of women we have to uproot those roots. For that we have to struggle together with our brothers. No Government solves our problems unless we wage mass struggles on a large scale.

While turning to the participation of women in trade unions, she said that they are not taking up leadership responsibility. They are not themselves organising struggles. No doubt household responsibilities pose an obstruction for women. Even then women got ability and committment to organise struggles themselves. So trade union leaders should provide place to women in leadership without underestimating their ability.

Another deep rooted evil in our society today is untouchability. It is necessary on our part to strive to eradicate untouchability and bring them into the mainstream of the society. While ending her speech she appealed women to vote for those candidates who are not communal, and who will protect the interests of women.

The meeting ended with the vote of thanks conveyed by Com. Kiranmayee, LIC Employee.

CITU's Note on ILO Convention on Equal Remuneration

We are glad to note that the complaint submitted by the CITU in 1976 with proper documentation and information on the actual functioning of the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, the lacunae in the enforcement machinery etc. was discussed in the meeting of the ILO Committee on Convention. It is indeed unfortunate that despite the passing of the Equal Remuneration Act in 1976, there remains still many shortcomings and loopholes and if the Government of India takes firm measure to implement it can serve the interest of the working women.

We do not agree that the steps the Government of India has taken concrete measures to increase an awareness among workers or employees, organised and unorganised both, about the Equal Remuneration Act and its implementation as claimed in the official note. This can be established by the non-implementation of the Act in various industries, including public sector undertakings.

The CITU also is not aware of the information provided to the ILO by the Government of India as to the centrally sponsored scheme to create the post of Labour Inspector with supporting staff to enforce legislation, relating to women and child labour on a 'pilot basis' in four states. If it is really taken up seriously, it might help to some extent to enforce the Equal Remuneration Act also. The documents regarding this pilot work should be made available to the trade unions which will be helpful to implement the scheme.

The CITU reiterates what it had said in earlier note, that the Government and its enforcement machinery is not serious about the implementation of the act and relies only on the written reports submitted by their officers. Otherwise how is it possible that women workers in Beedi, Construction, Garment, Agriculture and other industries continue to get

less wages compared to male workers. Regarding the payment of equal remuneration the same nature of work, or similar nature of work, the official reply that "it may not be possible to introduce it at the present stage of development" and "it would be necessary and more important to implement effectively the Equal Remuneration Act 1976 as amended," only highlights that the Government of India is not prepared to take positive measures to ensure full implementation of the concept of equal remuneration. This was the view taken by the employers at that time to avoid equal wages to women workers under the 'plea that nature of the work differs among men and women and so to pay equal wage was out of question.' In our meeting with the then Labour Minister in 1977, the issue was made clear that no such differentiation be made where both men and women work at the same place. We have quoted at that time in our note as to how the plantation owners in Karnataka placed women as a whole in one category to avoid equal pay. In fact the nature of work in Beedi or Construction for men and women is the same or of similar nature. Despite that women get less wages in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and other states. In construction industry, male and female workers work as head load workers or coal women workers loading the wagons are denied equal wage at par with men. Quite often the piece rate system is being utilised to deny equal remuneration to the women workers. Therefore this argument forwarded by the Government of India that "the concept of equal pay for equal work of equal value is an advanced concept" does not hold good. Under this plea an attempt is being made to deny implementation of the principle of equal remuneration.

The powers given under the Equal Remune-

rations Act 1976 to grant exemptions are grossly misused to harm the interests of women workers without any justification. The notification issued by the Govt of India under the Act excludes Air Hostesses of Indian Airlines and Air India from the purview of the clause relating to equal remuneration. Professional workers are similarly excluded as a result of which a woman stenographer lost the case in the Supreme Court in the Mackenzie case.

When the Act was amended to include the working conditions within the purview of the Act a clarification was issued by the Chief Labour Commissioner (Central) that the notification applies to only remuneration and not the working conditions. Yet the Air India management went to the Bombay High Court to challenge the jurisdiction of the Regional Labour Commissioner (Central) to intervene in the complain filed by the Air India Hostesses Association. Though the complaint was filed in May 1990 by the Association regarding the discrimination on the age of retirement, promotion etc. the Air India management is resorting to dilatory tactics and not allowing any decision to come from the appropriate authorities on the violations of the Act. It is necessary to plug the loopholes of the Act so that certain time limit is fixed for giving decision by the appropriate authorities on a complaint filed by an aggrieved party.

As a result of this shortcoming in the Act and Rules framed under it, the Air Hostesses of Air India are forced to retire at the age of 45 while the male flight pursers are allowed to do so till the age of 58. Though the work of Air Hostess and flight purser is of a similar nature this discrimination is allowed to be continued on the plea that they are two distinct categories. It is significant that the management of Indian Airlines has enhanced the age of retirement of Air Hostess to 58 years the Air India management is violating the provision of the Act without any effective action by the Government of India.

The Air Hostesses are discriminated against the managements in the matter of promotional avenues and other working conditions which also need to be stopped.

It is necessary to take urgent steps to ensure that the attempts of the management to utilise the loopholes of the Act and continue discrimination against women workers should be put an end forthwith.

The ILO document has raised a pertinent point regarding getting detailed information about the visits of the inspectors to the site of the working. We have no information with regard to the number of visits of the inspectors to check whether Equal Remuneration Act is implemented or not. We have noted our experience in our last note that the inspection machinery is in hand in gloves with the employers and is corrupt. The situation has not changed materially since then. The women workers thus lose their rights to get equal wages. We still hold the view that the records are not maintained properly at the work places. This particular criticism made by CITU is vindicated by various studies appeared in Indian Labour journals of which mention has been made in our last note. The situation has not improved since then.

The point made in the ILO note about the wages in plantation fixed by bilateral agreement between management and the workers union is correct. In Assam, the wages are still lower for the women workers. We appreciate that the ILO Committee has requested the Government of India to see that in such agreements, the principles of Equal Remuneration Act are not violated.

Finally, we would like to mention a few things. The consciousness among working women and men is being raised due to efforts of trade unions. The women's wings under the trade unions work among them on their specific problems while raising their consciousness about their rights. The result is they come forward to fight for equal remuneration, for

minimum wages etc.

The Central Government held recently two conferences on the women in trade unions and their rights, on family planning etc. where they invited employers, trade unions, voluntary organisations. These efforts, no doubt, help to understand the views and lacunae in implementation of various laws concerning women. However steps taken so far are symbolic and do not touch even the fringe of the problem. More concerted action on the part of the Government of India is urgently necessary.

We feel therefore, these efforts should not stop there. The follow up of these attempts should continue, so that more encouraging results will be available in implementation of Equal Remuneration Act. The Government of India should try to remove earnestly the disabilities and discrimination against women in every field giving social justice all around. The further initiative by ILO on these matters will immensely help in ensuring equality for working women.

The CITU would earnestly request the ILO to take expeditious steps so that the ILO Convention regarding Equal Remuneration is fully complied with by the Government of India. Though the CITU complained more than 15 years ago the Government of India is not yet doing justice to the working women regarding wages and working conditions. We hope the ILO will take a serious view of the matter and prevail upon the Government of India to put an end to all discrimination against the women workers.

Read

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Delegation of Anganwadi Meets the the Minister of State for Women and Child Welfare

Mrs. Vimal Ranadive has issued the following statement on behalf of the Samyukta Sangharsh Samithy.

A delegation of Samyukta Sangharsh Samithi consisting of five different all India federations of Anganwadi workers and helpers submitted a memorandum on the charter of demands describing their inhuman working conditions to Smt. Mamata Banerjee the Minister of State for Women and Child Welfare today. The main question was raised by the delegation was about their paltry honorarium of Rs. 225/- to Rs. 350/- for the workers and Rs. 110/- for the helper. Smt. Rajkumari, the Secretary of ABAK other women workers accompanied in the delegation told the Minister about the harassment by the CDPOS, the number of registers they have to fill up and long hours of work. They are not getting the TA while attending the meetings in the offices. The delegation told her that these women are appointed by the Central Government, but are called as social workers and paid honorarium only exploiting their cheap labour. The delegation demanded regularisation of these women and be paid minimum wages.

After hearing patiently from the delegates Ms. Mamata Banerjee said the issue was under discussion of their ministry, and when it came to Parliament all women MPs and others spoke in favour of their demands. She promised to consider the question of honorarium in a few days.

The delegation consisted of Shri B. K. Prasad, Hukum Singh, Smt. Vimal Ranadive, Shri B. D. Joshi, Smt. Rajkumari, Smt. Shobha Rani and Smt. Usha Sharma and others representing all the federations.

Women and the Law—Age at marriage

Dr. Smt. Nalini, Smt. Padma (Andhra Pradesh)

Reformation movement led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen, Jyotiba Phule, M.G. Ranade to name a few brought some important legislations to improve the status of women in the society and family. For example : (1) the Abolition of Sati Act 1829, (2) The widow remarriage Act 1856 and (3) The Sharada Act 1829.

The freedom movement gave an opportunity to women to participate in public activity and prove their mettle. The leadership also realised the need of womens' participation for the attainment of the goal as they constitute half of the population. It has made the framers of the constitution to provide some special provide for women to overcome their social backwardness and to enact laws to improve their status.

Here an attempt has been made to study various aspect of the law and their limiations in improving the status of women.

Age of marriage

Social reformers were aghast at the number of child widows in the country. They wanted to curb the trend by raising the age of marriage for girls. They have taken initiative to curb child marriages by legislation. The first legislation was the civil Marriage Act 1872 which laid down the age of marriage to be 14 years. In order to prevent early consummation of marriage, in 1925, the age of consent was passed to prohibit consummation before 12 years. In 1925, the age of consent was raised to 13 years. This was the forerunner of the Sarda Act of 1929. The Sarada Act decrees fourteen years as the minimum age of marriage for girls. It has ammended in 1949 where in the age of marriage was raised to 18 years for males and 14 years for females, ammended to 16 years. The Act leaves the validity of child marriage

untouched but makes such practice a penal offence. Parents, guardians and also adult bridegroom were liable to imprisonment upto three months.

The various personal laws have also their own minimum age of marriage. The Hindu Marriage Act, the post independence legislation, lays down the completion of 18 years and 15 years by the bridegroom and the bride respectively. The Parsce Marriage and Divorce Act 1936 lays down that the minimum age of marriage for the bridegroom and bride to be 16 years and 14 years respectively. The Christian Marriage Act 1872 provides the age of the male shall exceed 16 years and that of the female 18 years for valid marriage. Under the classical Muslim Law both the parties should have attained puberty for the valid marriage. Puberty is presumed in the absence of evidence to the contrary at 15 and 19 in case of girls and boys respectively.

The special marriage act, 1954, a post independence legislation provides for a secular marriage between adults. Under its provisions, it fixes the minimum age at 21 and 18 for males and females respectively. Registration is also compulsory for marriages solemnised under the Act. Section 16 of this Act permits voluntary Registration marriages celebrated under other laws.

There are large scale violations of the Act particularly in the rural areas. According to the study conducted by Kumudini Dandeker 13.79 per cent of girls were already married in the age group 19-14 in rural areas. The pecentage of married women in the age group 15-19 is 63.9 in rural areas. In Urban areas the percentages are much less 4.21 in the age group 10-14 and 36.26 in the age group 15-19. The non-cognizable nature of the offence is stated to be a serious hindrance for the effective en-

forcement of the law. Hence it has been suggested to make the offence cognizable and to appoint marriage prevention officers for effective enforcement of the law.

The reasons for the failure of the law do lie in the socio-cultural set-up of the society and ultimately in its economic basis.

Low age of marriage is related with the near universality of marriage in India. In a sense marriage is not an individual decision but a cultural one. Since all girls have to be married off, the thought of their marriage has to be entertained from their birth or early childhood.

Again, the early marriage takes care of the rules of endogamy which prescribe that marriage should be arranged within a certain age group, and other norms of prescription, Preference and proscription (Such as close kin marriages, gotra, clan and village exogamy and marriages within one's class). Leaving the girl to decide when to marry may also mean her deciding whom to marry and her choice may not conform to the traditional norms and rules. Betrothals and early marriages are encouraged towards this end.

The notion that a girl can be married with proper rites only when she is a virgin is an important factor behind early marriage. Another important factor connected with early marriage is that onset of puberty is regarded as the right age for marriage, as girl is considered ready for maternity.

The desire to preserve chastity and purity of women is a causative factor for early marriage among the scheduled castes and Brahmins. A father, who could not marry off his daughter before attaining puberty is ostracised. The strong winds of reform movement during twenties of the present century could not prevent the early marriages among the Brahmins. However, since 1931, there has been a gradual but distinct rise in the age of marriage specially among middle and upper classes in the Urban areas but the rise is not so noticeable among the scheduled castes.

The need of girls of scheduled caste to participate in nonhousehold work, particularly agricultural work, makes necessary early marriage in order to ensure their reputation and protect them from motherhood before marriage. Some social scientists have related the continuance of the custom among scheduled castes to their helplessness in protecting their women from the lust of men of upper groups who have economic power over them.

The land, an important and crucial instrument of production, is concentrated among few individual families in rural areas. Non-agricultural sector, particularly industrialisation did not have much impact in these areas. On the otherhand the traditional village industries and Crafts are vanishing at a rapid rate following lack of market for their products and being unable to face competition from large scale industries. So, the rural masses are totally dependant on landlords for their survival. The landlords, taking advantage of their economic power, are exploiting rural masses and more so women.

The Various state governments have made legislations for redistribution of land to the tiller. But it has not been effectively implemented. As a result, the social spectrum has remained as it was previously. This, in turn, nullified the impact of Age of Consent Act. Hence, in order to reap the benefits of the Act, effective implementation of land reforms is essential as it shatters the economic power of landlords and at the same time empowers landless and reduces their dependency.

Most often in poor families, women bear the responsibilities of maintaining the family, where as their men spend time and earnings in gamble and wine. In order to see that the kitchen fire burns women accept any conditions of work and also succumb to the sexual lust of the landlords. Once land reforms are implemented properly, women can work in their own fields for their earnings and there will be no need for them to accept the conditions

imposed by the landlords on them. They will not be prey to the lust of landlords any more. Joint titles to the land enhances their status in the family. Women's economic contribution to the family in turn reduces the desire on part of parents to marry off daughters at an early age with an object to ease their economic burden.

The patriarchal culture demands chastity and purity of women in order to get children of unquestioned paternity. It is stronger in rural areas where feudal relations of production still prevail. The land reforms not only knock down the feudal relations of production but also feudal values like taboos and inhibitions existing with regard to women. It eases the restrictions and improves their mobility. Parents are not required to bother about their daughters marriage from their childhood.

The land reforms, increasing purchasing power with the villagers open avenues for expansion of non-agricultural sector in rural areas. It inturn expands vistas of employment both for men and women. The improved economic conditions together with availability of employment opportunities in non-agricultural sector will create zeal among the parents to send their daughters to schools. Here it is suggested for opening of schools in all villages by the Government and for making free and compulsory education upto 14 years statutory for girls as it would help to reinforce implementation of Age at marriage law.

All the legislations including special marriages act suggested lower age of marriage for girls than males. It is lesser than the age prescribed for males. It may be because females mature physically at an early age than males. Reproduction is no doubt an important aspect of marriage as it perpetuates human race. But intellectual parity, understanding, commonness of interest are also equally essential for sustenance of the relationship and to produce a superior human race. Further it is difficult for a girl of 14 years to bear the burden of mother-

hood. Early marriages also lead to high maternal and infant mortality and have worst consequences on health of women. So awareness be created among parents about evils of early marriage and also need of mental maturity. This will deter parents from marrying off girls at an early age.

The age of marriage for girls should be raised to 18 years as is under special marriages Act to enable girls to take intelligent decisions regarding their partners in life. Compulsory registration of marriages is also essential to oversee the effective enforcement of the law. Again, all offences under the child marriage Restraint Act should be made cognizable and special officers be appointed to enforce the law.

The land reforms together with expansion of educational opportunities and avenues of employment shatter endogamous marriages to a large extent and enable girls to choose their own partners which automatically means raise in the age of marriage.

Even to-day girls are not able to enjoy the benefits of the age of marriage Act though 42 years have lapsed since its enactment. Legislation, in spite of being an instrument of social change, can not bring the desired change if the necessary economic changes are not brought about along with it.

(From page 8)

body. When she complained about the bad food, she was asked to hush up the matter which she refused. The union also agitated against it. The result was the dismissal of the above 5 women including the President.

I hope you will intervene in the matter and do justice to the aggrieved women who are devotedly serving the rural poor. An early acknowledgement of my letter shall be appreciated.

Thanking you,
3.7.1991

Yours sincerely,
Vimal Ranadive
President

Political Participation and Women's Struggles

Meera Velayudhan

It is indeed, a historic moment when the bases of social consensus are changing. This context is, in the broadest sense, a political opening which provides social movements such as the women's movement, an extraordinary opportunity to raise issues concerning them and influence popular expectations. The role that women play will be crucial, as it can provide a new visibility to women's issues and women's organisations in the process of democratic consolidation.

What is the role that women can play? If we were to go by mere statistical trends, and this is by no means unimportant, we get a picture of low levels of participation of women in decision making bodies, low membership in political parties, the small number of women contest as candidates and still fewer who are elected, combined with the trend of a rising number of women's subordination adversely affects the forms, character and effectiveness of their participation. As the Committee on Status of Women (1974) put it: 'Political participation is meaningless where the mass of the population suffers from poverty, continuous threats of starvation, illiteracy, lack of health, inequality of class, status and power. It is more so in the case of women who suffer from another dimension of inequality, namely the weight of traditional attitudes that regard them as physically, intellectually and socially inferior to men'. A basic factor affecting women's participation is their role as citizens. Independence granted women political equality on the basis of adult franchise and Article 15 of the Constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex. This has its roots in the the movement for women's rights which took place in the historical context of colonial rule, the social reform movement of the 19th century, the national movement and the anti-feudal

struggles of the 40s. Independence brought with it promises of a just society based on principles of equality and dignity of the individual.

Although the acceptance of women's equality was enshrined in the Constitution itself, the government made compromises from the start. The National Planning Sub-Committee Women had stressed on structural changes in property relations and the right to economic independence as crucial in changing the situation of women, and the Directive Principles of State Policy had suggested changes in that direction. Yet, the government, in its five-year plans, failed to integrate women's rights as equal citizens, especially in the fields of agriculture and industry. On the other hand, planned development led to largescale displacement of women from agriculture, industry and trade.

Ferment Exist Among Broad Sections of Women

The women's movement in the post-independence period emerged in this context. Even as organisation such as the AIWC withdrew from organised political action on women's issues, women's groups and organisations such as AIDWA conducted struggles on issues concerning women. Many of these coincided with the struggles by left political parties in the early 70s on wider issues. This was only the beginning. Studies indicate that a ferment existed among broad sections of women the working class, agricultural workers, poor peasants, middle-class housewives, NGOs, and students.

Women participated in agrarian struggles, working-class agitations, anti-price rise movements, the food movement, and against atrocities inflicted on women such as rape, dowry, sexual harassment. These struggles covered Kerala, Andhra, Tamilnadu in the south,

Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat in the West, Bihar, Rajasthan, UP, Delhi in the north and West Bengal, Assam, Tripura in the east. These struggles took place in the background of the crisis-both economic and political-towards which India was moving and the Emergency. The women's movement was a part of the overall growth of political struggles in this period.

Women's Issues More Significant During Elections

The growing political participation of women was reflected in the electoral process as well as in popular struggles. Women's issues studies played a significant role in creating a debate on policy issues concerning women. Women's struggles shaped that debate and, in turn, incorporated some aspects emerging from the debate. Women's issues began to receive more significance as evident from the election manifestos and campaigns and struggles on issues such as dowry, rape, gained wider political support and media coverage. Significantly, in the 80s, political parties of the opposition, especially the left parties and women's organisations like AIDWA, provided the platform for large-scale participation by women and also for broad-based agitation on issues of social oppression and human rights violation, eg. rape, dowry, sati, equal legal rights in marriage, etc. These, combined with the struggles by other women's groups, in fact forced the government to amend laws concerning rape, dowry, sati, whatever their limitations.

Women's Issues Basically Political One

Since the 80s, the issue of women's political role has acquired significant dimensions. A discernible trend within the women's movement-which range from the feminist 'non-political' to groups involved in work women in distress-appear to be in a continuous state of fragmentation. Women's groups working on

development programmes such as literacy, health, employment generation, environment, etc have, through their own experience, become more critical of government policies. Several women's organisation such as the YWCA are taking a more radical position on such issues. On the other hand, organisations such as AIDWA have from the beginning held that the women's issue is basically a political one, that the nature of political development and economic trends shape the overall trends in women's status. This understanding has been reinforced by their own experience in the struggles which has convinced AIDWA that the roots of women's oppression lie in our social set-up which is riddled with inequalities, that government policies have only perpetuated these inequalities and injustice. Therefore, while the women's movement has to confront the government on these policies, the need for radical social change must be kept in mind. This could happen only if women are organised and their struggles linked with other sections fighting for a just society.

Wider political developments since the mid-80s revealed this crucial link. The rise of communalism and attacks on even the existing rights of women, the struggles against the Muslim Women's Bill and sati, the left parties were the major allies of the women's movement. Several women's organisations have begun to recognise the significance of linking the women's movement with the wider democratic movement and this is evident from the joint struggles not only on issues such as rape and dowry but also on questions of government policy regarding women's employment and legal rights, its approach to communalism and religious fundamentalism. Although it is but a small beginning, the potential of such struggles can be gauged from the impact made by the women's organisations through their joint critique of the National Perspective plan (NPP) of the former Rajiv Gandhi-led Congress-I Government. It was a major gain, for the

women's groups were able to work out a consensus and bringout an alternate document covering policy approaches of the government on all crucial issues concerning women. This united action of women's organisations put the government on the defensive and forced it to make some changes in their original draft.

Enhance Political Participation

An important part of this document considered the questions of enhancing women's political participation. Criticising the authoritarian implications of certain measures suggested in the NPP, such as the undermining of the role of political parties, the reservation of seats for women in decision-making bodies through co-option, the women's organisations emphasised that democratisation from the panchayat and district levels onwards can only take place on the basis of elections. The democratic process must not be subverted by nominations. The mere presence of women representatives (through co-option) could hide the reality of women's subordinate position as they may be cut off from the masses of women whom they represent and hence remain insensitive to issues affecting them. The document placed the issue of nomination in the context of the growth of centralisation and authoritarianism which adversely affects women's political participation. Women's rights to organise and struggle against their oppression was linked with the question of democratic rights. Anti-democratic laws such as the Industrial Disputes Act and the Hospital & Other Institutions Bill enacted by the former Congress-I government were criticised by the women's organisations in its critique of the NPP. How could women's participation in trade unions increase if the right to organise itself was taken away, they asked.

It is the linking of women's struggles with the wider political movement that led the former National Front Government to set up the

National Commission for Women, which, despite its limitations, marks an important gain for the women's movement. The contrast in the debates in Parliament surrounding the Report on the Status of Women Committee in 1975 and that of the setting up of the Women's Commission in 1990 indicates the significance of this link and the possibilities that exist for women's issues to take their due place in the national agenda.

Widest Platform to Mobilise Women for Democracy Secularism to Ensure The Status of Women :

Significant report such as the Status of Women Committee was lost in the context of the Emergency. The suggestion for the setting up of the Women's Commission first found a place in this basic document. However, it was the struggles of women, their role in ensuring the defeat of the authoritarian Congress-I in 1989 and the setting up of the National Front Govt that enabled this longstanding demand of the women's movement to receive statutory sanction. The struggles in the past few years in particular to protect the existing rights as well as to advance women's rights indicate that we in the women's movement have to make hard political choices. The widest possible mobilisation of women in support of those who stand for democracy and secularism can ensure that the status of women becomes a central issue in future campaigns.

(From : Equality)

[The last issue of Voice of the working women (May 1991) an article appeared on "Role of Women MPS" was reproduced from APA Mainstream. We are sorry the name could not appear due to our neglect, though we mentioned it in our Hindi Bulletin "Kamkaji Mahila" We express our regrets. Editor.]

Harassment to Airhostess Leads to Safety Danger

Air hostesses have been discriminated on the ground of sex in the airlines by the management on the question of their service conditions. This is a matter of shame for any civilised country. But that should be termed as cases of the harassment to Airhostesses on duty and that too by no important person than the Captain of the flight? It is definitely barbaric.

On 28th Feb '91, flight No. IC 410 from Calcutta to Delhi via Ranchi, Patna and Lucknow had been piloted by Capt. Munjal and the senior-most cabin crew was Air hostess Mrs. Rekha Das. Mr. Munjal was not in good terms with Mrs. Das because he physically assaulted her in the past for which there was a spontaneous agitation by the Air hostesses and Munjal was chargesheeted by the management. Out of this incident he was in revengeful attitude towards her.

On the commencement of the flight Rekha, being the senior-most cabin crew, took charge in the front galley of the aircraft and prepared the duty chart and gave the same to Munjal for his information and counter signature. Here it has to be mentioned that as per laid down rules and departmental instructions in the safety manuals, the senior-most cabin crew has to be on duty in the front galley. This is a safety requirement. But Munjal not only refused to sign the chart but even asked Rekha to perform duty on the rear galley in violation of the laid down procedure. Obviously Munjal wanted to settle the old scores with Rekha.

The entire cabin crew members insisted Munjal either to sign the duty allocation sheet or record his objection in writing. But instead of complying with the same Munjal reportedly told them that he does not like to see the face of Rekha and hence 'she is safety hazard' to him. In the process ultimately when the flight reached Lucknow the arrogant captain unloaded

Rekha and two other airhostesses and the last leg of the flight was performed virtually without cabin crew.

This is a glaring instance as to how the airhostesses are ill-treated and also how safety of the air passengers are made play things by even a pilot notoriously for settling old scores with an air hostess. What is her fault? She did not bear with physical assault on her by Munjal silently.

Time and again such incidents have been taking place in Indian Airlines and after every incident instead of taking stern action against concerned persons the authority is recirculating its instructions for safety regulations and the guilty is allowed to go scot-free denying justice to the harassed Air hostesses.

Concern at the Attacks On the Party Mass Organization

The AIDWA and AICCWW express concern at the targetted attacks on men, women and children in the violence that has erupted after the dastardly murder of Rajiv Gandhi. The AIDWA is particularly concerned about the situation that has been created in Tripura where already in the last elections constitutional and democratic norms have been flagrantly violated by the Congress-I and TUJS. A delegation of the National Front which visited Tripura after the 1989 election had indicted the Congress-I. TUJS alliance of gross violation of constitutional procedures. Subsequently joint delegation of women's organizations investigated the atrocities on women in Tripura pointing out that in the state of Tripura the law of the land had ceased to exist. The targetted attacks on activists of the CPI (M) and other democratic organizations squarely pose the question of the exercise of political right and choices. Today this is directly linked with the survival of democracy in one country. The AIDWA seeks to draw the attention of the Election Commission to the matter and points out that elections should not be held under such circumstances where the people of Tripura, particularly women, are sought to be terrorised in a manner which directly impedes the exercise of their franchise, leave alone the feasibility of a free & fair election being held under the circumstances.

News From Abroad

Swiss Women Strike For Equality

Women in Switzerland are going on general strike on June 14 at the workplace and at home. Women in unions, political parties and in feminist organisations call for the strike to protest against sexual discrimination in wages social security and at home. Swiss women complained that their salary was one-third less than that of men and they are the ones to take on most of the domestic work. [A.W.W.N. June 1991].

First Women Workers Leadership Workshop in Nepal

Fifty women workers leaders from different industries and from all over Nepal took part in early March in a workshop entitled "Women Workers Leadership within the Trade Union". The workshop aimed at discussing women workers problems the solution to these problems, and the need to organise. The workshop helped build mutual understanding among women workers leaders and encouraged them to share their experience with each other. The workshop also trained the participants in organising and running union committee.

The workshop was organised by the major trade union federation GEFONT and the All Nepalese Women Association. In her inaugural speech, the only woman minister of the interim government, Sahana Pradhan, maintained that unless and until the workers movement recognise that the problems faced by women workers are seen as problems of the workers movement, the movement would remain weak. [AWWN-June 1991].

Philippine Women Workers Won Paternity Leave

In some factories in Metro Manila, paternity leave can now be availed of by a worker when his wife gives birth. Usually, the leave lasts from two to seven days depending on how much the union has won through the Collective Bargaining Agreement [CBA].

This was made possible not through the perseverance of male workers but of women unionists. Records show that in unions with paternity leave, credit for its adoption belong to the women workers.

"If members and officers of the unions had all been males, paternity leave might still have been a dream today", said Perlita Serrano, Chairperson of Kulusang Manggagawang Kababaihan [KMK-Women Workers Movement].

Male unionists, according to Serrano, are more concerned with economic demands or with daily problems like the quota system and overtime than anything else. Women unionists, on the other hand, have become increasingly aware of their rights, redoubling their efforts for better working conditions.

KMK worked through the union's women's committee, which in turn, saw to it that women's issues are raised in CBA negotiations and other union activities.

Despite having a woman as the country's president, the KMK has worked doubly hard for women's issues to be recognised. A bill which increases maternity leave from 45 to 60 days has to languish in Congress for two years before being passed. Although it is already a law, the KMK has to campaign for its implementation and even has to bargain for its inclusion in CBA negotiations.

Meanwhile, at least several factories have approved paternity leave for their workers, including the Fortune Tobacco Corp., and the Shoe manufacturer Grosby. One firm, however, objected and questioned why husbands should absent themselves when they are not the one who give birth.

Serrano explained that during CBA negotiations, women workers had to argue that a husband's support is needed by the wife during childbirth, especially when there is no house-

[Cont'd on Page 24]

The Place of Women is in The Battlefront of The Struggle— Oliver Tambo, ANC Women's League Formed in Durban

The ANC Women's League, founded in 1948 to mount resistance against apartheid and banned in 1961, was rebuilt in August 1990.

Due to some positive developments in South Africa the ANC had taken the decision to restructure itself inside the country, and so the women likewise decided to rebuild their organization, the ANC Women's League. The decision was taken at an extended National Women's Executive Meeting held in May 1990 in Lusaka.

One outcome of that meeting was a big women's rally held in Durban on August 9th, 1990 to form the ANC Women's League. On the same date 34 years ago, in 1956, more than 20,000 South African women from all over the country courageously and resolutely marched to the seat of the South African government in order to strongly protest against the introduction of the disgraceful Pass Laws.

The day of foundation of the ANC Women's League, August 9th, is a very important date in the struggle of the women's movement of Southern Africa, it is the International Day of Solidarity with the Struggling Women of South Africa and Namibia. It was officially recognized by the UN in 1981 and is celebrated every year not only by the women of the region but all over the world.

For decades black women in South Africa have suffered triple oppression: firstly because they are black, secondly because they are women, and thirdly because they are living under Apartheid. Throughout the history of the struggle in South Africa women have been part of the national liberation force in the country. South African women are known for their courageous struggle against Apartheid, suppression and discrimination. In the past South African women of diverse national groups, political opinions and religious convi-

ctions have come together at conferences and meetings, e.g. in Lusaka and Harare, to redefine their role in the struggle against Apartheid and to work out new strategies for the creation of a united, non-racial, democratic and nonsexist South Africa.

Aims and objectives of the newly rebuilt ANC Women's League are to defend and advance the rights of women both inside and outside the ANC. These rights are to be defended against all forms of national, social and gender oppression.

The formation of the ANC Women's League was a very important step and essential for mobilizing and organizing South African women within the liberation movement, under the new conditions of political development, to guarantee women's advancement, emancipation and development.

Women's emancipation has always been a central point in the struggle of the South African people for freedom and liberation. The right of women to participate in all decision-making bodies must be guaranteed in principle and practice.

A statement of the ANC on the emancipation of women in South Africa says that centuries of women's subjugation have deprived and marginalized them in different ways. Nationally, women have the lowest level of health, education and skills. The majority still bear the whole burden of domestic labour. Women make up the majority of the unemployed, and working women are channelled into the worst paid, lowest status jobs. Notwithstanding these oppressive conditions women have made significant contributions to the liberation struggle.

The struggle for elimination of Apartheid is closely connected with the struggle for the full emancipation of South African women. The

struggle for genuine emancipation of women in all spheres of life is not easy, and therefore appropriate measures should be taken to insure the principle of equality. The Women's League has expressed its readiness to set up relations with democratic women's organizations internationally.

The ANC Women's League, the women of South Africa, are faced with the challenge to fight for a united, nonracial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa. Women's united action is needed now.

Oliver Tambo, who recently returned to South Africa after many years in exile, once said that the place of women is in the battle front of the struggle.

We, women from all over the world, assure our South African sisters and friends of our unshakable solidarity. MALIBONGWE !

All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women (CITU)

To meet On 29th of July 1991

The first meeting of the newly elected committee of AICCW will be held on 29-30th of July 1991 at Delhi. The full Secretariat of the CITU held on 22nd June discussed the date and venue of the meeting. The agenda of the conference will be as follows :

1. Placing of the report by the Secretary and discussion on it.
2. Reports from the States on their work.
3. Report on the work of All India Anganwadi Federation.
4. The report Published on the 3rd convention at Calcutta and quota to be taken by the members.
5. Voice of the Working Women & Kamkaji Mahila.
6. Future programme of Action.

Vimal Ranadive

Considering the first meeting after the 3rd convention of working women, it is requested that all the states should attend the meeting in large numbers. The venue and the time table will be informed to you later. In view of the non-availability of all the addresses of members (even after repeated requestes comrades did not send them), those leaders in the states should take responsibility to inform their members of the meeting.

Comrades should inform about their arrival and date of departure to the CITU office by sending MO in time to get their booking.

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hold help nor relatives around.

Fortune Tobacco has 3,000 employees, 60% of them are male. The majority of them are married. The company granted one day's paternity leave in 1985, with pay. In 1989, management rejected seven day's paternity leave in CBA negotiations. The union wrangled a two day furlough instead.

The union over at Grosby was more victorious as it was able to convince the management to a five-day paternity leave. However, few management are as forthcoming. 'Pushing for women's issues during CBA negotiations can be heart-breaking', said Serrano. At first stage women's issues are up on the list of demands in the CBA, but they are the first to get thrown out when things are not going well in the negotiations. 'Like when the union was made to choose between a rice subsidy and maternity benefits, they took the rice subsidy of course,' she said.

Other women's issues such as additional maternity benefits, choice of work during pregnancy, menstruation leave, day-care center for workers' children, and stiffer penalty for sexual harrasment, are vigorously being pursued in CBA negotiations.

'Our next target in Congress is to introduce a bill on paternity leave' said Serrano.

AWWN