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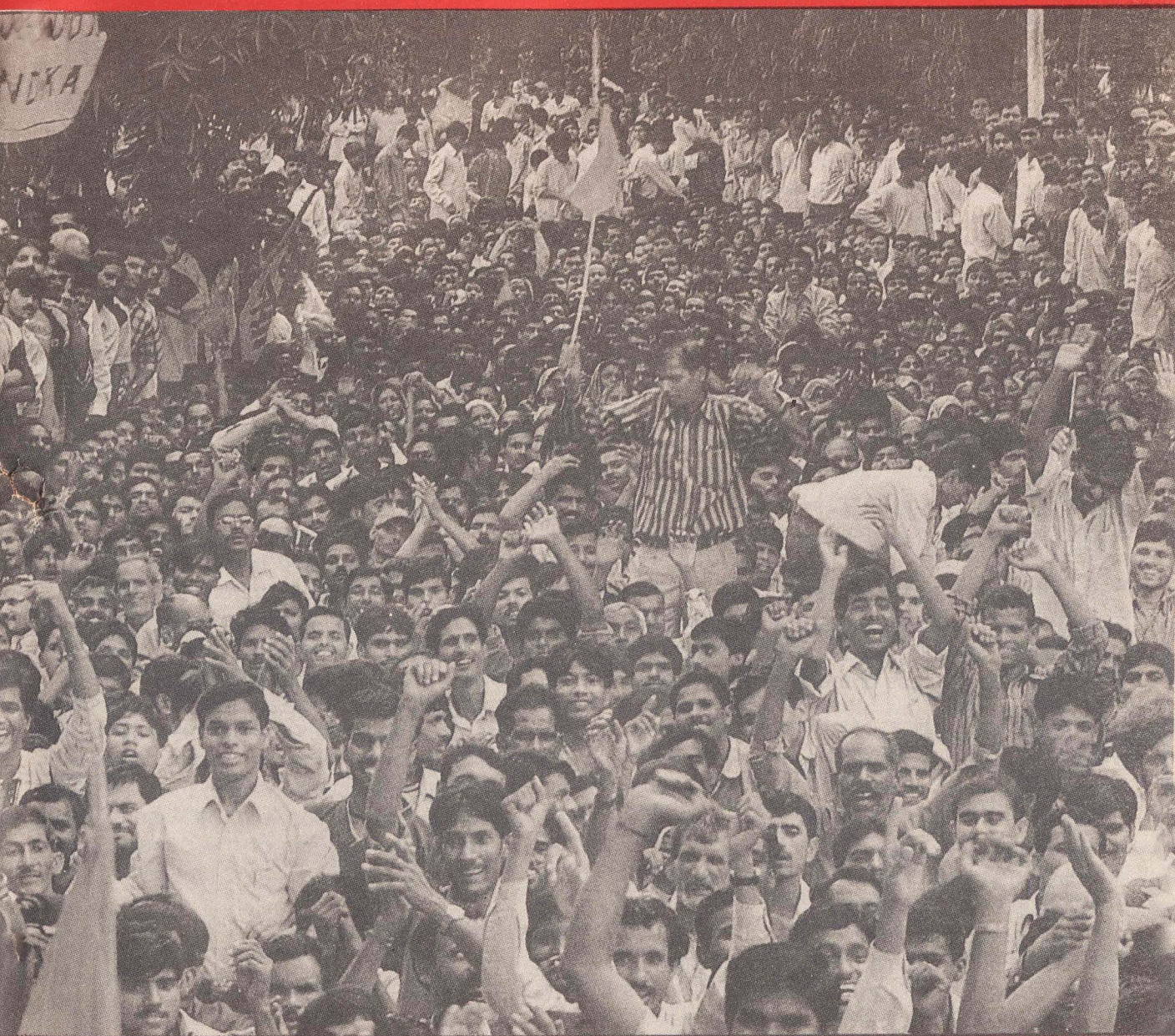
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THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU



MASSIVE RALLY IN DELHI - 12TH OCTOBER 2004

CENTRE OF INDIAN TRADE UNIONS

Meeting of the Working Committee

3-5 December 2004

Agartala, Tripura

NOTICE

The meeting of the Working Committee of CITU will be held on 3rd to 5th December at Agartala, Tripura. The agenda of the meeting is as follows:

1. Condolence
2. Presidential Address
3. General Secretary's Report
4. Verification of Membership
5. Review of collection of funds for P Ramamurthy Trade Union School
6. Any other issue with the permission of Chair

The meeting will commence at 10 AM on 3rd December 2004. All comrades are requested to please attend the meeting.

Chittabrata Majumdar
General Secretary

WORKING COMMITTEE MEMBERS PLEASE NOTE

Members are requested to please book their journey tickets for both-way well in advance to avoid problems at the eleventh hour. They should also intimate the Tripura State Committee about their arrival particulars to enable them to arrange for receiving the members at Airport/ Bus Station. The Address of the State Committee is:

Com. Pijush Nag,
General Secretary
Tripura State Committee of CITU
Office Lane,
Agartala,
Tripura (W), Pin 799001
Phone: 0381-2324255, Fax: 2319259.
Mobile no: 09436122206
E-mail: gscitu@sanchernet.in

For reaching Agartala, one has to either go by train up to Guwahati and therefrom by bus to Agartala (24 hours journey) or by train/air up to Kolkata and therefrom by air to Agartala. The fare for Kolkata-Agartala air ticket will be Rs 2670/- (one way).

Those traveling by train-bus route will have to reach Guwahati by 1st December (Wednesday) morning. As informed by Tripura State Committee,

the bus for Agartala will leave Guwahati between 2 pm to 3 pm and will reach Agartala on 2nd Afternoon. The bus-fare is Rs 350/- (app). Comrades traveling by bus from Guwahati to Agartala are requested to intimate the Tripura State Committee and Assam State Committee their travel programme immediately after (i.e., when they will be reaching Guwahati by which train etc and also their return journey particulars) so that arrangement for the bus journey of all the comrades together can be made by the Reception Committee in cooperation with the Assam State Committee. The address of the Assam State Committee is given below for information:

Com. Deben Bhattacharya,
General Secretary
Assam State Committee of CITU
Ananda Ram Barua Road
Near Srimant Press
Guwahati 781001, Assam
Phone and fax: 0361-2524350.
Mobile: 09435 042096

THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

NOVEMBER 2004

YOU SAID IT by Laxman



I suggest a way to gain popularity, Sir. Announce an increase in prices of some essential commodities, Sir. Then after a couple of days, you announce you are not going to increase it in the interest of the public.

Courtesy: The Times of India

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EDITORIAL

WHY DITHER ON EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE?

The UPA government headed by Manmohan Singh had adopted the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP), which, *inter-alia*, committed to immediately enact a National Employment Guarantee Act.

The Finance Minister of the UPA government in his first budget speech had also noted: "... Work has begun on the National Employment Guarantee Act. The object is to guarantee 100 days of employment in a year to one able-bodied person in every poor household. The Minister of Labour, expects that he would be able to introduce the Bill in Parliament shortly.

While we eagerly await the enactment of the legislation on employment guarantee, there are certain disquieting signals emanating from certain quarters. There is a story that had been floated in the media that the Finance Ministry is expressing difficulties - rather disinclination - to commit the financial allocation of around Rs. 32000 crore needed for backing up the employment guarantee legislation at one go. Spokesmen of the ruling dispensation have started listing up the financial crunch the government is or may have to face including the anticipated additional burden that may devolve as a result of the next Pay Commission for the government employees. Proposals are mooted to stagger the implementation of the employment guarantee scheme, starting with 150 districts in the next financial year and extend it to other districts over the next few years, perhaps till the end of the tenure of the present government. Such talks naturally raise a doubt whether the employment guarantee legislation will be legislated in the ensuing session of the Parliament or meet the same fate as similar legislations for the agricultural workers and unorganised workers, which have been hanging in the air for long.

The commitment in the NCMP is only a minimum effort that the UPA government would undertake in the short run. The objective is to utilise the greatest asset that we have viz. our human resources, by generating gainful employment empowering our young men and women to fully participate in the growth process.

It is unfortunate that the mindset, which considers every item of expenditure, intended to benefit the affluent sections of the society as essential and the one benefiting poorer sections as wasteful 'doles', dominates the thinking of the policy makers in the corridors of power.

It is hoped that the UPA government will end this dithering on employment guarantee legislation. The youth and working class of the country is already restive and will surely not countenance such dithering any more!

INDIAN TU DELEGATION IN CHINA

M K Pandhe

The All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) invited a high power delegation from India in the middle of September 2004. CITU, INTUC, BMS and AITUC were invited to send 2 members each in the delegation.

The CITU decided to nominate me and Kashmir Singh Thakur, General Secretary, Himachal Pradesh State Committee of CITU as members of the delegation. The BMS nominated its president, Hasubhai Dave and Dy General Secretary, Jagdish Awasthi. The AITUC was represented by Unniyal and Brij Mohan, both belonging to Petroleum Workers Union, Delhi. The INTUC could send only one delegate, Shankar Das, leader of Zinc workers union. The other delegate could not go due to passport difficulties.

The delegation left for China on 15th September. It visited Beijing, Chngsha and Shanghai as per programme chalked out by the ACFTU. On 16th Sept the delegation visited forbidden city and on 17th Sept Great Wall of China. On 18th Sept it visited ancient University of Yuelu where Mao Tse Tung studied. The place where Mao was studying in the natural surrounding has been specially preserved by the authorities. On 19th Sept a visit to the state owned Beshiny Cigarette Factory was arranged. The delegation visited the housing quarter of a model employee to study the family life of workers. We left for Shanghai on 19th Sept evening.

On 20th Sept the delegation visited foreign owned Leica Microsystems Ltd, Shanghai, which manufactures educational microscope, and laboratory microscope used in hospitals, etc. On 21st Sept the delegation had sightseeing and free time for marketing etc. In the evening the delegation left for Delhi.

In every city the top leaders of trade unions arranged banquets in honour of the delegation where detailed discussions and exchange of views on problems of mutual interest had taken place. The delegation received VIP treatment everywhere and members were given cordial reception in all the places. Everywhere the

leadership of Chinese trade unions showed extreme importance for the friendly ties between the trade union movements of India and China. ACFTU leadership appreciated the unity reflected by joint delegation from India and keenness was expressed to strengthen the bonds of friendship between the trade union movement of two most populous countries of the world. At every stage the point was emphasized that Indian and Chinese people constitute 40 per cent of the world population!

On 16th Sept afternoon we were taken to the headquarters of ACFTU to meet Xu Zhenghuan, vice chairman of ACFTU and Fan siyuing from the headquarters of ACFTU. Zhang Tao and Tan Tao of the International Liaison Department of ACFTU were also present in the meeting.

Xu Zhenghuan explained to the delegation the problems of the developments in China since 1978 when the economic reforms were introduced in China. He pointed out that the per capita income during 1980 to 2000 increased four times in real terms. The new plan prepared by the government again visualizes per capita income increase by 4 times during 2000 and 2020. The average annual income is expected to reach \$3000 by that time. Xu noted that the country gives top priority to economic construction and people oriented sustainable development is given special stress by the government. The 5 cardinal issues on which the balanced growth is achieved are as follows (1) balanced development in urban and rural areas (2) achieving human development without adversely affecting nature (3) higher domestic economic growth and opening of the economy to the outside world (4) economic development to ensure social aspects are given due importance and (5) regional development to reduce regional disparity.

He admitted that some problems are faced by the country which are concerns of the trade unions in China. The most important problem faced is that of unemployment. Due to modernization of economy several workers have been laid off while

new entrants have come in the employment market. More and more rural people are coming to cities and problems of urbanisation have become more crucial. Social security of workers is also a serious problem for the migrant workers. Last year incomes of farmers showed a decline. However, due to additional investment in agriculture income of the peasants started showing an increase.

Xu further noted that income disparity in the society has widened and the govt has to take steps to reduce it. He observed the pressure on natural resources increased due to faster development. He clarified that the steps are to be taken to overcome these problems so that the imbalances in the growth of economy are properly corrected.

He mentioned that AICFTU has a membership of 123 million and has 32 provincial branches. The total workforce in China is estimated at 315 million of which about 100 million are migrant workers. The ACFTU has 1.57 million grass root branches all over China. Since the union membership is enrolled on a



voluntary basis, all workers are not members of the union. Though many agricultural workers are members of the ACFTU the membership in this sector requires to be strengthened. Generally every year 6.6 million workers are added to the union membership.

The trade unions in China are playing an important role in adopting labour laws. The National Peoples Congress consults ACFTU in passing labour laws and regulations concerning working conditions, safety, occupational health and work related injuries. Over 30 laws and regulations have been so far adopted by the NPC in consultation with trade unions. President of the

ACFTU is vice chairman of NPC and he has recently demanded revision of some of the labour laws in favour of workers. The company law in China is now being amended and ACFTU is ensuring that workers rights and interests are properly protected in that law.

Xu explained that joint sessions are periodically held between ACFTU and Govt of China at Central Provincial and county levels to ensure that workers rights are properly protected. 673,000 collective agreements have been signed in China covering 1.21 million enterprises and 1003 million workers.

To promote and strengthen democratic management in industry the factories and establishments are holding workers' congress to decide the policies of running the undertaking in

consultation with trade unions. They also consider technological development of the unit and planning in advancing production. The non-public enterprises are also now covered by the workers congress system so that the undertakings are run in a

democratic manner.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

24 million workers are unemployed in China due to introduction of new technology which accounts for 4.3 per cent of the workforce. This year the figure is likely to reach 4.6 per cent due to modernisation of textile industry in China. About 4 million workers are added to the employment market every year due to new entrants. Government is adopting a policy which would ensure creation of about 10 million jobs every year.

The unemployed workers are protected by an unemployment insurance scheme. Under this

scheme a workers is given minimum wage for a period of 3 years. If he does not get job by that time then some living guarantee is given to a worker. The amount is however varying between different provinces. Some workers are provided financial assistance to start some establishment of their own for a living. Children of unemployed workers are provided special facilities in their studies in schools and colleges.

FOREIGN OWNED PROJECTS

ACFTU felt that the foreign companies working in China were discouraging formation of unions. Therefore, TU law provides for establishment of trade unions in such undertakings. Xu admitted that in some foreign establishments TU have not been formed and ACFTU is making attempts to do so. Some foreign companies violate the labour laws and government had to take action against some employers. Even some strikes have been reported in some of the foreign owned undertakings.

As a result of China's entry in WTO, the foreign advanced countries which give huge subsidies to their industries are opposing subsidies by the developing countries. That is generating an area of conflict. Some Chinese enterprises have been opposing unfair competition by foreign companies.

Xu pointed that out of total employed workers 40 per cent are women and they are getting equal rights in all respects. He also replied to the questions raised by the members of Indian TU delegation.

VISIT TO CIGARETTE FACTORY

Indian delegations visit to Beshiny Cigarette factory was helpful in knowing how efforts are made to improve the performance of the factory through joint efforts of the union and the management. Both the Director of the factory and the union chairperson of the factory were women. Since

1984 the attempt to modernize the factory were made as a result of which the output per worker increased from 200 to 500 cartons per day. The employment of the factory came down from 4000 to 2000 but the retrenched workers were rehabilitated elsewhere.

48 per cent of the employment in the factory was of women. The same proportion of women was in the management personnel. Every worker in the factory has been provided with a house. Workers are also encouraged to have their own house through a fund created by joint contribution of the workers and the management. For half a Yuan the workers are provided good quality of lunch by the management of the factory. Every worker in the factory is entitled for old age pension.

The workers participate in the management of the factory and every policy decision is taken in consultation with the trade union. The factory runs a business management school for advancement of skill of workers and management personnel. The factory allows workers to purchase shares if they so



desire.

LEICA - JOINT VENTURE COMPANY

Our visit to Leica Microsystem unit with German collaboration was also informative. The management was fully controlled by the Chinese while German experts were giving technical guidance. The unit manufactures microscopy systems in life sciences, instruments for tissue infiltration and embedding, surgical microscopes which offer new therapeutic approaches in micro surgery and semi conductor equipment. Most of the employees were highly skilled and producing high value items which were exported all over the world.

A large number of employees were women and the production process was highly automatised.

All the 1500 employees had to undergo extensive training to perform highly complicated operations. General Manager of the factory was young Chinese technocrat who was personally knowing every employee. He explained the working of the factory in a simple way and showed us the actual operation of all the departments. Every worker has direct access to him and an effective monitoring system of all the departments was well developed. He was personally looking into all aspects of working of the factory which has resulted in increase in the productivity of the workers substantially.

The German collaborators had given financial and technical assistance but entire management control was in the hands of Chinese. All labour laws in China were applicable to the undertakings. The union leader who also accompanied us throughout explained how the union played an important role in running of the factory. No decision is taken by the management without

consulting the union.

Strengthen India-China Cooperation

During the visit the leadership of two countries agreed to strengthen cooperation between the trade union movement of India and China. It was also agreed to extend the cooperation at the Asian level so that solidarity of the Asian workers is strengthened. Industrywise joint delegation by trade unions of both the countries can be organized. It was felt that holding Asian level seminars on common issues facing the working class can improve such cooperation through exchange of views and experiences. Both sides agreed that despite ideological differences it was possible to come together on common issues and learn from each others experiences.

Indian TU delegation returned to India with confidence of strengthening the ties of friendship between two largest populated Asian countries which will contribute to the development of TU movement in Asia.

SALES PROMOTION EMPLOYEES ALL INDIA CONVENTION

At the call of FMRAI, an all India convention of Sales Promotion Employees of industries other than pharmaceuticals was held at Shramik Bhawan, Kolkata on 19th September 2004. 212 delegates from 17 industries attended the convention.

The convention discussed the burning problems of the sales promotion employees in the non-medical segment, which include rapid contractualisation through franchisees, distributor, C&F agents in violation of Contract Labour (Abolition & Regulation) Act, taking away trade union rights by changing designation as sales-officer, victimization on the ground of sales and imposition of unbearable workload. The convention demanded amongst others, extension of Sales Promotion Employees Act to all industries and establishments, fixation and enforcement of minimum wages by all State governments for all section of sales promotion employees, etc.

D P Dubey, General Secretary, FMRAI inaugurated the convention. Background note was placed by Arun Ghosal, Secretary, FMRAI. 17 delegates from various industries spoke in the convention. The convention gave a call to take urgent initiative to campaign and enroll this section of employees as members of state units of FMRAI and this country wide membership campaign will be conducted during January 3-8, 2005. The convention also gave call to mobilize this section of employees to build up industrywise consolidation to develop industrywise movement. The convention was presided over by a presidium consisting of Amitava Guha, Jt General Secretary, Aloke Banerjee, Secretary and Samir Roy, Treasurer of FMRAI.

TEXTILE AND CLOTHING INDUSTRY IN INDIA:

PHASING OUT OF THE MFA

P K Ganguly

The Textiles industry in India roughly employs around 35 million people (in 2000-2001), making it the second largest employer in the country after agriculture. The economic significance of the industry is further established by the fact that it contributes about 18 percent of the industrial production in the country and about 30 percent of its export earnings.

The industry has several very vast sectors within it, viz, the mill sector, the clothing or garment sector, the handloom sector and the powerloom sector. Each of these sectors employs large number of workers in terms of lakhs and also contributes significantly to the national economy. The tradable commodities under Textiles include readymade garments (clothing), cotton yarns, fabrics, silk and woolen products, etc.

Garment Sector

The garment sector, however, has emerged as the most globalised sectors in the world today. This sector alone employees about 3.6 million workers. A large segment of the garment sector comprises of a vast domestic market, while another significant segment caters to the export market. Most of the units producing for exports are in Tirupur, Delhi and Mumbai. According to the Ministry of Commerce, 51 percent of the total Textile exports in 2000-2001, was from the garment sector alone. Nearly 80 per cent of Indian clothing exports go to the USA and the EU where they face quota restrictions. Apart from agriculture and Patents, textiles and clothing in particular are the murkiest drama on the stage of world politics. The struggle on these two sectors continued throughout the Uruguay round for eight years, and are still continuing as the most contentious issues. The export orientation and thereby production of garments for exports in India is a trend that started in the 1970s, with some exports to Africa and mostly to the erstwhile Soviet Union.

The MFA

Since 1974 bilateral quotas negotiated under the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA) governed the world export of textiles and clothing. This

continued till 1994. Under the MFA, quotas were imposed by the developed countries on imports from the developing countries. The new Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC) arrived at Marrakesh in 1994 as a part of the GATT agreement, sought to phase out the MFA in four phases over 10 years i.e. by December 31, 2004. So on 31st December 2004 the MFA would come to an end, and from January 1, 2005, trade in textiles and clothing will come fully under WTO. The philosophy is that there will be "free trade" under WTO without any quota regime.

Firstly, according to the ATC, 51 percent of the quotas on imports from the developing countries were to be removed by December, 2002, and then the rest of 49 per cent to be removed by December 2004. But at the Cancun Ministerial meeting of WTO in September, 2003 it was seen that the USA, followed by the EU had not implemented even 50 per cent of their obligations. The Review Meeting held in Geneva in July 2004, to review the implementations after Doha and Cancun, did not review the implementation of the ATC at all. The Govt. of India also lay supirie in the matter. Already murmurs are being heard as reported in the press that some countries want to postpone the ATC beyond 2004. Thus it is still not certain when the so-called "free trade" and quota-free regime under WTO will begin. Also, even if the MFA comes to an end on December 31, there is no assurance regarding complete withdrawal of the quota regime by the USA and EU.

It should be noted that the developing countries including India wanted complete dismantling of the FMA during the Uruguay Round. The EU wanted its continuation. But the USA took the middle path and the ATC was finally signed to phase out the MFA by 2004.

India, particularly was and still having euphoria about the shape of things to come after the WTO takes over the trade in textiles and clothing. The Govt. expects to increase the exports of textiles, most particularly garments by about 4-5 times when the free trade with the quota free regime

starts in January, 2005. Based on such euphoric presumptions, the Satyam Committee made its recommendation to remould the Textile Policy in commensurate with the globalised economy and trade under the WTO regime. So the new Textile Policy (2001) was also formulated, exposing all its sectors to the ravages of the WTO's "free trade" philosophy.

The question arises, when trade was actually "free" in the world. The UNCTAD report after the Marrakesh agreement had rightly pointed out that since 1970, the developing countries have always been at the receiving end in world trade. The rich North has been dominating over the poor South. In India also, the trade balance had never been positive, i.e. exports never overwhelming the imports.

The other aspect we have to see is that, in a free trade and quota free regime under WTO India will have to face extremely stiff competition from other Asian countries like China, South Korea, Hongkong, Philippines, Indonesia, Taiwan, Thailand, Bangladesh, Srilanka, etc.

Further, in the free trade regime India will also have to open its own domestic market to all other countries in the world particularly to the rich North. In the liberalised regime in the globalised economy under the WTO, we are already having very adverse effect in our trade and economy.

Already under pressure from America, the Govt, had dereserved many items of production in the SSI, including in handloom, as recommended by Satyam Committee on the ground that reservation of item of production does not have any meaning in an era of liberalisation. This apart, the Govt. has also withdrawn the quantitative restrictions on imports.

Also, there will be several barriers, which the ongoing, WTO trade politics and the rich North have given us the experience like protectionism, anti-dumping measures, environmental issues, labour rights, child labour issues, etc. - all to put brakes on exports from India and the poor South.

The Axe Falls on Labour

Whatever may happen in trade from January, 2005, is a matter of speculation and arguments and counter arguments. Only time will say this. But the working class have to go according to their experiences regarding the imperialist globalisation

and the WTO.

But it can be said as certain that the adverse impact will be on the workers. With prices offered by the lead firms i.e. the MNCs, the exporters will try to cut their costs. Since fabric and other inputs have a direct bearing on the final quality of the product, these costs cannot be reduced beyond a point. So the axe will fall on labour.

We are already experiencing how globalisation encourages contractualisation and informalisation of production and economy leading to severe exploitation of the workers. The textile and clothing industry is one of the worst affected in this respect. Even as a precursor to the full fledged WTO regime, there is allround violation of workers' rights. There are high levels of casual employment, long working hours, no employment security, very low levels of wages, lack of any social security, more exploitation of women workers, no labour laws or trade union rights. Even the minimum standards set by the ILO Conventions are violated, namely, Freedom of Association and Right to Collective Bargaining (Conventions 87 and 98); Ban on Forced Labour (Convention 29); Determination of Minimum Wage; Ban on Child Labour (Convention 138); on the issue of Migrant Labour, on health, safety, occupational diseases and so on.

Already several national seminars are being organised to discuss the shape of the post-MFA Textile Industry and the workers. It becomes imperative for the CITU and the trade union movement to discuss the issue and decide the plans to meet the challenge.

CHANDIDAS SINHA

We record with profound regret the passing away of Shri Chandidas Sinha, Secretary of the Indian National Trade Union Congress in New Delhi on 29th September, 2004. Shri Sinha had been manning the national headquarters of the INTUC and was an affable person, maintaining very cordial fraternal relationship with all central trade unions. He was totally dedicated to the cause of the workers and in his own way contributed to further the cause of the trade union movement in no small measure. We pay our homage to the memory of Shri Sinha and convey our condolences to all the bereaved.

MISSILES IN IMPORTED SCRAPS: WORKERS DIE IN EXPLOSION: ENTIRE SAHIBABAD INDUSTRIAL AREA ON STRIKE

On 30th September, at around 3-30 pm, more than 10 workers, all on contract, were killed owing to explosion of live missiles in the premise of M/s Bhusan Steel & Strips Ltd at site-4 of the industrial area of Sahibabad in Uttar Pradesh. The company regularly imports iron scraps from abroad to melt them and produce finished items in its factories in the same area. The live missiles came along with the imported consignments from abroad, which exploded while being handled within the factory premise leading to death of reportedly 10 workers.

The entire incident, though appearing to be accidental, may not be actually so since the Bhusan Steel Premise had witnessed similar explosions in the past more than once. Hence possibility of links between the Bhusan Steel management and similar scrap importers and the unscrupulous exporters of scrap abroad smuggling explosives/missiles in India cannot be ruled out. The suspicion gets further endorsement from the incidents of missiles and even rocket launchers being found along with import-consignments in several other places in the country within a span of 10 days following the incident in Sahibabad. Moreover, possibility of Bhusan Steel management with the smugglers of explosives and missiles inside

the country through scrap-import route bears ominous portents as a highly sensitive defence sector establishment, Bharat Electronics Ltd is located closely to the Bhusan Steel premise. The CITU demanded a thorough enquiry into the incident by appropriate high-power agency.

The explosion in Bhusan Steel has got another dimension. Although the death toll was declared to be 10, actual number of death may be much more. As per insiders' report, well before the police reached the spot, the armed gangsters maintained by the Bhusan Steel management in the name of security could manage to put some dead bodies within the furnace. 95% of the total 5000 workers working in the company are contract workers whose records are not deliberately maintained by the company although it was their statutory responsibility. Not only this, the CITU's intervention brought to light that the Bhusan Steel, a major steel producer having three/four units in that area are, in close connivance with the labour department and police officials and with the help of armed henchmen, violating all labour laws relating to maintenance of employment register, contract workers, minimum wages and other statutory social security benefits.

The Ghaziabad district committee of CITU took up the matter seriously. On the day following the explosion, on 1st October, the industrial workers from the entire area got spontaneously mobilized in the gate of Bhusan Steel and held mighty demonstration demanding enquiry into the incident and appropriate punishment of the employer and adequate compensation for the those died and injured.

The district and state leadership of CITU addressed the workers and called for general strike in site-4 Sahibabad industrial area to press for the demand for enquiry into the incident and compensation for the victims and also for compelling the employer to maintain regular employment register and implement other labour related statutes.

On 5th October, the industrial workers of the entire area magnificently responded to the strike call. The strike was total throughout the area and the striking workers assembled in the gate of the main factory and headquarter of Bhusan Steel and held daylong demonstration. The atmosphere was so charged that the district administration had to announce Rs 5 lakh as compensation for the workers' families, who lost their lives.

BRICK-KILN INDUSTRY IN DOLDRUMS

There have been around 40,000 brick-kilns in the country employing around 50 lakh workers. This industry has been put in doldrums. The order of the Delhi High Court, made it mandatory for the brick-kilns to use 25% of fly-ash generated by the Thermal Power plants in brick making. The brick-kiln owners are opposing this order and ultimately thousands of brick-kilns in different parts of the country are kept closed leading to loss of livelihood to lakhs of workers.

Delhi High Court passed an order in 1999 to make mandatory the use of 25% fly ash in brick making by the brick-kilns located within 50 kilometer radius of the Thermal Power Plants. The order was issued on ground of environmental protection from the pollution arising out of the fly-ash generated by the Thermal power plants. Accordingly, the Environment Ministry had issued Gazette notification to that effect on 14-09-1999. Again on 5th August 2004, on further application by another NGO, The Delhi High Court reiterated the same order for all brick-kilns located within 100 km radius from the Thermal Power Plants. Accordingly, all the State Governments issued notification. This will result in bringing 75% of the brick kilns in the country under compulsory usage of fly ash as raw material. Many State Governments are refusing to issue 'No Objection

Certificate' to the brick-kilns in the state unless they undertake to use fly-ash. The brick kilns are getting closed in thousands resulting loss of earnings to lakhs of workers.

There have been many inconsistencies in the Govt. order. The pollution is created by the Thermal Power Plants and they should have been made to make productive use of the fly-ash by producing bricks as their bye-products through mechanized process. That should have been the best means to address the problem of pollution. But instead, the brick-kilns are being compelled unjustly to bear the burden of the pollution for which they are in no way responsible. Moreover the court order has not made it clear, nor the Govt notification in that regard as to who would bear the carrying cost for safe transportation of fly-ash from the thermal plants to the brick kilns. Further, the transportation of fly-ash must have to be made in proper fully covered transport as otherwise it will spread pollution all-through the route of its transportation.

Taking advantage of the situation, the bigger brick kilns having huge unsold stock of bricks at their disposal stopped operating their kilns and the price of bricks started touching the sky affecting the consumers in a big way. At the same time, the brick kiln owners' Association while raising

demands before the Govt.s to exempt them from fly ash usage have also been making plea for relieving them from observance of labour laws to bail them out from the crisis.

The TU movement in the brick kiln industry will have to confront this critical situation effectively. CITU is opposed to compelling the brick kilns to use the fly ash. Rather, the Thermal Power Plants, which are generating fly ash, are better placed to make best productive use of such fly ash through mechanized brick making as its bye-product. That is the best way for addressing the problems of pollution from thermal power plants. Further compulsory usage of fly ash in brick making may cause serious health hazards for the workers. On the other hand, CITU is also opposed to the opportunistic demands of the brick kiln owners to exempt them from labour laws. CITU maintains that the brick kiln owners, instead of stopping the operation of brick kilns should take up with the judiciary for review of the High Court Order to ensure that fly-ash pollution is addressed at its source, i.e., at the thermal power plant itself. Simultaneously, they should take up with the Govt.s and judiciary on the issue of transportation cost.

The Haryana State of CITU and Laljhanda Bhatta Mazdoor Union have already taken up issues with brick kiln Association in the State and also demanded urgent Govt. intervention.

GLOBALISATION & NEW FORM OF RECRUITMENT

Chittabrata Majumdar

The rising unemployment is a perennial problem in all the third world countries like ours. The problem has been aggravated further with the massive downsizing of the existing manpower through indiscriminate implementation of exit policies in form of golden hand shake, voluntary retirement scheme etc. during the last two decades under reform with a plea of making the organisations more efficient and viable. Beyond any doubt the real motto behind such downsizing was malicious and just to shrug the responsibility of the permanent commitment towards the employees to a maximum possible extent to maximise the profit. The neo-liberal reform of the country has thus prepared the ground ready in favour of capitalist putting the workers in a back foot so far as the bargaining capacity is concerned at least for the time being. This may be noted that during the ongoing reform process the size of the unemployment has been ever increasing, since the job opportunity has been perpetually lagging compared to the requirement. The close down of industrial units, and the retrenchment of so-called surplus employees has further fuelled the crises. The millions of job seekers including the educated youth and women are desperate to get job for their mere survival, irrespective of the quality and condition, which is nothing but the compulsion for the distress selling of labour. This was exactly the situation what the capitalist indigenous and of foreign origin have master minded to create. Engagement of labour via contractors while being most common practice since long, usage of various agencies that provide the labour at a much cheaper cost is also rapidly proved to be the favourite to the big organisations. Use of agencies popularly known as "Third Party" in activities of perennial nature to sustain the smooth operation has become a common practice now a day by the industrial and business houses including the multinational companies. In a pre-conceived move the companies have sought to replace the permanent work force by massive deployment of

casual labour.

Since the arrangement have been done between the principal and agencies for supply of labour, the former, though the user of the labour, can conveniently deny the responsibility to adhere the labour laws of the country in absence of direct employee employer relationship as per the present frame of labour laws. In reality many of such agencies are nothing but the mere cosmetic faces of these big houses since every process from selection to deployment are the subject matter of the latter in disguise. Thus these agencies in true sense are the satellites of the parent organisations to continue the increasing exploitation of working class clandestinely.

With the patronage of the monopoly capital and multinationals these agencies have been mushrooming during these days to subordinate the sole capitalist interest. The referred agencies today use to supply manual labour as well as engineers, professionals etc. to meet the capitalist's requirement at a low price. They are casuals, without having job permanency, living at the mercy of their true employers i.e. the principal. These workers are denied of right of association for collective bargaining. The violation of the provisions of minimum wages along with the laws relating ESI, bonus, gratuity, provident fund etc. are the common features in the new form. In addition, work rules such as working hours as per the factories act and other similar laws has become unrestricted practice. No additional pay for the additional work hours is offered. They are kept all the time under the threat of retrenchment. The list of the violation of labour rights and attacks by the employers on the workers is a long one to deal with and getting longer as the neo-liberalisation process as long as continues. The lack of adequate legislative supervision to ensure the adherence of the existing statutes has made the things worse.

The plethora of unemployed work force in the country and the mode of the usage of labour via third party have lead to increase of unorganised

labour force in the organised sector.

The new generation industries, the neo-liberals' favourites as "sunrise industries", powerful with the new technologies have been since their inception more vigorously adopting the strategy of deployment of work force through the same passive route with the help of the said agencies. Even for the direct engagement of very insignificant number, the employment is offered on strictly contractual basis, where no permanency exists along with the other benefits. These contractual appointees along with the others are denied of all sorts of justice. There is hardly any adherence of the labour laws so as to working hours as evidenced by the stretched working hours in all most all the enterprises operating in presently booming IT sectors. The units came into existence as the BPO centres have been operating in shifts. The facts reveal that the employers do not bother to adhere the labour statutes and norms regarding the working time and are flouting conveniently the other stipulation as well. The continuous overworking and unbearable strain of the work compel the workers to quite on their own very soon.

This way, by the massive downsizing the bourgeoisie of the country along with the foreign capital conspired to suppress the organised labour force and to bulldoze the workers' collective

bargaining strength to maximise their interest, through new method of utilisation of labour. They, in combination are consistently putting all sorts of pressures to compel the governments to amend the existing labour laws as well as enact the new sets of statutes to allow more and more concessions to enable them to pitch all sorts of heinous attacks on the toiling mass to fulfil their lust and thirst of profit. Even more, the pro liberalisation block move further to advocate for the casualisation process in the government department and public sector units out of their antagonistic class outlook towards the working class.

The workers in this new scenario have to properly understand the tactic that the capitalist bourgeois have devised to deceit the working class and its impact in proper perspective. In a determined organised manner the working class must come forward to compel the Government to frame adequate machinery to ensure the implementation and adherence of the existing statutes as well as the further legal framework to foil the emerging attacks of the capital.

With the proper understanding the working class have to build the broader unity to evolve the strategy to defend themselves and to defeat the menace of the neo-liberal form of capitalist onslaught.

DATTOPANT THENGADI

We regret to record the sudden demise of Shri Dattopant Thengadi, founder of Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, on 14th October 2004, at Pune. He was 84.

Shri Thengadi was deeply committed to the ideology of the RSS. Despite that he had shown his eagerness to join hand with other trade unions, particularly the CITU, on issues of common concern for the workers.

He courageously mounted a scathing attack on the mad and senseless drive for globalisation and the economic reforms policy measures implemented by his own camp followers in the BJP led NDA government. His objective criticism of the policies that led to job losses and loss of national economic independence and relentless crusade against the WTO regime had contributed to further the united resistance to liberalisation policies by the trade union movement in the country.

Shri Thengadiji was an unassuming personality and would be remembered by everyone who came in contact with him. We convey our condolences to the leaders and cadre of the BMS who have lost the founding father of their organisation.

TRADE UNION CLASSES: A MODEST BEGINNING

KANAI BANERJEE

Though the recently concluded round of interactive trade union classes was not an unalloyed success, it nevertheless marked the beginning of an effort that was long overdue.

The Bhubaneswar Document on organisation laid emphasis on trade union education; since then, there was constant demand for arrangement of classes by the centre, for syllabus, lecture notes and all that. For years, the CITU centre had failed to keep its promise. The 11th conference of CITU, held in Dec 2003 at Chennai, decided to observe BTR Birth Centenary throughout the year 2004 (strictly speaking from 19 Dec 2003 to 19th Dec 2004), and laid as main objective dissemination of the teachings of Com. BTR through classes, seminars, popular lectures and by all other possible means. The CITU secretariat decided to organise three classes for the three regions of the country, namely the south, north and west (Hindi belt) and eastern regions. The classes for the southern region comprising Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra and Karnataka was held at Thiruvananthapuram on 6-8 August; for the Hindi speaking states and Maharashtra and Gujarat was held at Delhi on 11-13 August; the eastern region class was held at Kolkata on 8-10 September, attended by comrades from Orissa, West Bengal, Assam and Tripura. The logistics was taken care of by Kerala (for Thiruvananthapuram, attended by 57 comrades including 7 women) and West Bengal (for Kolkata - 37 comrades, including 4 women) State Committees and the CITU centre (for Delhi - 60 comrades including 9 women).

Classes with Difference

These classes were planned to be somewhat different from the conventional ones. The usual practice is that a "teacher" in his lecture explains the subject and the "students" ask questions seeking clarification of different points. And the teacher then answers those questions clarifying the points. The present round of classes was conceived as interactive sessions. While the facilitator (not a "teacher") was supposed to

introduce the subject, comrades attending would participate in full-fledged discussions.

The subjects chosen were (1) Present day capitalism and Globalisation (2) Revolutionary trade unionism in present day context (3) Communalism and Casteism (4) Organisation and (5) Present situation and our tasks. These are mostly the subjects to which Com. BTR attached great importance. Besides, a session for evaluation of the entire exercise was also planned. The first subject is predominantly theoretical, albeit with important practical implication. The other three subjects, the enormous importance of which is obvious, have been discussed more or less widely in different forums of CITU and elsewhere and urgent tasks in respect of them have been formulated in clear terms. But review of our work exposes serious lag in implementation. One major consideration in choosing these subjects was that in the course of interaction, hopefully, more light would be thrown on the problems of implementation.

The Sessions

In the class for the southern region, M K Pandhe, introduced the subject on present day capitalism, besides presenting the present situation and our task. Kanai Banerjee presented the subjects on revolutionary trade unions and communalism and casteism. K. Hemalata introduced the subject on Organisation. Pandhe also supplemented the presentation on revolutionary trade unionism. In the class for Hindi belt, Tapan Sen, Kanai Banerjee, S Deb Roy and M K Pandhe made presentations. In the eastern region class, Chittabrata Majumdar, Sukomal Sen, Shyamal Chakraborty, Kanai Banerjee and Pandhe presented the subjects.

Expectedly, many comrades participated in the discussions in all the three classes, which was quite lively. Comrades came up with many valuable points on the subjects. Comrades also came up with a lot of constructive criticism. Most of them are undoubtedly valid. It cannot, however, be expected that every criticism made in the

sessions will be equally constructive and will be accepted as valid by every one else. Besides, though the CITU has its own broad line on all the issues, there of course is room for some divergence of views, when it comes to details. Criticism was also some times very sharp. But all this contributed towards making the sessions lively.

Shortcomings

This is the first time that high-level trade union classes have been planned and organised by the CITU Centre. The exercise as a whole had many shortcomings, as correctly pointed out by the participants. The centre itself was conscious about some of the shortcomings and had expressed its regret at the very beginning. Those were not in all cases avoidable but that does not make them condonable either. We note some of them here. In high-level classes, taking up serious subjects, circulation of lecture notes is essential. Notes could not be circulated (only in the eastern region classes, a printed note was circulated for the session on communalism and casteism). This was a common point of criticism justifiably made in all the classes.

Besides, there was deficiency in some of the presentations also. In some classes, the participants found them to be lacking in structural balance, i.e. balance between space devoted to different aspects dealt with, some aspects having been dealt with more elaborately than others which deserved more attention. This is also among valid criticisms. In some cases some important aspects were totally or partially ignored. All the shortcomings, the participants felt correctly, were mainly due to lack of preparations.

The participants had expectation for richer theoretical content and better form of presentation on all subjects, and some participants had candidly expressed their disappointment.

Good Suggestions

The participants put forward several good suggestions - notifying topics well in advance along with the list of reference literature; involvement of experts and academics in preparing notes and even for presentation for subjects like communalism, casteism; provision of sufficient time for each subject allowing time for group discussion also; and inclusion of gender issues.

Conclusion

It was an ambitious programme-this class with the state leadership. Its importance cannot be overemphasised. The lack of preparation, which has considerably detracted from its value, shows that it was not taken with the seriousness it deserved. Although it was the decision that notes would be prepared for finalisation through collective discussion at the centre, this did not materialise. Even there was no collective discussion about form and content of the oral presentation. The centre will have to take proper lessons from the experience of this round of classes so that the shortcomings are removed. Notwithstanding the shortcomings, however, the comrades generally hailed the effort of the centre as a "good beginning" and that is what it actually was. At least some comrades expressed the feeling that they were benefited from the classes. They have rightly emphasised the need for continuing this effort. The centre will have to take care of this. At the same time it will, perhaps, be useful to reiterate in conclusion that in spite of various weaknesses the classes have tried to bring to the fore (1) the question of conscious and planned effort for development of socialist consciousness among workers (2) the urgent need for planning action for fighting against communalism and casteism as day to day work with emphasis on the working class itself as target group (3) the urgency of implementation of the Bhubaneshwar document.

Working Women Convention

CITU is holding a mass convention of working women at the Ram Lila ground in Delhi on the 17th November 2004, which will be followed by a procession from the Ram Lila ground to the Jantar Mantar, near Parliament. The convention will highlight five major demands of working women - equal wages, maternity benefit and crèches for all women workers, law against sexual harassment, comprehensive legislation for home based workers and halt the move to lift the ban on night work.

There will also be a two-day workshop for the activists of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women on 18-19 November 2004. or women.

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Jammu Railway Project

CONSTRUCTION WORKERS CONTINUE STRIKE

The Construction workers of Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramullah Railway project have been continuing their strike action since 2nd August braving barbaric atrocities by police-gangster combine. The main contractor of the Project is M/s IRCON, which in turn subcontracted the construction of railway track, bridges and tunnels in the hilly region to Hindustan Construction Corporation (HCC). The entire workforce engaged by HCC was organised under USB Rail Project Workers' Union (CITU) and they have been on strike since last 70 days. The main demands of the workers are implementation of the labour laws in respect of minimum wages at different levels of skill, social security benefits, safety etc. Despite barbaric onslaughts by the local police in connivance with the armed gangsters deployed by the employer, the strike was continuing total. On 10th September 2004 police opened fire on the peaceful

dharna of the striking workers at the construction site at Banihal at which one worker leader, Mohd Hanif died on the spot and two were seriously injured. At least forty others were injured by lathi-charge. On 11th September, entire Banihal observed Bandh in protest. Since then, the local police have been hounding after the striking workmen at the insistence of the Employer. The striking workers have been driven away from the workplace and the Jammu Police have been working as Security Guard of HCC. 13 workers leaders have been arrested and brutally being tortured in police custody. Against 38 more, arrest warrants have been issued and those leaders have been leading the strike from underground. The HCC has been trying to bring workers from outside and to start work but they failed to do so as yet. On 18th October 2004, one battalion Army was deployed to serve the law-

offending contractor and to hunt the striking workers.

Basudeb Acharya, MP visited the Banihal immediately after the firing incident and insisted the Railway Authority to compel their contractor to abide by labour laws and settle the disputes with the Union. But no action has been taken so far. The Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir has been requested not to allow its police to behave as security guards of the contractor and restrain from repressive activities and also to compel the contractor to implement labour laws. But nothing has happened as yet and strike is continuing. Meantime CITU secretariat called upon all its affiliated units and state committees to hold solidarity actions in support of the struggling workers. The J&K state Committee of CITU has also been planning to hold solidarity strikes in other projects in the State.

All India Beedi Workers Federation

MANGALORE GEARING UP TO HOST CONFERENCE

The coastal city of Mangalore is in a festive mood. The city is all set to host the 4th all India conference of All India Beedi Workers Federation (AIBWF), which is going to be held from November 2 to 4, 2004. The city

is wearing a festive look with every public wall painted with the message of the ensuing conference. The city is decorated with banners and flags. The enthusiasm of the beedi workers, the overwhelming majority of

whom are women, is visible everywhere.

The Reception Committee, formed under the chairmanship of K Jayaprakash Hegde, MLA, is making all arrangement for the successful conduct of the

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conference. The venue of the conference is named after P Ramachandra Rao Nagar, Taj Mahal multipurpose Hall, which is situated in the suburb of Mangalore.

A seminar on "Challenges of Communalism and Imperialism in India today" will be held as part of the conference. Prakash Karat, PB Member, CPI (M) will deliver the keynote address in the seminar, which will be participated by Chittabrata Majumdar, MP, General Secretary, CITU, Dr P L Dharma, Chairman, Deptt of Political Science, Mangalore University, among others.

Mangalore has a glorious history of beedi workers' struggles. Women had played a great role in this saga of struggles. The first trade union of beedi workers was formed under the leadership of late Smt Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, a great freedom fighter, way back in 1934. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, hailing from a rich

family of Mangalore was a leader of the Congress Socialist Party. She started organizing the beedi workers and other sections of the working class in order to attract them to the freedom movement. Consequently the beedi workers of Mangalore in those years actively involved themselves in the freedom movement. At that time there were only male workers in beedi industry. But after independence, when the government arrested and detained a large number of trade union leaders in 1948, the beedi manufacturers took advantage of the situation, closed beedi factories and started the system of home-based work. This changed situation and helped the women to take up the work of beedi rolling at their homes. At present, more than 95% of beedi workers are women. The women beedi workers of Dakshina Kannada district of which Mangalore is the headquarters, fought many glorious struggles braving attacks by

goondas and the police.

This conference being held at a time when the problems of the beedi workers are aggravating. There is no national minimum wage for the beedi workers. Taking advantage of the absence of a national minimum wage, the manufacturers are threatening to shift their production activities to states where the wages are very low. Lakhs of workers are denied statutory benefits and are compelled to work for miserably low wages. They are provided only 2 days work in a week, with the result they practically starve for major part of the week.

Mangalore with its history of anti-imperialist struggles and the tradition of working class struggles is all set to welcome the delegates and leaders to the all India conference. Hundreds of cadres, mostly women are enthusiastically working for the successful conduct of the conference.

Kolkata

NPMO DEMANDS REVERSAL OF ECONOMIC POLICY

Kolkata, 1st October 2004, the city witnessed a massive rally of the workers-employees-peasants-students-youth-women and people from various other mass organisations under the banner of National Platform of Mass Organisations (NPMO). Several thousands of people from 52 mass organisations converged at Rani-

Rasmoni Road to raise voice demanding reversal of the economic policy regime of Govt of India to ensure expeditious implementation of the pro-people commitments of the UPA Govt as made in their Common Minimum Programme (CMP). The rally also called upon the people to unitedly resist the anti-people moves like

hike in FDI cap in Telecom, civil aviation and insurance.

The rally of 1st October was preceded by month long statewide campaign by NPMO on the issues facing the working class and common people in the country and the related demands. The 1st October rally was conducted by a presidium comprising of Shyamal

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Chakraborty, Sujit Roy, Shyamali Gupta, Sudip Goswami, Shefali Bhattacharya, Khama Bhattacharya, Shafikul Islam, K D Ghosh, Bharati Roy and Haripada Biswas representing different trade unions and mass organisations. 22 point Charter of demands formulated by NPMO has been placed and explained by

Shyamal Chakraborty, President, WB State CITU. The rally was addressed by Kali Ghosh, General Secretary, WB State CITU, Ranjit Guha (AITUC) and also by Samar Baora, All India Kisan Sabha, Saral Deb (TUCC), Sankar Saha (UTUC-LS), Ashok Ghosh (UTUC), Lalta Prasad Asthana (HMS), Prabodh Panda, Geeta

Sengupta, Chunilal Dasgupta etc. Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, Chief Minister, West Bengal, while addressing the rally expressed his support to the 22 point demands of NPMO and assured that the Left Front Govt in the state which was born through the process of struggles of the toiling people will continue to stand by their struggle.

Visakhapatnam

STEEL WORKERS' CONFERENCE

The Fifth Conference of Steel Plant Employees Union (CITU) was held on 11-12 September 2004 at the Steel Township at Ukkunagaram, Visakhapatnam. The venue of the Conference was named as Nanduri Prasad Rao Nagar, after the name of the veteran freedom fighter and CITU leader and the Conference hall was named as Rongali Bairagi Naidu Pranganam after the name of a veteran freedom fighter and also a fighter against privatization.

700 delegates, all from the workers of Vizag steel plant attended the conference. The Conference began with the inaugural speech of Ardhendu Dakshi, Secretary CITU and President Steel Workers' Federation of India and

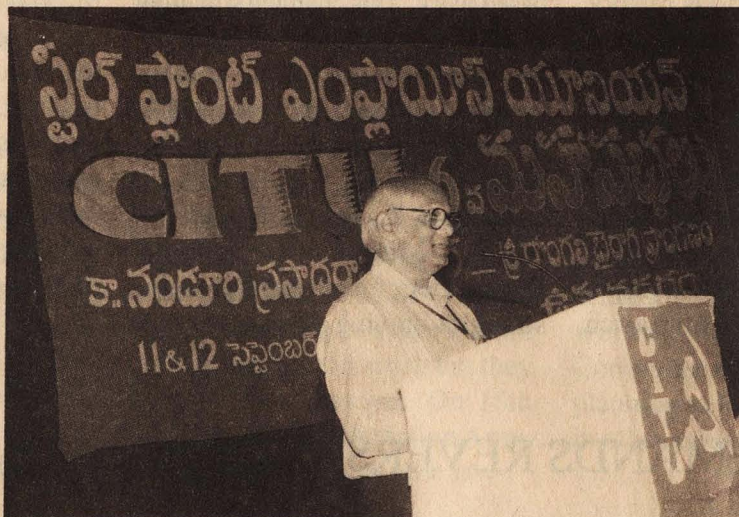
thereafter the address by C H Narasingh Rao, President of AP

surging struggle in the country as well, which is also having its impact

on the political developments of the country. The struggle must continue and broaden its horizon, Dakshi asserted. Narasingha Rao reminded the conference of the struggles against privatization in Vizag and stressed upon the need to carry on the united struggle and involve the mass

of the people in the same.

N Rama Rao, General Secretary of the Union, placed the Report of activities and future tasks in the conference. The report dealt on in details the activities of the union since last conference, problems faced and shortcoming identified and also outlined the future movemental and organizational



state CITU. Dakshi spoke about the crisis in the world economy in the era of neoliberal globalisation and its impact on the Indian industry and the working people with particular reference of steel industry. He also pointed to the developing struggles against globalisation and imperialism throughout the world and also

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task. 35 delegates took part in deliberation on the Report, which made important observations about the weaknesses, along with concrete valuable suggestions to improve upon.

The Conference also stressed upon the need for expansion and modernization of Vizag Steel Plant and called upon the workers to raise voice for more investment for

that purpose within the public sector framework. The conference also called for urgent steps by the management to fill up all the vacancies. The conference adopted various resolutions pertaining to crucial demands of the workers.

The conference unanimously elected the new leadership with C H Narasingha Rao as Hon

President, V Dhana Raju as President, N Rama Rao as General Secretary. On this occasion a seminar was held on "Public sector Politics" which was addressed by Dr K Nageswar Rao, Hon Editor of 'Political Analysis' besides CH Narasingha Rao, A Dakshi and K K Rao, Director (Operation), RINL.

Tamilnadu

MOVEMENT AGAINST TUTICORIN PORT PRIVATISATION

CITU has long been agitating against the privatisation move in Tuticorin port. The management despite protest through militant demonstration by the workers, the management sent the proposal to ministry for privatization of the berth no 8 to convert the same into a container terminal to be built and operated by Multinational

Company.

The movement is going on. Tuticorin Port Democratic Staff Union (CITU) adopted a phased programme of movement in a mass rally organised at the old harbour gate, which was inaugurated by veteran freedom fighter N Sankaraiah. A huge procession of thousand workers in

motorcycles criss-crossed the Tuticorin town and again converged into a mass rally in front of Ambedkar Statue. It was decided to unleash a mass signature campaign among the people against the privatisation move and hold a demonstration before parliament during the winter session.

ANGANWADI WORKERS LAUNCH SIGNATURE CAMPAIGN

It was around two years since the 4th Conference of the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers was held in Puri. The working committee of AIFAWH decided to conduct a mid term review of the implementation of the decisions of the conference. Accordingly, an extended working committee meeting was held in Thiruvananthapuram on 23- 25

August 2004, in which 69 members and invitees from 15 states (Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Pondicherry, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal) participated. The President of the Federation Neelima Maitra presided over the meeting.

The meeting was divided into four sessions, which discussed four important decisions of the conference - formation, strengthening and functioning of the Centres, democratic functioning, cadre development and strengthening the relationship with the beneficiaries and the people in the area. A brief presentation by the General Secretary of the Federation on

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each issue was followed by state wise group discussions, reporting by the groups, and concluding remarks by the General Secretary. The review meeting noted that most of the state committees made efforts to develop team functioning at the state level. The functioning of the state, district and project committees have improved in several states. The local committees' intervention to solve the local problems of the anganwadi employees has increased in all the states. In many states, the union leaders were also helping in organising some other sections of the workers and toiling people like community health workers, ICDS supervisors etc and participating in the campaigns of CITU, of the organisations of

women, agricultural workers etc. While noting these with satisfaction, the working committee decided that these efforts should be strengthened further. It was also decided that similar review meetings should be organised by all the State committees.

On the 25th September the working committee discussed the draft note on 'regularisation of ICDS' and unanimously adopted it. The working committee noted that ICDS, which was started experimentally in 1975, has proved its effectiveness and utility in reducing the Infant Mortality Rate and school drop out rate and in increasing immunisation and school enrolment levels. Now it was time to institutionalise the scheme by

converting it into a regular department of the Human Resources Development Department of the Government of India and the service named 'Integrated Women and Child Development Services'. The working committee proposed that the anganwadi centres should be open for the entire day providing crèche services for the children of the rural women workers, like the agriculture workers. The working committee decided to popularise the demand for regularisation of the ICDS among the anganwadi employees as well as the beneficiaries and the common people in general and collect 2 crores signatures in support of this demand on the memorandum to be submitted to the HRD Minister.

Karnataka

ANGANWADI WORKERS' SUCCESSFUL STRUGGLE

The united struggle by the Anganwadi employees in Karnataka compelled the State Government to revert its orders on handing over of the anganwadi centres to the Gram Panchayats. The anganwadi workers and helpers, lead by the CITU affiliated Karnataka Rajya Anganwadi Noukarara Sangha, played the leading role in the struggle against the state government's decision to hand over the anganwadi centres to the Gram Panchayats. The previous Congress government lead by S M Krishna had appointed a task force on rural

development. This task force parroted the World Bank's dictations as its recommendations. As part of imperialist driven globalisation, the report of the task force recommended withdrawal of the state from the responsibility of administration and supervision of the departments of the government and conveniently handover these jobs to village Panchayats as a first step. In this background, a meeting of the presidents of gram Panchayats was organised at a place called Belur on 23rd January 2004. A resolution was adopted in this meeting which called for the

implementation of the recommendations of the task force and termed it as the 'Belur Declaration'.

The present Congress Janata Dal (S) government came to power in the elections in May 2004. Though there is a change of government there is no change in policies. The present coalition government issued a circular on 24th May 2004, making two changes in the administration of the anganwadi centres in the State. It states that the anganwadi employees have to obtain attendance certificates from the village Panchayat every month,

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on the basis of which they would be paid their monthly honorarium. It also states that the anganwadi employees could avail their 20 days' annual leave only with the sanction of the village Panchayat. This circular has created a severe sense of panic in the minds of the workers and helpers all over the state. The Karnataka Rajya Anganwadi Noukarara Sangha immediately took up the cause of the employees and called for a state wide protest in front of Zilla Panchayats and Taluk Centres. This call of struggle electrified the workers who were already suffering because of the interference and oppression of vested interests of rural society in their day to day functioning. This circular was perceived as another blow to the anganwadi employees who were already being harassed by the officers of various departments and the local politicians of various hues.

The continuous and consistent struggle launched by the union forced the Chief Minister Dharam Singh to hold discussions with the representatives of the unions on this issue. The CPI (M) MLA, Sreeramareddy also raised the issue in the assembly. The government tried to pressurise the

unions to sign an agreement with eye washing protective measures, which all the unions except one small union have rejected. Government tried to impose this agreement but had to step back because of the firm opposition from the CITU affiliated union. The union continued to campaign among the anganwadi employees and around 9,000 anganwadi employees participated in the state level rally organised by the state committee of CITU, which included the demand of withdrawal of the circular in its charter of demands. A continuous dharna was organised in Bangalore by the union from the 3rd September to 14th September. Around 500 anganwadi employees from different districts participated in the dharna on each day. The union also took initiative to bring together all the others unions working among the anganwadi employees. A state level joint convention was organised in the first week of September and resolved to go on a one-day strike on 15th September. It also decided to stop submitting the Monthly Progress Reports (MPR) to the department. The call was successfully implemented in all the districts. The unions also decided to boycott the

Pulse Polio programme of the government on 10th of October, in which anganwadi employees play an important role. There was severe pressure on the workers to submit MPRs, payment of their honorarium was withheld and there was mounting pressure to participate in the Pulse Polio programme. In certain places the authorities started harassing the workers in a manner worse than any private capitalist owner.

In spite of this mounting pressure and harassment workers and helpers stood firmly and fought back the officers. The CITU affiliated union planned to intensify the struggle with a wider participation of the anganwadi employees.

Finally, the Director, Department of Women and Child Development called a meeting on 5th October and announced that the government would modify the earlier circular and withdraw the 2 basic anti workers provisions in it. The Union congratulated the thousands of anganwadi employees in the state who fought heroically to affect the reversal of the stand by the government and appealed to them to strengthen the union further.

Tamil Nadu

LIC WORKING WOMEN CONVENTION

The third Tamil Nadu state convention of working women in the LIC was held in Salem on

the 2nd October 2004. More than 700 women working in the eight divisions of LIC in Tamil Nadu

converged at Salem in a show of strength and spirit.

A cultural programme organised

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by the women's sub committee of the ICEU, Salem division involving women employees and the children of employees provided a precursor to the convention. Thirty five women and 12 children rendered songs, dramas, dance, fancy dress etc. The events depicted the continuing discrimination and violence against women in the society and also the role of LIC vis a vis the role of private insurance companies. This programme received wide appreciation of all the participants. Chitra Sampath, Chairperson of the Reception Committee, welcomed the delegates and Balabharathi MLA inaugurated the convention. M Girija, Joint Convener, LIC Working Women's Coordination Committee, South Zone, placed the report for discussion. Eight women representing the divisions in Tamil Nadu participated in the discussion. They focused on the unequal status of women in society, the danger of the communal forces, the impact of their regressive ideology on women and the need to continue the fight

against such forces, notwithstanding their defeat in the recent elections. The benefits and the rights secured through struggles under the leadership of the All India Insurance Employees' Association and the importance of further strengthening the organisation was also discussed in the meeting. The specific problems faced by women LIC employees in the wake of modernisation of the branches like the illogical lay out specifications and seating arrangements, and the need for women employees to take more active role in the activities of the union were emphasised by the speakers. R Govindarajan, working committee member of the AIIEA, C Ravindranathan, president, SZIEF, Santhanam, Joint secretary, SZIEF greeted the convention. D Dharanipathy, General Secretary, SZIEF, summed up the discussion. A Unnamalai, Joint convener, ICEU women's sub committee proposed a vote of thanks. The convention adopted several resolutions including one that demanded providing crèche facilities in all LIC offices, working

women's hostels in all major centres, new recruitment including women in class IV cadre, wage revision, against FDI hike in insurance, for abolition of service tax on insurance premia, restoration of the ban on night shift work for women, provision of social security and job security for unorganised sector workers, etc. A special programme was organised by the Tamil Nadu Science Forum, Salem chapter, to entertain the children of the women delegates participating in the convention. More than 130 children took active part in this programme where the children were treated to magic show, scientific games, songs, and were also taught the art or Origami. This special arrangement for the children was highly appreciated by the women as this enabled them to concentrate on the deliberations in the convention. The convention generated great enthusiasm among the women employees who showed excellent organising skills and commitment to the organisation.

Bihar

TRANSPORT WORKERS DEMONSTRATE

The road transport workers in Bihar held a mighty demonstration and rally on 21st September 2004 at Patna to demand immediate implementation of the National Transport Policy

to ensure devising proper welfare and social security measures for road transport workers and putting brake on police atrocities on them. Several thousands road transport workers from different part of the

State assembled at Gandhi Maidan at Patna and took out a huge procession through main thoroughfare of the city via Dak-bangla chouraha, income-tax-chouraha and converged at Hartali

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Chowk in to a massive rally. The programme was organized in response to a call given by All India Road Transport Workers' Federation. The rally was

addressed by Chandi Prasad, Arun Mishra, both President and General Secretary of Bihar State CITU, and also Ganesh Shankar Singha and Raj Kumar Jha of

Bihar State Road Transport Workers Federation. From the rally, a memorandum was submitted to the Transport Commissioner of the State.

To Review the Electricity Act 2003

ELECTRICITY WORKERS PREPARE FOR STRUGGLE

The All India Joint Convention of the Electricity Workers of the country was held under the banner of National Co-ordination Committee of Electricity Workers and Engineers on 14th October 2004 at Hindi Bhavan, New Delhi. The Coordination Committee is comprised of all the major trade unions in the Electricity sector. The convention dealt on the negative impact of the Electricity Act 2003 on the industry, its workers and the consumers and stressed upon the need for countrywide united struggle to bring about much required changes in the said retrograde Act so far as its negative consequences are concerned.

The Convention was presided over by E Balanandan, President of Electricity Employees Federation of India (EEFI-CITU). Among those who addressed the convention were A B Bardhan, Vice President, AITUC, H N Sharma (Diploma Engineers Association), B S Meel, General Secretary, EEFI, Saledra Dubey (AIPEF) and C P Singh (AIFEE) besides others.

The convention noted that consequent upon political changes after the 14th Lok Sabha election, the UPA Govt had to admit in its Common Minimum Programme (CMP) the necessity of reviewing the Electricity Act 2003. But such review or change will not come

about automatically. The Trade Union movement in the Electricity sector have to seize the opportunity and build up strong countrywide united movement involving the mass of the people to ensure pro-people changes in the Electricity Act 2003 and save this most important public utility industry from disaster.

With this objective, the Convention adopted a programme of countrywide intensive mass awakening campaign on the disastrous impact of the Electricity Act 2003 from 16th November to 30th November 2004 and a massive march to Parliament by the Electricity workers on 10th December 2004.

BEEDI WORKERS STATE-LEVEL DHARNA

Patna, September 23 2004, thousands of Beedi workers from different districts like Jamui, Begusarai, Bihar Sharif and others staged a dharna at the capital demanding implementation of the statute on Minimum wages, issuance of identity cards, social security measures etc for the beedi

workers. The dharna also demanded strong action by the Govt against the attack on the beedi workers by the employers in connivance with the local police. The participation of women workers from all over the state in the dharna was notable.

Chandi Prasad, Arun Mishra, L N

Chakraborty Sibsankar Singh, Laxmi Devi and other leaders of CITU and Beedi workers Union addressed the dharna. From the rally, a delegation met the Labour Minister and submitted memorandum.

REPORTS & EVENTS

DIVESTMENT MOVE IN BSNL OPPOSED

The BSNL employees' movement has expressed strong opposition to the divestment move in the public sector telecom industry in an unscrupulous manner. The BSNL Employees Union in a statement issued on 9th October 2004 recorded their firm opposition to the proposal being mooted to merge BSNL into MTNL and thereby open the route for disinvestments in BSNL. In MTNL already a substantial

portion of share has been disinvested whereas BSNL has just been formed recently by corporatising the telecom dept. in which hundred per cent equity is still with the Govt. To start with, the Govt is now planning to divest 5% share of BSNL in the process of its merger with MTNL.

The statement pointed out that despite anti-BSNL decisions by TRAI and the Govt, BSNL has been able to maintain its financial

viability although the Govt has not yet reimbursed Rs 11000 crore to BSNL for providing village connections. The ongoing divestment move will further weaken BSNL to the advantage of its private sector competitors. The best and logical way is to merge MTNL into BSNL after buying back MTNL shares from the market and the Union has demanded to resort to that route in national interest.

NABARD EMPLOYEES' STRIKE ON OCTOBER 5

More than 5000 employees and officers of NABARD have gone in for total strike on October 5, 2004 at the call of All India NABARD Employees Association (AINBEA) and NABARD Officers Association (NOA). Strike was total throughout the country. The main demand of the striking officers and employees were maintenance of Development Financial Institutions status for NABARD within PSU

framework without diluting its shareholding pattern of RBI and GOI, flow of concessionary funds to NABARD from RBI/GOI to facilitate agricultural credit flow to village economy, and parity in pay-scales and other service conditions of the employees and officers with Reserve Bank of India.

The one-day strike on 5th October 2004 was a culmination of first phase of struggle of the concerned employees/officers, which

commenced with campaigns, agitation, dharna etc. The joint statement issued by the Employees' and Officers' Association declared that if the Govt of India does not respond positively to the just demands, the struggle will be further heightened and they have already planning for two days' strike action preceded by March to Parliament during the Winter Session of Parliament

Uttar Pradesh

POLICE FIRING IN FEROZABAD: PROTEST DAY OBSERVED

Lucknow: Police brutally lathicharged and then opened firing on thousands of glass-bangle-workers in Ferozabad on Oct' 5, 2004 when they were staging dharna demanding

implementation of labour laws. More than a dozen Workers injured, some them were wounded seriously. The incident of lathi-charge, throwing teargas shells on the workers and firing continued

on second day also. Police arrested workers and their leaders also. Daulat Ram, the General Secretary, State Committee of CITU, Uttar Pradesh, while giving this information told that the

REPORTS & EVENTS

repression of workers going on. The Police and para-military forces perpetuating barbarous acts against innocent workers in connivance with the owners of glass-bangle industrial units. District administration has created curfew like situation in the city of Ferozabad. The police force along with the hired goons of the employers have been carrying on regular raids in the workers' colony and ransacked their houses more than once to create a reign of terror in the entire area. The struggle by the workers is

going on combating such terrorizing tactics of the administration-employer combine. On 6th October 2004, a huge demonstration of workers blockaded railway traffic for several hours. A massive demonstration of several thousand workers was held on 11th October at Ferozabad defying prohibitory orders. Earlier, on October 8, 2004, a delegation of CITU led by Jibon Roy M. P. visited the areas affected by the violence. The members of the delegation went to hospitals, they met injured

workers; later while addressing a workers' rally on the same day, Jibon Roy demanded immediate removal of the District head of the police dept. owing to his complicity with the employers.

More than 2 lakh workers working in glass-bangle Industry in Ferozabad have long been fighting for just implementation of the labour laws in respect of minimum wages, social security benefits, working hours etc. CITU took initiative to organize their struggle. And the struggle is continuing braving brutal police atrocities.

DELHI

SHIFTING OF SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES OPPOSED

Delhi, 12th October 2004, a massive demonstration of workers and also some owners of the small scale industrial units opposed the sweeping order of the Delhi Govt for shifting and/or closing down the several thousands small scale industrial establishments in so called non-conforming areas in Delhi in line with Delhi Master Plan. The Delhi

Govt took the step pursuant to High Court Order without giving any cognisance to the livelihood of around 2 lakh workers working in those establishments. The demonstration was held in Rajghat, which blocked the ring road for hours.

CITU played crucial role in mobilizing several thousands of workers in the demonstration.

CITU demanded amendment of the Delhi Master Plan through an Ordinance within a definite time frame failing which the agitation would be further escalated. Besides the CITU leadership, CPI (M) Politbureau member Sitaram Yechury, CPI leader D Raja and former Prime minister V P Singh also addressed the rally.

ONE-HOUR STRIKE BY INSURANCE EMPLOYEES

At the call of All India Insurance Employees Association (AIIEA), the employees of the insurance sector took part en-masse in the one-hour walkout programme on 7th October 2004 throughout the country. The wage revision of the

employees and fresh recruitment in the insurance sector were the main demands. The one-hour walk-out action was the beginning of a long-drawn struggle, the insurance employees have been preparing for to press for the just demands and also to give the Govt

the message on the readiness of the insurance employees resist any move to dilute the PSU status of the insurance sector and allow more FDI. The AIIEA leadership congratulated the insurance employees for their magnificent response to the strike call.

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

State	Sr. No.	Centre	Month		State	Sr. No.	Centre	Month	
			July.' 04	Aug.' 04				July.' 04	Aug.' 04
Andhra Pradesh	1	Gudur	489	491	Maharashtra	38	Mumbai	606	610
	2	Guntur	512	512		39	Nagpur	531	539
	3	Hyderabad	514	518		40	Nasik	558	560
	4	Visakhapatnam	502	505		41	Pune	577	583
	5	Warangal	541	536		42	Solapur	527	532
Assam	6	D.D.Tinsukia	428	432	Orissa	43	Barbil	453	457
	7	Guwahati	526	529		44	Rourkela	455	464
	8	Labac-Silchar	417	414	Punjab	45	Amritsar	455	461
	9	Mariani-Jorhat	438	442		46	Ludhiana	473	474
	10	Rangapara-Tezpur	435	439	Rajasthan	47	Ajmer	516	528
Bihar	11	Monghyr	484	485		48	Jaipur	468	478
Chhattisgarh	12	Bhillai	466	465	Tamil Nadu	49	Chennai	555	558
Gujarat	13	Ahmedabad	507	524		50	Coimbatore	496	496
	14	Bhavnagar	528	556		51	Coonoor	499	502
	15	Rajkot	470	479		52	Madurai	502	502
	16	Surat	493	512		53	Salem	487	490
	17	Vadodra	484	499		54	Tiruchirapall	554	544
Haryana	18	Faridabad	536	547	Uttar Pradesh	55	Agra	486	494
	19	Yamunanagar	490	503		56	Ghaziabad	526	528
J & K	20	Srinagar	601	597		57	Kanpur	490	496
Jharkhand	21	Jamshedpur	485	484		58	Saharanpur	466	485
	22	Jharia	415	420		59	Varanasi	544	546
	23	Kodarma	419	426	West Bengal	60	Asansol	493	494
	24	Noamundi	456	461		61	Darjeeling	433	440
	25	Ranchi-Hatia	474	473		62	Durgapur	583	586
Karnataka	26	Bangalore	501	508		63	Haldia	610	613
	27	Belgaum	572	570		64	Howrah	597	593
	28	Hubli-Dharwar	529	530		65	Jalpaiguri	442	447
	29	Mercara	494	497		66	Kolkata	562	567
Kerala	30	Alwaye	520	519		67	Raniganj	451	454
	31	Mundakayam	502	502	Chandigarh	68	Chandigarh	568	576
	32	Quilon	529	530	Delhi	69	Delhi	609	617
	33	Thiruvananthapuram	579	568	Pondicherry	70	Pondicherry	558	555
Madhya Pradesh	34	Balaghat	465	468					
	35	Bhopal	535	545					
	36	Indore	525	530					
	37	Jabalpur	519	524					
								ALL-INDIA	517 522

Additional Series of Labour Bureau

State	Centre	July 2004	August 2004
Andhra Pradesh	Kethgudem	518	522
Himachal Pradesh	Himachal Pradesh	491	496
Rajasthan	Bhilwara	508	512
Madhya Pradesh	Chhindwara	462	471
Tripura	Tripura	459	460
Goa	Goa	618	619

WHY TO SCRAP PRESS NOTE 18? IN WHO'S INTEREST?

The Govt of India, it is learnt, has been actively considering scrapping of the provisions of Press Note 18. The Press Note 18 is a regulatory provision on the foreign partner of any Joint Venture Company in India introduced in 1994. This provision requires the foreign company, which is a partner in a joint-venture company in India to obtain consent from his Indian partner if it wants to go for a wholly owned venture/company in India on the same/similar fields of business/product.

The rationale behind the provision of press note 18 was quite clear and fair too. The Joint venture between an Indian Company and a foreign one usually comes into being where the foreign partner provides technology and resources and the Indian partner manages manufacturing and marketing in domestic market. In that event, if the foreign partner opens a wholly owned company on the same/similar line of product/business in India, it is destined to come into conflict with the business interest of the joint venture company with Indian partner and given the natural bias of the foreign partner of the joint venture company towards its wholly owned company in Indian soil, the fate of the joint venture company with Indian partner is destined to be endangered seriously.

As such, in such a situation ideally, the foreign partner of the joint venture company should not be allowed at all to go for any wholly owned company of the same/similar product or business in Indian soil. But Indian policy makers could not become so harsh to the foreign investors and kept minimum regulatory provision requiring consent of their Indian partner as provided in press note 18. And the said regulatory provision was further diluted in favour of the foreign investors in 2000 and 2001 whereby the information technology sector and pure financial investors (that is, investment without technology transfer or trademark arrangement like investment funds etc) have been exempted from this regulatory provision of press note 18. And despite existence of such regulatory provision, the foreign companies in joint venture in India could very well manage to establish its wholly owned company in the same

product line. The wholly owned two-wheeler producing unit by Honda in Guragaon besides there being Hero-Honda located in the same town is the example.

But despite that, the Govt of India has been contemplating to scrap the press note 18 altogether, to give the foreign partners in Indian joint venture companies a free hand to ditch their Indian partners in the joint venture companies and turn the latter sick facilitating easy and cheaper take-over of the JV by the foreign company. The Indian policy makers argue that scrapping of press note 18 is required to allure more FDI. That does not stand the test of rationality: rather it reflects a slavish mindset.

FDI led Joint venture is being clamoured by Indian policy makers basically on two counts, resources and technology transfer, later one being more important. That led to showering of liberal concessions to foreign investors including allowing 100 per cent foreign ownership in almost all kinds of manufacturing barring few exceptions. Despite that the FDI flow in India continued to be lukewarm and insignificant, never crossing merely 2.5% of the Gross Domestic Savings. Hence resource providing efficacy or more appropriately inefficacy of FDI stands thoroughly exposed. Technology still remains the more important factor in the FDI led joint ventures. In the event the foreign partners in Indian joint ventures are allowed to open their wholly owned shops of the same product through automatic route without any hurdles, by way of scrapping of press note 18, the joint venture companies are destined to suffer technology-obsolescence and make way for either closure/sick or easy take-over by the foreign partner.

The Trade union movement denounced such move by the Govt of India. CITU demanded that the Govt of India must refrain from such disastrous move utterly detrimental to the interest of the domestic industries. Unfortunately, the domestic industry lobby is not vociferous enough in opposing such a move.

B T R CENTENARY

THE GREAT OCTOBER SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

The historic victory of the working class of Russia opened a new page in world history leading to transformatory changes in the world political scene during the last seven decades...

The October revolution founded the first successful proletarian state, the dictatorship of the proletariat, which was an indispensable condition for the building and flowering of socialism in the Soviet Union. The successful building of socialism in the Soviet Union, then a backward country, was a great achievement of the working class and the proletarian state. These and successive achievements were made possible because the working class and the state were guided by the scientific doctrine of Marxism-Leninism and by a party wedded to it...

The foundation of the working class state, the defeat of capitalist landlord class in Russia sent waves of revolutionary upheavals all over the world. They inspired the revolutionary fighters in India and led to the formation of communist groups in the country. The successful building of socialism inspired millions in the fight against national enslavement, in their fight for democracy and socialism. The foreign policy of the working class state based on Lenin's decree of peace, which called for peace among nations, abjuring of war annexations and enslavement of countries by others became a powerful factor in linking the national struggles with the progress of the Soviet Union...

The great victory of the Soviet working class and the Soviet people in the anti-fascist war changed the face of the world, with the banner of socialism now waving over one third of the world, causing the collapse of the old colonial order and facilitating the achievements of independence by India and many other colonial dependent countries...

India in particular has been greatly benefited by large-scale Soviet aid supplemented by aid from other socialist countries. India's public sector industries, strategic industries in public sector, have been mostly built with Soviet help and aid from other socialist countries. Without it India would have found it impossible to gear its economy and protect its freedom.

The Indo-Soviet treaty of friendship and co-operation embodies the growing friendship between the two countries, ensures, India's security and contributes to the maintenance of peace in the sub-continent which the USA threatens to disturb with its pouring in of sophisticated arms into Pakistan. The Indo-Soviet treaty reveals the will and capacity of the Soviet Union to protect peace and freedom of other states...

While the US imperialists are interfering in many countries to bring them under their control, while they are planning their designs and conspiracies against newly liberated countries and often resorting to open aggression to secure their global objectives, the Soviet intervention in world affairs has been to protect freedom and independence of nations. Whether at the UNO or outside whether it is Arab nations, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Kampuchea, Mozambique or Angola, the voice of the Soviet Union has always been raised in defence of freedom and against aggression...

The barbaric character of the imperialist system stands completely exposed and the humanist character of socialist system manifests before the eyes of all...

(The Working Class, Vol.17, No.3 November 1987)