

17th November, 1970

B.T. Ranadive, President of the C.I.T.U. has issued the following statement:

The CITU denounces the proposed West Bengal Public Order Bill as monstrous legislation which treads underfoot every known principle of democracy and makes farce of every declared right in the Constitution. The citizens' inviolability, his security, his very life is now placed at the mercy of the trigger-happy policemen who are virtually assured that the more they shoot to kill, the more efficient they will be considered. Never before perhaps in the past such wide powers, repugnant to all democratic concepts were claimed by the Government in this country. The usual excuse of national security against foreign invasion is also not available in the present situation.

The powers that are claimed are far more sweeping than under the notorious Defence of India Act which the Government used as the Defence of the Congress Act. The policemen can shoot you at sight and trot out the excuse that you were indulging in looting; they can arrest any one and the judges are told to refuse bail if the police oppose; a new principle of jurisprudence is being introduced, the judges are to decide whether a person is guilty or not, before any evidence is led, before granting the bail; the police are empowered to enter any house or premise at their discretion and play havoc with the people - terrorise and intimidate them. No magistrates and officers will be required under the Bill to direct lathi-charges, open fire and disperse any meeting or a ssembly of the people. The head constables are given these powers to usher in Indira Gandhi's Socialist raj.

All these monstrous powers are claimed under the excuse of restricting their use to fight the Naxalites violence. The fig leaf of the definition of a subversive act, which is described as one directed towards collection of arms will not deceive any one. It does not in the least mean that the Bill will not be used against the democratic movement now gathering momentum in West Bengal.

As a matter of fact, behind the facade of fighting the Naxalite Extremists, the police and the Government are forging a new instrument to attack the mass movements. The CITU in its resolutions had warned that the Naxalite violence will be used to suppress the class movement of the toilers the trade union and the kisan movement in particular. This is what is being done through the new Bill. The provisions of the Bill empowering the police to shoot at sight will be used to shoot at workers, peasants and student demonstrations, with the allegation that they were indulging in looting.

It is not accidental that the measure is being put on the statute book when the workers of Bengal are preparing for big mass battles to defend their rights. The jute workers have declared to strike from 7th December in support of their demands; the coal miners have also announced their intention to wage a similar strike.

It is further not accidental that it is being put on the statute book on the eve of the harvesting season in West Bengal. In the rural areas of West Bengal, the police, the jotedars and their goondas have been preparing for a swoop on the peasants' harvests on occupied land and the new Bill is their common weapon to shoot down and suppress the peasantry.

The efforts of the West Bengal and Central Governments to enact the Preventive Detention Act have been hitherto foiled by the united opposition of the democratic forces. Now the Government has brought forward a Bill which is far more suppressive, draconian and tyrannical than the P.D. Act. The Government is emboldened by the treacherous utterances of leaders like Shri Ajoy Mukherjee and others like those of the Right C.P. who sought to screen the

game of the Government all these days.

The CITU believes that even now this attack can be defeated by the united opposition of all democratic parties. It calls upon all these parties to oppose the Bill unitedly in the Consultative Committee and join with the mass organisations in organising a common fight against the measure. The CITU hopes that the leaders of the AITUC will not side with the Government by remaining neutral as they did on the issue of the censure motion in relation to the stabbing attack on Mrs. K.G. Bose.

The CITU calls on all its unions to protest against the measure which is nothing but the open announcement of the installation of a police State in West Bengal.

FOR FAVOUR OF PUBLICATION

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