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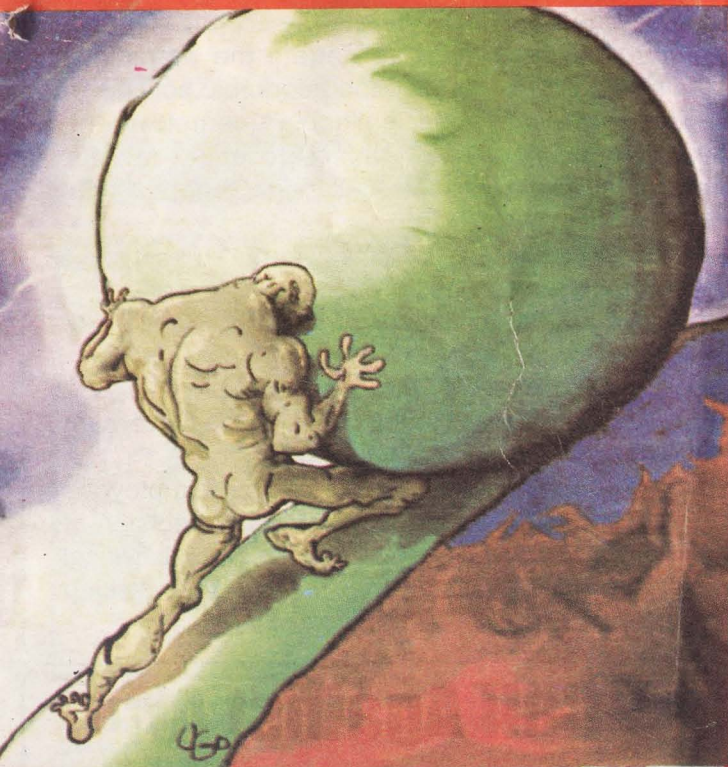
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THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU



WORLD SOCIAL FORUM-2004



NO GLOBAL WAR



COUNTRYWIDE GENERAL STRIKE ON 24 FEB

The Joint meeting of the Central Trade Unions held on 5th January 2004 at New Delhi decided to organise COUNTRYWIDE GENERAL STRIKE on 24TH FEBRUARY 2004. The statement jointly signed and released to Press on 6th January 2004 states that :

"The Central Trade Union Organisations met in the office of INTUC today (5th January 2004) under the chairmanship of G Sanjeeva Reddy, President INTUC and discussed the situation arising out of the failure of the Central Government to take steps to negate the pernicious impact of the judgment of the Supreme Court on Right to Strike as also the economic policies of the present government resulting in worsening economic situation, galloping unemployment, growing poverty, reckless privatisation and closures and dilatory tactics to enact law for unorganised sector workers. The meeting therefore decided to organise All India General Strike on 24th February 2004.

Shri Sanjeeva Reddy informed the meeting that he would take up the proposal of strike before the ensuing meeting of the working committee for favourable consideration.

The meeting appealed to all Trade Unions irrespective of their affiliations to join the above strike action."

The signatories to the joint statement calling for general strike were Gurudas Dasgupta (AITUC), Swapan Mukherjee (AICCTU), M K Pandhe (CITU), G Sanjeeva Reddy (INTUC), G Devarajan (TUCC), Abani Roy (UTUC), S Majumder (UTUC-LS).

In a separate statement released on 6th January 2004, The All India State Govt Employees Federation and Confederation of Central Govt Employees & Workers welcomed the decision of the Central Trade Unions and decided to change their earlier decision for strike action on identical issues from 11th February to 24th February 2004 in the interest of total unity of the working class in action.

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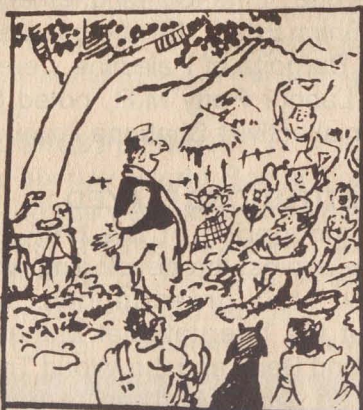
M K Pandhe, Editor

THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

FEBRUARY 2004

YOU SAID IT by Laxman



In the last five years of my term, I couldn't fulfil any of my promises because of our party's infighting, allegations of scam, etc. Please vote us to power this time, we will carry out all the old promises.

Courtesy: The Times of India

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EDITORIAL

EARLY ELECTIONS: FALSE HERO CHASING A MIRAGE

First it was the hype about the 'feel good factor'. Then came the media blitzkrieg of 'India Shining'. Then it was the turn of the Finance Minister to announce a series of sops to strengthen the illusory 'feel good factor'. In the first phase, the Finance Minister announced major changes to the taxation structure, which would benefit the big business and the corporate houses. These changes would deprive the country of around Rs. 10,000 crores. The next phase of the sops was supposed to benefit agriculture, small industry and the infrastructure, whereby the Finance Minister has offered credit bonanza to these sectors. The financial institutions were asked to provide loans of around Rs. 1,10,000 crore, over the next three years, to these sectors. It is anybody's guess as to what extent these loans will materialise in effect.

In announcing these Schemes, the Government has completely by passed the Parliament and the people. There are no budgetary provisions for the Schemes that have been announced. The government could have presented the budget and got these approved, if it thought that these decisions were so important for the economy.

But, all these are only to prop up the BJP's otherwise bleak prospects in the general elections to the Lok Sabha, which are being held ahead of schedule. What was the necessity of advancing the elections to the Parliament and going for a vote on account?

Buoyed with the victory in the three States recently, the BJP has decided to advance elections to the Parliament, so that it can hasten the process of imperialist globalisation, privatisation and liberalisation to serve the interests of the national and multinational corporations. The BJP hopes that by resorting to such gimmicks it can achieve its 'Mission 2004' and come back to power. In its anxiety to reap electoral benefits, the NDA has put the finances of the Government in a peril.

For the BJP, it is a cheap electoral game plan of presenting its Prime Minister in a larger than life image. But the people and the working class are conscious to see through these games. They will make the elections a story of 'a false hero chasing a mirage'. For them 'Mission 2004' means something else. It means slapping a decisive defeat on the BJP and all its opportunistic allies. The BJP, intent to mortgage the country and its resources cannot be allowed to come to power under any circumstances.

The February 24 general strike is the first front in the battle to defeat the retrograde right-wing government, the worst that the country had since independence. The working people will take up the mantle in right earnest!

WORLD SOCIAL FORUM 2004, Mumbai, 16 - 21 January :

VISIONS OF ANOTHER WORLD AND ASSERTIONS TO BUILD IT!

W R Varada Rajan

The fourth edition of the World Social Forum opened up, for the first time out of Brazil, where it took birth in 2000, in Mumbai on the evening of 16th January, 2004 and continued for the next five days, as a festival of people's movements.

The sprawling NESCO grounds in Goregaon, Mumbai was the venue of this gigantic event, which opposed imperialist globalisation, militarism and war, communalism, religious fanaticism and sectarian violence, casteism, racism and exclusions based on work and descent and patriarchy. On the positive side, the WSF 2004 was a meeting place for those intensely desirous of peace, sustainable and people centric development.

Over a lakh and twenty-five thousand people converged in Mumbai. There were over 73000 registered delegates from 151 countries and around 40000, who took the daily passes to visit the WSF 2004.

The huge gathering came from near and far, from the nooks and corners of India; most of them belonged to the exploited and marginalised sections of the people - workers, dalits, tribals, women, students and youth. They came beating the drums, blowing the horns, singing tunes and verses - all asserting that 'Another World is Possible and we are determined to build it!'

The militarist and economic offensives of imperialism and their impact on the lives of thousands of people in the world were the dominant theme at this anti-globalisation meet.

OPENING PLEANARY

The opening plenary was chaired by the veteran freedom fighter Captain Lakshmi Sehgal. The former Prime Minister, who was to co-chair the event, could not make it due to indifferent health but sent in his message sharing the vision of another world.

The Forum started with the vibrant music and songs rendered by Junoon, the music group from Pakistan, which was lustily cheered, echoing the

keen desire of the people of India for an everlasting friendship with the neighbouring Pakistan. The dance troupe from Africa sent the whole crowd dizzy with raptures.

There was an impressive line-up of speakers from around the world, which included Abdul Amir Al-Rekaby from the Iraqi National Democratic Currents, writer Arundhati Roy, Chico Whitaker, who is regarded as one of the founding fathers of the WSF in Brazil, Shirin Ebadi, the noble-laureate from Iran, Mustafa Bargoita of Palestine, Jeremy Cobin, the British Labour Party M.P., noted film personality and social activist Shabana Azmi and others.

GLOBALISING INSTITUTIONS FLAYED

Besides the war mongering of the USA, the economic offensive against the developing world spearheaded by the prescriptions and conditionalities of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which had led to further impoverishment and insecurity for the poorest, came in for the severest attack during deliberations in the Forum..

Walden Bello, Professor of Sociology and Public Administration at the University of the Philippines, felt that the only way to a more equitable economy is to derail these institutions controlled by the most powerful nations of the world.

Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel laureate and former World Bank chief economist, said: "The current form of globalisation being imposed by the IMF has led to greater insecurity. By insisting on the free flow of capital and the privatisation of social security, the IMF has exposed people, especially the aged and the poor, to greater insecurity. Unemployment has also increased, leading to greater violence." Prabhat Patnaik, economics professor from Jawaharlal Nehru University held: "In the current situation, we cannot have a fair globalisation. The unequal distribution of power in the world doesn't make it possible."

George Monbiot, British writer and activist, insisted that institutions like the IMF and the World Bank were "un-reformable." "Their constitutions are totally controlled by the Western world. They give the U.S. 17 per cent of the vote in the IMF and 18 per cent of the vote in the World Bank. There can be no reform within their structures," he said.

Brazilian economist Laura Tavares Soares said: "Class conflict rather than "civil society" movements can force change". "Terms like "civil society" are being used to undermine the fact that there was still class conflict in poor countries with vast inequalities".

There were over 1500 seminars, conferences, panel discussions, testimonies, besides a whole range of cultural programmes of music, dance, films *et al*, which dwelled on the variety of issues in the whole range of the thematic axis of the WSF 2004.

CLOSING PLENARY

The six-day World Social Forum concluded on 21st January evening with a march beginning from August Kranti maidan near Grant Road, culminating in a closing ceremony with meeting and music at Azad Maidan.

The former President, K. R. Narayanan, delivering

the closing address hailed the World Social Forum as "one of the most significant movement in history" and declared that people's power is a new factor in international politics.

The Pakistani human rights activist and lawyer, Asma Jehangir, chaired the closing session and asserted: "we want to tell the powerful forces in the world, that we don't fight with tanks, with cluster bombs or with atom bombs. We fight with our resolve, and with our pens. Victory will be ours because our resolve is based on principles."

Noble laureate and former South African President, Nelson Mandela had sent a video message, which was screened. He said: "All forms of discrimination, whether gender, race, caste, religion or phenomenon which is used for injustice in any part of the world is wrong. Determination, commitment and clear mindedness can lead to a better world. We owe future generations a better world in which every individual is respected. This world will soon become a reality."

Artists like Shubha Mudgal, Pakistani folk singers, Brazilian Minister for culture and musician Gilberto Gil and the Indian Ocean troupe rendered mesmerising music, which made the parting evening vibrant and memorable.



THE FALSE EUPHORIA OF 'INDIA SHINING'

K HEMALATA

The BJP led NDA Government is all set to advance the Lok Sabha polls due in September- October this year. In all probability, Parliament elections along with elections to some State Assemblies may be held in the second part of May. The Government has started a huge media blitzkrieg about 'India Shining'. The advertisements which were stopped by the Election Commission before the Assembly elections have reappeared with full force. The media is full of excited reports of the 'feel good factor' and the 'feel great factor' orchestrated by the ruling Party and its cohorts. The stock markets are bouncing. Foreign exchange reserves are mounting. The granaries are overflowing. Recently the CSO has estimated that in the second quarter of this fiscal (July- September 2003), our economy has shown a growth rate of 8.4%. This was more than enough to make the BJP and its friends dizzy. Add to this the good monsoon which resulted in a growth in agriculture, some good show by our cricketers in Australia and the recent Vajpayee and Musharraf talks in Islamabad. Nobody can stop them from claiming that all this is evidence enough that 'India is Shining' under the Vajpayee regime. 'India Shining' they say. Probably for the BJP and its Government, India means only

the big corporate houses which have been reaping huge profits at the expense of the workers and the common people, the criminals who have invaded the political scene in the country as never before, the corrupt for whom bribery has become a way of life, the perpetrators of the unprecedented scams who were or still continue to be their colleagues and trusted friends, etc., for it is only these that are shining in present day India.

TRUE INDIA GROANING

For the crores of toiling masses, who form the true India, living and slogging here, in its villages and towns and cities, contributing to its economic growth and development through their sweat and blood, life is far from shining.

For the mother in Orissa, who had to sell her infant baby for Rs. 10, to keep herself alive, for the lakhs of shelterless women and children, who take to drugs to keep themselves warm in the chilling nights in the railway platforms and footpaths in Delhi, for the children of the peasants in Andhra Pradesh who committed suicide, since they were unable to pay the small loans they had taken from private money lenders, for the bonded child labourers in Sivakasi who have to work more than 10 hours a day for years and years for the never

repayable loan that their fore fathers have taken, what is shining? What is shining for the millions of the workers who have lost their jobs and their only source of livelihood? For the millions of agricultural workers, who, unable to get any work in their villages, migrate to far off cities in search of some job, leaving behind their old parents and small children to fend for themselves? For the lakhs of women in the around 2 lakh villages without drinking water facility, who walk daily for miles and miles in search of a few mugs of water, what is shining is only the dry sand in the scorching sun. For those young girls who are trafficked and sold as prostitutes and used to satisfy the lust of the tourists and promote tourism, is their future shining? For the thousands of families of the minorities in Gujarat, trying to forget the nightmare of the State sponsored carnage and come to terms with living under constant threat of attacks, and subjected to the humiliation of regularly having to demonstrate their patriotism, what else is shining except the images of the flames of burning houses and corpses that they see in their dreams?

GROUND REALITIES

This indeed is our India today and it is certainly not shining as the NDA regime wants us to

believe. Look at these realities:

■ India today is home to the largest number of hungry in the world. Despite the fact that food grains are rotting and are consumed by rodents in the FCI godowns, millions of people in this country go hungry every day. In spite of thousands of crores of rupees being spent on subsidies, almost none of it reaches the needy. Only the traders, exporters, corrupt bureaucrats etc benefit.

■ According to Abusaleh Shariff, Chief Economist, and head of the human development programme at the National Council of Applied Economic Research, in India, the Net Poverty Line is decided as per the amount of money required to replenish energy equivalent to 2, 400 K Cal per day in urban areas (and 2, 100 K Cal in rural). This comes to about half a kg of rice, which translates as Rs. 7-8 per person per day. Even with this very, very low cut off, as per the Government's own admission, 26% of Indians fall below the poverty line. But if the international yardstick of counting persons with two dollars per day as poor and one dollar per day as chronically poor is used, then 70% of our people will qualify as poor (and BPL), 26% will qualify as worse than chronically poor. The UN has estimated that 70% of the world's poor are women.

■ Around 40 Crores in a country of a little over 100 Crores do not know how to read

and write.

■ 95 out of every 1000 children born in our 'shining' country die before the age of five.

■ More than a third of India's 200 million school-age children are not in school.

■ Half the Indian population still doesn't have electricity. Over 63 per cent of all rural households lack it. Even those who have it don't have it all the time.

■ There is only one hand pump or stand pipe for every 250 people and a water source within 1.6 km of a habitation. According to the World Bank, many drinking water supply facilities in rural India are defunct due to poor maintenance and are not sustainable.' And experts say that there is poison and all kinds of pollutants in the water that large number of rural Indians drink and use, causing diseases, deformities and death.

■ Whatever growth has been there in the last few years, it has been not only 'job less' growth but 'job loss' growth. As per The Statesman, dated 2nd January 2004, 'Employment in the organised sector declined by a shocking 1.5% last year. It has, indeed, been on the decline ever since the NDA came to power in 1998, reversing a trend of job growth seen under Congress and United Front Governments since 1991. Jobs lost in the organised sector were

not even compensated by job creation in the unorganised sector. In the last five years, more than 2 crores small and medium sized industrial units have closed down. These units used to be labour intensive in the unorganised sector and with their closure hundreds of thousands have lost their jobs.

■ The more than 100 billion dollar foreign exchange reserves could provide solace if they could have been used in productive investment, generating employment for our youth. But here too the facts are other wise. A large portion of this money is from foreign institutional investors and non resident Indians, who brought this money here because of very low interest rates in the US and Europe. Much of this reserve is 'hot money', that is it may be taken out of the country, when its owners find better returns elsewhere in the world.

The policies of globalisation so zealously pursued by the BJP led NDA Government have only increased disparities. Besides, the BJP is a Party driven by the fascist ideology of the RSS, which does not believe in democratic institutions and unity in diversity. The return of the BJP to power will only spell further disaster for the country, its unity, and its secular and pluralistic values. The BJP must be given a clear message that its disastrous and divisive policies can no longer be tolerated by the people. The BJP led front must be defeated at all costs in the ensuing elections.

COAL UNIONS FORCE NDA GOVT TO RETREAT PRIVATISATION, OUTSOURCING & CLOSURES HALTED

M K Pandhe

The remarkable unity achieved by five and half lakh coal mine workers, under the leadership of five federations viz. CITU, INTUC, AITUC, HMS and BMS, generated a favourable atmosphere for a 6 day nationwide strike from 23rd to 29th February 2004. The Federations in a communication to the Secretary Ministry of Coal and Mines conveyed their decision that if the Government does not settle the dispute by 24th January they will give strike notice on 28th January and there would be no room for talks after the strike notice is served. The united movement of Coal workers organised a powerful campaign all over India. A massive rally organised jointly by 5 Federations in front of Coal India Headquarters in Kolkata on 17th December reflected the growing militancy of the Coal miners in all the coal companies to resist privatisation and contractorisation.

JOINT CAMPAIGN

In the face of rising tempo of joint preparation for six-day-strike throughout the entire coal industry countrywide, and massive joint mobilisation of coal workers at the colliery level all over the country, the Govt of India had to come forward for negotiations with the unions and had to make a retreat, may be for the time being, on almost all the issues on which they were displaying arrogance earlier.

The eleven point charter of demands submitted by the Federations include the demand to scrap the Coal Mines Nationalisation (Amendment) Bill 2000 to privatise the coal industry, to stop the outsourcing of Coal production to private contractors, restoration of customs duty on imported coal to the 1991 level, to restructure the Coal India Ltd along with the coal companies/units as a single holding company, to restore budgetary support to the coal industry for further investment in coal mines, to ensure proper safety measures in coal mines to prepare joint package for revival of sick coal companies like ECL, BCCL, NCL and Dankuni Coal Complex and stop privatisation of CMPDIL.

The delay in constitution of the Joint Bipartite Committee for Coal Industry JBCCI (VII) despite lapse of two and a half years after the commencement of the period of the current wage agreement caused acute discontent among the coal miners. All the Five Federations therefore demanded immediate payment of interim relief of 25 per cent of the basic wages to the workers.

The first meeting of the JBCCI was convened by the management on 12th January 2004. However, the private sector management of TISCO, ICML, Bengal EMTA and Jindal and public sector management of IISCO declined to join the

JBCCI and implement its decision due to "financial constraints". These companies want to compete with Coal India by paying workers less wages and substandard service conditions. The trade union representatives therefore demanded that the Union Labour Ministry should issue notification making one industrial wage for the entire coal industry to be decided by the JBCCI.

MINISTER'S ASSURANCES

In the afternoon of 12th January 2004, Mamata Banerjee who, after anxiously waiting for four months to get a portfolio got the coal and mines Ministry, called a meeting of trade union representatives to discuss the eleven point charter of demands raised by the five federations. In the meeting the Secretary, Department of Coal as well as senior officials of Coal India managements were present. The trade union representatives criticised the policy of the NDA Government to privatise the coal mines and non-implementation of the promises given to the trade unions.

The Union Coal Minister agreed not to bring the Bill to privatise the coal mines without arriving at a consensus among the trade unions. While criticising the policy of outsourcing, she agreed to examine all the aspects of outsourcing in details and the trade union leaders were asked to give their

observations on the subject to the Government.

On the question of reduction in customs duty on imported coal by the Finance Minister she agreed to take up the matter with the Finance Minister to ensure trade barriers to protect the coal industry.

The Minister agreed to give 15 per cent of basic wages as interim relief to all the coal workers from 1st January 2004 pending finalisation of new coal wage agreement. She also agreed not to close down any mine or retrench coal workers and agreed to work out joint revival package for ECL, BCCL, NCL and Dankuni Coal Complex. She further agreed not to privatise the CMPDIL. She agreed to take up the question of inclusion of private sector coal companies and IISCO so that there would be uniform wages for the entire coal industry.

Regarding the question of non-implementation of several clauses of wage agreement she agreed to discuss with the trade unions prior to 24 January 2004

and ensure their full implementation. She promised to consider the question of expansion of coal industry, its modernisation and development of new mines with the trade unions. She further assured that expeditious steps would be taken to ensure safety in coal mines, check illegal mining and take steps to prevent subsidence of mining area and coal fires.

As she herself noted, she accepted more than 90 per cent of the demands of the coal workers and she appealed for withdrawal of the strike notice. An agreement was also drafted. M.K. Pandhe President CITU, while welcoming the assurances wanted to ensure full implementation of the commitments since some of the policy measures have been decided by the NDA cabinet.

JBBCCI RATIFIES

The CITU proposed that the proposals should be placed before JBBCCI and after ratification the agreement should be signed. All central trade unions except CITU

signed the draft along with Secretary, Ministry of Coal and Mines and Chairman CIL. The CITU representatives signed the draft only after it was ratified by JBBCCI in the evening.

The trade union movement while noting the advance made in the agreement should continue their movement to ensure implementation of the agreement.

A meeting of the All India Coal Workers Federation held on 13 January at Kolkata decided to campaign for implementation of the clauses of the agreement. This is extremely important since most of the commitments given on 1 August 2001 remained unimplemented.

The AICWF decided to campaign for the countrywide general strike on 24th February called jointly by the central trade unions to oppose the Supreme Court judgment banning the right to strike and also against the economic policies of the Govt. of India. It decided to observe 24 January as an All India day to popularise the strike action on 24th February 2004.

EMPLOYERS' MILITANCY!

As against about 92 million man-days lost in strikes during the year 1991 and 2000, lockouts accounted for 138.5 million man-days lost during the same period. In relative terms, lock-outs accounted for over 60 per cent and strikes only 40 per cent of the total man-days lost during the 1990s.

The situation was alarming during 1999 when lock-outs accounted for 76.2 man-days lost per worker as against only 9.7 man-days in strikes, i.e the former was nearly eight times the latter. The shares of lockouts in the totals of the number of work stoppages, workers involved and workdays lost had been on the increase since the beginning of the 1980s. Employers' militancy as measured by lockout incidence is not a new phenomenon. But there are some distinct features in the figures relating to the 1990s. The peak figures for the three measures were reached in this decade - nearly half the decisions to stop work were taken by the employers, more than one-third of the workers affected were by lockouts, and about two-thirds of the workdays lost were due to lockouts in one or the other sub-periods in the 1990s.

(Source: The Indian Journal of Labour Economics)

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Tapan Sen

In 2001, the Supreme Court set aside its own earlier judgment in the Air India case while disposing of the review petition filed by Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL). In Air India case earlier (pre-liberalisation period), Supreme Court awarded for regularisation of the contract workers deployed in permanent perennial nature of job in the principal establishment, upholding the basic content and spirit of Contract Labour (Regulation Abolition) Act 1970. But post liberalisation, in response to the petition filed by SAIL, the apex court set aside its own earlier judgment, thus regularising or legitimising an utterly irregular practice of deploying workers on contract basis even in permanent perennial jobs of any establishment. Justice, no more impartial, has just taken its side. In 2002, the Supreme Court bench also set aside the judgments of two high courts and awarded that even if a dismissed worker is reinstated, setting aside the dismissal, he need not be paid back-wages. This means if a worker is dismissed illegally by the employer, he may be able to get back his job if dismissal is proved illegal or irregular, but has to bear the burden of the illegal or irregular act of the employer, being deprived of the back-wages, for no fault of his. Justice indeed!

In 2003, Kolkata High Court

prohibited procession/rallies in the city in the weekdays from morning eight to evening eight. Of course, in the midst of mounting protest by the people from all walks of life through rallies and processions in that city itself, the division bench of the Kolkata high court stayed such prohibitory order of the single judge bench on an application of Left Front Govt of West Bengal. But Judicial intolerance towards peoples' right to collective expression could not remain suppressed. Meantime, in the same year, the Supreme Court pronounced its belated judgment, two years after the completion of hearing on the case, upholding the infamous Employees Pension Scheme 1995 practically ignoring the contention of the petitioner unions that the said pension scheme is forcibly snatching away much more from the savings of the workers than what is being returned in the form of pension. This judgment practically legitimized the loot on the workers' savings in the form of provident fund by the Govt. On 6th August 2003, the Apex Court again pronounced its infamous dictum banning right to strike for the Govt employees and the language of the concerned 21-page judgment by the Supreme Court was so designed as to have the same prohibitive implication for other sections of the working class as well. The things come true when

the Ranchi high Court, while responding to a petition by the Bokaro Steel management, imposed similar ban on the strike to be observed by the unions of the steel workers there on 11th October 2003 through its interim order which referred to the 6th August judgment of the Supreme Court. Similar prohibitive order was also reported to have been given by the Uttranchal Court in respect of strike in hydel power project in the state. Hence, it is erroneous to consider the ban on strike imposed by Supreme Court in its 6th August judgment to be meant for only the Govt employees. It is aimed at the entire working class.

While right to strike is being banned for the workers, the employers are being virtually empowered with the "right to kill". The same Apex court in its judgment pronounced in December 2003 acquitted unconditionally one employer of a Kerala based factory who shot dead two workers while they were squatting in front of the factory gate on the day of a general strike on 15th March 1998. The Apex Court acquitted the employer of proven murder charge on the ground of his 'self-defence' although the same employer had been sentenced life-imprisonment by the High Court after prolonged hearing. And while pronouncing the said judgment, the Supreme Court has directed the Govt to tackle

the 'hooliganism' like strike action with iron-hands. Yet another novel example of intolerance towards the right of collective expression by the working class!

And the last but may not be the latest, is the judgment of Supreme Court denying the right to gratuity to the teachers, which was pronounced in January 2004 while dismissing the petition of the Private Primary Teachers Association of Ahmedabad challenging the similar order of the Gujarat High Court. That the teachers' community has been enjoying the gratuity payment as a part of their retirement benefit since many years has not come into consideration by the Supreme Court. The teachers have been declared not entitled to coverage of the Payment of Gratuity Act 1972 by the Apex Court on sheer technical ground that the teachers cannot be categorized as 'unskilled', 'semi-skilled' or 'skilled' as provided in the definition of employees in section 2(E) of the Payment gratuity Act 1972. Even the specific notification dated 3rd April 1997 by the Govt extending coverage of the Gratuity Act to the educational institutions employing 10 or more teachers have been totally ignored by the Apex Court for reasons only known to them.

But whatever may be the unknown reasons, the judgment has definitely delighted the employers of the privately owned schools

and other educational institutions which have been mushrooming under the neoliberal policy regime, when all public utility services including education are being dedicated to the market god-to the priests of the business world.

Added to these specific 'mention-worthy' records of 'justices' meted out to the mass of the toiling people, there have been numerous rulings of courts of various levels in limiting and restricting the rights and freedom of collective expressions by the workers. In the capital city of Delhi itself, gate-meetings/demonstrations are banned within 100 meters of many of the workplaces. Similar restrictions are also in vogue in many of the workplaces in UP, Haryana, Rajasthan and many other states in the country.

The victims of administrative and executive highhandedness used to look for redressal from the judiciary. But in the event of neoliberalism taking over all redressal agencies along with the governance, where do we go from here?

If someone wants to maim us by force, we must raise our voice still louder. If just rights are denied, the toilers must defend them by asserting the same rights more forcefully. History has taught us this. The working class of the country is going to assert right to strike through countrywide general strike on 24th February 2004. Trade unions of all affiliations have already announced their firm resolve in that direction. The toiling people will have the last say about their rights.

CENTRAL TUs DENOUNCE SC JUDGMENT

In a Joint Statement issued on 15th January 2004, All the Central Trade Union in the country have denounced the Supreme Court judgment denying the "right to gratuity" to the teachers while dismissing the petition of Ahmedabad Private Primary Teachers' Association challenging the similar judgment earlier given by the Gujarat High Court. The judgment is given on sheer technical ground.

The SC judgment denying the gratuity for the teachers is not only having bearing on the teachers in Gujarat but also on the teachers' community throughout the country, particularly when the education system is being privatized/commercialised in a big way.

Central Trade Unions urged upon the Government to take urgent appropriate step in negating the pernicious impact of the concerned judgment denying right to gratuity to the teaching community who are playing vital role in educating the future generation of the country. The Signatory to the Statement were Gurudas Dasgupta (AITUC), Tapan Sen (CITU), A D Nagpal (HMS), R K Bhakt (BMS), Chandidas Sinha (INTUC), Rajib Dhimri (AICCTU), Abani Roy (UTUC), Krishnarup Chakraborty (UTUC-LS) and G Devarajan (TUCC).

B T R BIRTH CENTENARY INAUGURATED

A massive rally held at the Netaji Indoor stadium in Kolkata on December 20 marked the commencement of the birth centenary celebrations of Comrade B T Ranadive. The rally was held under the aegis of the Bengal state unit of the CITU.

In his address to the rally, former Bengal chief minister and veteran trade union leader, Jyoti Basu noted how from a very early age, Comrade BTR engaged himself in the task of organising and leading the working class in the most difficult of circumstances. Recalling his long association with Comrade BTR, Basu said that the CITU was formed when the reactionary leadership of the AITUC started to indulge in the politics of exclusion. Comrade BTR, recalled Basu, had raised the slogan of 'unity and struggle' and had played a crucial role in the formation of the CITU.

Comrade BTR, said Basu, always stressed on the need to build up an all-India confederation of TU's and noted that he had been active in building up a coordination committee of TU's across the country. The NPMO was a direct consequence of Comrade BTR's effort in these directions, noted Basu. Comrade BTR was also keen, recalled Basu, to bring inside the folds of the organised movement both women and the workers of the unorganised sector. Comrade BTR underscored the necessity

of the TU movement to include in its agenda the problem of unemployment and the plight of the unemployed.

Long associated with the Communist and the TU movement, Comrade BTR also essayed a remarkable role in the twin fight against revisionism and sectarianism. In conclusion, Basu said that a fitting tribute would be paid to the memory of Comrade BTR by strengthening the Left TU movement nationwide and by augmenting the struggle against the anti-people and anti-BJP union government. Basu also called for the transformation of the February 11 strike of the government employees into a nationwide general strike.

Reminiscing about Comrade BTR, veteran CITU leader Samar Mukherjee recalled how Comrade BTR had called for leading the TU movement into the arena of class struggle, rejecting out of hand all concepts of class collaboration. Identifying the massive increase in the membership of the CITU, Mukherjee said that the task was to make the workers politically conscious and to lead them towards the establishment of socialism. The workers'-peasants' unity must be further strengthened and widened, concluded Mukherjee.

M K Pandhe, President, CITU, said that the yearlong celebration of the birth centenary of Comrade BTR would conclude with a rally held

on December 19 2004 in Mumbai. Programmes would be organised in this connection in every state. The CITU membership presently stood at 35 lakh, and Dr Pandhe said that the drive was on to make the CITU membership 40 lakh come December 2004. Pandhe said that the birth centenary celebrations of Comrade BTR would be held through the widening of the base of the CITU. Pandhe said that there were two kinds of TU movement in this country. Those who kept themselves confined to the economic demands of the workers were revisionist in character. Certainly, the economic demands of the workers formed an important component of the TU movement, but while organising struggles and movements, the workers would realise that there could be no end to exploitation unless fundamental social changes could be brought about, said Dr Pandhe. He recalled that before the formation of the CITU there had been no all-India workers' strike and it was only in 1981 that such a strike could be organised. Dr Pandhe called upon all TU's to get involved in the united struggle against the policies of globalisation.

Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary, CITU, said that Comrade BTR emphasised the need to organise the unorganised, the unemployed, and the women for, as Comrade

BTR had pointed out, the reactionary elements would try to exploit these forces. In this connection, Majumdar recalled the calculated anti-TU and 'pro-kisan' statements in 1970 of the then Congress prime minister, Indira Gandhi.

Majumdar said Comrade BTR always emphasised the need to involve all strata of workers, and all sections of TU's while organising strike actions. Comrade BTR would call for 'strike committees' for this purpose. Majumdar said that along with the aggressive imperialist globalisation, a relentless series of attacks were coming on the TU movement. Campaigns of misinformation were being spread against the TU movement.

At a time, Majumdar pointed out, when the entire society was plunged into economic

dysfunction and when poverty was increasing by leaps and bounds, the resentment that would inevitably accrue among the people was being exploited by the ruling classes to lead an assault against TU rights. The working class must be made more conscious, and united TU movements must be relentlessly launched to resist the attacks by the ruling classes, concluded Chittabrata Majumdar.

General Secretary of the Bengal unit of the CITU, Kali Ghosh said that the resolve to commemorate Comrade BTR's birth centenary was taken at the Chennai all-India conference of the CITU. While highlighting the contributions made to the development of the trade union movement by Comrade BTR, Kali Ghosh said that the teachings of Comrade BTR must be reached out to each TU

unit across the districts and must not be confined to central rallies alone.

President of the Bengal unit of the CITU, Shyamal Chakraborty who presided over the meeting strongly played the attacks being organised in a section of the media against the TU movement. He said that unless every attack of the ruling classes was met with appropriate counter-action, the forces of authoritarianism would seek to clamp down on the nation itself. Chakraborty was sharply critical of the revisionist trend in the TU movement. The TU movement, concluded Chakraborty, must equip itself to prove equal to the task of building up appropriate movements suiting the issues at hand.

(Report Courtesy: B. Prasanth & Ganashakti Website)

BTR CENTENARY IN DELHI

Comrade B T Ranadive, the founder President of CITU, was born on the 19th of December 1904. The eleventh conference of CITU decided to observe the coming year as BTR Centenary year, to take his teachings to the working class and the working people of our country. At the CITU Central office at BTR Bhawan in New Delhi, a meeting was held on 19th December 2004. Despite the bitter cold, the auditorium was jam packed with workers and employees, when the meeting started, with K Hemalata, Secretary CITU, presiding. The main speaker, Kanai Banerjee, Secretary CITU, spoke about the different aspects of Com BTR's teachings, on the issues of unemployment, communalism, workers in the unorganised sector, the importance of the worker-peasant alliance, the role of working women in the working class movement, joint front tactics etc. Emphasizing the necessity for the working class to take a leading role in bringing about political change in favour of the toiling masses, he pointed out how relevant BTR's teachings are for our organisation and the trade union movement, even today, when the challenges before the working class have intensified manifold.

Tapan Sen, Secretary CITU, detailed the programmes planned by the CITU for the Centenary year, which include seminars, classes, workshops, an ongoing trade union school, and functioning of the BTR Memorial Research Centre. Speaking on the occasion, Jibon Roy, Secretary CITU, recalled the revolutionary life and work of Com BTR.

ECONOMY DERAILED ...

INDIA SHINING(!), WHICH INDIA?

India is shining (!), But which India? Well some India is certainly shining - the India where bribery has become a way of life, criminals have invaded politics, scams have become the rule, and people like Satyendra Dubey have to get killed for exposing corruption...

The truth is, 433 million Indians, in a country of one billion people, still live in absolute poverty; some 400 million don't know how to read and write; 95 out of every 1000 children born in this country die before the age of five; and more than a third of India's 200 million school-age children are not in school.

Half the Indian population still doesn't have electricity. Over 63 per cent of all rural households

lack it. Even those who have it, don't have all the time....

India claims 89 per cent of its people have access to water. What does it mean? Just one hand pump or standpipe for every 250 people and a water source within 1.6 km of a habitation. But even under this punishing norm, do people get quality water all the year round?

Here is what the World Bank has to say: "...many drinking water supply facilities in rural India are defunct due to poor maintenance and not sustainable." And here what experts tell us: there is poison and all kinds of pollutants in that water that large number of rural Indians drink and use, causing diseases, deformities and deaths....

(My News, Rediff.Com, 26-12-2003)

INDIA SHINING? OR DIMMING?

Explosive growth? Eight per cent growth?... That's one quarter's performance buddy....

Eight per cent growth? Never before reached by Indian economy? Nonsense. In 1988-89, the economy grew at 10.87 per cent.... In five of the last six years, growth rate was five to six per cent. And in two years, it dropped to below five per cent... Alas, India is dimming!

Agriculture is booming?... Despite blessed monsoon this year, the kharif output of foodgrain is lower than two years ago, the rabi crop predictions are no better. For the first time since first five year plan, population growth is outstripping the growth rate of foodgrains.... Over the eighties, oilseed production doubled and in 1991-96 India became net exporter of edible oils.... Under the NDA lot, edible oil imports have zoomed to \$ 2000 million. Almost all the soya-oil

processing plants in the country have closed down... Never before, has public investment in agriculture been as shamefully low as in the last six years... Now, just before the election announcement, a media driven scheme of Rs 50000 crore has been announced. Where were they all these six years?

Berojgari hatao? One crore jobs a year?... The prime minister is plain lying when he claims 84 lakh job creation in 2002-03. That is gross figure. The net figure, that is jobs created versus jobs lost, is a measly 30 lakh in a country where 1.5 crore new entrants come on the job market every year.

Yes, India is shining for about 3 million Indians of the Reliance/CII kind... For the 800 million of the poor and near-poor, it is, alas, India Dimming!

(Mani Shankar Aiyer in, 'The Telegraph', 13-01-2004)

DOWN THE DISASTER LANE !

CORRUPTION STINK IN PDS: SURVEY

Despite 65 million tonnes of food grains and whopping Rs 27000 crore as food subsidy, people still go hungry.....

Parliamentary Standing Committee Chairman for food and civil supplies, Devendra Yadav, who as Food Minister introduced targeted PDS in 1997, said, " Sixty five per cent of the Rs 27000 crore food subsidy goes to bureaucrats' salary, establishment costs, storage, traders and exporters. The remaining 35 per cent goes by way of diversions and pilferage."

According to a survey of below-poverty-line (BPL) families and PDS shops in east Delhi by 'Parivartan', an NGO, over 70 per cent of the

subsidised food grains do not reach the desperately poor. As for example, Md Iqbal of F-block, Sundernagari, who earns his livelihood by repairing batteries, does not have any BPL cards. But according to records, during past two years, full amount of ration was lifted from the local PDS shop against Iqbal's name.

These are not one-off cases. The Parivartan had in the last two weeks surveyed 160 families in Welcome colony near Seelampur in east Delhi. The survey report reveals, "not a single family has got full amount of ration. Only 23 per cent got something, that too lesser than the prescribed amount and at a higher price."

(Times of India, 31-12-2003)

GROWTH -THE TARGETS AND THE REALITY

...The majority of economists feel that the plan estimates for (growth) 2004-05 are unlikely to be met. In 2004-05, the third year of the Tenth five year plan, the country's gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to grow only 6-6.5 per cent as

compared with the Plan target of 8.1 per cent.... Compared with the Tenth plan target of 6.7 per cent growth in the first year-2002-03-the actual GDP growth was only 4.3 per cent.

(Business Standard, 02-01-2004)

THE PROBLEM WITH THE IMF ...

....My problem with IMF has been that its belief in markets is ideological, not pragmatic. Its policies on liberalisation evolved as a consensus between the US Treasury and the World Bank. It didn't involve other countries nor was it based on economic theory. It just pushed for markets in developing countries without mentioning adequately the limitations....

International Trade Agreements are unfair. Developed countries want to get rid of trade barriers in other countries but won't reciprocate. The bargaining process is lopsided and so are the outcomes....

In Jamaica, they eliminated trade barriers in agriculture and were swamped by subsidized American agriculture. When IMF forced a hike in interest rates, this worsened the economic downturn, making it impossible for enterprises to flourish...Done in wrong way, liberalisation can lead to poverty and unemployment....

Basically, there is an incongruity between political and economic globalisation. As more economies globalise, more decisions are taken internationally, but there is no mechanism to do so democratically. The current US Administration evidently does not believe in democracy in the international level. It uses the rhetoric but does what it wants.....

It is surprising IMF talks about competition but does not really mean for itself...

(Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz: Times of India, 15-01-2004)

LABOUR EVENTS IN WSF 2004

The WSF 2004 was held from 16th to 21st January, 2004 in Mumbai. It was focused on opposition to imperialist globalisation, militarism, communalism, religious fanaticism and sectarian violence, casteism, racism and work/descent based exclusions and discriminations and patriarchy and for world peace.

LABOUR IN WSF 2004

'Labour in WSF 2004' evolved as a joint platform of trade unions associated with the WSF India comprising the central trade unions, federations, independent unions and labour support organisations covering the workers in both the organised and unorganised sectors. Through the efforts of this joint platform of trade unions, labour issues were brought on the agenda of the WSF 2004.

For the first time in the World Social Forum, a Conference on the theme "Work and the World of Labour: Freedom, Equality and Labour Rights; Discriminations and Exclusions; Full Employment, Living Wage and Social Security", was held on 20th January, 2004, as a WSF 2004 organised event.

CONFERENCE THEME

Belying the orchestrated propaganda that globalisation is cure all for the global ills, the present form of ongoing

globalisation has failed to create employment opportunities or sustainable livelihood to meet the aspirations of the people the world over. The iniquitous globalisation has further widened the already wide disparities between and within nations.

According to the UNDP Human Development Report, the gap between the incomes of the richest countries and the poorest countries, which was 3 to 1 in 1920 and 35 to 1 in 1950, had gone upto 75 to 1 in 1992 and as on date it is estimated to have risen to 100 to 1. Out of five billion people all over the world, about 790 million people do not have enough to eat. The ILO says that nearly three billion in the world live on less than one dollar a day. Never was witnessed so many languishing in poverty amidst so much wealth.

The new economic order under globalisation, determined by market forces, is designed to increase trade opportunities and provide inter-country access to markets, while allowing free flow of capital. The main beneficiaries of this corporate globalisation, conceived by the neo-colonialist powers, are the multinational corporations (MNCs).

The MNCs have, over the years, gained enormous clout over the

global economies. Of the world's 100 largest economies, 51 are global corporations and 49 are countries. The combined sales of the world's 200 corporations are far greater than a quarter of the world's economic activity. These multinational corporations are notorious for using their economic power to position themselves as primary agents for the kind of economic development that inevitably results in loss of jobs, gross social and political inequalities, environmental disasters and loss of cultural diversity.

The brunt of the process of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation is being borne by the developing countries. The workers have become the target of concerted attack. Closures of industrial units, mass retrenchment mounting unemployment, to menacing proportions, large-scale casualisation and contractualisation and total loss of job security have become the order of the day. The workers' hard earned fundamental human and trade union rights are abused with utter contempt to the UN Declaration on Human Rights and the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles of Rights at Work. In the name of labour market flexibility, developing countries are being coerced to give unfettered freedom for closure of units and hiring and firing of workers. The

organised sector is made to rapidly shrink and the informal sector with its case of exploitation is presently the preferred mode. There is now a growing discontent among the workers the world over.

At the same time globalisation has brought an active civil society fighting for greater social justice and better represented democracy. The working class has come closer than ever before in its fight for labour reforms through inter-exchange of ideas among trade unions and other international networks. An important development that has taken place in response to the neo-liberal policies and capitalist led globalisation is the creation of World Social Forum.

SPEAKERS

The WSF organised conference was moderated by Indira Jaisingh, Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India and addressed by Guy Ryder, General Secretary, ICFTU, Alexander Zharikov, General Secretary, WFTU, Willy Thys, General Secretary, World Confederation of Labour, Prabhat Patnaik, Labour Economist and Gerry Rodgers, ILO. M.K.Pandhe, President, CITU made his intervention along with other trade unionists from India and abroad.

'Labour in WSF 2004' also held four self-organised seminars, one each day on 17 - 20 January, 2004 on the following themes:

International Working Class Unity Against Imperialist

Globalisation (17 Jan.'04) - Keynote address by Umraomul Purohit, HMS and Moderator Chittabrata Majumdar, CITU.

The expansion of metropolitan and multinational capital has led to integration of production chains, with progressively higher degrees of exploitation. This situation is sustained by (i) unipolar world order and (ii) weakening of the nation state aided by the direct intervention of multilateral institutions. It is also sustained by the consequent decline in the democratic rights of people, both in the developed and the developing world. The intervention of multilateral institutions ensures dismantling of a regulatory state, and of a state-determined welfare mechanism. It accentuates the exploitation of the working class and reduces its bargaining power with respect to capital, both multinational and national. In the developing countries, this results in progressive de-industrialisation and unrestricted inflow of Foreign Direct Investment, mostly for speculative purposes without resulting in any increase in per-capita incomes. The international solidarity of the working capital class has to look at an alternative paradigm that leads to progressive increase in Equality of nations, Development rights of people, Participatory democracy and Strengthening of collective bargaining rights. What this implies in strategic terms is that the working class across the world should build solidarity

around opposing the policies of multilateral institutions that lead to weakening of the nation state and state regulation and unrestricted access of multinational capital to investment and market; it should also aim at strengthening the capacity of workers around the world to associate freely and bargain collectively.

Privatisation, Disinvestment And Its Impact On National Economy And Working Class (18 Jan.'04) - Keynote address by M.K.Pandhe, CITU and Moderator H.Mahadevan, AITUC.

The income differential between the fifth of humanity living in the richest countries and fifth in the poorest has increased to 74:1 in 1997 from 60:1 in 1990 and 30:1 in 1960. This economic paradigm shift has resulted in reducing the benefits accrued to the rural and weaker sections, giving multinationals substantial access to domestic savings, selective privatisation leading to "privatisation of profits and nationalisation of losses", weakening the ability of the state to effectively intervene in the economy in favour of the vast majority of people who are close to destitution, bartering the economic sovereignty of developing nations. This seminar exposed the ulterior motive of the governments in privatising even several profit making State Owned Enterprises, the impact of privatisation on the indigenous industries, on labour and labour rights and how the challenges

thrown up before the trade union movement can effectively be met unitedly.

Communalism, Religious Fanaticism And Secretarian Violence, Labour Rights And Trade Union Movement

(19 Jan.'04) - Keynote address by Sanjeeva Reddy, INTUC and Moderator Ashim Roy, NTUI.

While the aggressive onslaughts unleashed by the imperialist globalisation demand heightened class consciousness and broadest unity among the workers and the people for being mobilised in resistance struggles, we are witnessing increasing fragmentation of the society on the lines of religious fundamentalism, language, ethnicity, race, caste et al. The agenda of religious right is to draw political mileage by sustaining religious identities and promoting sectarian intolerance and politics of hatred and violence. Imperialism and vested interests in every country is seeking to utilise these forces indulging in oppression, repression and unending violence to sub-serve their domination. "The War on Terror" and other wars are mere variants of such brutal attacks against marginalised communities. In India the rise of Hindu rightist forces, increasingly assuming fascist dimensions, threatens the secular democratic fabric of the society. This seminar addressed this threat and its fall out on labour rights and trade union movement.

Workers Of Unorganised

Sector & Unorganised Workers (20 Jan.'04) - Keynote address by J. Chittaranjan, AITUC and Moderator and Moderator R.A.Mital, HMS.

The unorganised sector forms the majority of the total workforce. (In India it is over 92 %). This high percentage of the work force is outside the purview any legal rights. It is seen as a skewed pattern seen in most third world countries. This section is rapidly growing and at the same time finding less and less work, leading to increasing marginalisation, unemployment, impoverishment, pauperization, suicides and starvation deaths. Changes in laws and loss of control over collective wealth like forests, pastures, mines and water resources are leading to further increase and impoverishment of rural labour force. Peasantry is suffering due to increasing costs of agricultural production. Feudal forms of oppression through caste oppression, discrimination and upper caste domination. Guaranteed minimum wages, accident claims and compensation, pensions or any other social or job security do not exist for them. Women are subjected to violence of all forms. There is strengthening of many feudal vestiges, such as girl-child labour and modern forms of bonded labour, by MNCs and corporate farming giants, Workers in export zones, especially women, are deliberately prevented from organising themselves. This seminar deliberated the issues and struggles related to workers

of the unorganised sector and those workers employed in the organised sector who are still unorganised.

ISSUES AND CONCERNS

In the conference as well as the seminars the issues and concerns dealt with broadly comprised the following:

- Attacks on Democratic and Labour Rights

- Informalisation of Production Process, depressing the quality of jobs and work environment through proliferation of contracting, outsourcing, flexitime operations, home-based work etc.

- Privatisation of State Owned Enterprises and Services - of electricity, roads, water, education, health etc. - and its impact on livelihood and jobs

- International Trade, Trade as instrument of domination and Social Clause

- Gender Issues in Trade Unions, 'Feminisation of Labour', Unpaid Female Labour, Feudal and patriarchal exploitation of women workers, Sexual Harassment at Workplace

- Problems and Issues of Agricultural and Rural Labour

- Unemployment, Under Employment and Non-employment.

■ Attacks on Social Security and Social Safety Net

■ Child labour, trafficking of children, sexual exploitation of girl-children and drug abuse.

■ Occupational Safety and Health, Environment issues.

■ Declining Ethos of Tripartism

■ Communalism,

Religious fanaticism, Sectarian Violence, Casteism, Racism, Exclusions and Discriminations and the Trade Union Movement

■ Trade Union Unity, Consolidation of Trade Union Movement and National-level and International Experiences of Unity in Action

The convening group for the 'LABOUR IN WSF 2004' comprised W.R. Varada Rajan,

CITU, H. Mahadevan, AITUC, R.A. Mital, HMS, S.C.Gaur, TUCC, Abhani Roy, UTUC, Satyawani, UTUC-LS, Srilata Swaminathan, AICCTU, PK Murthy, AIFTU, R.G.Karnik, AISGEF, Dada Samant, Kamgar Agadi and Ashim Roy, NTUI. The Labour support group, Centre for Education and Communication acted as Facilitators.

CENTRAL TUs FLAY GOVT. NOTIFICATION

EIGHT central trade unions - AITUC, CITU, HMS, INTUC, AICCTU, TUCC, UTUC and UTUC(LS) - have in a joint statement condemned the Vajpayee government's notification introducing a new classification of 'fixed term employment workman' by way of an amendment to the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Central Rules, 1946. Apprehending that this move of the government will promote widespread casualisation of workforce and result in gradual elimination of the permanent workmen's category itself in most of the establishments, the unions have demanded immediate revocation of the notification issued on December 10, 2003. They also felt that the government had clearly bypassed the Parliament by amending the Schedule, which was part of the legislation enacted by the Parliament. "It can only be amended with the express consent of the Parliament and not by an administrative fiat", they stated. Even though the matter pertained to industrial relations policy, the government had unilaterally issued a preliminary notification on September 4, 2003 without consulting trade unions. Following strong protest from the unions, the government convened a meeting on November 12, 2003 to discuss this issue. The trade unions, without exception, conveyed their total objection to the introduction of such a new classification of workmen. They also condemned the government for "throwing to winds all ethos of tripartism and reducing the consultation process to a mockery." However, the government ignored these views and proceeded to issue this notification on December 10, 2003 - the copies of which reached the trade unions only recently. As per the Industrial Employment Standing Orders, workmen are already classified as permanent, probationer, badli, temporary, casual and apprentice. The amendment has brought in such workmen who are 'engaged on the basis of contract of employment for a fixed period' in the definition of the 'fixed term employment workman'. This will result in indiscriminate contractual appointments for any number of 'fixed terms' in jobs, including those which are of perennial and permanent nature. This will immensely harm the interests of the workers.

The unions have made it clear that this amendment is nothing but a way of introducing a 'hire and fire' regime in industrial employment. "It will only help the employers to engage a workman on 'fixed term employment' for any length of time, without ever making him permanent, by resorting to perpetual renewal of the 'contract of employment for a fixed period'.

W R Varada Rajan (CITU) D L Sachdeva (AITUC), R A Mittal (HMS), Chandidas Sinha (INTUC) Swapan Mukherjee (AICCTU), S C Gaur (TUCC), Abani Roy (UTUC) and Achinta Sinha of UTUC(LS) were signatories to the joint statement, which was issued on January 3.

REPORTS & EVENTS

West Bengal

VICTORIOUS 11-DAY STRIKE BY JUTE WORKERS

Two and half lakh jute workers in 59 jute mills in West Bengal started indefinite strike from 29th December 2003 in support of their long pending economic demands and opposing the conspiratorial move to relax the Jute Packaging Act in collusion of the Synthetic lobby. Non-implementation of previous industrywise agreement in respect of DA and various other counts and refusal of the Jute mill owners to respond to just persuasion of the trade unions have compelled the jute workers to go for indefinite strike action. The Jute workers indefinite strike from 29th December reflected magnificent unity of the entire workforce in the industry. All the major 15 trade unions functioning in the industry representing almost the entire workforce have joined the strike action.

The strike by the jute-mill workers evoked remarkable spontaneous solidarity from all sections of the trade union movement and other sections of democratic movement throughout the state. The Kisan Sabha also has extended full support to the united strike action by the jute workers.

During the strike days, there have been numerous rallies and mobilisations both by the jute workers and also by other organisations in solidarity.

Notable was the massive demonstrations by the striking jute workers in all the mill-gates on 5th January 2004 through burning synthetic bags in protest of the conspiratorial move by administration to relax Jute Packaging Act 1987 to allow synthetic packaging of cement and urea in entirety and also of foodgrains, of course partially. Such relaxation, if allowed, would have ruinous impact on the economy of the jute industry. On 7th January, there has been huge demonstration of lakhs of striking workers in front the head quarter of Indian Jute Mills Association (IJMA).

Despite consistent intervention by the Labour Minister, Govt of West Bengal, the IJMA did not respond with any positive approach till the eighth day of strike. Thereafter situation started changing and after numerous rounds of hours-long negotiations with the active involvement of the state labour deptt and the Labour Minister of the Left front Govt himself, agreement was arrived at on 8th January 2004 between jute management and fifteen unions affiliated to CITU, AITUC, INTUC, HMS, UTUC, TUCC and others and the strike was called off.

As per the agreement, the jute management will pay Dearness Allowance to the workmen on increased consumer price index of 134 points from 1-2-2004. DA

falling due from 1-2-2004 will be paid on 1-8-2004 with back-effect from 1-2-2004, dues from 1-5-2004 and subsequent quarters will be released with effect from 1-5-2004, 1-8-2004 and on the dates of subsequent quarters as per agreement dated 2-12-1995 and 5-1-2002. It was agreed to finalise production norms and related issues through discussions within four months. The employers agreed to pay gratuity as per provisions of concerned Act. An adhoc increment of Rs 10/- with effect from 1-2-2004 was also agreed. Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary, CITU and Gobinda Guha, General Secretary of Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union (CITU) have congratulated the mass of the jute workers for their successful united struggle and also the democratic people and other mass organisations in the State for their solidarity support.

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REPORTS & EVENTS

On Right to Strike

JOINT T U CONVENTION IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

A state level trade union convention jointly held at Mandi on January 4, 2004, called upon the working class in the state to prepare for observing statewide strike in defence of the right to strike on which a ban was imposed by the Supreme Court in its 6th August judgment.

The convention was sponsored by all the major Central Trade Unions functioning in the State viz., CITU, AITUC, INTUC and BMS besides the employees organisations in Banks, Insurance, Central Govt employees etc.

The convention was conducted by Devidas (AIIEA) who placed the declaration to be adopted by the convention. The declaration, while denouncing the Supreme Court judgment banning right to strike, stressed upon the urgent need for asserting the right to strike of the workers through a powerful countrywide strike action. The declaration pointed out that along with the central Govt, the state govt of Himachal

pradesh also have been taking steps in curbing the labour rights besides unleashing vindictive actions like suspension, indiscriminate and arbitrary transfers on the state govt employees' leaders and activists, resorting to large scale retrenchment of PWD workers etc against which also statewide united struggle has to be organised.

Tapan Sen, Secretary, CITU while addressing the convention, congratulated the leadership of all the trade union centers and employees organisations in the state for forging such all in unity and stressed that such unity to be really effective should lead to statewide united struggle against the policies of both the State and Central Govt-both drawn in tune with the policy of neoliberal globalisation. He pointed out that while right to strike of the workers is being scuttled by Supreme Court and also the Govt, the right to kill the striking workers by the

employers is being upheld by the same court on the ground of self defence as has happened in a recent judgment by the apex court where, the employer of a factory in Kerala charged for killing two striking workers in March 1998 was acquitted on the ground of self defence. In such a situation right to strike has to be defended by workers through assertive strike action only and by no other means, Sen asserted.

The Convention was also addressed by Kashmir Singh Thakur, Ravinder Kumar, both General Secretary and President of HP State CITU, R L Dogra, Deshraj from AITUC, Surender Thakur, Balbir Sharma from BMS, Ashis Atri from AIBEA, A C Chauhan from AIIEA, K R Gautam, Prem Verma from Central Govt Employees Coordination Committee besides others. Around 350 workers from different parts of the State attended the Convention.

On Right to Strike

JOINT T U CONVENTION IN ASSAM

A State level convention of all the Central Trade Unions in Assam (barring the BMS) along with industry level federations and associations was held on

7th January at Bishnu Nirmal Bhawan at Guwahati. The Convention called upon the working people in Assam to join the countrywide General Strike

on 24th February 2004 in defence of the Right to Strike and against the anti-people economic policies of the Govt. Altogether 220 delegates

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attended the Convention.

A presidium consisting of Jiten Duarat (INTUC), M Mahanta (AITUC), Asit Dutta (CITU), Haren Dev Goswami (HMS), Paritosh Chanda (UTUC), Biren Kalita (AICCTU) and Pramod Bhagavati conducted the proceedings of the convention. Deben Bhattacharya, General Secretary, Assam State Committee of CITU placed the draft declaration of the convention, which, while denouncing the Supreme Court judgment imposing ban on Right to strike, called upon the workers to unite and defend the

right to strike through militant strike action. The Declaration also dealt on the grievous impact of the disastrous economic policies of the BJP-led NDA Govt on the life and living of the people and mounting unrest among the mass of the people against the same in the background of which attacks are being unleashed on labour rights and democratic rights of the people. The Convention also upheld the declaration adopted in the National Trade Union Convention on Right to Strike held on 26th September 2003 at New Delhi. It has welcomed

the joint decision of the central trade unions to go for countrywide General Strike on 24th February.

25 delegates from different organisations and unions took part in the deliberations on the Declaration and extended full support to the call of General Strike. The convention also decided to hold district level conventions on or before 10th February, to hold demonstrations in all district headquarters and submit memorandum on 21st February in support of the Strike call.

ONGC WORKERS PROTEST DISINVESTMENTS

The trade unions affiliated to AITUC, BMS, CITU & INTUC have jointly condemned the decision of the Government to disinvest the equity of ONGC to private sector. It may be recalled that the BJP-led NDA Government has decided to offload 10 per cent equity of ONGC and GAIL in the market. Such disinvestments is expected ONGC and GAIL to part with around Rs.12,000 crores to bail out the Government in attaining the budgeted target of resource mobilization out of selling off public sector equity.

In the meantime the Union Cabinet has also approved the selling out the cross-holding in the oil PSUs in the market. IOC has 9.62 per cent stake in

ONGC and a 4.8 holding in GAIL, ONGC in turn has a 9.11 per cent stake in IOC and a 4.82 per cent holding in GAIL. GAIL has a 2.4 per cent stake in ONGC. Now with the decision of the Cabinet these equities shall go to private sector.

At a time when the Government has already decided to privatise top profit making the oil and petroleum PSUs, the decision of the Government allowing 100 per cent equity participation by foreign capital in the down stream of oil sector, the oil sector in its entirety has been fully exposed to foreign oil MNCs. The Cabinet in its meeting on 15th January, 2004 has removed all curbs on foreign direct investment in the petroleum sector. The

Government has decided to allow 100% FDI in petroleum refineries, marketing, pipelines for oil and gas and oil exploration. Moreover, while removing the current curbs in these sectors, the Government has also permitted investments through the automatic route instead of FIPB. The automatic route is applicable in all the activities in both the up and down streams.

The ONGC unions in their joint meeting held in Mumbai on 18th January, 2004 have decided to observe 'protest day' on 9th and 10th February, 2004 by wearing black badge by the ONGC workers all over the country. On 11th February mass dharna shall be staged throughout the country.

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DURGAPUR

STEEL WORKERS OBSERVE B T R CENTENARY

As per decision of the 11th conference of CITU, the Steel workers at Durgapur took initiative of effectively celebrating the Birth Centenary year of B T Ranadive, the founder president of CITU and great visionary of the working class movement in the country. On 19th December 2004, on the commencement day of the birth centenary year, a huge procession of about 6000 people comprising the steel workers, students, youth, women

and from other walks of life traveled through the main thoroughfares of the township. The procession was decorated with big photo of BTR and placards on BTR teachings and issues before the democratic movement.

This was followed by meetings on 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd and 24th December on various subjects like unemployment, united movement, working women, workers-peasants unity etc which witnessed huge

gatherings of workers and people from other walks of life. Shyamal Chakraborty, President, West Bengal State CITU, K Hemalata, Secretary CITU, Jibon Roy, Secretary CITU, Mrinal Banerjee, Vice President SWFI and Power Minister, Govt of West Bengal and Md Amin, Secretary CITU and Labour Minister, Govt of West Bengal were the speakers on various days. In all the days, meeting was followed by cultural programmes, film-show, drama.

Haryana

FOREST WORKERS OPPOSE RETRENCHMENT MOVE

4500 daily-rated workers under Forest deptt in Haryana demonstrated throughout the State in protest against the clandestine move of the State Govt to retrench the daily rated workers working for last 15-20 years enmasse.

The State Chief Minister Mr Omprakash Chautala made announcement on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Late Chowdhry Devlal that all daily rated workers on completing three years of service on last 30th September will be made permanent. But that announcement turned out to be a mere gimmick when the concerned Forest deptt was reported to be preparing for

mass scale retrenchment of daily rated workers and switch over to contract system in stead. The Banbibhag Mazdoor Union, Haryana led by CITU in cooperation with the Ban Karmachari Sangh has already lodged protest against such retrenchment move through massive demonstration before the office of Divisional Forest Officer on 23rd December 2003. In the Second phase of struggle, the workers decided for a phased statewide demonstration before the offices of Chief Conservator of Forest and District Commissioners. Accordingly, massive demonstrations and dharnas took place at Ambala circle on

16th January, at Rohtak on 20th January, at Hissar on 22nd January and at Gurgaon on 28th January 2004. The demonstrations and dharnas have drawn participation of thousands of workers in all the places. The Union has also decided to hold a demonstration before the Haryana State Assembly on the second day of the next session. Anand Sharma, General Secretary and Bhim Singh, President of Banbibhag Mazdoor Union (CITU) has called upon the workers to carry on determined struggle to resist the retrenchment move and to join the forthcoming countrywide General Strike on 24.2.2004.

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Secret Ballot in Powergrid:

CITU UNIONS PERFORM CREDITABLY

As per a bilateral agreement, secret ballot was held in Power Grid Corporation of India (a public sector power transmission company) on 20th January, 2004. The CITU unions have performed excellently and achieved the first position with INTUC and BMS making it to a distant second and third place respectively.

In line with the organisational structure of the company and the number of workmen, 12 constituencies were identified for electing a total number of 23 representatives. The constituencies consisted of the

regional power transmission system, regional load dispatch centers and the corporate office.

Election was held for all the constituencies, except one. Due to a court order obtained by a newly registered union formed by a break away group of BMS the elections in the Northern Region - II has been stayed.

Out of the 11 constituencies with 20 seats, which went into elections, CITU unions have won 13 seats representing 10 constituencies. INTUC unions have won 3 seats from 2 constituencies, BMS unions

have 2 seats from 2 constituencies and two independent unions have won one seat each in 2 constituencies.

This is for the second time that secret ballot took place in Powergrid. In the previous elections also the CITU unions had won with overwhelming majority. In fact, this time the CITU unions have won more constituencies and more seats, indicating the increasing confidence reposed by the workers on CITU unions.

(Report by Swadesh Dev Roye)

PSU Coordination Committee Meeting

PSU WORKERS TO JOIN STRIKE ON 24th FEB

All India Coordination Committee of Public Sector Unions met on 16th January 2004 in Mumbai and resolved to fight vigorously and unitedly against the policies of the central Government to dismantle Public Sector through privatisation and closure. The meeting, attended by about 100 representatives from unions and federations of the public sector unions from all over the country, discussed the infamous judgement of the Supreme Court on Right to Strike and NDA Government's silence on the issue which hits at the root of

trade union rights, earned through years of relentless struggles.

Jibon Roy, Secretary, CITU, presented the report in the meeting which dealt on the situation facing the public sector and the national economy and its grievous impact on the workers and people. The report also stressed upon the urgency of united struggle by the public sector workers against the disastrous policies of the Govt. 25 delegates took part in the deliberation. During the discussion, various facts of the above issues were discussed.

The committee called upon the PSU workers to join and actively participate in the All India general strike on 24th February 2004, called by the Central Trade Unions. The meeting also urged upon the workers to campaign in the ensuing election so that the anti-public sector and anti-worker rulers at the centre are thrown out lock, stock and barrel.

The meeting further has decided to observe 29th January, 2004 as 'National Protest Day' by public sector workers all over the country by organising dharna, demonstration, gate meeting

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etc. as a preparatory step for the success of the 24th February strike.

The meeting, was presided by Com. Ardhendu Dakshi,

Secretary CITU and President, Steel Workers' Federation of India. The meeting was also addressed by M.K. Pandhe and Chittabrata Majumdar, President

and General Secretary of CITU besides S. Dev Roye, T.K. Rengarajan, K.L. Bajaj, and Dipankar Mukherjee, all office bearers of CITU.

Tamil Nadu Strike

NDA GOVT ENDORSES JAYALALITHA TERROR REGIME

The International Labour Organization (ILO), in response to the complaint lodged by CITU and also by Public Service International (PSI), queried the Govt. of India. In a communication dated 3rd November 2003 to ILO, the Labour Ministry, on behalf of the Govt. of India fully endorsed the highhanded actions of the Jayalalitha regime against its own employees.

The five page long communication sent by the Labour Ministry to ILO through the Indian Mission at Geneva justified each and every action of the Tamil Nadu Govt right from unilateral curtailment of pensionary and gratuity benefit, its arrogant refusal to give hearing to the representatives of the unions, mass scale arrests of the leaders and activists at midnight even before the commencement of strike, amendment ordinance of TESMA with retrospective effect to facilitate summary dismissal, followed by summary dismissal of over one lakh seventy thousand employees. At the end, the Govt of India's communication commented that

"thus it is clear from the above that the situation (in Tamilnadu) has been tackled as per the established law of the land..."

The GOI communication to ILO also cited the Indian Constitution that all the citizens are conferred with fundamental rights to freedom of speech, expression, assembly and association etc "with reasonable restrictions." In the same breath the GOI letter shamelessly endorsed the Tamilnadu Service Conduct Rules prohibiting strikes and also all kinds of meetings and rallies by the employees even after office hours and holidays in the areas adjoining the workplaces without the prior permission of the authorities. For the Govt of India, "reasonable restriction" is synonymous with "total denial of rights" so far as labour is concerned. Even the worst adversaries of the country cannot make so much mockery with the country's constitution as the Govt of India did in its communication to ILO.

The GOI communication justified invoking of TESMA on the ground of alleged "unruly behaviour" by the employees.

But even the media reports admitted that the strike was by and large peaceful and it is the police authorities which brutally tortured the peaceful dharnas by the striking employees at various parts of the State.

It is interesting to note that the GOI in the same piece of communication expressed displeasure saying that 'administration of justice in a sovereign state should not be subject to scrutiny as that amounts to breach of respect for sovereignty of the country concerned.' Perhaps the present players in governance forgot or pretend to forget that the entire procedures, methodology and system of examining the administration of justice to labour by the ILO in terms of ILO Conventions have been devised by ILO forum, of which the Govt of India is also a party as a founder member of ILO. While refuting the contention of Govt of India, as made in its communication to ILO, CITU has already written to ILO Committee on Freedom of Association urging upon them to intervene and examine the complaint lodged by CITU in the right perspective.

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

State	Sr. No.	Centre	Month		State	Sr. No.	Centre	Month	
			Oct.' 03	Nov.' 03				Oct.' 03	Nov.' 03
Andhra Pradesh	1	Gudur	476	476	Maharashtra	38	Mumbai	585	587
	2	Guntur	501	504		39	Nagpur	510	508
	3	Hyderabad	504	503		40	Nasik	532	534
	4	Visakhapatnam	490	488		41	Pune	558	564
	5	Warangal	520	521		42	Solapur	509	515
Assam	6	D.D. Tinsukia	429	434	Orissa	43	Barbil	442	443
	7	Guwahati	509	511		44	Rourkela	446	446
	8	Labac-Silchar	393	397	Punjab	45	Amritsar	440	439
	9	Mariani-Jorhat	445	446		46	Ludhiana	454	449
	10	Rangapara-Tezpur	448	451	Rajasthan	47	Ajmer	492	492
Bihar	11	Monghyr	474	484		48	Jaipur	456	457
Chhattisgarh	12	Bhillai	452	452	Tamil Nadu	49	Chennai	533	534
Gujarat	13	Ahmedabad	487	484		50	Coimbatore	495	500
	14	Bhavnagar	514	505		51	Coonoor	492	495
	15	Rajkot	465	448		52	Madurai	488	492
	16	Surat	498	483		53	Salem	486	489
	17	Vadodra	478	467		54	Tiruchirapally	573	583
Haryana	18	Faridabad	511	508	Uttar Pradesh	55	Agra	466	468
	19	Yamunanagar	475	476		56	Ghaziabad	501	495
J & K	20	Srinagar	583	587		57	Kanpur	491	485
Jharkhand	21	Jamshedpur	465	468		58	Saharanpur	466	461
	22	Jharia	409	410		59	Varanasi	517	517
	23	Kodarma	410	416	West Bengal	60	Asansol	487	490
	24	Noamundi	442	442		61	Darjeeling	435	436
	25	Ranchi-Hatia	446	451		62	Durgapur	579	576
Karnataka	26	Bangalore	481	486		63	Haldia	602	612
	27	Belgaum	544	544		64	Howrah	572	575
	28	Hubli-Dharwar	496	498		65	Jalpaiguri	437	433
	29	Mercara	478	481		66	Kolkata	549	561
Kerala	30	Alwaye	496	500		67	Raniganj	439	447
	31	Mundakayam	491	492	Chandigarh	68	Chandigarh	538	538
	32	Quilon	526	539	Delhi	69	Delhi	581	574
	33	Thiruvananthapuram	555	566	Pondicherry	70	Pondicherry	544	555
Madhya Pradesh	34	Balaghat	457	455					
	35	Bhopal	537	534					
	36	Indore	515	516					
	37	Jabalpur	504	506					
								ALL-INDIA	503
									504

Additional Series of Labour Bureau

State		Centre	October 2003	November 2003
Andhra Pradesh	1	Kethgudem		
Himachal Pradesh	2	Himachal Pradesh		
Rajasthan	3	Bhilwara		
Madhya Pradesh	4	Chhindwara		
Tripura	5	Tripura		
Goa	6	Goa		

ILO GOVERNING BODY ON EPZs IN INDIA

In response to a complaint lodged by CITU on the repression and victimization on the struggling workers of Visakhapatnam Export Processing Zone, the ILO Governing body, in which the Govt of India is also a member, has made certain concrete recommendations. Some of the recommendations are having bearing not only on the employees of VEPZ but all the Export Processing Zones (EPZs) and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the country.

In January 2002, the employees of M/s Worldwide Diamonds Mfg Ltd, an Israeli company located at Visakhapatnam EPZ had to go for united struggle under the leadership of CITU. The management, in collusion with the state administration and particularly the Development Commissioner in particular unleashed brutal terror and repression on the workers. Mass scale dismissal took place and the workers fought unitedly, braving terror and victimization. In that process CITU lodged a complaint with ILO on violation of core ILO Conventions, discrimination and victimization for just trade union activities and denial of basic trade union rights to the workers and connivance of the State administration in such unlawful activities.

The complaints were examined by ILO and the ultimately the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association had submitted its finding and recommendations, while pointing to the gross irregularities going on in VEPZ. The ILO governing body endorsed the said findings of the Committee and urged upon the Govt of India to implement the said recommendations.

The Governing Body of ILO vide its Report no GB 288 (Part II), November 2003, (para no 730 to 750) made following specific recommendations:

- 1) An independent and thorough investigation in to the happenings with the cooperation of the complainant organization
- 2) Dismissals in Worldwide Diamond Manufacturers Ltd at VEPZ were found to be on anti-union grounds and hence the concerned workers be reinstated without loss of pay.
- 3) The Govt of India to ensure that no

permission by the Labour Authorities is required for trade unions to have access to justice, and if necessary to amend the legislation accordingly.

4) The Govt of India to take all necessary steps so as to ensure that the functions of the Grievance Redressal Officers(GRO) are not performed by Deputy Development Commissioner (DDC) in the EPZ of Visakhapatnam (currently GRO and DDC are the same person) but by another independent person or body having confidence of all parties.

The recommendation regarding access to justice by the workers in EPZ/SEZ warrants full fledged trade union rights of the workers and freedom of trade unions to operate in EPZ, which at present does not exist in any of the EPZs and SEZs in the country.

Secondly, in all the EPZs and SEZs, the Development Commissioner operating under the Commerce Ministry, who is in charge of EPZ Administration and is also responsible for cropping up of grievances of the workers owing to its connivance with the employers, have been, most unscrupulously, assigned the responsibility of Labour Commissioner or the Grievance Redressal Officer.

While citing the case of VEPZ, the ILO Governing Body have recommended to change such an illogical arrangement and ensure that functions of the Grievance Redressal Officer are performed 'not by Development Commissioner' but by an "independent person or body having confidence of all the parties."

The Govt of India has not yet responded to the recommendations of the ILO governing Body they are part of the Governing Body and party to such recommendations. None of the dismissed workers have yet been reinstated. The trade unions are still obstructed to operate in EPZs and the naïve two-in-one arrangement of making the Development Commissioner operate as Labour Commissioner is still continuing in all the EPZs under NDA regime. On 7th January 2004, CITU demanded the Government to urgently implement the recommendations.

(As we observe the year long birth centenary of Com. B.T. Ranadive, 'The Working Class' is dedicating this page in the successive issues to reproduce some of the inspiring writings of BTR. Here we give below what Com. BTR wrote paying a fitting tribute to Karl Marx, on his death centenary. - Editor)

B.T.RANADIVE ON "TEACHINGS OF KARL MARX"

"The working men all over the world will honour the memory of this great teacher of theirs who taught them the alphabet of revolution and socialism and watched and guided their faltering steps during the infancy of their movement. His theory soon became a material force arming the working class with a revolutionary arsenal to battle against capitalist exploitation. Carried forward and enriched by Lenin, it revealed its gigantic transformatory character, changing the face of the world within a few years. In the Communist Manifesto Marx and Engels gave the working class its great battle cry-"Workers of the World Unite. You have nothing to loose but your chains. You have the whole world to conquer!" This inspiring call for proletarian internationalism has continued to guide the working class movement since then. It called upon the working class to fight all unjust and exploitative wars launched by the capitalist class.

Marx analysing the laws of capitalist society in his monumental work Capital, saw the inevitable collapse of capitalism and the necessity for society to make a transition to socialism. He taught the working class that their exploitation and misery, the misery of all toiling humanity will not end without ending private property in all means of production and socialising them.

Marx taught the working class that the objective of socialism cannot be achieved without a social revolution, without deposing the capitalists and other possessing classes from political power, without the working class taking political power in its hands. The working class must always act in alliance with other toilers to ensure success. To organise the working class to wage its battle for emancipation, he declared tht it was necessary to form a distinct political party of the working class. A resolution of the International Workingmen's Association passed at the instance of Marx says, "In its struggle against the collective power of the possessing classes the proletariat can act as a class only by constituting itself a distinct political party, opposed to all the old political parties formed by the possessing classes."

Karl Marx was an active revolutionary and organiser of the working class movement. He was the founder of the First International organisation of the working class. The International Working Men's Association. He guided its policies, rectified the mistakes of the young movement and gave personal advice to workers of several countries. He paid attention to all aspects of the awakening working class movement and attached great importance to the developing trade union struggles.

Marx criticised the narrow-mindedness of some trade union leaders - the British trade union leaders- and while recognising the importance of the struggle for immediate economic demands asked the unions to look beyond and participate in the general social and democratic movement of their times. "Too exclusively bent upon the local and immediate struggles with capital, the trade unions have not yet fully understood their power of acting against the system of wage slavery itself. Apart from their original purposes, they must now learn to act deliberately as organising centres of the working class in the broad interest of its complete emancipation. They must aid every social and political movement tending in that direction. They must look carefully after the interests of our worst paid trades, such as the agricultural labourers, rendered powerless by exceptional circumstances."

It almost appears as if Marx is laying his finger on the present day weaknesses of India's trade union movement. The indifference of organised unions to the interest of the unorganised workers, above all the agricultural labours of our country-is patent. Also there is lack of wholesale participation in the democratic and political movements and upheavals of our time. The danger from imperialist conspiracies against the country's freedom is hardly realised and consciousness of internationalism is weak.

(The Working Class, Vol. 12 No. 7, March 1983)