



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

CITU Calls for Radical Improvement in P.F. Scheme

(The Government of India appointed the Employees Provident Fund Review Committee under the Chairmanship of Shri R. Ramanujam, General Secretary, INTUC, The CITU Secretary M.K. Pandhe and Hrishi Banerjee appeared before the Committee on August 1, 1980 and presented a memorandum. We are reproducing below the full text of the memorandum with headings and emphasis added.-Ed.)

THE Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) thanks the Chairman and the Members of the Employees Provident Fund Review Committee for giving us an opportunity to place our views before the Committee on such an important subject concerning the interest of our working class. The CITU hopes that the Committee will give serious consideration to the views expressed and suggestions made in this Memorandum so that necessary improvements can be incorporated in the scheme in the interest of several lakhs of members of the Provident Fund Organisation.

Implementation of Act being Evaded

The present Act covers factories, employing 20 or more persons or any establishment employing 20 or more persons, which has been notified by the Government. However, the experience of the implementation of the Act clearly shows that several employers have been able to evade implementation of the Act by utilising loopholes in our legal framework. This has resulted in exclusion of large number of workers in some industries from the purview of the Act. We are giving below some instances of industries where only a small proportion of the total employees is covered by the Act :

Industry/ Estab.	No. of workers employed	Employees covered during 1977-78.
Road-motor Transport Establishment: Over 12 lakhs		3,72,716
Bidi industry: 30 lakhs		3,99,513

There have been some industries where several lakhs of workers are employed but the coverage under the Act is very small, e.g. 84,171 hotel employees, 19,404 restaurant employees and 10,813 canteen employees have been covered by the P.F. Scheme. The employment, however, runs into several lakhs. There have been several high profit earning establishments who are in a

position to introduce the P.F. Scheme but are not only fully covered because of the limit of the

Greetings to Readers

On the occasion of 'The Working Class' entering into tenth year of publication we convey our warmest greetings to our Readers.

20 provided in the Act. For instance, only 4424 employees in profit-earning travel agencies are covered under the scheme. Though Cost & Works Accountants have been covered under the Act as early as in 1964, not a single employee has been able to get the benefit of the P.F. Scheme. Such cases can be multiplied if we go into the record of the P.F. Organisation. CITU is therefore, of the opinion that it is necessary to review the existing provisions in this regard so that more establishments could be covered under the Scheme. We, therefore, suggest that units employing ten or more persons should be covered under the Act and the Central P. F. Commissioner should be empowered to cover certain industries or establishments in which the employment may be even less than 10. This provi-

sion would enable many more workers to get coverage under the scheme.

Gross Misuse

At present the workers are covered under the scheme if they work for a period of more than 120 days within a period of six months with the same employer even though employed for intermittent spells. This provision is grossly misused by several managements to deprive large number of workers from the scheme, particularly in industries where employer can terminate the service of a worker at his sweet will. Therefore, we suggest that the law should be so amended as to include a worker who has worked in the unit for more than a month. This will enable the workers who cannot get job with the same employer for a longer period to derive benefit from the scheme. In case of such workers even if the employer is changed, it should be possible for a worker to continue remaining as a member of the P. F. Organisation despite intermittent breaks in a service. Whatever work a worker has done for any employer should be treated as reasonable work for payment of contribution by the employer to the P. F. Scheme.

Implementation of this proposal may require a more systematic and wide spread administrative apparatus and may necessitate improvement in the working of the scheme in the interest of such unorganised sections of workers.

At present large number of workers who are employed in building and construction industries where the system of contract labour is quite widespread, the workers are unable to get advantage of the scheme. We feel it necessary to provide some sort of social security to these workers though in an extremely rudimentary form.

We also consider that whenever the employers pay retrenchment compensation to the workers they should be compelled to pay P. F. Contributions on the retrenchment compensation also. This is necessary because during the period of unemployment the workers should get the benefit of the scheme, though for a part of period.

Huge Accumulation of Arrears

The problem of huge accumulation of arrears has been raised by the trade union movement on several occasions with the P. F. authorities and the Government. However, the accumulations go on swelling still further, causing great loss to the workers. What is most astounding is that the employers quite often not only fail to pay their own contributions but also fail to deposit the contribu-

tions deducted from the wages of the workers. The total arrears of the E.P.F. Organisation have already reached a colossal figure of Rs. 30 crores which is likely to increase still further if proper steps are not taken to recover them. A large part of the accumulated arrears may not be realised at all and the workers will be penalised in those units for no fault of their own. The present penal provision of simple imprisonment of six months and a fine which may extent to Rs. 1000/- or with both, hardly acts as a deterrent against non-payment of the contributions by the employers. Quite often the employers find it convenient and profitable not to pay the contributions and face time-consuming prosecutions. We, therefore, feel that the punishment should be more stringent so that no employer may think of withholding the contributions at any time.

We tried to find out how many employers have been jailed during the last 27 years of the working of the Act. But we came across only one solitary case of an employer of a small unit having been imprisoned for defaulting the P. F. contributions and that too for one day only. We are of the opinion that imprisonment must be the first punishment for non-payment of the P. F. contributions. If the employer does not pay his own contributions that he may be given simple imprisonment for a period extending up to 5 years. However, if he fails to deposit the workers' contributions then the punishment should be rigorous because it is a highly unsocial act committed by the employer by not depositing the contribution of the workers with the P.F. Organisation.

Regarding the fine imposed on the employers the present provision of Rs. 1000/- is just symbolic. We are of the opinion that the fine should be equivalent to the amount in default.

At present the P. F. Organisation wakes up only after one year or after the default has been committed. This poses problems in recovering the arrears. It is our suggestion that as soon as the default is located in a month, the prosecution proceedings should be commenced against the employer. To make the matter quicker the the registered trade unions working in the defaulting undertakings should be empowered to prosecute the employer if he does not pay the contributions even for a period of one month.

At present the employers have resorted to the tactics of making the unit sick by diverting huge funds of the company to some other undertakings, as a result of this even if the assets of the company

are taken over, the liabilities far exceed the assets with the result that the Govt. is unable to realise the P. F. arrears. We, therefore, suggest that the Act should provide for attachment of the property and other assets of the delinquent employer so that the P. F. Organisation does not suffer from the malaise of arrears of contributions.

A Serious Lacuna

At present if an employer fails to deposit his contributions as well as the contributions of the workers with E. P. F. Organisations, the workers are deprived of the benefits of the scheme though their contributions were deducted from their wages every month. This is a very serious lacuna of the present scheme which penalises the workers for the crime committed by the employer. We, therefore, suggest that if the Govt. fails to realise the contributions from the employers, the workers should not be deprived of the benefits under the scheme.

Negative Rate of Returns

Due to galloping inflation and the sky-rocketing price level of essential commodities the workers get substantially less return in real terms in relation to the contributions they have made to the P. F. Organisations. This aspect of the working of the scheme was very clearly brought to light by Shri Man Mohan Singh, Labour and Employment Adviser to the Government of India, in a Paper in a seminar on social security and national development, held in New Delhi from 19-30 September, 1977. Since the Paper is self-explanatory, we are enclosing herewith a copy of the said Paper for information of the Committee so that it can look into the aspect of erosion of the intrinsic value of money deposited by the member of the E.P.F. organisation. Shri Man Mohan Singh after giving detailed statistical data in this connection has concluded-

“It is evident that the subscribers have not only been getting the interest even at lower rate prescribed for them, they have not been getting even the deposits in real terms they made. Negative rate of return in both P.F. Schemes is obvious.”

It is, therefore, suggested that the rate of interest on the P.F. Contributions should be more than 10% which is normally the rate of long term deposits in the banking industry. In Post Office Savings Bank Account the interest rate for long term deposits is already 10½% p.a.

Streamline the PF Organisation

Several workers have been complaining about the inordinate delay in getting back their money

after retirement. Sometimes the delay is as one year which also breeds corruption in the organisation. If a worker dies then his dependants have to face several difficulties in getting the P.F. contributions of the deceased worker. It is, therefore, necessary to streamline the organisation for payment of full amount to the workers as soon as possible so that the workers do not face difficulties after retirement in receiving full amount of the P.F. If a provision is made in the Act to compel the employers to give advance intimation of at least 3 months to the P.F. Organisation about the retirement of worker, it may enable the P.F. Organisation to expedite payment of the P.F. contributions to the worker or his dependants.

Give More Representation to TUs on Board

The Statutory Committee under the E.P.F. Act at apex level as well as the State Levels should be properly re-organised and the representatives of the workers should be given more voice in running this organisation. At present the Board of Trustees of the E.P.F. Organisation is only an advisory body. We suggest that this body should be given powers of supervision also so that proper implementation of the scheme is ensured. We have learnt that in some States holding of meetings of the Regional Advisory Committees is merely formal though they normally meet once in six month; at times they transact business in about 2 hours-time. One can imagine what type of functioning such bodies may be making. It is necessary to ensure that these bodies are made more meaningful and effective. The union representatives should also take more interest in the working of the scheme so that they can play a crucial role in improvement of the scheme. At the present out of 33 members of the Central Board of Trustees, only 6 are from the Trade Unions which only highlights the bureaucratic domination of this organisation. It is necessary to increase the representation of the trade unions on the Central Board of Trustees as well as on Regional Board of Trustees.

At present our organisation is not associated with any of these committees, either at the State level or at the Central Level and we practically have no say in the working of the scheme. This situation should be remedied at an early date so that major Central Trade Unions are given adequate representation on the Board of Trustees of the E.P.F. Organisation.

The 10,000 employees working in the P.F. Organisation have a great role to play in making the scheme successful. But present scheme does not

give proper recognition to their services and does not take into account the suggestions of the employees of the organisation for improving the scheme. Though the organisation has been further burdened with working of the Family Pension Scheme since 1971 and Deposit Linked Insurance Scheme in 1976, and the number of subscribers has also gone up substantially, but there has been no corresponding rise in the number of employees in the organisation. The Annual Report of the P.F. Organisation does not give any information regarding the strength of the employees in the organisation. The employees have several grievances which are not being properly attended to by the Government. The recent Committee constituted to go into the question of emoluments and working conditions of the P.F. Orgn. employees did not include a nominee of the employees. Even when the regional offices are opened in different centres, as demanded by the trade unions,

the difficulties faced by the P.F. employees are not properly appreciated and sufficient efforts are lacking to ameliorate their difficulties. Even the employees are complaining about lack of adequate furniture and seating arrangements in the offices. The question of penal transfers, victimisation of union leaders is also continuing in the organisation which also affects the morale of the employees. We, therefore, suggest that a representative of the P.F. employees should be taken on the Board of Trustees at the Central as well as at the State level so that they can also contribute to the improvement of the scheme.

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions hopes that the Review Committee would consider our suggestions sympathetically and submit suitable recommendations so that there can be substantial improvement in the working of the scheme.

Total Strike Against Karnataka Bill

THE statewide one day general strike called by the joint action committee of all trade unions except INTUC to protest against the proposed Karnataka Essential Services Maintenance Bill on August 18 brought to complete halt all activities in the industrial sector of the State in almost all the centres.

Most of the two lakh organised workers in Bangalore responded to the call. The public sector industries remained closed including Hindustan Aeronautics, BHEL, HMT and IIT. Trading and commercial activity was at a standstill. Public transport was off the roads.

To frustrate the strike the State police attacked the peaceful workers at a number of places and resorted to lathi-charging and teargassing. Over a hundred workers have been arrested by the police. The State Committee of the CITU said that the Government must understand the need of the workers and withdraw the Bill. It also demanded the immediate release of the

workers.

Earlier, a joint statement issued on August 17 in New Delhi by CITU, AITUC, HMS and BMS warmly congratulated the working class of Karnataka. It

recalled in this connection that the peasants in the villages and consumers in the urban areas of Karnataka had recently mounted a powerful struggle. It assured the support of their organisations in this significant struggle.

Modinagar Strike

Central Govt. Urged to Intervene

M.K. Pandhe, Secretary, CITU, Y.D. Sharma, Secretary, AITUC, S. Venkataram, President, HMS and O.P. Aghi, Secretary, BMS, have issued the following statement on August 17.

The heroic struggle of the 15,000 textile workers of Modinagar in UP has entered the 11th week, with the Government refusing to effectively intervene and settle the dispute. It is amazing that the workers have to struggle at such great cost for implementation of an award of the former P.M. Sri Charan Singh.

The repression let loose by the employer and the police knows no bounds. Hundreds have been suspended and prosecuted and the workers are not

paid wages for almost 5 months.

We congratulate the Trade Union organisations in UP for taking up the cause of the Modinagar workers and assure them of our full support.

It is amazing that the FICCI President Mr. Modi who while discussing with the PM on industrial relations advocated industrial harmony should take recourse to repression of his own workers at Modinagar. We urge upon the Central Government to intervene in the dispute so that this longdrawn struggle is settled without any further delay.

We appeal to the Modinagar textile workers to carry forward their struggle unitedly till the demands are achieved.

CITU Greet Assam Working Class

THE Assam State Committee of the CITU met in Gauhati on August 15 and was presided over by Suren Hazarika President, State Committee. The meeting condoled the death of Dinen Bhattacharya and Tarun Sengupta, members of the CITU Working Committee. It condemned the brutal murder of Madan Deka (SFI), Mabhab Barman (Kisan Sabha), Powali Agarwalla, and Badal Saha in the recent past and demanded stringent punishment to the murderers and compensation to the berieved families.

The Vice-President of the State Committee, Achintya Bhattacharjee, in his inaugural speech explained the political and economic situation of the country as well as nature and character of the current agitation of Assam in the context of the working class struggles.

The General Secretary of the State Committee, Amal Ghosh Dastidar, noted in his review of the past one year that the current Assam agitation could not divide the industrial workers so much as it has affected the middle class organisations. He greeted

the CITU followers who withstood heroically all sorts of attacks and humiliations in defending the working class ideology of CITU. In spite of the most unfavourable circumstances the CITU unions with their limited strength had conducted a number of factorywise struggles achieving remarkable gains in most cases; concluded a number of new wage agreements, gained higher quantum of bonus over the previous year, successfully launched statewide observance of April 21, the All India Demands Day.

The General Secretary told that in spite of the fact that the agitationist observed First May as the 'White Flag Day' and physically assaulted our comrades, the May Day was observed at several places successfully and jointly and industrial workers abstained from duties. He noted that even trade union leaders were physically assaulted by the agitationists, for observing the May Day. The President and General Secretary and seven activists of Silighat Jute Mills union were severely beaten up and they had to be

CITU Office Ransacked in Gauhati

THE office of the State Committee of the CITU situated at Uzanbazar, Gauhati, was attacked by some miscreants on August 17 at about 5 PM. They damaged some office, files and papers and record player and removed the signboard.

In a statement on August 18, the General Secretary of the Assam State Committee of the CITU condemned the attack and appealed to all democratic people in the state in general and working class in particular to raise their voice against such attacks

on democratic organisations. It is the fourth time when the office has been attacked.

The State CITU also condemned the attacks on 'Kalakhar' an Assamese Weekly and on the public meeting organised by the Coordination Committee of Democratic Students' and Youth Organisations on the same day. It firmly believed that these three attacks were inseparable and well planned. The State Committee demanded of the Government that the miscreants should be brought to book and punished.

hospitalised.

Amal Ghosh Dastidar said that the managements of plywood industry, Assam Cooperative Jute Mill and Buildworth taking advantage of the present movement retrenched hundreds of workers, including 200 of minority community and deprived them of their new wages due after the expiry of previous wage agreement and derecognised some CITU unions. In the meantime four tea gardens left the fold of INTUC and joined CITU. He also explained the stand of CITU on current agitation.

The meeting in its resolutions condemned the attacks on Silighat Jute and Buildworth workers, demanded new pay scales for engineering and plywood workers, withdrawal of blockade from plywood industry, reinstatement of workers victimised during last one year and inclusion of CITU in the wage board for plantation workers.

The State Committee also decided to hold the State Council and two special State Conventions for tea and motor workers, publication of new bulletin and to send delegations to All India Jute Workers Conference and Working Women Convention. The meeting called upon the CITU unions to strengthen CITU organisation and to enable CITU to play its role more effectively in the coming portentous days.

Tripura Fund

THE General Body meeting of the Nasik Workers Union (CITU), Nasik, Maharashtra, held on July 30 while expressing solidarity with the left and democratic forces of the North Eastern Region facing serious onslaught due to secessionist movement, announced that we shall not allow the people of Tripura to feel alone and neglected and sent a cheque of Rs. 1,000 for their help.

Working Women Committee Call for Joint Action

TO review the work of last 5 months since its March meeting in New Delhi and discuss the programme of activities for the immediate future, the All India Coordination Committee of the Working Women met in Jaipur on August 9 and 10.

The meeting noted that there is a lack of understanding and neglect by unions of the special problems faced by women. One such problem is sexual harassment in jobs, by officers in particular, making work a daily ordeal. Such questions can be tackled only at the union level. These are apart from problems common to men and women as workers. All this has again underlined the need for the Coordination Committees and one of their major tasks.

All India Coordination Committee decided to address all trade union centres and other trade union federations requesting them to set up special committees within the unions to deal with the problems of women

workers and employees in their establishments. It also decided to organise an All India Working Women Convention in November 1980 with the cooperation of other central trade unions and women organisation. The Committee has also called upon the coordination committees wherever they exist to run campaigns to explain to and mobilise working women to not only become members of their respective trade unions but also to actively participate in them, on the basis of the understanding, that their special problems as women workers can be solved as part of general trade union and democratic demands of the working class. Equally they should demand and fight for requisite representation in trade union committees at all levels of the organisation.

Reports also showed that there has been tremendous revulsion and anger among working women as amongst the women in general, at the growing incidence of rape and

outrages on women, the most notorious of which was the shameful incident in Bhagpat. The meeting called upon the working women to fight against all such incidents with special emphasis on criminal involvement of the police using police stations for these heinous crimes. Another major problem faced by the working women is continuing discrimination in terms of employment, wages, promotion and training etc.

At the end of the meeting, a public meeting of the women was held in Mazdoor Nagar Kuchi Basti, attended by over 800 women. Some women had come from Kishengarh, Udaipur and Beawar. S. Meena, a tribal leader from Udaipur who presided over, spoke about the special problems of tribal women. Kanchan Sharma explained the decisions of the Committee. Ahilya Rangnekar and Susheela Gopalan, MP, addressed the meeting. Saraswati from Temilnadu and Rukamini from Bhilai congratulated the women for their struggle. 'Netani' from Kuchi Basti Federation called on women to unite and struggle.

West Bengal Newsletter

Big Victory for National Tobacco Workers

The management of the National Tobacco Company (owned by the monopoly house of the Goenkas) illegally retrenched 1180 workers of their Agarpara factory during the Emergency in 1975. After the Lok Sabha election in 1977, the CITU-affiliated N.T.C. Mazdoor Union led a united movement for the reinstatement of the retrenched workers. As a result of the movement, the management was forced to reinstate the workers in batches and up till

March this year 533 workers had been reinstated.

At a bipartite meeting held on 27th July last, between the management and representatives of the three Unions in the factory the management agreed to take back all the remaining workers within the month of August.

Workers and Employees of Bhartiya Win their Demands

The management of the Bhartiya Electric Steel Co. of Calcutta declared an illegal lock-out after the workers and employees submitted their charter of demands. Their

demands included promotion, production bonus, leave travel allowance, employment for a relation of retired workers etc. Led by the Co-ordination Committee of the CITU and AITUC Unions and the Staff Association, the workers and employees unitedly fought against the illegal lock-out for 79 days. The lock-out was withdrawn on 7th August last after an agreement was signed by the representatives of the three unions and the management at the office of the Deputy Labour Commissioner. The management had to come down and accept most of

[On Page Seven]

Water Transport Workers to Prepare for Movement

THE meeting of the Working Committee of the Water Transport Workers Federation of India held at Haldia (West Bengal) on 24th and 25th August expressed its concerns at the stalemate in bipartite wage negotiation in port and dock industry and called upon the workers to prepare for the joint struggle to press the authorities to accept a decent wage standard for the port and dock workers. M. M. Lawrence presided over the meeting.

Consequent to the court order obtained by the BMS Federation that its representatives should be permitted to participate in the wage negotiations as an observer a stalemate has been created. The Government and the other Federations has challenged the Court Orders. The Government of India have also been adopting dilatory tactics in negotiations which is causing strong resentment among the port and dock workers. The Working Committee of the Federation therefore feel that without a broadbased movement of the workers the Government will not give up the attitude.

K. K. Roy Ganguly, General Secretary of the Federation gave a report on the implementation of the programme chalked out by the second Conference of the Federation at Cochin. The programme was by and large implemented by the unions which generated enthusiasm among the workers. The Federation could expand its activities during the last 4 months and the port authorities resorted to vindictive action against the activists of the Federation in Mangalore and Tuticorin. In Bombay the Federation activists had to face gangster attacks of the hiring of the management.

Members from different centres gave reports of their activities who also criticised the discriminatory treatment given to the affiliates of the Federation. The leadership of HMS, INTUC and AITUC want only dialogue across the table without creating any pressure from below.

M. K. Pandhe, Secretary CITU, explained the experience of wage negotiations in other industries and pointed out the need for combining the negotiation above with the mass movement below. He emphasised the task of persuading other Federations to launch a joint movement to achieve the Charter of Demands. At the same time it is also necessary to understand the importance of the independent activity of the Federation.

By a resolution the meeting condemned the recent steps of the port authorities of giving the contract of supply of mobile equipment to contractors. It further condemned further steps of containerisation and mechanisation leading to further reduction of job potential of the industry.

The meeting adopted a resolution expressing concern at the rising prices of essential commodities and demanded strong action to bring down the price level. By another resolution the meeting criticised the recent bonus ordinance and decided to launch a signature campaign demanding bonus as a deferred wage to all the port and dock workers.

The meeting adopted resolutions on the situation in Assam and Tripura and on recent communal riots and called upon the working class to fight the

disruptive and secessionist elements and their conspiracies at the behests of imperialists.

The meeting decided to organise education programme of maritime workers in co-operation with I.L.O.

The meeting supported the struggle of Indian Seamen to achieve their Charter of Demands and condemned the patronage given by the Government of India to the some unions.

A well attended public meeting was organised to explain the decision of the Working Committee which was addressed by Comrades M. M. Lawrence, K. P. S. Menon, Thambi, Dinesh Jobanputra, Lakhan Seth and others.

West Bengal...

[From Page Six]

the demands. At a gate meeting held after the signing of the agreement, the workers and employees were addressed by the leaders of the three unions.

Under the agreement, 20 per cent workers will get promotion every two years (in place of 3 per cent), production bonus was raised by Rs. 70, the workers and employees will get additional Rs. 100 as L.T.A. The management was also forced to re-introduce the system of employing a near relation of a worker after his retirement.

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Reign of Terror in Border Road Organisation : CITU Complains to ILO

A virtual reign of terror is operating in Border Roads Organisation, a body under the Ministry of Transport and Shipping, Govt. of India. Denial of fundamental rights, confiscation of union funds, detention without trial for long periods, detaining trade union workers and leaders in military custody and treating them like prisoners of war have become common features. In a communication to the Director General, International Labour Organisation (ILO), Geneva, P. Ramamurti, General Secretary of CITU, has brought these and many other facts to his notice and has appealed to this international forum to intervene so that democratic rights of the workers are restored in this organisation.

Discriminating Regulations

Border Roads Development Board was set up in 1960 for the development of road systems, specially for the broder and hilly areas of the country. On 20 November 1969, the terms and conditions of service of the employees were revised. They were subjected to the provisions of the Central Civil Service Rules, 1965 as amended from time to time alongwith certain provisions of the Army Act 1950 and Army Rules 1954 for the purpose of discipline.

Obviously, the application of Army Rules to civilian employees is in itself an arbitrary act. In the name of discipline, the authorities have indiscriminately tried 95 per cent of the cases under the Army Act thereby not giving them a fair trial. It should be noted that none of the civilian employees in Defence Services

or its allied bodies are subjected to the Army Act for the sake of discipline. Therefore, it is surprising why the Border Roads Organisation should be discriminated against.

Discord

The key appointments are manned by army personnel who get many benefits and privileges denied to the BRO employees doing the same job. They can not be tried for offence punishable under Civil Service Regulations. Thus the BRO employees are not considered equal before law, which is a fundamental right. The influx of the army officers in the BRO for middle and top positions has resulted in

stagnation of promotional avenues of civilian employees. These disparities have created discord between the majority of civilian employees and a limited number of army top brass.

Memorandum

Having exhausted all the forms of seeking redressal in vain, the employees formed an All India Border Roads Employees Association at Tezpur (Assam) on 15th August 1978. They elected its Office-bearers and decided to co-ordinate all the Border Roads Workers scattered all over the country for getting their legitimate rights. They put their memorandum of demands

before the Government through B.R.O's, Deputy Secretary on 22 September 1979. Their main demands are—recognition of the Association, better-living conditions, better scales, security in service and better pensionary benefits.

Employees Treated like War Prisoners

In retaliation, the authorities ransacked the Association Office on 14 December 1979 and took away important documents and cash. They also raided the house of R. Viswan, the General Secretary of the Association to arrest him in vain. Other important office-bearers of the Association, including its Presi-

dent, Vice-President and many Executive members, were arrested and beaten. On 15th December, the employees staged a peaceful demonstration in front of the Chief Engineer's Office and demanded the release of their arrested colleagues. The Chief Engineer, Brigadier M. S. Gosain, called the police to have the employees arrested. The police refused to arrest them because they were not violating law and order. The Chief Engineer then called the army and got 355 employees arrested. They were taken to a place 50 kms. away from Tezpur and detained in condemned cells like prisoners of war for weeks and months without basic amenities

like food, water and lighting.

Following the arrests, the employees all over BRO Units struck work demanding the release of their arrested colleagues in Assam. They shared the same consequences. They were arrested. Their womenfolk were raped in their absence. Many children died because of the non-availability of proper medicines and parental care. The General Secretary and seven other office-bearers have been forced to go underground as arrest warrants have been issued against them.

The CITU has called upon the ILO to see to it that this reign of terror comes to an end and the democratic rights of the workers are restored forthwith.

Fire in Sitaldasji Colliery : Life, Property in Peril

DUE to bad mining and negligence of mines safety rules there often occurs widespread fire, subsidence and gas hazards at different mines, threatening the life and property of the people of the adjoining villages and towns. The smoke and smut emitting from the mines has caused a great peril to the health and hygiene of the people of the locality, vomiting tendency and lungs congestion are on rapid increase.

Heinous Crime : The callous mining authorities have abused all laws and norms to boost up production and in the process encouraged all sorts of violations. The disregard to all safety laws inevitably resulted in general massacre of the life and property. There are many examples to support this and the recent fire in Sitaldasji Colliery is the glaring example of such heinous crimes on the part of the Eastern Coalfield Ltd.

(ECL) authorities at Raniganj Coal Belt area,

Danger : The Sitaldasji Colliery's recent fire leapt up 200 feet visible from a distance of five kilometres. Many villages and other collieries lying within a radius of five kilometres are faced with the danger of being engulfed by the fire. The authorities seemed to have taken no steps to arrest the fire from spreading. Only a halfhearted belated attempt has been made to cover the flames from the surface, but it continues to burn underground and is fast spreading in the nearby areas. Thus the whole area is under danger of fire, explosion and subsidence and no one knows when the concealed fire will flame up again with redoubled ferocity and bring about the unprecedented devastation in its wave.

In Vain : Times without number, the Colliery Mazdoor Sabha of India (CITU) drew the

attention of the ECL authorities to this problem of checking underground fire, subsidence and gas hazards by taking immediate and adequate steps in the form of strict safety rules that is full and complete sand stowing, providing emergency measures to arrest continuance and spreading of fire, etc But all in vain. The accidents, roof falls, sudden fire, gas explosion, are progressively on the increase. Despite their occasional tall talks about adoption of safety measures, the vast area of Raniganj Coal Belt has been, of late, declared unsafe for human habitation by the authorities concerned. But they themselves seemed to be least concerned for the well-being of the population. Had they been least conscious of the gravity of the situation and their responsibility in the matter, they would not have been so callous and indifferent to such a grave and fatal situation.

Demand : With all concern for the toiling masses in the area, Santosh Datta, Secretary, CMSI, has appealed to all concerned to take necessary steps to right the wrongs in all affairs in the coal-field and fight the menace of destruction on war footing. In view of the gravity of the situation, he has demanded that

a Court of Enquiry be instituted to go into the cause of such mischievous fire, to fix up responsibility for the same and suggest measures to arrest such recurrence of fire or gas explosion in the mines and to find out measures to safeguard the life of the people of the adjoining villages and the miners.

HSCL : Stalemate in Negotiations

A stalemate has been reached in bipartite wage negotiations in Hindustan Steelworks Construction Ltd. due to the attitude of some central trade unions particularly the INTUC.

The CITU always insisted for secret ballot for deciding the representation of different trade unions on the bipartite forum. While the INTUC opposed it, the AITUC said that it was not practicable in HSCL. After some days, it was agreed upon during talks among central trade unions to constitute a bipartite forum with 5 representatives each of

CITU and INTUC, 3 each of AITUC and BMS, 2 of HMS and representatives of 3 independent unions.

Soon after the constitution of the forum opposition came up from differant TUS particularly from INTUC and HMS. The INTUC even bycotted the forum. However, a joint charter of demands was submitted by the CITU, HMS, AITUC and BMS.

The informal talks on 3 occasions in New Delhi proposed that the joint forum should only consist of CITU, HMS, INTUC

[On Page Ten]

Bonus Ordinance Below Expectations.

P Ramamurti, M. P., General Secretary, Centre of Indian Trade Unions, has issued the following statement on August 23 :

The spokesmen of the Govt. including some Ministers, through their statements had created an impression to the effect that the Bonus Act would be reviewed thoroughly, which had roused hopes amongst the workers. But the Ordinance has belied their expectations.

The Ordinance as far as the minimum 8.33% is concerned, has made it a permanent feature in respect of the industries which were covered earlier and thus the principle of deferred wage has been accepted to this extent. But its coverage has not been extended further and there is nothing new in this though the organised trade union movement had been demanding coverage to all workers. The ceiling on bonus which has been maintained in the ordinance means that the workers are deprived of their due share to the value added by their labour, while the management are free to take the lion's share thereof, as no ceiling on profit or dividend has been imposed.

The CITU urges upon the Govt. to reconsider their decision and calls upon the working class to build up a powerful united movement for extension of coverage and removal of ceiling on bonus.

Editorial Board

B T. Ranadive (Chairman),

**P. Ramamurti, Manoranjan Roy,
Niren Ghosh, Sudhin Kumar,**

M.K. Pandhe (Editor)

Third Tamilnadu CITU Conference in September

THE third Conference of the Tamilnadu State Committee of the CITU will be held at Thiruchirapalli, a centre of many trade union battles, from 18th to 21st September. The State Committee met on August 9 and 10 at Madras with K. Ramani, MLA, in Chair and reviewed the preparations being made for the Conference. The meeting gave a call to all the affiliated unions to make the Conference a success and mobilise people for the mass rally on the last day of the Conference.

As a part of the campaign on the Conference a Flag Day will be observed on September 5 when red flags will be hoisted and gate meetings will be organised. The Committee also called upon the working class to participate in anti-price rise campaign. It adopted several resolutions on the problems of the workers.

HSCL : Stalemate in Negotiations

[From Centre Page]
and AITUC. Since INTUC was demanding more seats than CITU, the problem of seats could not be solved. AITUC almost sided with INTUC.

In a final meeting on August 2, while CITU proposed secret ballot the AITUC suggested the composition as INTUC-7, CITU-5, AITUC-5, HMS-3. The CITU strongly objected this since it does not reflect individual organisational strength. The INTUC is trying to take the advantage of current political position and AITUC is helping it. The management may leave the matter to the Government

and INTUC will pressurise the Government for favour.

Under the circumstances to bring pressure on the Government and the management, the CITU has called upon its unions to raise the following issues through HSCL workers movement: joint forum in HSCL on the basis of secret ballot, withdraw termination orders against 5 TU functionaries at Hyderabad, stop contract labour system and work through regular employees, no retrenchment of workers, and stop malpractices and corruption in HSCL. Next meeting of the HSCL unions will take place at Cannanore on September 15 to consider the joint programme of All India movement.

Comrade Subrid Mullick Chowdhury

Comrade Subrid Mullick Chowdhury, Vice President CITU and a prominent T.U. Leader of West Bengal breathed his last on 23rd August in Calcutta due to severe heart attack.

Com. Chowdhury joined the national movement in thirties and became a close associate of Subhash Chandra Bose in Forward Block. Later joined the trade union movement and was a member of the Central Council of AITUC for several years. In the foundation conference of the CITU he was elected as Vice-President, a post he held till his death.

He was twice elected to the West Bengal Legislative Assembly and was elected to Rajya Sabha for one term.

Com. Chowdhury was General Secretary of the Forward Block (Marxist) for several years. He was also Vice-President of All India Kisan Sabha.

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions and The Working Class express their deep sense of sorrow at the untimely death of Com. Subrid Mullick Chowdhury and convey their heartfelt condolences to the West Bengal State Committee of CITU and the bereaved members of his family.

Forward to General Council Meeting at Cannanore

AS announced earlier, the General Council of the CITU will meet at Cannanore from 11th to 14th September, 1980. Since this is the first General Council meeting after 4th Conference of CITU at Madras last year, the meeting will review the activities of the CITU during the last one year and take appropriate decisions for further actions in defence of working class.

The Reception Committee at Cannanore with C. Kannan as the Chairman has already commenced preparations for the General Council meeting and to receive the members. Industry-wise meetings of the road transport, electricity, plantations, bidi and other industries have been fixed for September 10, while the unions working in construction and erection industry will meet on 15th September. The Central Office of the CITU will start functioning at Cannanore on September 10.

Delegations Abroad

THE Confederation of Trade Unions of Yugoslavia is holding the Second Yugoslav Asian Seminar for representatives of the Asian Trade Union Organisations from September 29 to October 13, 1980. On behalf of the CITU C. Kannan, Vice-President CITU, will attend the seminar.

The World Federation of Trade Unions is organising the World Parliament of people for Peace in Sofia (Bulgaria) from 23rd to 27th September. On behalf of the CITU, S. Suryanarayana Rao, President Karnataka State Committee of CITU will attend the meeting.

Successful Kerala Bandh

IN response to the call given by CITU and some other central trade unions, the workers and the employees went on a day's total strike on August 18 to protest against the Centre's discrimination against Kerala. The general life in the State came to a standstill.

The transport was off the roads. All shops remained closed. The educational institutions could not open, the examinations were postponed. The hospital, water, milk, electricity and newspaper services were exempted

from the strike. The State Bandh was total and peaceful.

The demands of 8.33 per cent minimum bonus, implementation of Rath Committee report, public distribution of essential commodities were focussed by the workers and employees. They strongly protested against the anti-working class policies of the Central Government and its discriminatory attitude towards Kerala. This was the biggest ever action by the trade unions in Kerala in recent times.

Settle Demands of Bihar Powermen

THE CITU President, B.T. Ranadive, in a statement on August 18 issued to the press in Patna says:

I am really very much constrained to note that the Bihar Government instead of solving the 11-day old indefinite strike of the Bihar powermen by conceding their just and legitimate demand of wage rise from April 1, 1975 as per pay revision award, has chosen to adopt a number of harassing measures, including declaration of electricity as 'essential service' and dismissing the striking workers at Ranchi as report goes. This act and other on the part of the State Government is nothing but to disrupt the peaceful and successful strike of the powermen and hence it

deserves to be universally condemned.

I would therefore appeal to the Bihar Chief Minister to intervene and settle the dispute with the leaders of the striking powermen across the table and normalise the situation early while acceding to the strikers demand as per agreement arrived at on June 26, 1977 besides revoking the aforesaid dismissal orders.

Tripura Tea Workers Become Owners of Gardens

IN Tripura, the ownership of two tea gardens have been handed over to Cooperatives of garden workers. The Left Front Government of Tripura had earlier handed over the ownership of the 'Tachai' tea garden in Rangrung mouza of Kailashar district to the workers. This was the first time in India that the workers became owners of a tea garden. Recently, the ownership of another tea garden in the Luxmilumma mouza of Sadar district was handed over to the workers. According to the State Labour Minister, Biren Datta, the garden has been renamed 'Tea Workers' Cooperative Samity.

The Agriculture Workers Union, USSR has invited All India Plantation Workers Federation to send representatives for their Conference to be held in Moscow from September 6, 1980. On behalf of the Federation P. Kunhi Kannan, Vice-President of the Federation, will attend the Conference.

Ministerial Staff Demonstrate before Parliament

OVER 3,000 ministerial staff under the leadership of All India Ministerial Staff Association demonstrated before Parliament on August 8, to present a mass petition to the Speaker, Lok Sabha, on their demands like lifting of ban on recruitment etc. 27,621 staff had signed the petition. A delegation on behalf of the Association led by its General Secretary C.M. Singh along with Samar Mukherjee met the Speaker at 1.P.M. to present the petition and apprise him of the situation.

The demonstration which came to the Boat Club, was addressed by Samar Mukherjee M. P., Basudev Acharia M. P., and Nrisingha Chakrabarty, Secretary C.I.T.U. among others. The Association decided to hold democratic conventions all over the country to explain the situation arising out of the proposed move for replacing the present computers by 3rd/4th generation computers to facilitate which the present ban on recruitment has been imposed as a result of which legal dues of railway workers amounting nearly Rs.50 crores could not be paid.

Agitation by Carriage & Wagon Staff

THE Carriage & Wagon Staff, under the All India Carriage & Wagon Staff Council, who had led a mass deputation on June 4 last and were assured that their demands would be finalised within a fortnight during their discussion with Railway Board on June 5, served ultimatum on August 1 through mass

deputations at all branches and started an agitation of withdrawal of co-operation from August 16. The authorities, instead of negotiating with the workers on the demands, had taken recourse to suppress the struggle.

Loco Mechanical Staff of N.E. Rly to Agitate

THE policy of continued victimisation and going back on the assurances given to the Staff of Gonda Loco Shed during their agitation on June 28 last, had forced the Zonal body of the N.E. Railway Loco Mechanical Staff Association to resort to agitation in case their efforts to seek negotiated settlement fails. The leadership of the Association went to the General Manager who however, did not meet them. As a result Prithwinath and Sriram Sharma, President and Zonal Secretary of the Association propose to go into an indefinite hunger strike from August 25 in front of the Head Quarters Office at Gorakhpur which is bound to create an explosive situation if the authorities do not settle the demands.

Railmen to Get Terene-Cotton Uniforms

DURING giving evidence before the Uniform Committee, the leadership of AILRSA not only emphasised the change of clothing habits of the people but also supplied a set of "Terene-Cotton" dresses to prove its efficacy. The Committee commenting on this admitted that "When the Committee was shown the sample in actual use, the merits of their claim became obvious. As a result quite a large section of railwaymen including the Loco Running Staff are going to

get 'Terene-Cotton' uniforms instead of cellular uniforms which were in force. The Secretary General AILRSA, had however drawn attention of the Railway Board to the various deficiencies and inconsistencies in the report of the Uniform Committee which deprives the cleaners from warm clothings etc. The Committee instead of acknowledging the pioneering role of the AILRSA, simply mentioned that a set of sample uniforms was provided by "Some Loco Running Staff".

Efforts for Co-ordination

THE Secretary Generals/General Secretaries of Railway Employees Confederation, AILRSA and other organisations met at Delhi on August 9 and reviewed the reaction of the staff on the joint appeal issued earlier as decided in April 1980 and noted that a new enthusiasm has been created amongst railwaymen. It was felt that several procedural questions including code of conduct and general approach to the problem of establishing a fighting unity would have to be discussed thoroughly before holding conventions at the divisional level. The Secretary General, circulated a note on the approach to the demands of railwaymen in the meeting. It was decided that all organisations should submit their views on the same and a further meetings will take place on 19th September between the Secretary Generals/General Secretaries of the five sponsor organisations and on September 20, with the General Secretaries of the constituent units and conveners of the Co-ordination Committee in NFR., SER. and SR to decide the programme of further action.

CITU Union Wins in SEWA Elections

THE elections to the 10 seats for workers representatives to Steel Employees Welfare Association (SEWA) were held on July 20 at Bhilai Steel Plant, Bhilai. The seats for the workers representatives were raised from 4 to 10 this year. In the outgoing committee the AITUC union had 3 representatives out of four and the other seat was won by the INTUC union. The CITU union had not participated in the elections.

The membership to this Association is compulsory and each member has to pay Rs. 4 for it. The CITU union tried to form a united front with the AITUC union but because of its non-cooperative attitude the front could not materialise. In this process this Union could not win even a single seat. The CITU and INTUC unions have 5 seats each. The INTUC was openly backed by the management.

On the day of election, the INTUC union activists brought a number of persons in trucks. They were not employees of the Plant. Due to the protests by the contestants their bid to cast false votes was foiled. But in the evening the management in collaboration with the Returning Officer opened a new polling booth and allowed the illegal polling. It was protested by all and non-INTUC persons boycotted its counting. The INTUC tried to create ugly scenes which were resisted.

From the results of this elections the INTUC has been exposed which claims support of 32 thousand employees out of total 55 thousand. It is also a recognised union. The AITUC union has also lost credit and it should now learn lesson from it and should try to forge unity of the workers as was done by the CITU union.

CITU Opposes Modification in Palekar Recommendations

THE CITU President B.T. Ranadive has issued the following statement on August 15 :

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions is surprised to note that the final report of Palekar Tribunal has toned down the earlier tentative wage proposals for journalists in favour of news paper magnets.

The CITU considers that there was no justification in postponing the date of implementation by 20 months since the inordinate delay in settling the wage question of the news paper employees was due to the obstructive tactics adopted by the managements. The modifica-

tion of the Palekar proposals has shown that the tactics of threat of closure of newspaper establishments have borne fruit and the newspaper employees have been the victims for no fault of their own.

The CITU appeals to the Government of India to accept the tentative proposals of the Palekar Tribunal and ensure its implementation from 1st January 1978 as recommended earlier.

The CITU assures full support to the journalists and non-journalists newspaper employees in their struggle against retrograde modification of the Palekar Tribunal recommendations.

Jute Workers to Form All India Federation

THE Jute workers were most backward and neglected among the industrial workers in India even a decade before. Since the victory of the Jute workers of West Bengal in 1969, the Jute workers have gained prominence. From Rs. 19 a week, their wage increased to Rs. 500 a month. The Jute workers of rest of India fought one by one and gained better wages and other benefits.

But these isolated struggles could not give the jute workers a national wage structure. The workload and other burdens pressed them very hard and non-uniformity in workload existed all over India. Secondly, the jute growers, that is peasants, who work in the fields to produce the raw material for the industry were deprived of their rights and proper wages by the jute dealers and barons.

To coordinate the struggle and agitation of Jute workers all over India against the monopoly capital and jute barons, an All India Federation of Jute workers will be formed in an All India Conference of Jute Workers being organised by CITU and other unions at Kanpur on September 27 and 28.

A meeting of the Organising Committee of the Conference met in New Delhi on August 12 alongwith the Office bearers of the CITU. The CITU President B.T. Ranadive presided over. The meeting decided in detail the outlines of report, resolutions and the constitution of the Federation apart from other things. Prominent among those who attended the meeting are Niren Ghosh, Sudhin Kumar, Daulat Ram, Narsingha Chakrabarty, Ajoy Biswas, and Kamal Sarkar, Convenor of the Organising Committee.

CISF Jawans Get Restive

AFTER last year's country wide agitation, the Government allowed the formation of the CISF staff associations at unit levels. In April, under the supervision of the DIG(HEC Unit) elections were held and the CISF Non-Gazetted Staff Association was formally launched at Ranchi. Soon the authorities developed hostility towards it and did not cooperate with it in solving the problems of jawans. The authorities were further infuriated when the Association sent financial assistance to 250 CISF jawans suspended at Bokaro and 5 jawans at Rourkela.

Later, a Delhi Meeting of the IGs and DIGs of CISF decided to smash the Association. Subsequently, Association leaders and activists were victimised and transferred.

The General Body meeting of the Association held at Ranchi on August 7 demanded that all kinds of victimisations should be stopped and transfers be done on seniority basis and action be taken against Assistant Commandants responsible for the death of Lekh Ram.

Bank Employees Call off Agitation

THE employees of Karur Vysya Bank in Tamilnadu who have been on strike for some time have called off their agitation following a meeting between N. Sampath, General Secretary of the Tamilnadu Bank Employees Federation and the Chairman of the Bank.

Later the Bank issued a circular appreciating the gesture of

Consumer Price Index Numbers

Base 1960

State/Centre	1980			State/Centre	1980		
	Apr.	May	June		Apr.	May	June
Andhra Pradesh				Orissa			
Gudur	376	375	381	Barbil	347	352	354
Guntur	402	409	413	Sambalpur	425	424	430
Hyderabad	375	384	389	Punjab			
Assam				Amritsar	393	388	394
Digboi	396	408	412	Rajasthan			
Doom Dooma	302	348	345	Ajmer	388	401	405
Labac	360	379	358	Jaipur	395	411	425
Mariani	331	336	339	Tamil Nadu			
Rangapara	347	354	355	Coimbatore	390	393	397
Bihar				Coonoor	386	384	391
Jamshedpur	367	375	378	Madras	361	357	371
Jharia	358	356	360	Madurai	388	393	403
Kodarma	397	399	410	U.P.			
Monghyr	397	406	410	Kanpur	374	381	381
Noamundi	362	368	376	Saharanpur	383	388	394
Gujarat				Varanasi	433	438	442
Ahmedabad	360	365	366	West Bengal			
Bhavnagar	388	395	391	Asansol	387	390	391
Haryana				Calcutta	362	371	375
Yamunanagar	403	418	423	Darjeeling	311	321	325
J. & K.				Howrah	347	353	359
Srinagar	387	396	404	Jalpaiguri	313	323	323
Karnataka				Raniganj	377	380	375
Ammathi	379	381	390	Delhi	401	407	412
Bangalore	397	401	407	Other Centres*			
Chikamagalur	372	377	384	Berhampur ('49)	521	537	552
Kolar G.F.	370	376	383	Cuttack ('49)	465	474	491
Kerala				Jabalpur ('49)	490	498	507
Alleppey	366	375	383	Beawar ('51-52)	467	481	497
Alwaye	374	382	387	Tripura (1961)	352	365	364
Mundakayam	343	350	362	H.P. (1965)	276	281	283
Madhya Pradesh				Goa (1966)	269	272	279
Balaghat	400	405	406	Bhilai (1966)	253	258	256
Bhopal	374	377	385	Bhilwara ('66)	246	250	260
Gwalior	393	408	415	Chhindwara ('66)	211	217	222
Indore	390	393	396	Kothagudem ('66)	244	248	256
Maharashtra				Rourkela ('66)	268	279	283
Bombay	381	385	389	All India ('49)	456	464	469
Nagpur	365	377	382	-do- ('60)373	375	382	386
Shoapul	381	384	389				

Figures in bracket

indicate base year.

the employees in calling off the agitation and restoring normalcy. On its part, the management has agreed to defer the transfer orders and one suspension order already issued which had embittered the relations between the two sides. It has also been agreed to continue the negotiations with its employees on their demands.

CITU Unions to Please Note

The CITU unions whose subscription to 'The Working Class' is over or is going to be over next month, are requested to renew it as soon as possible.

Manager

Seamen' Struggle

EVEN after 33 years of independence there is no security for the employment of Indian seamen and there is no comprehensive Act to guide the relations between the employers and seamen. On the other hand it had given birth to corruption and malpractices and the miseries to seamen.

The foodstuff supplied to Indian seamen is highly sub-standard, under weighed and sometime unconsumable. The vessels are not maintained properly while air conditioners do not function, there are no electrical fans, radio and television for entertainment, and no messroom. The vessels do not have adequate facilities for games, medicines and the medical treatment, and the fresh water tanks are not properly cemented. There are number such problems which bring hardships to seamen. The maintenance work is given to contractors who make money and bring electrical or mechanical disadvantages to the vessels. The repairs which can be done at Indian ports are carried out at foreign ports by unfair means. Dry docking facilities of foreign ports are used while those of India remain idle. Large scale corruption prevail in shipping industry.

The ILO wages of the Indian seamen working on foreign ships are given to the Government of India to give that, in turn, to seamen only NMB wages which are far less. The rest of the money go to the 'Seafarers' Welfare Fund Society' while the Government of India is making money with no investment by getting levy in foreign exchange from seamen wages. But, when seamen approach the Government for the security of employment and other benefits, it simply says that they are not its employees.

Under these circumstances, the Forward Seamen Union of

India (CITU) has been demanding for radical changes in Merchant Shipping Act, 1958. The FSUI have been struggling for the rights and demands of the Indian as well as foreign seamen. In many cases it had to detain the vessels in the ports.

The Regional Director of the SCI, S. R. Prasad, on July 26 alleged that the Calcutta based seamen only with a view to extract money from the shipping companies on some pretext or other are claiming compensation resulting in detention of vessels at Calcutta port only. The allegations have been challenged by the General Secretary of the FUSI, Asutosh Banerjee, on August 1 in a statement. He said that the detention of vessels was not only for compensation for inconveniences but also demanding necessary repairs of the vessels. The vessels have been detained not only at Calcutta port but at many other ports like Bombay, New Kandla, Cochin, Madras and other places. By and large the settlements were arrived at bilateral levels. These are not illegal and it is not always necessary for the shipping companies to refer to the Shipping Master for solution. But, the Government now appears to be concerned about the implementation of the Act while it fails to protect the Indian seamen working abroad for foreign vessels.

This Regional Director, S.R. Prasad, has indulged himself in making false statements to the press regarding the seamen of m.v. "Aradhana" and m.v.

"Vishva Shakti" and others. In the case of 'Aradhana', the Chief Secretary to the Government of West Bengal intervened and a solution was found out, whereas the SCI is delaying it and so far he has not heard any thing from the Regional Director. The Forward Seamen' Union of India has urged upon the Government to have a sincere effort for an amicable settlement and not to press the seamen to go on greater struggle.

The seamen of Calcutta organised a massive demonstration on August 5 in front of the Regional Director's office to express their deep concern and strong resentment on the attitude taken by the management in relation to the dispute of the crew members aboard m.v. "Aradhana" and m.v. "Vishva Shakti". On behalf of the seamen the General Secretary of the Water Transport Workers' Federation of India (CITU), K.K. Roy Ganguli, submitted a memorandum to the Regional Director. It noted with deep concern that with ulterior motives the proposal suggested by the Chief Secretary to the Government of West Bengal at the intervention of the Union Transport Minister has not been accepted by the Regional Director. It urged upon to immediately stop all sorts of provocative action and settle the disputes by withdrawing the discharge notices served against the crew members aboard two said vessels failing which there will be serious unrest affecting the movement of all SCI vessels in Indian ports and abroad. It hoped for an amicable settlement in the line proposed by the Chief Secretary to the Government of West Bengal without any delay.

Massive TU Demonstration in Bombay

THE CITU, AITUC, UTUC, HMS, and the organisations of the middle class employees like those of LIC, Government and banks, organised a 20,000-strong massive demonstration on August 5 in Bombay in front of Council Hall protesting against rising prices, deteriorating law and order situation, growing unemployment and the closures and lockouts of many industries.

While the workers and the employees were demonstrating outside in support of their demands, the MLAs of CPI(M), CPI, Janata Party and Peasants and Workers' Party raised the issue inside the Assembly. They all demanded intervention and settlement of the demands raised by the demonstrators under the banner of Joint Action Committee of Trade Unions and Middle Class Employees.

A deputation on behalf of the organisations which met the State Chief Minister included CITU representatives S.Y. Kolhatkar, P.K. Kurane, and Madan Phadnis. Later on, the leaders of the organisations addressed the workers sitting near Flora Fountain.

This Morch is just a beginning of a sustained and longterm statewide agitation against the anti-working class and anti-people policies of the State and Central Government. The memorandum submitted to the Chief Minister warned the Government that if it did not move to take immediate steps in this regard, the working class would be left with no other alternative but to launch a united struggle to compel it to concede their demands.

Meanwhile, the now revived Women' Anti Price Rise Joint Committee campaigned against price rise and the atrocities on women, against house wives and working women that have seen a dangerous increase in the recent period. The monthlong campaign culminated in a massive morcha of women on August 8 from Azad Maidan to the Council Hall. The morcha was led by Ahilya Rangnekar amongst others.

Lockout Lifted in Tata Merlin

THE three month long lockout in the Tata Merlin and Gerin Company at Thane in Bombay has been lifted following agreement reached between the CITU Union and the management. All its 600 employees resumed work on July 24.

The workers had gone on strike on April 20 following the suspension of 4 union activists on groundless charges. The management declared a lockout on May 6. Under the settlement now reached the suspension orders have been withdrawn and employees have gained wage benefits.

Krishna Woollen Mills Workers Score Victory

THE 9-month old lockout at Krishna Woollen Mills at Bhandup, Bombay, was unconditionally lifted by the management on July 26 and its 1500 workers have started rejoining their duties in phases.

Gross mismanagement of the mill over the years have brought it to a situation where the workers had to resort to agitation even to receive their earned wages. The workers

fought back bravely and won their point.

The majority of the workers are members of the Woollen Workers Union (CITU), a recognised union. During emergency, an attempt was made to foist INTUC union by the management. This attempt continued and became one of the points of contention between the workers and the management. The CITU proposed secret ballot to determine the respective strength of the two unions. This was unacceptable to the INTUC union. Finally, the management was compelled to sign the settlement with the CITU union.

Stoppage of Work in Silewara Colliery

NEARLY 2000 workers of Silewara Colliery, Nagpur, are on total strike since July 7 due to the despotic attitude of the management which has stubbornly refused to take action against Under Manager, R. K. Sharma, who assaulted a casual worker going to drink water.

The workers demanded action against the Manager but the management started victimising the workers by suspensions and terminations. It also started giving provocative statements. To defend the Manager the management fabricated a story that the said workers was in a forbidden area which was disputed by the workers.

The representatives of the CITU, AITUC, HMS and INTUC have formed a Joint Action Committee to fight this obstinate and vindictive attitude of the management. The Colliery is losing 1000 tones of coal production every day at a time when the country is facing energy crisis.