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MAY DAY 2003

CITU

Greetings

Resist the USA's Terrorism!

VIMAL RANADIVE MEMORIAL LECTURE

The Vimal Ranadive Memorial (third) Lecture was organised by the CITU Centre in BT Ranadive Bhawan, New Delhi, on the 10th of April 2003. Noted columnist and Delhi University lecturer, Nalini Taneja, delivered a lecture on 'Globalisation, War and Working Women'. E Balanandan, President of CITU, Pong Sul AHN, Senior Technical Advisor of ACTRAV, ILO, and a large number of workers, students and youth organisations attended the lecture. Tapan Sen, Secretary, CITU presided. Hemalata, Secretary, CITU welcomed. Nalini, at the outset, paid rich tributes to Vimaldi. Highlights of her lecture are given below:

War and women's oppression and suffering during war were not new to history. In the last decade there was an upsurge of right wing forces all over the world which was linked to imperialism and the use of its military might. Today while adverse impacts of imperialist led globalisation are evident all over the world, there were no Socialist bastions as the Soviet Union, which led the international resistance against fascism during the Second World War. This has enabled the unilateral US aggression against any country that dares to challenge it. The so called wars in the last decade have been really invasions and interventions to defend the interests of Capital. As this is linked

with a rise in right wing ideology in several countries in the world, including the western countries, it has grave implications for women's struggles for equality, besides the sufferings women undergo during any war.

There was a wide acceptance of the US argument of a 'clash of civilisations', which was meant to increase racism. National security was made an excuse to trample over the rights of citizens. This in fact leads to a rapid rise of fundamentalism in other parts of the world. Women's struggle for equality becomes that much more difficult with armed conflicts and authoritarian regimes all over the world. As far as women are concerned there was no conflict of interests between the forces of globalisation backed by the military might of imperialism and the forces of fundamentalism in the Third World. There was a causal link in today's globalised world between slaughter of women and children in Iraq by the US and British invaders and the suicides of peasants in Andhra Pradesh, the starving children in Africa. Globalisation accentuates ethnic and religious strife.

It was absolutely necessary for the imperialist capital to make the subordination of the third world countries socially acceptable. This it does by creating divisions among the peoples and societies, within societies and even inventing conflicts of various kinds. This disrupts the political agenda of the left and progressive forces and movements in a country and the field is prepared for the take over of this space by the right wing forces. Fundamentalism transforms the fight for real freedom in third world countries into identity politics. This is a radically new phase of imperialism where the world situation has significantly changed from that in which women's movements emerged and grew, and especially in the third world countries, adopted policies supporting the working people in their countries. Peace requires not passivity but militant activism and resistance against imperialism. The fight against fundamentalism and anti people policies at home was inextricably linked with the larger war against imperialism. Women must express their internationalism.

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THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

MAY 2003

HERE & NOW | Sudhir Tailang



I'm told Praveen Bhai Togadia is coming to the drought affected areas — to distribute trishuls!

Courtesy: Hindustan Times

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EDITORIAL

REIGNING IN THE VENOM ...

For quite some time the country had been a mute spectator to the bizarre spectre of the saffron propagandists indulging in most provocative and inflammatory speeches and utterances, which no civilised society can tolerate. Whether it is the Shiv Sena supremo or the latest 'firebrand' of the VHP, Praveen Togadia, all of them have almost perceived themselves to be above all laws of the country.

Now, the likes of Togadia had chosen to go beyond oral diatribes. They had chosen to 'arm' their saffron followers with weapons to carry out attacks against those whom they consider to be enemies of 'Hindutva', fashioned on the lines of the post-Godhra genocide in Gujarat. This operation had been code named as 'Trishul Dhiksha' and the traditional 'trishul' had been 'modified' to serve the purpose. It was finally the turn of the Rajasthan Government to attempt to stop Praveen Togadia on his tracks. This venomous propagandist landed there in Ajmer on April 13 last, to take part in a 'Dharma Sabha' for a programme of mass distribution of such 'modified Trishuls' to his 'followers' in the VHP and Bajrang Dal camp. The choice of Rajasthan for such an exercise is obviously because of the fact that the State is slated to go in for elections later during this year. The sangh parivar would like to resume with further vigour their Gujarat experiment patented by Narendra Modi, which suffered a brake in Himachal Pradesh early this year.

All the RSS outfits made loud noises when a criminal case was instituted against Togadia and he was arrested the next day. Immediately after Togadia was remanded to judicial custody, the VHP indulged in brave rhetoric that it would not seek bail for him but take the issue to the 'people's court'. But soon the sangh parivar had to realise that it had no option but to abide by the legal process and move a bail application on April 18. Even as Togadia was granted a bail after a week long incarceration, the Sessions Court in Ajmer rightly directed him not to repeat the offences for which he was booked.

It is a welcome relief to find the judicial process firmly asserting that nobody can elevate himself above the laws of the country, while reigning in Togadia. But, the arm of law, however long it may be, cannot by itself check the communal venom and fire. The people must now come forward to put a stop to the game plans of the likes of Togadia.

There is another dimension to this, which should not be lost sight of. The utter bankruptcy of the policies pursued by the saffron party in governance of the country is faced with increasing resistance from all sections of the people. They need to divert the attention of the people from the pressing problems of the day. Togadias are just doing this. This diversionary tactics must also be squarely defeated. Working class has a leading role to play in this.

MAY DAY MANIFESTO OF CITU 2003

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) extends revolutionary greetings to the working class fraternity all over the world, on the historic May Day - the day of the international solidarity of the working people!

The CITU greets the working class and the people of the socialist countries for steadfastly holding aloft the banner of socialism, despite the setbacks suffered during the closing decade of the last millennium.

The CITU greets the working class and the people of the advanced capitalist countries, who have raised the banner of resistance to the neo-liberal globalisation policies, putting up inspiring and militant struggles against capitalism.

The CITU warmly greets and pledges solidarity with the working people of the developing countries, engaged in fighting back the offensives of imperialism on the one hand and the onslaughts of the ruling classes on the other.

II

The US imperialists have launched the war against Iraq, defying overwhelming world wide public opinion and without any mandate from the United Nations. In this they were fully aided and abetted by the Tony Blair regime of the U.K. This is the most brazen act of aggression propelled by the greed to corner the oil wealth of Iraq and to consolidate the global hegemony of U.S. imperialism. For the imperialists the euphemism of "war on terrorism" is a handy instrument to militarily intervene in any part of the world and indulge in atrocious onslaughts against the people of any country, for the simple reason of not submitting to the dictates of the U.S.

The US administration had in the process, grossly undermined and weakened the role and authority of the U.N. The mission of disarming Iraq of the deadly weapons of mass destruction had turned out to be just a ruse, to cloak the display of their arrogance and fire power superiority. Even after three weeks of war in Iraq, the U.S. invaders could not come out with any evidence of the chemical and biological weaponry that the Iraq was accused of possessing.

The war on Iraq had taken a very heavy toll of

civilian lives; unarmed common people, particularly the children and women, have been massacred in large numbers. Mercenaries and lackeys of imperialism are now being assembled in the war devastated Iraq, to plant a pliant 'interim administration' there. The U.S. administration is turning a deaf ear to the sane voices calling for the U.N. to be involved in deciding the future of that country and to take care of relief and rehabilitation efforts there.

In this context we need to ponder over what did the world community do in the face of such arrogant demonstration of gangsterism by the U.S. administration. No doubt, overwhelming majority of national Governments opposed the war against Iraq within the UN forum. Apprehending a defeat in UN Security Council, the US and its cohorts withdrew their resolution proposing war on Iraq. But those nations, which rightly opposed the war on Iraq, ended up as mere onlooker to the unilateral US gangsterism on Iraqi soil, which merrily indulged in large-scale massacre of innocent Iraqis, in a vulgar display of arrogance. They failed to lift even a little finger against brazen violation of the U.N. Charter and international law. By their stoic silence, they have just allowed the United Nations to be pushed to irrelevance.

Here the gangsterism of neoliberal globalisation comes to surface, which is making most of the nation states helplessly succumb to US arrogance. By surrendering to the dictums of neo-liberal globalisation piloted by the Fund/Bank duo under the mighty domination of US imperialist interest, the developing nations and also some of the developed ones undermined, rather weakened, their own sovereignty.

But, the people at large have refused to submit to the global gangsters. The anti-war campaign, both prior to the bombing of Iraq and during the height of the war operations, reached a crescendo with people in all the continents taking to the streets in millions.

The imperialists faced the wrath of the masses in their own soil. Never before the imperialist warmongers faced resistance of such a magnitude all over the globe. The U.S.

administration may gloat over their 'success' in the Iraq war and even succeed in harvesting its dividends; but the indignant wrath and bitterness generated among the world populace will linger on and the imperialists stand exposed as the worst enemies of the mankind.

The U.S. imperialism has already laid bare its intentions to target countries like Syria, Iran, North Korea etc. for its further offensives. Already it has acquiesced in the Israeli onslaughts against the Palestinians, which is bound to be stepped up in the coming period. Hence, the anti-war campaign and mobilisation must be continued with more vigour, across the globe.

The CITU calls upon the working class of India to step up the campaign against imperialist offensives, both militarist, economic and ideological and rouse the patriotic masses of the country to revive their rich tradition of anti-imperialist struggle in the coming days.

III

Imperialism has been using the international financial and trade institutions, which are under its domination, to consolidate its hegemony over the global economy. The neo-liberal globalisation agenda had been pursued through these institutions to subjugate all nation states in the realm of economic policy making and implementation. It is clearly manifest that the conditionality imposed by these institutions has served only to advance the economic interests of imperialist powers. The increasing resort to militarist intervention in different regions of the world is a part of the diabolic game plan of the

imperialists aimed at aggressively pushing ahead their economic domination.

But, much as the pro-reforms lobby would like the world to believe that 'There Is No Alternative' to the imperialist driven neo-liberal globalisation, people across the globe are rallying en-masse in resistance struggles. From Seattle to Genoa, militant protests, participated in huge numbers, had refuted the inevitability of the so-called economic reforms, dictated by the Brettonwood institutions.

The successive editions of the 'World Social Forum' in Porto Alegre and its European and Asian versions held in the recent past had emphatically declared that 'Another World is Possible' and that 'Socialism Is The Alternative'. Internationally, the movement against the neo-liberal globalisation is increasingly coming out vehemently against the move to impose further adverse terms on the developing countries during the forthcoming round of Ministerial meeting in Cancun, Mexico, during September next.

The World Trade Organization (WTO), together with a proliferation of regional and bilateral trade agreements, are used by multinational corporations to promote their interests, to dominate and control our economies and to impose a development model which impoverishes our societies. In the name of trade liberalization, every aspect of life and nature is for sale and people are denied their basic rights. These countries are trapped in a never-ending cycle of debt that forces them to open up their markets and export their wealth.

COMRADE L.B. GANGADHARA RAO

Lavu Balagangadhara Rao, veteran leader of the communist movement in the country passed away in Hyderabad on the 28th March 2003. Popularly known as LBG, he played an important role in building the communist movement in Andhra Pradesh.

LBG was born in a rich farmers' family but was attracted to the left movement at an early age. He sold all his property and gave the proceeds to the Party and lived a simple life with the allowance given by the Party. He served as the President of the All India Agricultural Workers' Union. He was also a member of the Polit Bureau of the CPI (M) until 1998. LBG displayed a high degree of courage and heroism during the Telangana armed struggle facing the Nizam's Razakars and the Indian army. He was forced to go underground five times and spent 11 years and nine months in these conditions. He also spent around 2 ½ years in jail.

The CITU Secretariat and 'The Working Class' condole the death of LBG and pay homage to his memory.

Worldwide campaign to stop and reverse liberalization of agriculture, water, energy, public services and investment, and to reassert peoples sovereignty over their societies, their resources, their cultures and knowledge and their economies are growing in strength.

The CITU exhorts the working class and other sections of the toiling people to rally together to further heighten the struggle against the global economic domination of imperialism being carried out through the WTO, World Bank the IMF and build up a global unity against globalisation!

IV

In India, the rise of communal fascism has entered the most aggressive phase of fundamentalist and communal orgy and violence.

The Bharatiya Janata Party, (BJP) in Gujarat, led by its notorious Chief Minister Narendra Modi, embarked on fully reviving their rabid communal agenda, targeting the religious minorities in the country for horrendous attacks. The success in the elections to the Gujarat Legislature gave further impetus to this process. Though the results of the subsequent elections held in Himachal Pradesh, Tripura and other States had served as some sort of a speed breaker, the saffron brigade will persist with its game plan of to bring about a communal polarisation of the Indian society for achieving electoral successes in the States slated to go in for polls later during this year and the subsequent elections to the Lok Sabha in 2004. The VHP and other RSS outfits have already upped the antenna of Ram mandir in Ayodhya. Despite the Supreme Court turning down the plea of the BJP government to review its earlier order for maintaining the status quo in respect of the disputed land there, vociferous demands for legislative sanction to hand over the land for temple construction have been raised by the saffron brigade.

The CITU calls upon the working people to realise the immense harm being caused to the secular fabric of the country and the unity of the toiling people by the forces of fascistic communalism. The working class of the country must fight hard to root out the communal venom emitted by the fundamentalist fanatics of the sangh parivar. The working class must also steer clear of the militant fundamentalism of the minority variety as well. The

CITU will rededicate itself to preserving the class unity of the workers and the people, countering the communal frenzy, which has assumed dangerous proportions at present.

V

The NDA Government, which doled out innumerable promises to the people, has reneged on every one of them. It has derailed the entire economy. Contrary to the Government's claim of having put the national economy back on rails, the economy is going down the disaster lane, with the lowering of the growth rate of GDP, per capita income and agriculture-growth. . Agriculture, industry, trade - all are in deep crisis. The rural poor are reeling under the impact of draught, famine and penury. The economy is reeling under a severe demand recession due to loss of the purchasing power of the people, consequent upon proliferation of job cut, wage cut, decline in job opportunities and pauperisation of the peasantry. It has drawn flak in all fronts of governance and is facing opposition and isolation in all fronts and hence banking upon its communal fascist agenda more desperately to defend its seat of governance by any means. In utter desperation, the Vajpayee regime has mounted an all-out attack on the democratic rights of the people. It has specifically targeted the working people of the country for its onslaughts for it is they who have been in the forefront of the struggle against the bankrupt policies of the NDA Government. It has embarked on a move to change the existing labour legislations to usher in 'hire and fire' regime in industrial relations, to please the capitalist class to intensify their ruthless exploitation.

All the central trade unions and independent unions and federations in the country have come together on a common platform to oppose the disastrous economic policies of the NDA Government. The workers march to Parliament staged on February 26, 2003 had given a call for an all India general strike against the Government of India's disastrous anti-people, anti-worker and anti-national policies and for realisation of the eight point demands formulated jointly. The all India general strike will be staged on the 21st May, 2003. The National Platform of Mass Organisations has, while expressing solidarity with the working class action, had also called upon all

other sections of the toiling people to stage powerful action programmes like rail roko and rasta roko on the same day, on the demands of the respective mass organisations.

The CITU conveys its warm greetings to all sections of the working people and toiling masses, who have been participating in the powerful strike wave emerging in the country against the policies of globalisation. The CITU welcomes this new phase of the united struggle by the working people of the country.

The CITU pledges to carry forward this growing resistance into a countrywide mass struggle to defeat the disastrous economic policies.

VI

On this May Day, the CITU exhorts the working people of the country to further strengthen and

consolidate the unity of all the toiling masses and unleash further powerful struggles against the imperialist offensives, onslaughts of the ruling classes, the ruinous economic policies and against the divisive and disruptive forces of communalism and casteism.

Let us march forward to defend the interests of our great country and its people!

Forward to the May 21 All India General Strike!

Long live working class unity!

Long live international solidarity of the working class!

Down with imperialism!

Long live socialism!

21ST MAY: ALL INDIA GENERAL STRIKE DAY:

NPMO CALL FOR STAGING RAIL/RASTA ROKO

A meeting of the National Platform of Mass Organisations (NPMO) was held on last Friday, 19th April, 2003 in New Delhi. The meeting, presided over by K. L. Mahendra, Vice President of AITUC was attended by the representatives of all the constituents fronts - Trade Unions, Kisan Sabhas, Agricultural Workers, Women, Student and Youth.

The NPMO fully endorsed the call of the Central Trade Unions for an All India General Strike on 21st May, 2003 to press for the eight-points demands and against the disastrous economic policies pursued by the Government of India.

The NPMO condemned the BJP-led NDA Government's reckless pursuit of the ruinous policies thrust by the World Bank, IMF and the WTO, under the neo-colonist powers led by the US. The NPMO also denounced the cowardly posture of the Central Government in refusing to condemn the naked aggression on Iraq by the US, which is seeking to impose its unipolar hegemony.

The policies of the NDA Government are brazenly anti-people and against the national interest. These policies have led to heaping of miseries on the mass of the people belonging to all sections of the society. The NPMO, being the common platform of organisations of all such people, cannot but extend active support to the struggles of any and every sections of the society.

Apart from making common cause with the workers and the trade unions, the NPMO has underlined the urgent need to fight for immediate relief to the victims of severe draught situation prevailing in different States in the country, which has taken a heavy toll of human lives. The situation obviously demands strengthening of the Public Distribution Scheme in the country.

The NPMO also expressed deep concern over the unprincipled use of the communal, casteist and other such disruptive forces by the NDA Government for diverting the attention of the Indian people from its all-round failures, while at the same time undermining the unity of the working masses and weaken their struggle.

The NPMO appealed to all the mass organisations representing the peasantry, agriculture workers, women, students and youth to organise simultaneous actions in furtherance of their own demands by staging rail/rasta roko and demonstrations all over the country on the 21st May, 2003, when the workers will go on a nation wide strike.

3-DAY STRIKE BY HPCL AND BPCL WORKERS

Swadesh Dev Roye

The 3-day countrywide strike by the workers of BPCL and HPCL on 25-27 March, 2003 has added a new dimension to the anti-privatisation movement in the country. The strike has totally rejected the fallacious claim of Arun Shourie, the Disinvestment Minister, that the workers of the oil PSUs are not against privatisation. The depth and sweep of the strike has clearly demonstrated the determination of the oil sector workers to fight the move to privatise the oil PSUs. Yet another vital highlight of the strike is the resolve of the oil sector workers to widen the unity and carry forward the fight to stop privatization of the oil PSUs. The strike was jointly called by the 26 trade unions functioning in BPCL and HPCL Refineries and the entire Marketing Network throughout the country under the banner of **NATIONAL UNITED FORUM Against Privatisation of OIL PSUs**. The Kochi Refineries Limited (KRL), Kochi also participated in the strike. The Indian Oil Shramik Union (CITU), Kolkata observed a day's solidarity strike on 26th March, 2003 throughout the East and Northern States. The CITU unions in the Refineries in Digboi and Numaligarh, Assam also conducted agitational programmes in support of the strike. The unions which took part in the strike included those affiliated with AITUC, CITU, a section of INTUC, Maharashtra General Kamgar Union (of late

Dutta Samant fame), Trade Unions of Shiv Sena and many unaffiliated unions with large followings in the refineries and marketing departments.

IMPACT OF STRIKE

The strike was a spectacular success. Alongwith the BPCL refinery, Mumbai, HPCL refineries in Mumbai and Visakhapatnam and KRL refinery at Kochi, the four regional marketing networks based at Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai and the Corporate Headquarters of both the oil PSUs at Mumbai the strike were a resounding success. The Bottling Plants of the two oil PSUs all over the country were almost completely shut due to the strike. The management adopted nefarious design to frighten and demoralise the workers through heavy deployment of Territorial Army, intimidating measures like obtaining *ex-parte* court orders prohibiting strike, issuing notice of alleged contempt of court to the leaders, threatening dismissal from services etc. But all this totally failed to demoralise the workers and disrupt the strike.

The Northern Region comprising Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Uttar Khand, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Jammu & Kashmir:

The strike was cent percent successful. Here the unions affiliated with the AITUC and the CITU functioning in both the companies and the sole independent union functioning

in the HPC joined the strike.

The Eastern Region comprising West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Assam, Tripura and other North-Eastern States: The strike was a grand success. A distinct feature of this region relating to the strike is the participation of the INTUC union in the strike. The Kolkata office of both the companies wore a deserted look. There were no activities in the depots and installations throughout the region.

The Southern Region comprising Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh:

The strike was a reverberating success. The offices, depots and installations all over the region the total workers participated in the strike. The KRL refinery, Kochi witnessed partial strike under the leadership of CITU in solidarity in all the three days. As per report, in Kerala the retail outlets of both BPCL and HPCL had gone dry.

The Western Region comprising Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh & Goa:

The situation here is different than in the other three regions due to various factors. This region has got the highest refining capacity of HPCL and BPCL and also the largest marketing network. Mumbai is also the headquarters of BPCL and HPCL. Large number of unions with different affiliations is functioning in the region. Thus the most wide spread unity composing of the trade unions

affiliated to AITUC, CITU, INTUC, Shiv Sena, Maharashtra General Kamgar Union and the unaffiliated unions has been forged in the Western Region. As already mentioned, while in the BPCL Mumbai refinery the strike was complete in the HPC refinery the strike was not cent percent success due to the opposition of INTUC union. On the other hand in the marketing division in the region, the strike was better in HPCL compared to the success of the strike in the BPCL marketing setup. Both the Corporate Offices in Mumbai also witnessed good strike.

WORKERS RALLY

On the first day of the strike the striking workers in Mumbai organised a grand march to the Mumbai residence of Ram Naik, Union Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas. The march was participated by more than 2000 striking workers. The CITU affiliated Contractor Workers Union in BPCL and HPCL, Chembur, Mumbai also staged demonstration in support of the strike. The last day of the 3-day strike marked by huge demonstrations of the striking workers at the major centers - Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Kochi etc. Around 5000 workers from the Refineries and Marketing set-ups of both the companies participated in a gigantic demonstration at the BPCL refinery gate in Mumbai. The leaders of different affiliations including K.L.Bajaj and Vivek Monterio, CITU, Sukumar Damle, AITUC, Dada Samant, Kamgar Aghadi, Bhai Jagtap, INTUC, Chandrakanth Dalvi, Independent Union, Suryakanth

Dalvi, Shiv Sena MLA addressed the demonstrators. After the demonstration the workers went in a procession and burnt the effigy of Arun Shourie. In Delhi the workers from all the offices, depots and installations of BPCL and HPCL participated in a big demonstration at the Jantar Mantar. Apart from Basudev Acharya, Sunil Khan and Chandrakala Pandey, all CPI(M) M.Ps, Y .D. Sharma, Vice-President AITUC and S. Dev Roye, Secretary, CITU, Iswar Singh, General Secretary of the Independent Union in HPCL, Northern Region, Mamraj Singh and Kharbanda (AITUC) and Ramashnakar Prasad Singh (CITU) also addressed the demonstrators.

SUSTAINED CAMPAIGN

It is important to note that the majority of the unions of the workers of the HPCL and the BPCL with various affiliations could be brought to the platform of struggle, through an almost yearlong campaign by CITU. A Long process of joint consultations, all India convention and regional conventions, joint representation to Prime Minister etc, ultimately led to the three-day strike, under the banner of the UNITED FORUM.

The long drawn joint campaign with meticulously drawn plan, programme and the patience employed in conducting the agitation and propaganda in gradually ascending order has definitely contributed in making the strike a huge success. The massive countrywide strike by the HPCL and BPCL workers

reflects the firm determination by the Oil and Petroleum workers to resist the anti-national conspiracy to handover the public sector oil industries to monopoly capital both Indian and Foreign.

ON TO FURTHER ACTIONS

Emboldened by the more than expected success of the strike, the confidence and unity of the oil sector workers has strengthened and provided a big moral boost in the fight against privatisation. Further, in the absence of any positive response from the Government even after the 3-day successful countrywide strike, the workers have no other go but to intensify the struggles against the move of privatisation.

It is shocking to note that according to report, Reliance Industries, Shell, Essar Group, ChevronTexaco, Petronas, Saudi Aramco and Kuwait Petroleum have responded the formal expressions of interest for HPCL's strategic sale of the majority equity. The Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation has been appointed the Global advisor for the HPCL sale.

In the above background, the meeting of the NATIONAL UNITED FORUM, held at Mumbai on 5th April, 2003 and attended by the representatives of all the 26 unions, took stock of the post strike situation and has decided to carry the struggle further forward. A national convention is being held Mumbai on 27th April, 2003. The convention is slated to adopt concrete programme of action involving the entire oil sector workers.

WHAT THE WAR IS ALL ABOUT ...?

Tapen Sen

The US-led war on Iraq has ultimately accomplished the regime change in Baghdad and the process of installing a puppet regime is now on. In the backstage, hectic move is going on sharing the booties of huge reconstruction - contracts worth billions of dollars and of course the control of oil-resources, which was basically the main objective behind the genocidal war-crimes. It was the economics that promoted the destructive war exercise by the US imperialists, no matter what they talked about in the open.

But, devils do not have dearth of pleas to cloak their misdeeds. The US administration reaffirmed the same. It raised the bogey of Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The combing operation by a big team of UN Arms inspectors through every inch of the Iraqi soil, could not traced such WMDs. And even after 'conquering' Iraq, nothing could be found. So the Bush administration now harps on liberating the people of Iraq from the dictatorial rule of Saddam Hussein, to justify its targeting for inhuman bombardment the very same people, their houses, hospitals, community centres, schools et al. It appears, the US's Iraq war is destined to liberate Iraqi people from all their worldly entities altogether.

During the span of last three decades, the US administration had inflicted similar genocidal carnage - either by itself or through its cohorts - on Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Guatemala, Chile, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and a host of other countries, on the holy plea of making the world safe for democracy. Now after Iraq, the global gangsters have upped the antenna of aggressive threats to Syria, Iran, North Korea, etc., besides the ongoing massacre and carnage of Palestinians, through their Israel administration. The philistinism of the US imperialists, the worst enemy of the humankind, their sinister game plan is to establish their hegemony over the entire globe, to re-colonise the resource-rich developing countries again. The Fund/Bank sponsored neoliberal globalisation has already set the pace for the same and US military arrogance is just to

hasten the process.

If one were to reassess the balance-sheet of the 1991 gulf-war, the 'war against terrorism' in Afghanistan and the present US war on Iraq, the unmistakable conclusion that will emerge is that all these hi-tech genocides are designed to ensure US hegemony on precious oil resources.

1991 GULF WAR

The war started, stated to be for freeing Kuwait from Iraqi annexation with UN sanction as well. But at the end of the war, it is only USA and its multinational oil companies had been the net gainers and all others including the Kuwait had to pay heavily.

A study by the Milan Technical University has exposed that seventy five per cent of the cost of war - or more than US\$ 30 billion - out of total of around US\$ 40 billion, had to be borne by the Arab countries, mainly Kuwait and Saudi Arabia; the US, along with its European Allies, shouldered only a burden of around \$10 billion. Following the war, the oil price jumped from \$15 to \$ 42 per barrel resulting in a profit of \$60 billion. The Arab world (Kuwait and Saudi Arabia) got \$ 30 billion out of the same, which was just sufficient to neutralise the direct cost of the Gulf-war-I, not to speak of the heavy indirect cost arising out of destructions including that in Iraq itself. Rest, \$ 30 billion went to US administration and the seven US multinational oil companies (Esso, Shell, Tamoil etc., five of which are owned by the State), meaning thereby a clear profit of more than \$ 20 billion for the US and its MNCs. Of this, the US Govt. made a net gain of \$11 billion, while the US private oil barons gained \$9 billions. Again, this profit does not include the huge profit earned by the US armament industries to the tune of more than \$49 billion, as their business of WMDs got a big boost during the Gulf-war. In fact, the entire amount of \$ 40 billion spent for the war, plus something more towards procurement of armament but not used, had gone to the US armament industries as revenues. An expert of Milan Technical University rightly commented: "...It had nothing to do with 'free Kuwait'. They were

only after the cheese”.

BEHIND THE AFGHAN WAR

The Afghan war had started as a part of US led 'war against terrorism', ostensibly for tracking down Osama bin Laden. An extremely poor and backward country, already ravaged by thirty years long armed scuffles, was reduced to dust by the mightiest military power. Civilians, women and children were the most vulnerable targets. There again, after US occupation a puppet regime was installed. The Afghan war itself manifested the worst form of US terrorism on humanity.

But, what was it all about? The hunt had nothing to do with the Osama bin Laden, but of the oil-economy there. The US administration and their Oil Cartels required a puppet regime in Afghanistan, whose terrain is of immense strategic business interest for the US oil barons. It provides the shortest route for the 2500 km pipe-line network for the American oil companies and a puppet Govt. there was needed for construction and maintenance of the same. The alternative to that had been a 5500 km roundabout and longer route for such pipe line involving more cost, hazards and uncertainties regarding maintenance. Afghanistan provided the shortest, hence less costly route. It was also a politically and economically soft target in the entire subcontinent for installing a pliant regime. Osama bin Laden brand of terrorists, a creation of the US administration - turned Frankenstein, became its handy tool, by default or otherwise, to execute its long-cherished pipe-line. The whole exercise had nothing to do with war against terrorism.

THE IRAQ WAR

Why the Bush-Blair clan required another Iraq-war? Again, it had nothing to do with either disarming Iraq or for freeing the Iraqi people. It is again for oil.

Iraq happens to be second largest reservoir of oil in the Middle East. Iraqi oil is the best in quality with least sulphur content with the deposits so located as to ensure exploration with least cost. USA requires importing more than 50% of its oil consumption and US oil refineries are heavily dependent on supply of crude oil from the Middle East (mainly Saudi Arabia) and Venezuela. The US relationship with Saudi Arabia has been under severe strain since long and is not expected to

improve in near future.

The Venezuela witnessed installation of a progressive and popular Govt., which unlike the earlier regime there, is not expected to oblige the Bush administration or the US business interests. In fact, the US administration made abortive attempts to topple the Venezuelan President through its agent saboteurs but failed miserably in the face of heroic resistance of the Venezuelan people. The US agents are still active but yet unable to come up with any tangible outcome.

In such a situation, the USA desperately needed an alternative source of oil supply to maintain its economic supremacy and also for full utilisation of capacity of its TNC owned oil refineries. It needed a puppet regime in one of the oil rich countries and the US administration calculated Iraq to be the softest target. The twelve year long economic sanctions and various other bans imposed on Iraq, following the 1991 Gulf war, had extremely weakened that country - economically, militarily and also politically. It was assumed that Iraq would be unable to defend itself.

The conditionality pertaining to disarmament imposed on Iraq following the 1991 war was utilised to get the UN nod for arms inspection; contrary to the expectations of the Bush-Blair combine, Iraq fully cooperated in arms-inspection. No WMDs could be discovered. Then the US demanded ouster of Saddam Hussein. US also tried to 'buy' out support of many national Governments, especially those in UN Security Council. Again it failed, mainly due to worldwide public opinion against war. Even traditional allies like France and Germany opined against unilateral US aggression on Iraq. But the overwhelming economic compulsions prevailed with the US administration that it ventured with some of its more servile allies to go in for the war against Iraq, defying the UN and the world opinion.

The crescendo of the anti-war movements throughout the globe has thoroughly exposed the heinous war-designs of the Bush-Blair clan. It is all for wealth and power to be grabbed forcibly by sheer dacoity. Baghdad might have fallen. But, the imperialist war mongers must be halted in their tracks, lest the world community has to reel under the most atrocious form of global dictatorship, worst than the fascists of forties.

WHY INTUC OPPOSES 21ST MAY NATIONWIDE STRIKE?

M K Pandhe

The Indian Worker, the fortnightly journal of the INTUC in its issue dated 1-15 April 2003 has expressed its views regarding the nationwide general strike call given by central trade unions in the country.

One should keep in mind that the INTUC has fully endorsed the 8-point charter of demands placed by the central trade unions and industry wise federation in support of their call for direct action. The BMS has also endorsed the demands and one can say with confidence that the 21st May strike is on issues on which there is complete understanding among the trade unions in the country. Even trade unions supporting the NDA government have endorsed these demands.

The Indian Worker correctly observes: "Even there were continuous and united struggle in different forms such as March to Parliament, Jai Bharo Andolan, Satyagraha etc. by CTUCs in protest against the irrational and unimaginative policies of the BJP-led NDA Government including disinvestment, the Union Government seems to have turned deaf ears to these protests and process of disinvestment of profit making public sector undertaking are continuing unabated"

By stating the views of INTUC President G. Sanjeeva Reddy on the lines mentioned above the INTUC journal notes: "It is

observed that the NDA Government lacks sincerity in having a constructive and fruitful dialogue on these vital issues with the representatives of the CTUCs at all levels, so as to understand the concern of the working mass of the country." The INTUC therefore concludes: "If the present Government fails to pay any heed, the situation may turn explosive".

The solution lies in strengthening the struggle to force the Government of India to change its policies. It is the paramount duty of the central trade unions to channelise the growing discontent into concrete forms of action with a view to achieve success in winning the demands of the workers.

SHIFTING STANCES

It is the experience of the trade union movement that despite solemn commitment given by the INTUC in 15th July 2002 convention it did not join in most of the forms of action chalked out by the convention. It is on record that INTUC even went to the extent of criticising the 8th January 2003 programme of Jail Bharo on the common demands accepted by all, including the INTUC. INTUC's participation in the 26th February 2003 rally before parliament was only symbolic.

One cannot ignore the fact that in the 7 days united coal strike in August 2002 the INTUC union stood by the side of workers but had to face criticism of the INTUC President for joining other trade

unions in giving call for such a strike. It is rather ridiculous that the President of INTUC is criticising its General Secretary for standing by the side of workers in coal industry.

The role of INTUC in signing the Report of the Second National Labour Commission was clearly against the interest of the working class. Even the BMS representative wrote a note of dissent and opposed the recommendations concerning the amendments to the Labour Laws. The INTUC president has done a great service to the BJP-led NDA Government by signing such a derogatory report. Several INTUC leaders find it difficult to justify the signing of the Report by the INTUC President. The matter has gone to such a ridiculous extent that INTUC leadership in W. Bengal had to organise a seminar against the amendments to the Labour Laws proposed by the Second National Labour Commission. 'The Working Class' in its earlier issues has already quoted from the article by the West Bengal INTUC leader.

DUPLICITY UNLIMITED

When the HPCL and BPCL workers were planning a nationwide strike to oppose privatisation of these premier public sector undertakings, Sanjeeva Reddy along with some leaders of INTUC met Disinvestment Minister and expressed support to privatisation of these profit

making undertakings. The matter was raised by the Minister himself in Parliament. No INTUC leader came forward to defend its position. It was CITU's Jibon Roy who had to come forward and state the official commitment of the INTUC to oppose privatisation of profit making public sector undertakings. This duplicity in INTUC's policy is causing confusion in INTUC's ranks.

INTUC's opposition to the public sector workers strike in April 2002 was totally unjustified. While all public sector workers downed their tools to oppose the policies of privatisation and closure of sick public sector undertakings the opposition of INTUC to these actions only isolate the INTUC leadership from the mass of the workers.

ANTI-STRUGGLE STANCE

Now INTUC wants to shift its emphasis from non participation in the struggle to give up the struggle altogether. Hence the 'Indian Worker' in the above mentioned article states: "It is also the prime duty of the trade unions to analyse the situation pragmatically and voice their concern through the respective political parties to take up the issue on the floor of Parliament. It seems to be the only option left to the trade unions, especially in view of the fact that

the present government is not in a mood to give cognisance to the legitimate protest of the working class."

Thus the open call given to the workers is not to join any struggle but only to approach the MPs to raise the issues in Parliament. The statement ignores the fact that the NDA has clear majority in Parliament and it can get any legal measure adopted in the Parliament. On the policies of globalisation the congress party is always willing to support NDA Govt. The example of Congress Party's support to the Patents Bill and Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill are still fresh in the mind of the workers.

The working class can prevent NDA Government from resorting to implement their policies of globalisation through the pressure of mass action.

Ideologically INTUC is claiming to keep the working class away from political struggles and is asking them to fight only for their economic demands. Now it has come to the conclusion that only political parties can solve the issues which are to be resolved by trade unions through mass actions. The 'Indian Worker' therefore claims: "only political parties are capable of pressurising the Government to reverse its policies by raising the

issues in Parliament".

It is practically taking a stand for liquidation of the trade union movement by taking the stand that workers should rely on Parliament to get their demands redressed. The Indian worker concludes: "Strike or work stoppage at this situation as has been planned by some of the CTUOs does not seem to be a solution."

Thus the INTUC has made an unconvincing case to oppose the 21st May strike. The call, however, is receiving very good response from workers of all affiliations. The INTUC workers who are also victims of the policies of globalisation desire united movement to reverse the anti-worker policies of the NDA Government. We earnestly appeal to the INTUC leadership to consider the fallacy of their own arguments and come forward to strengthen the united movement of the working class to reverse the NDA Government IMF-World Bank dictated policies.

The united working class has sufficient strength to defeat the policies of globalisation. Instead of dividing our ranks let the working class be united in a determined struggle on the 21st May against these draconian policies.

COM.E K MENON

E K Menon, a veteran trade union leader and the General Council member of CITU, died on March 8, 2003 at Thrissur, Kerala. He was 78.

Menon was in the forefront of the working class struggle in the State. The death came while he was attending a function of Kerala Karshaka Sangham. He was the Trichur District Secretary of CITU and a prominent leader of CPI(M). He was elected to Kerala Assembly in 1987.

The CITU Secretariat and 'The Working Class' convey deepest condolences to the bereaved family and comrades.

ECONOMY DERAILED

WHITHER SUSTAINABLE GROWTH?

The Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) has put the quick estimates for the third quarter GDP growth in 2002-03 at 2.6%. The bad news couldn't have come at a more appropriate moment, what with the extended war in Iraq causing serious doubts over the prospects of a global economic recovery. Expectedly, the lower estimates are largely because of the widespread drought in over 13 states during last year causing a negative growth of 7.9% in agriculture.... The worry, however, is that this story may not end with the

last fiscal. Typically a severe decline in agricultural production shrinks real income in rural India which still generates the bulk of the demand for the manufacturing sector. This effect of demand compression comes after a lag of over six months. So the impact of lower real income in agriculture will be felt in the coming months.... The incipient recovery in manufacturing may not hold for too long, unless some creative policy interventions are thought of quickly.

(Editorial, *The Economic Times*, 02-04-2003)

GDP GLOOM....

....On a year to year basis,... the manufacturing sector witnessed an expansion of 6.3% during October-December in 2002 as against a growth of just 3.4% in the same period in 2001. However, there is now evidence of a surprising deceleration over the three quarters of 2002-03 for which CSO estimates of GDP are available. Barring the sub-sector of electricity, gas and water supply, growth in all industrial and service sub-sectors slowed in

the third quarter of 2002-03 compared to that recorded in the second quarter of the year. In some sectors (manufacturing is one) the slow-down was marginal; in others (financial services, for example) deceleration was substantial.... The industrial and service sectors were expected to partly neutralise the effect of drought on agricultural production. Instead, the opposite has happened...

(Editorial, *The Hindu*, 03-04-2003)

FOODGRAIN OUTPUT TUMBLES BY 13.2%

The total foodgrain production for the year 2002-03 fell by a whopping 13.20 per cent according to advance estimates..... Oilseed production suffered most - declined by 24%.. Cotton production

declined by 15.61% while in the case of Jute & mesta and sugarcane, the decline is in the range of 5-6 per cent...

(*The Financial Express*, 05-04-2003)

RETURN (?) OF HUNGER !

'The problem of hunger though more or less eradicated (?), could reemerge in parts of country unless the food economy is overhauled completely' said K C Pant, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission.... "Besides a steady decline in public investment in agriculture, institutional structures developed in the fifties and sixties for food security and relief have also been allowed

to erode substantially' Pant said. 'A sense of complacency and declining standards of governance were responsible for the deteriorating situation' he added. Pant was speaking on "Towards a hunger-free India-countdown from 2007", a consultation organised by M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, United Nations' World Food Programme and FAO...

(*Business Standard*, 05-04-2003)

DOWN THE DISASTER LANE

JOBLESSNESS ON THE RISE...

The Economic Survey 2002-03 has drawn attention to the steep decline in the rate of growth of employment in recent years. The absolute number of unemployed in the country as well as incidence of unemployment (expressed in terms of unemployed as a percentage of labour force) increased during the period 1994-2000.

While the absolute number of unemployed rose

from 20.13 million in 1993-94, to 26.58 million in 1999-2000, the unemployment rate increased from 5.99 per cent to 7.32 per cent. What is disturbing is the fact that the dip in employment growth has occurred in spite of the relatively higher output growth and a slower growth of labour force during the past decade...

(S D Naik in Business Line, 15-04-2003)

FAILED MONETARY POLICY!

Going by the Report on Currency and Finance 2001-02, the RBI is quite aware of the black-hole the Indian Economy is in.... The monetary regulator is helpless having to report to a moribund state political apparatus....

In the last five years the growth has dipped while interest rates (market) came down and the Report puts it to "weak sensitivity" of bank lending rates

to mark-downs in Bank Rate diluting "the efficacy of the monetary policy in reinvigorating growth".....

At the disaggregated level, there has been a drop in bank lending to small farmers from 15.1% in the 1980s to 11% in 1990s while that to marginal farmers has dipped to 13% from 18%...

(Editorial, Business Line, 03-04-2003)

REDUCTION IN ORGANISED WORKFORCE

As per the sample survey carried out by the National Sample Survey organization during 1999-2000, the estimated total workforce in the country was 39.7 crore. 13.9% workers were employed as regular salaried persons while 33.2% were engaged as casual staff. Out of a total employment of 2.79 crore in the organised sector, approximately 1.93 crore were employed in the public sector.

As per the Employment Market Information

Programme of the Directorate General of Employment & Training, estimated employment in the organised sector which was 281.13 lakh as on March, 1999 has marginally gone down to 277.89 lakh in March 2001. Estimated employment in the public sector has also marginally gone down from 194.15 lakh as on March, 1999 to 191.38 lakh as on March, 2001.

(Source: Reply to Question in Rajya Sabha, PIB)

WHO WILL EXPLAIN - WHY?

The Hon'ble Minister for Heavy Industries states: "As per Public Enterprises Survey, 2002-02, which was laid in the Rajya Sabha on 3-03-03, the additional investment in all the 240 Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) was Rs 50,434 crore during 2001-02. The net profit of 230 operating CPSUs as a group was Rs 26,045 crore which is higher by 66% over the previous year."

As per the P E Survey 2001-02, the net worth of 240 CPSUs has gone up from Rs 1,76,669 crore in 2000-01 to Rs 2,32,265 crore in 2001-02...."

(Reply to starred question no 425 in Rajya Sabha on 21-4-2003)

Yet the CPSUs, and particularly those responsible for such bright performance, have been targeted for outright sale to private hands, both domestic and foreign. Who will explain - WHY ?

(T.K.RENGARAJAN, Vice president, CITU, recently visited Colombo for attending the National Congress of Socialist Workers Union, the trade union wing of the Janatha Vimukthi Perumana (People's Liberation Front - PLF). Here is a report by him on the situation obtaining in the island country. - Editor)

SRI LANKA:

CONGRESS OF SOCIALIST WORKERS UNION

The one day session of the National Congress of Socialist Workers Union was inaugurated on the 31st March. Along with me, another guest who attended the conference was from the Trade Union Coordination Centre (FB) from Bangalore. The Conference was conducted by their leaders Lalgandha, Nandan Gunatilake and Kularatine. Leaders of the Kisan, Women and Trade Union fronts spoke.

Though the people of Sri Lanka were having some sort of a relief at the ongoing peace process between the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE, the JVP and the Socialist Workers Union appeared to be not satisfied with the peace proposals facilitated by the Norway interlocutors. On the 1st April morning they have arranged for a meeting with the General Secretary of JVP, Com.Tilvin Silva. On the 2nd and 3rd April we were taken to Anuradhapura and Kandy. A meeting with the trade union leaders was arranged on 3rd evening immediately on our return. On the 4th morning I met the General Secretary of the Sri Lankan Communist Party, D.E.W.Gunasekara and their leaders Raja Collure, Subhasinghe and Kugathasan.

ECONOMY IN BAD SHAPE

Generally in Colombo and in all places, where I went, I could see that the people want peace and the frustration and fatigue of a long drawn civil strife was perceptible when we interacted with the people. The economy is in a bad shape, which they attribute to this. The cost of living is very high (say, for example a kilogram of potatoes sells at 50 Sri Lankan rupees and that is the case with almost all vegetables and fruits). Prices at the ordinary hotels are also not cheap either. Cooking gas price (12.5 Kg cylinder) was increased four times within one year and it sells at a whopping SL RS.660.

The Indian IT companies like Infosys, NIIT and SSI are doing a flourishing trade with their shops and

training centers all over. The Sri Lankans get free medical facilities everywhere provided by the state. They also get free education for the children at all levels, which resulted in a high literacy rate of 96%, which should simply be the highest average for any country in the SAARC region.

During the past decade, 90 state-run PSUs were privatised throwing thousands of workers out of jobs. Now the government is targeting the service sector for their next stage of privatisation drive. The entire tea sector, which is a main industry of their economy, - from cultivation stage to export - has been privatised. Air transport, Soviet-aided steel and tyre factories etc., are being privatised. The country appears to be wholly dependant on the Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Indian and Singaporean investments for kick starting their economy. Chinese are much interested in investing largely in the tourism sector there with a view to catering to the increasing needs of the Chinese tourists, whose number is expected to increase multifold in the coming years. India had taken over 200 oil pumps through their oil major Indian Oil Corporation at Trincomallee. Bajaj autorikshaws are widely plying on roads and Maruti cars and Tata & Ashok Leyland lorries and trucks had just entered the automobile market. The multiplicity of trade unions is quite prevalent there in every industry, ranging from five unions to thirty at one factory level. But unit level joint action committees are also seen everywhere.

Except, Janatha Vimukthi Perumana (PLF) almost all the parties including Sri Lankan Communist Party and Nawa Samaja Party (of the Trotskyites) support the ongoing peace talks with the Tamils there. Against the Iraq war, all left parties had demonstrated in front of the U.S. embassy and JVP had conducted two well-organised demonstrations as per their report. The reaction of the bourgeoisie and the media is very lukewarm to the war, as has been in India. Various women

organisations (Women & Media, Women Education and Research Centre, Voice of Women, Kantha Shakthi, Women Development Foundation etc.) had conducted a huge rally against the U.S. War on Iraq.

The state is generally dependant on western powers especially the U.S.A. The US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage had assured the Sri Lankan government that the war with Iraq will not affect them in anyway and the US assistance to Sri Lanka will continue as ever.

A 16-member delegation of the LTTE, 5 of them are women had left for a visit to Switzerland, UK, Finland and Canada recently to study federalism. There is a growing apprehension among the people that even after one year no solution is in sight for the vexatious ethnic problem. To this, the UNP refrain was that in South Africa the peace talks went on for over 4 years and Northern Ireland took more than six years to settle the strife and similarly it would take longer time here also.

TU SITUATION

During this visit I could meet the representatives from a variety of industries like electricity, engineering, railway, postal service, government employees, port & general workers etc. From the three hours meeting with them, wealth of information could be elicited.

➤ The telecom industry went to private hands from the year 1993 and at present the postal service is being sought to be privatised. Against this in the year 1998 a 52 days strike was conducted by the workers. Hundreds of them were arrested during the struggle and lost their jobs. A joint action committee of ten unions was formed to conduct the struggle.

➤ From 1996 onwards, sector wise privatisation is taking place. The Sri Lankan

workers could conduct one massive strike against this during this entire period.

➤ The 16000 Port workers were divided in 30 unions. In the state owned engineering sector, there are only 3000 workers and nine unions are there. At present there are no work orders and the jobs are being privatised. Mainly, Japanese and Korean investments are coming into this sector. Now the workers have formed a joint action committee.

➤ Similarly in the water & drainage service, there are 7000 workers organised in 12 unions. The government had taken a decision to privatise the rural water supply schemes.

➤ Ironically, in the large segment of teachers there are about 125 unions and there is no joint action committee. About 500 primary schools are being closed and the government is proposing to open international schools with private participation.

➤ In health sector, about 80000 people are working. They are organised in more than 800 category wise unions. At present the work of maintenance, OP, cleaning and laboratories are given to private hands. The government says that the state sector workers are comparatively more as a ratio to the population in Sri Lanka and they would strive to reduce that ratio at comparable levels with other nations.

➤ In the railways 17000 people are employed. The rail services are there for about 1435 Kilometers only. The government is trying to privatise this state run sector and the employees forming a joint front are opposing that.

➤ The general consciousness of the workers is not politicalised nor were they ideologically equipped either. Hence, no strong apex level unity and action is forthcoming.

COMRADE LAKSHMI DEY

We record with deep regret the premature death of Com. Lakshmi Dey, a member of CITU General Council and a leading figure in the left and democratic movement in West Bengal. He was also a Mayor of Kolkata Corporation. His indomitable courage in the struggle against all forces of reaction in the State established him as an important political leader in the State. Over and above his political activity, he also devoted time and energy for working class movement. His untimely death is a great loss to the democratic and trade union movement in the State. The CITU Secretariat and 'The Working Class' condole the death of Com. Lakshmi Dey and pay homage to his memory.

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30TH Conference of All India Kisan Sabha:

CALL FOR MASSIVE PEASANT UPSURGE ON MAY 21

The 30th all India conference of the All India Kisan Sabha was held on 6-8 March 2003 at Jullundhar, Punjab. The Conference was inaugurated by Harkishan Singh Surjeet, Vice President of AIKS. The delegates' session began on March 6 with the placing of the General Secretary's Report by K Varadha Rajan. The Conference decided to organise massive peasants action countrywide on 21st May 2003 - the day the country's working class have decided to go for countrywide General Strike against the policies of neo-liberal imperialist globalisation.

The General Secretary's Report, which briefly outlined the political challenges at the international and national level, consisted of four main parts: (1) Crisis in Indian Agriculture, (2) Review of Major Struggles, (3) Review of Organisation, (4) Main Weaknesses and Future Tasks. While placing the report, K Varadha Rajan touched upon all these four aspects. He also underlined the fact that the last four years have also seen worldwide protests against globalisation as well as against US military interventions.

The report pinpointed the various aspects of the crisis in Indian agriculture leading to all round decline and aggravation of poverty and employment. Despite all

liberalisation, the agricultural export has also declined in dollar terms by around 16%. While the NDA Govt has been cutting down subsidies on various segments of agriculture pushing down to the level of measly 3%, the subsidies being given by the rich countries have been on the rise ranging from 30% to as high as 72.5%. On top of this is the worst drought witnessed by the country in 2002 and the utterly callous attitude of the Central Government towards the plight of the drought-hit peasants and agricultural workers. The report also took stock of the major struggles led by the All India Kisan Sabha during the last four years and their impact on the progress of the organisation. The major actions at the all India level included a convention of peasant-agricultural workers organisations in August 2000; a massive one lakh strong Delhi Rally of Left-led peasants and agricultural workers on November 30, 2000; and a nationwide struggle of picketing of Central Government offices, rail roko and rasta roko actions in March 2001, in which lakhs of peasants and agricultural workers took part. All these actions were directed against the disastrous agrarian policies of the BJP-led central government.

The report also outlined a large number of independent struggles conducted by the AIKS all over

the country on issues like drought relief, land, remunerative prices, irrigation and power, and against social atrocities. While making a review of the organisation, the report noted that there has been a significant increase in membership by over 29 lakhs in the last four years, and AIKS membership now stands at a record 1 crore 57 lakhs. But it also noted the great unevenness in membership, with West Bengal alone accounting for 76 per cent, and West Bengal and Kerala together accounting for 87.5 per cent of the total membership. Of the above 29 lakh increase in the last four years, the three states of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura account for an increase of 24 lakhs.

M.K.Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, greeted the conference and emphasised the need for closer coordination between the CITU, Kisan Sabha and the All India Agricultural Workers Union to strengthen the worker - peasant alliance and build countrywide joint struggles against the policies of the NDA Government.

The conference, besides debating the General Secretary's report, held discussions in separate commissions on four most important topics viz., Effect of LPG policies on agriculture, irrigation and natural calamities, social atrocities and credit facilities. The conference also

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adopted a number of resolutions on various issues of relevance viz., against eviction of tribals from land, against reversal of land reforms, condemning US led war on Iraq, on solidarity on the

occasion of International Women's day, on drought situation, against communalism etc.

The Conference elected a 135 member All India Kisan Council, 52 member Central Kisan

Committee (CKC) and a 13 member Secretariat with S Ramchandran Pillai as President and K Varadha Rajan as General Secretary.

COAL WORKERS HOLD ALL INDIA CONFERENCE

All India Coal Workers Federation (AICWF) is the strongest organisation of coal workers in India that have led lakhs of workers in coal industry through glorious struggles since its formation. AICWF has waged a sustained struggle against privatisation of coal mines. The Government of India had to backtrack thrice from their move for privatisation, in the face of a total strike by the miners with AICWF as the leading force.

The AICWF held its 6th conference from 29th to 31st March in Singrauli (Jayant area), Madhya Pradesh, amidst great enthusiasm of coal workers who assembled there from all over the country. 204 delegates and 10 observers representing Eastern (ECL), Western (WCL), South Eastern (SECL), Northern (NCL), Central (CCL), Mahanadi, Singareni Coalfields and Bharat Coking Coal Ltd, Dankuni Coal Complex, Assam Coalmines (NECL) and also offices in Kolkata and elsewhere, attended the conference. The venue of the conference was named Sailendra Shaily Nagar and the stage as

Jamuna Prasad Shastri Manch.

On 29th March, the conference began with hoisting of red flag of AICWF and, later on, adopting a condolence resolution of martyrs and departed comrades. Md Oyaz Khan, chairman, Reception Committee, welcomed the delegates. The conference was inaugurated by M K Pandhe, President of AICWF.

Inaugurating the Conference, Pandhe dealt extensively on major international and national developments and also on the present situation in the Indian Coal industry.

Pandhe castigated the Government of India for its economic policies. The impact of all these policies has been severe upon the coal industry. Jobs in coal industry have come down by 1, 30,000 during the last 8 years. The number of contract workers is increasing by leaps and bounds. Reduction of import duty has made imported coal cheaper, thus making domestic mining non-viable. Again, in the name of restoring economic viability there is a mad drive for outsourcing and handing over mines to mafia. VRS scheme and

special VRS scheme for women are pushing out huge number of male workers and almost all the female workers from the collieries. Mismanagement, theft, illegal mining, neglect of machineries, blatant flouting of safety rules, are the order of the day. All these are causing huge losses to the coal companies. Unsafe conditions are leading to several deaths and hundreds of accidents. Mafia operating in collusion with officers have created lawlessness in the entire coalfield areas and workers as well as common peace-loving people are falling victims of their machinations.

Pandhe called upon the coal workers to strengthen the organisation. He reminded that despite the glorious strikes and struggles, on organisation front we are still weak; our influence is far greater than our membership. Strong organisation is an absolute necessity to realise our demands, to thwart privatisation and to bring order in the management we should intervene more effectively. Sunil Basu Roy, General Secretary, AICWF gave a detailed account of the activities of the federation

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since its 5th conference at Korba. He highlighted the major tasks before that coal workers which were (a) saving PSUs and defeating privatisation drives (b) fight against closure of mines (c) fight against outsourcing, (d) fight for implementation of national wage agreement, and starting of negotiation on coal agreement (VII bipartite) and (e) ensure safety in the mines, making them free from gas and fire. He told that the coal workers should be in the forefront of all struggles against the anti worker policies of the Government and asked them to make the 21st May All India General Strike a grand success.

G P Goswami, treasurer of the Federation placed the accounts and gave a detailed account of the status of safety in the coal mines. He pointed out that fatal and non-

fatal accidents, most of which were avoidable, are very high. The recommendations of National Conference on Safety are not implemented at all.

33 comrades participated in the discussions on General Secretary's report and gave many valuable suggestions.

The Conference emphasised the importance of (a) building united movement (b) carrying out simultaneous independent activities and becoming a catalyst in joint movement (c) exploiting the full potential to enrol membership (d) taking our activities down to unit level (f) improving communication system, (g) building up cadres and (h) picking up local issues and involving local mass of people in our campaign and struggle, both at the industry level and at national level.

The Conference adopted several resolutions on US led war on Iraq, against communalism, POTA, divestment of CMPDI, anti worker recommendations of the Second National Commission on Labour, engagement of contract workers in coal industry and against privatisation and closures.

The conference elected a new committee consisting 19 Office Bearers and 38 members. M K Pandhe was re-elected as President of the Federation, while Haradhan Roy, veteran leader and ex-MP, took over as General Secretary, in place of Sunil Basu Roy, who retired on health grounds. The Conference congratulated the organisers and volunteers of Singrauli for their untiring efforts in making the conference a success.

(Report from Ardhendu Dakshi)

UNITED STRUGGLES IN TAMILNADU

Following the footsteps of the Govt at the centre, the Tamilnadu Govt has also unleashed attacks on various sections of working people.

In addition to the announcement on privatisation of State Transport undertakings, the Govt has now come out with proposals to handover Co-operative and State owned sugar mills and spinning mills. The process of privatising the State Electricity Board has also begun with putting in place the State Regulatory Authority.

More and more attacks on

teachers and State Govt employees have come in the form of taking away various benefits in calculating pension, commutation benefits and gratuity. A portion of monetary payments are to be made through saving certificates. In addition to this are the new taxation proposals of the State and Central Govt.s.

The traders in the State have downed their shutters for 2 days in protest against VAT. For the last 10 days, power loom producers have stopped production all over the state, protesting against the

10% excise duty. So is the case of the small scale garment manufacturers.

State Transport Workers: Joint Action Committee of all trade unions including CITU, LPF, INTUC, AITUC, and HMS have been on struggle against privatisation and on other demands. Various forms of struggles including human chains, dharnas, demonstrations have been conducted.

On 25th March, a massive procession was taken out in Chennai, in which more than 20

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thousand workers from all over the state participated.

The demands included halt to the privatisation attempts, lift ban on recruitment, start discussion on charter of demands which has been pending for more than 2 years, against contractisation etc. The procession was led by A.Soundararajan (CITU), C.Kuppusami, M.P. (LPF), J. Lakshmanan (AITUC) and other state level leaders.

The processionists also raised their voice against the U.S. attack on Iraq.

Electricity Workers: Electricity workers and Engineers are on a three pronged struggle. On one side is the question saving the electricity sector, in view of the Electricity Bill being taken up in the parliament. Against this and against the privatisation efforts various unions of workers and engineers have come together under the banner of the state unit of the NCCOEE. Eight trade unions including CITU, LPF, AESU and the Engineers Association participated in this movement.

State level demonstrations in front of TNEB offices were conducted on 12th March and a state level convention was held on 30th March in Chennai. T.K.Rengarajan (CITU), C. Kuppusami, M.P. (LPF) and other leaders addressed the largely attended convention.

On the question of wage revision, pending for more than 2 years and for the implementation of the

PWD rates of wages for contract workers, CITU, LPF, AESU and Janatha Unions have formed a JAC and have been conducting struggles. Demonstrations were held in various parts of the state on 7th March. A massive demonstration has been held in front of the TNEB head quarters in Chennai.

The TNEB has, violating all the rules and regulations, 'adopted' the State Govt.'s new orders on pensionary benefits. 10 unions in TNEB have come together to fight against this. Powerful demonstrations have been conducted in various parts of the state against the arbitrary orders. Efforts are being made for bringing together 2 other unions which have not been joining these united struggles.

Meanwhile, CITU led contract workers in TNEB are to go on two days fasting all over the state demanding wage rise as agreed in the last settlement and for regularisation.

Strike by Govt. employees and Teachers: More than 8 lakhs of state Govt employees and teachers went on a day's successful strike on 10th April against the State Govt. orders curtailing pensionary benefits and other benefits to the Govt employees and teachers. Massive protest actions have been taking place all over the state, under the banner of Joint Action Committee of Teachers and Govt Employees. When the decision to go on a day's strike was announced, the state Govt came

out with threats of invoking ESMA. But the strike was very successful all over the state including the state secretariat.

It is noteworthy that the employees in the state secretariat have not been joining united actions, but this time they effected a change in the leadership of the Association and conducted a successful strike.

The employees and teachers have decided to continue the campaign and to go for an indefinite strike in May.

Central Govt employees' struggle: Central Govt employees in the State have decided to join the All India strike on 21st May. A resolution to this effect was adopted in the state level conference of the Confederation of Central Govt Employees in Chennai on 22nd March. A. K. Padmanabhan (CITU), C.Kuppusami, M.P. (LPF), C.C. Pillai (Confederation) were among those who addressed the conference.

Hosiery workers strike: More than 1 lakh of hosiery workers in Tiruppur went on a day's token strike on 15th April demanding wage revision. The Employers' organisations have not been coming forward to settle the charter of demands and the Joint Action Committee consisting of CITU, AITUC, LPF, INTUC, ATP and MLF has been formed. JAC has also served notice for an indefinite strike from 25th April. The existing wage settlement had expired in February and a 15 point charter was submitted. The

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Management has been advocating productivity linked wages and the unions have rejected it.

Textile and sugar unions in the state have also begun preparations for state level movements against privatisation of Co-op and state owned sugar factories and Spinning Mills.

A state level joint meeting of Trade unions and cane growers associations was held in

Villupuram on 12th March. CITU, AITUC, LPF, INTUC, MLF, PTS and Ambedkar unions and various cane growers participated. A joint action committee has been formed. T.K. Rengarajan, K. Vaithyanathan and V.Kumar from CITU state centre attended the meeting.

Another area of united resistance in this period was the struggle of the teachers and students of 100

years old Queen Mary's College, which the state Govt wants to demolish to build new offices for state secretariat. Various political Parties, Mass organisations and intellectuals have extended solidarity with the students and teachers. The struggle has been put on hold at the intervention of Chennai High Court.

(Report from A. K. PADMANABHAN)

ANGANWADI EMPLOYEES' MEET PLANS ACTIONS

The Working Committee of the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers, which met at Shimla on the 17th and 18th of April 2003 decided to join the All India General Strike by the Central Trade Unions. The AIFAWH working committee called upon all the 12 lakh anganwadi workers and helpers in the country to participate in the strike en masse and join the rallies, dharnas and processions held by the trade unions on that day.

The meeting was presided over by Neelima Maitra, President of AIFAWH. Members and invitees from 12 States - Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttaranchal and West Bengal - participated in the meeting.

Hemalata, General Secretary of AIFAWH presented the report of activities.

All the State representatives participated in the discussion and reported activities in their States. It was reported that in some States like Haryana and Tamil Nadu, the arrears of the increased honorarium has not been paid till now. In Haryana, the State Government had deducted the amount the State Government was giving for the additional work, even though it was specifically mentioned in the GO that this should not be done. The Union in Haryana has organised dharnas in several districts and has planned a State level convention on the 27th of April. The Tamil Nadu State Government also has not paid the arrears till now and has decided to withdraw the DA it was providing. The Himachal Pradesh Government too toyed with the idea but had to give it up after the anganwadi employees organised a rally on the 16th April and warned of intensifying the stir if the State

Government withdrew its share. The Chief Minister promised the Union delegation not to withdraw the State's share and pay the full arrears immediately. The Working Committee decided to write to the State Governments concerned and also represent to the Government of India on this matter. All the State Committees will also send telegrams demanding that the Haryana and Tamil Nadu State Governments pay the full arrears without any deduction immediately.

All the State Committees made preparations to ensure early payment of arrears and in most of the States payment of arrears has started. The members from Andhra Pradesh reported how they have prepared a plan and implemented it meticulously to get the arrears and to ensure that the anganwadi employees get the full amount. As a result of this the anganwadi employees responded

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magnificently to the call of the Union for Funds, which also demonstrated their loyalty towards the Union. In some districts some officers tried desperately to prevent the union from collecting funds. But the anganwadi employees firmly told that they were able to get the enhancement only because of the struggles launched by the Union and they wanted to further strengthen the union by contributing funds. In several projects they sat on dharnas against the tactics of the officers. In some districts, anganwadi workers and helpers voluntarily offered one month's honorarium. As soon as there was a small increase in the honorarium, attempts have started from a section of officers and other vested interests to remove the anganwadi workers and helpers who have been working since many years

and replace them with their own people. It was also reported that in some States like Punjab and Maharashtra there were attempts to retire the anganwadi helpers. The Maharashtra Government issued a GO which says that the anganwadi helpers aged 65 years or who are physically incapacitated would be retired. But they get no retirement benefits. The Federation decided to take up the demand of Provident Fund and Pension and launch wide campaigns and struggles on these issues.

The Working Committee unanimously adopted the report and the tasks proposed in the report. It was decided to organise the Central Trade Union Classes for Hindi speaking States on 24-28 May 2003 at Delhi. The Working Committee called upon all the State Committees to

concentrate on cadre development during the year 2003 and organise State level trade union classes in July -August. The importance of developing closer bonds with the beneficiaries, particularly the women, agricultural workers and poor peasants and actively supporting their demands and struggles was emphasised.

An impressive procession and rally of anganwadi employees were organised on the 16th of April. Anganwadi employees from even remote parts of Himachal Pradesh like Kinnaur on the Indo-China border participated in the rally, which was addressed by Neelima Maitra, Hemalata, Kashmir Singh Thakur, General Secretary of the State Committee, Jagat Ram, Organising Secretary, Devki Sharma, General Secretary and Prem Kumari, President of the Union, among others.

J & K ANGANWADI EMPLOYEES STATE CONVENTION

In the first ever attempt to organise the anganwadi workers and helpers in the State of Jammu and Kashmir on their demands, a State level conference was held on 30th March 2003 at Khanabal in Anantanag district in the Kashmir valley. Only a few days earlier 24 Kashmiri Pundits were brutally killed in Nadimarg in the same district. The presence of the large number of security forces visible every where shows that Kashmir has not yet returned to normalcy. It was of immense

significance that in spite of this difficult situation in the State, around 2000 anganwadi workers and helpers from 5 districts of Jammu & Kashmir- Anantanag, Pulwama, Srinagar, Badgaon, and Baramulla- participated in the conference. This is an indication of how seriously they feel about the poor wages, irregular payment of honorarium, and lack of recognition as employees etc. K Hemalata, General Secretary, All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers, Mohammed

Yusuf Tarigami, Secretary, J & K State Committee of CPI (M), and Ghulam Nabi Malik, Secretary of the State Kisan Sabha participated in the Convention, which was presided over by Hasina Sophie, an anganwadi worker from Anantanag district.

Extending warm greetings on behalf of the AIFAWH, Hemalata congratulated the women for participating in the conference in such a large numbers. She welcomed their decision to organise and join the all India

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movement of the anganwadi employees by becoming part of the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers. She promised all help and support from the Federation in their efforts to achieve their genuine demands of regularisation etc.

Several anganwadi workers and helpers including Taslima Subhan from Kashmir, Neelofer Suphia from Pulwama, Parveena, Naseema Akhtar, Shirifa, Daisy, Fameeda etc spoke on their problems. They told that the fuel charges were not enough and not paid regularly. Even the honorarium was paid only once in 6 months and that too in instalments. Many of them were the sole wage earners in their families and it was difficult to manage the family with the meagre honorarium. The work load on them was continuously

being increased. Many had to face the wrath of their in laws as they had to work for such long hours for such ridiculously low remuneration. There were at least two instances of the husbands giving 'talaq' to the anganwadi workers after they came to know that it was not a Government job and their honorarium was so low. The women kept on chanting full throated slogans demanding 'service books', enhancement of fuel charges, enhancement of honorarium, welfare benefits etc. The Conference passed a resolution demanding the Government of India to sanction immediately the 7,281 new anganwadi centres, the proposal for which has been sent by the State Government. This would help in improving the nutritional status of the poor children and provide them pre school education.

The unemployed women in the State would also get some employment. In another resolution the conference demanded medical leave and free medical aid including investigations to the anganwadi employees. They also demanded that the medical expenses should be reimbursed if the anganwadi employees had to seek private medical treatment. The Convention decided to form a State wide organisation - Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Association, Jammu and Kashmir. A State level Organising Committee was elected with Taslima Subhan as President and Hasina Sophie as the General Secretary. The Committee decided to register the Union and enroll members in large numbers. It was also decided to organise from the grass root level by forming project and district level committees.

ANGANWADI EMPLOYEES: SUPREME COURT CASE

In August 1996, the Karnataka Administrative Tribunal has ruled that '...having in view of the right of the State to select for appointment, the right to appoint, the right to terminate the employment, right to prescribe conditions of service, the nature of duties performed by the employee, the right to control the employees, manner and method of work to issue directions and right to determine and the source from which salary (honorarium) is paid and host of circumstances clearly go to show that there exists

relationship of master and servant (between the State and the anganwadi workers and helpers)'. The Tribunal also observed 'In the circumstances, we hope that the State Government would come out with an appropriate absorption order, scheme or rule with a reasonable pay scale to those appointed as anganwadi workers and helpers'. But the Karnataka Government chose to appeal to the Supreme Court in stead of implementing the order of the Tribunal. The case has now come up for hearing before the Supreme

Court on the 27th March 2003. The anganwadi workers and AITUC from Karnataka was represented by Indira Jaisingh and the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers, which has decided to intervene in the case was represented by Keerti Singh. The Additional Solicitor General Raju Ramachandran represented the Government of India. The representative of the Karnataka State Government was not present and the case was adjourned for next hearing, which may be in July 2003.

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ASSAM PREPARES FOR GENERAL STRIKE

The Assam State Committee of CITU met on 3rd and 4th April, 2003. S Dev Roye, Secretary CITU, attended the meeting.

As decided by the State Committee the following programmes were carried out in the State:

Anti-war Day against US- led war

on Iraq was observed through out the State on 11th April by wearing badges, holding demonstration in front of US and British establishments in Assam and telegrams were sent to the US Ambassador.

Demonstrations were held in front of the offices of Regional PF Commissioner demanding 12% PF

interest and inclusion of CITU representatives in the standing committee. The meeting also chalked out detailed programme to prepare for the 21st May strike. It was also decided to convene the State General Council of CITU in July at Tezpur, in preparation for holding the State Conference in November 2003.

DELHI: WORKERS GO ON INDUSTRIAL STRIKE

At the call of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), the industrial workers of Delhi, Ghaziabad, Faridabad and NOIDA went on a strike on March 27, with marches, morchas and processions, braving lathi charges and facing arrests. The response was spontaneous, unlike the hired bus morchas in many Delhi meetings.

The strike was to press for a minimum wage of Rs 5000; end of outsourcing and contract system for permanent jobs; declaration of lock-outs and closures as punishable offences; equal wages for equal and similar work; halt to demolition of jhuggi-jhopdis; and provision of pucca houses for their dwellers.

Along with the CITU, supporters of the Jana Chetna Manch turned out in large numbers. Former prime minister V P Singh addressed several rallies and visited police

stations to demand the release of those arrested. He also went to Tis Hazari courts in solidarity and addressed a snap press conference.

The one-month long campaign in preparation for the strike programme also raised the voice of protest against the US-led aggression against Iraq.

The response to the strike call in various industrial areas of Delhi, Ghaziabad, NOIDA and Faridabad has been moderate to high. Most of the industrial areas witnessed atleast a few hours of strike, and some witnessed complete strike, with impressive rallies and processions by the striking workers and their families. In several areas, traffic was paralysed. In many places, the poorest among the poor from the jhuggis came out in support.

In several places, the police resorted to unwarranted

lathicharges in a bid to foil the workers' strike, causing injuries to dozens of workers including women and children. The trade union movement is not going to allow such atrocities lying down, a CITU spokesman said after the strike.

The industrial strike at Delhi and in adjoining regions at the initiative of the CITU and other friendly organisations is the beginning of a long-drawn united struggle to resist the onslaught of the employers-government combine on the life and livelihood of the workers, the spokesman said.

In Delhi, big demonstrations were held in Kirti Nagar, Yamuna Pushta, Wazirpur Industrial Area, Jahangirpuri, Ambedkar Nagar, Samaypur Badli, Mahipalpur, Rangpuri, Piragarhi Chowk and Khanpur.

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

State	Sr. Centre		Month		State	Sr. Centre		Month	
	No.		Jan.' 03	Feb.' 03		No.		Jan.' 03	Feb.' 03
Andhra Pradesh	1	Gudur	462	464	Maharashtra	38	Mumbai	574	574
	2	Guntur	488	495		39	Nagpur	493	492
	3	Hyderabad	478	481		40	Nasik	524	516
	4	Visakhapatnam	476	475		41	Pune	540	539
	5	Warangal	512	523		42	Solapur	491	494
Assam	6	D.D.Tinsukia	396	410	Orissa	43	Barbil	427	419
	7	Guwahati	481	487		44	Rourkela	416	418
	8	Labac-Silchar	373	372	Punjab	45	Amritsar	419	421
	9	Mariani-Jorhat	416	426		46	Ludhiana	430	429
	10	Rangapara-Tezpur	405	419	Rajasthan	47	Ajmer	476	477
Bihar	11	Monghyr	437	445		48	Jaipur	448	447
Chhattisgarh	12	Bhillai	425	425	Tamil Nadu	49	Chennai	523	523
Gujarat	13	Ahmedabad	478	480		50	Coimbatore	485	490
	14	Bhavnagar	487	492		51	Coonoor	483	489
	15	Rajkot	453	446		52	Madurai	470	470
	16	Surat	487	487		53	Salem	467	465
	17	Vadodra	461	464		54	Tiruchirapally	564	556
Haryana	18	Faridabad	482	486	Uttar Pradesh	55	Agra	445	448
	19	Yamunanagar	447	452		56	Ghaziabad	479	484
J & K	20	Srinagar	554	563		57	Kanpur	453	458
Jharkhand	21	Jamshedpur	441	445		58	Saharanpur	440	444
	22	Jharia	379	373		59	Varanasi	484	491
	23	Kodarma	386	389	West Bengal	60	Asansol	455	453
	24	Noamundi	430	429		61	Darjeeling	410	403
	25	Ranchi-Hatia	431	427		62	Durgapur	552	551
Karnataka	26	Bangalore	463	465		63	Haldia	578	575
	27	Belgaum	522	523		64	Howrah	542	538
	28	Hubli-Dharwar	481	487		65	Jalpaiguri	404	409
	29	Mercara	459	460		66	Kolkata	527	527
Kerala	30	Alwaye	489	486		67	Raniganj	408	406
	31	Mundakayam	481	479	Chandigarh	68	Chandigarh	514	514
	32	Quilon	518	509	Delhi	69	Delhi	555	558
	33	Thiruvananthapuram	555	556	Pondicherry	70	Pondicherry	529	536
Madhya Pradesh	34	Balaghat	432	427					
	35	Bhopal	508	509					
	36	Indore	491	492					
	37	Jabalpur	466	468					
								ALL-INDIA	483 484

Additional Series of Labour Bureau

State	Centre	January 2003	February 2003
Andhra Pradesh	1 Kethgudem	496	
Himachal Pradesh	2 Himachal Pradesh	453	
Rajasthan	3 Bhilwara	484	
Madhya Pradesh	4 Chhindwara	439	
Tripura	5 Tripura	423	
Goa	6 Goa	582	

THE RUIN OF RUSSIA

Joseph Stiglitz

Ten years ago this month, Russia's parliament, the Duma, was seeking to impeach President Boris Yeltsin, initiating a time of stalemate and struggle that ended seven months later when Yeltsin ordered tanks to fire on the Duma's headquarters. Yeltsin's victory settled who ruled Russia and who would determine economic policy. But were Yeltsin's economic policy choices the right ones for Russia?

The move from communism to capitalism in Russia after 1991 was supposed to bring unprecedented prosperity. It did not. By the time of the rouble crisis of August 1998, output had fallen by almost half and poverty had increased from 2% of the population to over 40%.

Russia's performance since then has been: its gross domestic product remains almost 30% below what it was in 1990. At 4% growth per annum, it will take Russia's economy another decade to get back to where it was when communism collapsed.

A transition that lasts two decades, during which poverty and inequality increase enormously as a few become wealthy, cannot be called a victory for capitalism or democracy. Moreover, the longer-run prospects are far from rosy: with investment a mere 10% of what it was in 1990, even if that investment is better allocated, how can growth be sustained?

IMF-style neo-liberals are now trotting out an interpretation that amounts to a belated declaration of victory... But the real explanation lies elsewhere - and is much simpler. Until 1998, the rouble was overvalued, making it impossible for domestic producers to compete with imports. The IMF did not want Russia to devalue, and it provided billions of dollars to prop up the exchange rate. The IMF and the US Treasury worried that any change would restart inflation, because there was little or no excess productive capacity.

This was a remarkable confession: these officials evidently believed that their policies had wrecked nearly half of Russia's economic capacity in the space of just a few years. They shunted aside micro-level data that showed that there was in fact

excess capacity, just as they ignored a World Bank analysis showing that fresh IMF loans would not restore economic growth, but would only leave the country deeper in debt.

The results were predictable: the 1998 bailout by IMF did not work, but devaluation did. It turned out that there was enormous excess capacity, and import substitution soon began, even in the midst of financial turmoil. Imports plummeted by nearly 50% in the year after devaluation, as consumers were forced to buy Russian-made food and goods. Later, higher world oil prices provided a further boost to the economy, generating funds for investment and expansion. Profits generated provided funds for expansion. Capital controls were imposed and domestic investors looked for opportunities at home instead of in New York or Cyprus. Yes, the market economy can provide incentives for wealth creation. Unfortunately... the market economy - with high interest rates, illegitimate privatisation, poor corporate governance and capital-market liberalisation - provided only incentives for asset-stripping. Growth was caused by the change in the economic environment, a change that Russia made for itself. Russia was growing at 5.4% annually by the end of 1999.....

But we should also be concerned not just with the pace of economic growth but with the type of society that is created. To Russia's so-called reformers, the enormous concentration of ownership in Russia that emerged in the 1990s, is of no concern, so long as it generates growth. But there is another vision of a market economy, one based on greater equality, which uses the power of markets to bring prosperity not just to the few but to all of society. That Russia's transition did not achieve this is not a surprise. That goal was not a part of the reformers' vision. The great paradox is that their view of economics was so stilted, so ideologically driven, that they failed even in their narrower objective of bringing about economic growth. What they achieved was undiluted decline. No rewriting of history will change this.

(The Guardian, April 9, 2003)

WILL THIS DESIGN OF SLAVERY PASS?

The cat is finally out of the bag. The present Labour Minister, after assuming charge of the Ministry, had made many high-flown pro-labour statements, sometimes resembling delirium.

But the monstrous moves are just in the opposite direction. The Minister made a commitment in the last Indian Labour Conference that the report of the Second National Commission on Labour would be discussed with all the Central Trade Unions before taking any action thereon.

Quite consistent with the BJP led NDA culture, where deeds seldom match the words, the Government - or for that matter the Labour Minister - started moving ahead in implementing its pro-employer design on changes in labour laws. Only a few weeks ago, the Group of Ministers (GoM) has finalised the draft amendments to the Industrial Disputes Act removing all embargo on retrenchment and closure and ensuring total liberty for the employers to usher in a 'hire & fire' regime.

the GoM had hurriedly finalised the draft amendments to Contract Labour (R&A) Act to facilitate total contractorisation of the entire workforce. And both the amendment bills are proposed to be introduced in the current budget session of Parliament.

The Second National Commission's recommendation allowed deployment of contract labour in all non core jobs and also in core jobs in case of exigencies. The GoM finalised the definition of non core jobs to embrace more than eighty per cent jobs in any industrial establishment. These so called non core jobs include: 1) maintenance, service and repair of equipments, machines and plants, 2) construction and maintenance of buildings, roads and bridges, 3) gardening, 4) loading and unloading of raw materials and finished goods, 5) running of hospital, education and training institutions, guest houses and clubs, 6) sweeping, cleaning, dusting and collection and disposal of wastes.

Once the above definitions get the legislative sanction, the first item itself, i.e., maintenance, service and repair of equipments, machines and plants will result in outsourcing of at least eighty

percent work in any major manufacturing establishments, open for deployment of contract labour. The definition of the so called non-core jobs has been so enlarged that will result in casualisation of the entire workforce.

The draft cleared by the GoM has also laid down that besides the jobs covered by the definition of the non-core, in other areas also "companies can hire contract workers for any sudden time-bound incremental work".

The above caveat has got a disastrous implication. It will allow the employers, to begin with, to get the same work done simultaneously under the same roof by two sets of workers, with two different service conditions - the permanent workers and the workers under contract. It will create tremendous pressure on the rights and wages and other facilities of the permanent workers, besides putting under severe strain the bargaining capacity of the concerned union, if any. The misdeed by the Group of Ministers does not end here. It completely liberated the principal employer from any obligation towards the contract workers, whom they will be hiring for maximising their profit. As per existing statute, the principal employer is required to ensure that the contract workers are treated as per the law of land in respect of minimum wages, timely payment, safety measures and other basic statutory requirements. Under the amended Act, such obligations for the principal employer have been given a complete go-bye, thereby rendering the condition of contract workers more vulnerable.

Last but not the least - the contractors, small or big, will not be required to obtain license, under the amended dispensation. They will thus be liberated practically from all checks and regulations by any enforcement authority. In this background, the proposal made by the GoM for payment of retrenchment compensation to contract workers, at the rate of 45 days wages, can be no more than a cruel joke.

The aim is nothing but to impose a perfect condition of slavery on the working class of the country.

Will this design of slavery be allowed to pass?