



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

SUCCESSFUL NATIONWIDE STRIKE BY 25 MILLION WORKERS

□ M.K. PANDHE

The magnificent strike by 25 million workers all over India on the 29th September 1994 surpassed all industrial actions since the introduction of the new economic policies by the Narasimha Rao Government in June 1991. This was the fourth consecutive strike organised by the working class against the policies dictated by the IMF and the World Bank.

The National Platform of Mass Organisations which spere- headed this successful action gave a call in a massive convention held in New Delhi on 21st June 1994 to protest against the economic policies and signing of the GATT agreement of surrender by the Government of India on 15th April 1994 at Marracus in Morocco. Several programmes of actions jointly organised by mass organisations prepared the basis for this general strike.

The civil disobedience movement launched by the Left Parties in the month of August-September gave a big helping hand in making the strike call successful. This remarkable action created a spirit of resistance among the working class and the toiling masses all over the country which in turn popularised the general strike on 29th September.

The widespread Rail Roko organised on 20th September disrupted and paralysed railway traffic all over the country. This action highlighted the growing discontent among the working class and the people of India due to the impact of the New Economic policies. Despite repression and arrests the rail roko increased the determination of the toiling millions to effectively resist the draconian economic policies.

The torch light processions on 27th September was effectively organised throughout the country. Several thousands of processions in all the industrial belt participated by large number of workers generated a wave of enthusiasm among the workers to make the general strike a powerful action.

BANDH IN SEVERAL STATES

The call for general strike converged into a state level bandh in West Bengal, Tripura, Bihar, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Even the official media had to admit the impact of these bandhs which paralysed the life completely in these states. In Orissa also, apart from the industrial strike, schools, state transport and shops remained closed. In addition to that scores of districts in different states successful bandhs were organised by constituents of mass organisations. The support given by Left Parties in these states, Janata Dal in Bihar and other states and some regional parties in different states has contributed a great deal in making the Bandh call successful.

CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

According to reports in most of the states students downed their pens on 29th September 1994 in protest against the Education Policy and GATT surrender. Several demonstrations were organised by the students to express their solidarity with the striking workers. In Patna the SFI leaders were beaten up by Bihar police when they were protesting against the central government's policies.

TOTAL COLLAPSE OF FINANCIAL SECTOR

The entire financial sector came to a grinding halt during the strike. All the bank employees unions, including the officers have supported the strike call which made it the biggest ever united action of the bank employees. All the insurance companies, including LIC and GIC could not transact any business on the day of strike. Big demonstrations of bank and insurance employees throughout the day created good impact all over the country.

AIR SERVICES HIT HARD

The air services in the country were severely affected on the strike day. In Calcutta not a single

flight took off while in Bombay the services were drastically cut. Though some flights took off with the help of executive pilots but without many passengers. In Delhi a large number of flights had to be rescheduled due to the strike. The employees of National Airport Authorities, Videsh Sanchar Nigam and Vayudut also joined the strike action in a big way.

PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS' GOOD RESPONSE

The 23 lakh public sector workers participated in the strike all over the country. They were the worst hit due to the policy of privatisation and threat of closure of public sector units. Their wage negotiations were facing bottlenecks and DA problem remained unsettled despite lapse of 5 years. Withdrawal of budgetary support crippled the economy of several public sector units some of which have no money even to purchase raw material for production of goods. The success of strike in the public sector reflected the growing discontent among the public sector workers. The conditions of sick industries in the public sector became pitiable who were left to the mercy of BIFR.

The seven and a half lakh coal miners, the biggest chunk of public sector workers showed a commendable strength during the strike. More than 85 per cent of the workers downed their tools on the day of strike. In ECL except 3-4 mines all the other mines were totally closed. The BCCL, CCL, SECL, WCL, NCL and Mahanadi coalfields organised near total strike. In Singareni collieries most of the underground and open cast mines stopped operations due to workers strike. The CIL headquarters and offices of subsidiary companies in Calcutta wore a deserted look. The workers of CMPDIL joined the strike in headquarters as well as in drilling sites. In several areas the officers in coalmines joined the strike actions.

All the Bangalore based public sector units wore a deserted look except HMT. In some units officers' association also joined the strike.

In steel industry, Durgapur, Alloy Steel Plant and Burnpur, the strike was near total. In Bokaro 40% workers downed their tools while overwhelming majority of workers of Salem joined the strike. In CMO the strike was successful. It was however partial in other plants. Police arrested 300 CITU activists in Rourkela for picketing before the gates.

In BHEL Trichy out of ten thousand workers employed only 300 joined duties. The strike in Ranipet and 2 Bangalore based units was successful.

In Hardwar, Jhansi majority workers joined the strike while in Bhopal, Hyderabad it was partial.

Successful strikes were organised in Hindustan Copper, Hindustan Photofilm, Hindusthan Teleprinters, FACT, Balmer Laurie, Andrew Yule, ECIL, HCL, BEL, NPCC, MECL, HSCL, NBCC, NJMC, NMDC, KGF, HEL good strikes were organised.

The NTC mills despite their sickness joined the strike all over India. Electricity workers in several states joined the strike. Most of the Fertilizer units in the public and private sectors joined the strike. ONGC and oil refineries and installations were also largely affected due to the strike action.

The drugs and pharmaceutical workers including the field workers joined the strike in a big way both in the private sector and the public sector.

DEFENCE ESTABLISHMENTS CLOSED DOWN

All the defence establishment joined the strike action and expressed their firm opposition to the policy of privatisation of defence units by the Government of India. The AIDEF made good preparations for making the strike call successful.

STATE AND CENTRAL GOVT EMPLOYEES

According to All India State Government Employees Federation about 40 lakh employees all over India participated in the strike. The Central Government employees, particularly P&T and Telecom employees in several parts of the country observed strike.

UNORGANISED WORKERS STRIKE

According to reports the participation of the unorganised workers in this strike was more prominent than the previous strike. The workers in Biri, Brick Klin, Construction, handloom, Powerloom, loading and unloading contract workers, workers in the traditional and small scale units and others joined the strike action in a massive way. The economic crisis has adversely affected this section severely and the participation of these workers indicate the rising consciousness among them to resist the economic policies of the Government of India. In this sector large number of women employees also participated in the strike action.

AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

The agricultural workers in Kerala, Andhra, W.Bengal, Tripura, Bihar, Orissa, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have also participated in the strike indicating increasing participation of the rural masses in the nationwide struggle against the economic policies.

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Massive Dislocation of Rail Services in the Country

As per the programme of the National Platform of Mass Organisations, workers, peasants, agricultural workers, students, youth and women, all combined to implement Rail Roko action throughout the country on September 20. This programme was the first of its type done on an all India basis on the same day to focus the attention of the people at large to the retrograde effects of the new economic policies of the Government being formulated under imperialist pressure.

Almost all trains in the entire length and breadth of the country, including the Rajdhani Express trains connecting the different metropolitan cities, the super-fast long distance trains connecting the far flung state capitals in the country, the passenger trains, local trains and goods trains were badly dislocated on the day. Many trains were cancelled and the rest were delayed by hours.

Hundreds of workers, peasants, agricultural labourers, students, youth and women belonging to the different constituents of the National Platform picketed on the railway tracks on the trunk routes, mainlines, loop lines, chord lines, and branch lines both on the broad gauge and meter gauge lines in the village areas and urban areas in all the states.

Police and Railway Protection Forces resorted to lathi charges injuring many and arresting a large number in various states, but failed to keep the wheels moving to the schedule.

This was the first big action by the masses, almost immediately following the countrywide Civil Disobedience Movement launched by the Left Parties from August 16 to September 9 against the economic policies. The rail roko created a big impact in the country as a precursor to the countrywide strike and Hartal on September 29.

The most redeeming feature of the movement was that it received the support of the travelling public. Not a single case of scuffle was reported from any place in the country. Obviously because the campaign was launched quite long before and it came in the wake of three years of continuous struggle by the trade unions and other mass organisations exposing the ill-effects of the economic policies, and because the people at large were themselves adversely affected by the so-called liberalisation and globalisation of the economy, which was manifested in growing unemployment and spiralling rise in the prices of all commodities. Railway employees extended cooperation

everywhere.

Following are a brief report of the rail roko in different states:

W Bengal: The rail roko was observed the state for two hours from 12 noon to 2 PM, the peak hours of the day. In all the eighteen districts in the state hundreds of volunteers with red flags campaigned in the big and small stations and in the streets and in the rural areas explaining the reasons for the programme and appealing for support from the people. Exactly at 12 noon they started squatting on the railway tracks. When the trains stopped, they went on explaining to the commuters about the cause and served them with all the necessities.

Kerala: Over one lakh volunteers participated in the squatting on the railway tracks in all the districts. In two districts of Kerala viz Idukki and Wynad, there are no railway lines. In these two districts the workers made Rasta Roko. Only two trains could leave the state in early morning, but they were held up in the adjoining state. There were lathi charges and injuries at several places.

Tamilnadu: Thousands of workers, peasants, agricultural labour, students, youth and women picketed at the tracks, totally dislocating the train services in the state. Over ten thousand workers, leaders and women were arrested at Madras, Madurai, Dindigul, Coimbatore, Tirunelveli, Trichy, Villipuram, Pondicherry and other places.

Karnataka: All the long distance and local trains were affected. Large section of workers, women and youth participated in the squatting on the rail tracks at different places in the state.

Andhra Pradesh: There was lathi charge and arrests at Vijayawada, Srikakulam, Kurnul, Nellore, Nalgonda, Adilabad, Kuvvor and other places. Large number of women were also arrested and injured. But train services were totally disrupted.

Orissa: A large number of long distance trains were either cancelled or dislocated. Over 500 volunteers including women were arrested at different places. Massive picketing was done at Bhubaneshwar, Cuttack, Sambalpur, Bhadrak, Balasore, Rourkela, Berhampur, Khurda Road, Puri and other places.

Bihar: The entire rail services in the whole of the state both North and South were totally disrupted. Several hundreds of volunteers including women were arrested and injured at Patna, Ranchi, Dhanbad, Hazaribagh, Jamshedpur, Bhagalpur, Muzaffarpur,

Barauni, Begusarai, Khagaria, Ara, Nawadah, Buxar, Aurangabad and a number of other places.

UP: At Kanpur and various other places picketing was launched, which disrupted the long distance and local trains.

Because of picketing in the above states, all the train services in the Eastern, Northern, North-Eastern, Southern, South-Eastern and South-Central railways were dislocated.

Assam: Over 500 were arrested. because of picketing at Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Naharkatia and other places, the train services in the entire North-East region comprising of the seven states were totally dislocated.

Rajasthan: Picketing on railway tracks was launched at Jaipur, Kota, Sikar, and several other stations. For over three hours the trains were detained by the picketers. This dislocated the rail services in the Western Railway.

Madhya Pradesh: At Gwalior a number of workers were injured by lathi charge by the police. However, picketing was done successfully at Gwalior, Moraina, Birlanagar and other places disrupting the long distance and local trains for four hours.

Haryana: At Hissar and other places picketing was launched, due to which trains were disrupted and Punjab and other northern region were affected.

In Bombay, a massive demonstration was held before the Western Railway head quarters.

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PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN PICKETING

The available reports clearly pointed out that the women participated in picketing during the strike. The activists among the women led by their mass organisations in the National Platform have played a significant role in helping the organisation of the strike. This has brought the trade unions and the women's movement closer during this action.

POLICE REPRESSION

The police in different parts of the country resorted to repressive measures to break the morale of workers. All over India nearly 2 thousand activists were arrested for picketing and organising demonstrations on the day of the strike. Some of them have been implicated in false cases. Most surprising was the repression let loose by Bihar police, despite the support given by the ruling party in the state to the call for the Bandh. In Ranchi even

MLA Rajendra Singh was insulted by the police. In Patna, several SFI leaders were beaten up by the police during demonstration. Police resorted to lathi charge in several places in Bihar. In Delhi 200 activists were arrested to obstruct the preparation of strike, similar number was reported from Andhra Pradesh. However, the repressive measures failed to cow-down the strikers.

ACTIVE ROLE PLAYED BY CULTURAL ACTIVISTS

A significant feature of the strike was the role played by several artists and cultural troupes who campaigned through street plays, songs, small dramas and exposed the Government of India's policies. Many workers have taken initiative in organising such programmes which is a positive development in the cultural field. It is necessary to strengthen this activity so that cultural performances can be a good instrument to mobilise larger and large number of people in the arena of struggles.

The National Platform of Mass Organisations congratulated workers, students, youth, women, peasants, agricultural workers who have a memorial role in making the general strike a grand success.

There are some areas of weaknesses noted during the strike. the major trade unions in railways, port and docks a did not join the strike action. Some Telecom unions withdrew the strike call. Some of the local constituents of the Central TUs did not even give strike notices. The National Platform should overcome the weakness so that such all India actions become more effective. More monitoring of the campaign by the central TUs will improve the situation.

In this historic strike, the National Platform of Mass Organisations has emerged as a powerful force binding together all mass organisations in a common platform. This unity should be further consolidated so that the forthcoming struggles would be strengthened at all levels.

The National Platform will meet shortly to review the success of the strike and decide the steps to be taken to further strengthen the struggle against the economic policies and the GATT agreement.

The General Strike and Bandh action has created good enthusiasm among all sections of workers. The atmosphere created should be further utilised to strengthen the movement and widen the unity already achieved in all the previous struggles.

NEW DRUG POLICY

A MORTAL BLOW TO THE INDIAN DRUGS AND PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

□ P.K. GANGULY

The New Drug Policy announced by the Narasimha Rao Government on September 15 is nothing but the beginning of implementation of the GATT agreement, and would give a mortal blow to the Indian Drugs and Pharmaceutical industry.

It is to be recalled that the GATT agreement based on Dunkel Proposals, particularly on the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), were drafted from the pages of the Paris Convention on Patents, held during the colonial period in 1883. The very first article of the Convention turned the intellectual property rights to Industrial property rights with the objective to establish product patent right and not to allow any other country to produce the same product even through a different process.

Another provision of the Convention was to abolish compulsory licensing. One of the malpractices indulged in by the drug multinationals to exploit the third world countries was to patent a product in a third world country and without producing it there, go on importing the product from their parent country and sell it to the third world country at a price 5 to 6 times more than that in their parent country. In this way they not only garnered huge profits, but at the same time relieved themselves of any obligation to actually work the patent in the third world country or establish any research or development there, and kept the third world country away from acquiring self-reliance and at the same time caused huge drainage of its foreign exchange. The argument of the multinationals was that simply import of the product is to be deemed as working of the patent in the country. With this diabolical objective, the Paris convention forbade any compulsory licensing by the third world country.

The other main provisions of the Paris Convention that come as a corollary to the above two, include giving equal national treatment to foreign investors and complete decontrol of government authority and prices of the drugs, which would include the cost of research and development in their parent country.

All the diabolical facets of the Paris Convention

have been officially manifested in the Drug Policy, viz, delicensing, decontrol, equal treatment to MNCs and of course product patenting, for which the official amendment of the Indian Patent Act is in the offing.

The Drug Policy therefore has to be seen not simply from the point of exorbitant rise in the prices that will follow, but from the point that it traps the country into the neo-colonial net of the imperialists and takes us back to the colonial era. While all the IMF-prescribed economic and industrial policies and the other two strategies of GATT, ie. Trade Related Investment Measures (TRIMS) and General Agreement in Trade in Services (GATS) taken together postulate dangerous provisions to undermine the economic sovereignty of the country, the TRIPS provisions of GATT as manifested in the Drug Policy singularly constitute the worst offensive on the sovereignty of the country, its self-reliance and negates any scope of research and development of indigenous technology.

It is to be recalled that particularly the Drugs and Pharmaceutical industry in India has been under the strangle hold of the multinationals since long. The imperialist countries led by the USA after independence put enormous pressure on the government to become a member of the Paris convention. But the government in the wake of anti-imperialist struggle resisted the pressure. It did emphasise on self-reliance, and after having adopted the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 giving public sector a commandeering role, it enacted the Indian Patent Act in 1970. The Patent Act, although not a panacea in itself, did give priority to national interest over the interest of the patentee. Product patenting was not allowed, permitting only process patenting. Process patenting was also for five years only from the date of granting it. It gave good scope of research and development in drugs and pharmaceuticals and develop alternate technologies to suit Indian conditions and pattern of diseases. In process patenting also the Act provided for compulsory licensing, empowering the government to revoke the

patent if it was found that the patented substance was not being worked in the country, or it had not met the requirement of the people or was not available at reasonable price. Under the Act, the patentee was not allowed to import at his own price.

Under the provisions of the Indian Patent Act, the Indian Drugs and Pharmaceutical Industry did compete in the international arena, and successfully. Despite the giant multinationals operating in the Pharmaceutical industry, the national sector recorded a diversified growth and development. This growth can be seen both in in-house Research and Development and creation of a self-reliant technological base in indigenous production of life saving and essential bulk drugs and formulations. India achieved near self-sufficiency in the production of bulk drugs and formulations at much cheaper prices and thereby developed growth in exports. Indian scientists and national laboratories like the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Central Drug Research Institute, etc. did produce a number of life saving and essential drugs through indigenous technologies within 4-6 years of their introduction in international market by the giant multinationals. These include broad spectrum anti-bacterials, anti-TB, anti-hypertensives, anti-asthmatics, anti-rheumatics, anti-ulcer, etc. Even success in research and development of anti-AIDS and anti-cancer drugs has been achieved. According to UNIDO, "India is technologically developed enough to be totally self-reliant with rich capability for the discovery of new chemical entities."

Similarly in exports, the performance of Indian pharmaceutical industry has been phenomenal. It has risen from Rs. 165 crores in 1983-94 to Rs. 640 crores in 1989-90. Because of quality and competitive prices India is gainer by about 700 million dollars over USA by way of more exports than imports of drugs.

India was one of the pioneers in the quest for scientific knowledge and developed various indigenous medicines according to the tropical disease pattern in this country. P.C. Ray, T.K. Gajjar, S.S. Sokhey, etc were among the leading luminaries in this process of indigenisation. Apart from developing various serums, vaccines, penicillin, streptomycin, anti-Malaria, anti-leprotic drugs, etc. they made efforts to develop the public sector to achieve self-reliance in production and in research

and development of life saving and essential drugs in the country. With this objective, at a later stage, giant pharmaceutical companies like Hindustan Anti-Biotics and IDPL were established. The original research institutions and companies like Bengal Immunity and Bengal Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals were also nationalised. Then with the enactment of the Indian Patent Act, efforts to make the country self-reliant in production of drugs in the national sector, both in the public and private sector triggered off a new situation.

But the policy of wooing multinationals and now the GATT agreement have nipped the developing indigenous medicines and the process of indigenisations in the bud. The fact is that, the traditional expertise with a nationalist and anti-imperialist culture that India had developed, has been progressively lost and the entire system has now been made totally dependent on western technology and drugs.

In the above background, the arguments pushed forward by the Government spokesmen that the Drug Policy has given encouragement for research and development, and that 90 per cent of the drugs will remain outside the purview of the GATT agreement for the next ten years, by which time India can produce indigenous technology, are not only misleading, but tantamount to fraud on the people. The ten-year grace period is simply a consolation to hoodwink the people with spurious arguments. Even during this ten year period (from 1995), when only the process patent will continue, the commercial rights have been kept exclusively with the inventors. That means, any drug which is already in the international market, if developed by India through a different process cannot be marketed. Therefore the GATT proposals have been drafted in such a way, that even process patenting becomes equivalent to product patenting.

It has further been argued, while announcing the policy, that investment by multinationals will open a new era of research and development in the country. This is sheer nonsense and a shameless propaganda to serve the interests of the multinationals. The character and practice of the multinationals has been stated above in the paragraphs dealing with the Paris Convention. The same character was pointed out by the Hathi Committee in 1975, which recorded that activities of

the multinational drug firms in India were anti-national, and recommended for their nationalisation.

Even the UNCTAD in a study in 1993, concluded that implementation of intellectual patent rights would not lead to greater investment in research by the multinationals in the developing nations. The UNCTAD countered the argument pushed forward by the USA that "third world countries that approve product patent rights, would experience a surge of investments in research and development." The UNCTAD instead concluded that when protection of patents are stronger, the industrialised nations have less need to invest in research and development in poor countries. They can just export their products from home to the third world country. As a proof, the UNCTAD had cited Chile, which approved the international patent law in 1991, and the US firm Pfizer and two other German firms had shut down their research and development wings in the country.

With the question of research and development the question of disease pattern in the country is related. While singing to the tunes of GATT, the new Drug Policy does not utter a single word about it. As was stated earlier, our leading luminaries in research and development had laid stress on the disease pattern in the country and developed drugs according to the needs of the people. The problem of cardiac ailments, liver damage, kidney problem or say infective killer diseases like Typhoid, Pneumonia, etc. may be universal. But what about the tropical diseases like Malaria, Cholera, Plague, etc. which spread in epidemic form in the tropical countries and become mass killers? The multinationals and even the country's monopoly sectors openly reject any proposal for investments for research and development of medicines to fight these mass killer diseases, because they do not give good returns. So the public sector is the only solution for this to safeguard the life and health of the people. But public sector is being consciously liquidated under the policy. No wonder that the recent spate of Cholera and Plague in parts the country have taken heavy tolls of lives.

Besides, the ratio of production of bulk drugs and formulations has been further reduced. This relieves the multinationals of any obligation to produce life saving and essential medicines in the country with the freedom to produce formulations according to their

commercial judgements. This is in tune with the 1991 Industrial Policy. Already the multinationals had reduced the production of bulk drugs in the country from 38 per cent in 1975 to 18 per cent in 1987, replacing them with the production of more profitable formulations. In India there are already 60,000 to 80,000 formulations. According to World Health Organisation, 80 per cent of the formulations sold in India are irrational and non-essential. The reduction in this ratio alongwith 51 per cent foreign equity participation will give a free lance to the multinationals to further dump the Indian market with irrational formulations, which are not required at all.

Now so far as the prices of drugs are concerned, the Government has totally surrendered to the long standing demands of the multinationals, linked with the stipulations of the GATT agreement. Decontrol of the prices of the life saving and essential drugs and formulations means a bonanza to the multinationals to globalise the drug prices under international market force and expose the life and health of the people to international capitalist racketeering. Even though the drug prices in India have been brought down after the Indian Patent Act, yet 70 per cent of the people do not have access in the modern drugs as they cannot afford to buy them. And now with the decontrol of prices coupled with the advantage of product patenting the prices of the drugs will rise to such colossal heights that cannot be imagined by any one. The hospitals and dispensaries are always in chronic shortage of medicines, because of lack of funds. To what extent the situation will worsen, is anybody's imagination.

The setting up of "independent" National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) and National Drug Authority (NDA) are also ploys to keep the governmental authority outside the purview of production and pricing of drugs. Although the NDA is being proposed to be a statutory body under the Health Ministry, yet its exact structure is still behind the curtains. It is visualised that it is going to be shaped along the lines of the Foods and Drugs Administration of America (FDA) "with sweeping powers to control irrational drugs." But these "sweeping powers" will actually be controlled by the FDA itself. It is to be noted that the US Government in 1978 had amended its Food and Drugs Act to allow export of banned and hazardous drugs to the third world countries at high prices.

The NPPA which on the other hand will be represented by the industry among others and will be under the Ministry of Chemicals, will virtually make the Bureau of Industrial Cost and Pricing (BICP) irrelevant. The BICP has of late been under fire by Britain, America and other imperialist countries, because of its insistence to fix the prices of drugs after making cost-cum- technical study of the drugs.

It is now clear to visualise the consequences of the GATT imprinted new Drug policy. To reiterate, India will come under the neo-colonial net of the monopolistic intellectual property regime of USA and other imperialist countries. The country's research activities will be stopped as the product patent will be for 20 years, after which the drug will obviously become obsolete. Self reliance and the process of indigenisations will have to be buried as the country will have to be entirely dependent on imports for raw materials, intermediaries and finished products. The inevitable result will be closure of our national laboratories, research institutions and large number of small, medium and even big Indian Pharmaceutical companies and loss of jobs of workers in thousands.

CITU Denounces the New Drug Policy

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions vehemently opposes the new Drug Policy as announced by the Government of India.

The policy as was earlier warned, is in keeping with the new Industrial Policy of 1991 and a follow up of the new GATT agreement signed by the Government.

All the new provisions of the policy, i.e. abolition of licensing, 51 percent foreign equity, automatic approval of foreign technology pact, de-control of prices, and reduction of number of drugs from price control, maximum allowable post manufacturing expenses to 100 percent and reduction of the ratio of obligation to manufacture bulk drugs to formulations, etc are all according to the stipulations of the new GATT agreement, which are in turn in tune with the Paris Convention on Patents of 1883, i.e. of the colonial period.

The new Drug Policy tantamounts to amendment of the Indian Patents Acts of 1970 and surrender of India's Intellectual property rights, the move for which had already been taken by the Government as per demands of the imperialist countries headed by the USA.

The new Drug Policy will result in a halt of India's indigenous research and development and lead to

Prices of all drugs will go up exorbitantly, because the MNCs will import them from their parent countries without any price control. As there will be no control by the government in any sphere, there will be no medicines for tropical killer diseases, acute shortage of life saving and essential drugs and the market will be flooded by banned, irrational and hazardous formulations. The life and health of the people will be seriously affected, and the so-called Alma Ata Declaration of Health for All by 2000 AD, to which Government of India is a party, will be turned into mockery. Above all, the export activities will receive a serious jolt, and with the inevitable rise in imports, India's balance of trade will be adversely affected.

Coming in the wake of the new Telecom Policy and the new Power sector policy---all in pursuance of the IMF-World Bank-GATT impositions, the new Drug Policy is another nail into the coffin of India's sovereignty. The working class with all other mass organisations and the democratic and patriotic forces must further consolidate their unity and cooperation to step up the struggle to compel the Government to withdraw the policy.

closures of the country's National Laboratories, research institutions and the medium and small companies and above all the public sector units, throwing out large number of workers and scientists, jobless.

It will further lead to colossal increase in prices of all drugs beyond the reach of the people, shortage of life saving and essential drugs and flood the market with irrational, sub-standard and spurious formulations by the multinationals.

Further, it will give a serious jolt to India's drug exports which had increased after the enactment of the Patent Act, and with inevitable rise in imports it will worsen the balance of trade, pushing the country further to the debt trap.

The Policy thus will further drag India under the neo-colonial net of the monopolistic intellectual property regime of the USA and other imperialist countries and will put another nail into the coffin of India's sovereignty.

The CITU demands immediate withdrawal of the policy and calls upon all the workers in the pharmaceutical industry and appeals to all trade unions, mass organisations and patriotic and democratic sections of the people to raise their voice of protest against it.

Textile Workers to rally before Parliament

The Joint Action Committee of Textile workers in its meeting held at Delhi on 20th September evening reiterated its call for march to Parliament by textile workers in November, 1994.

The meeting was presided over by N M Barot of NLO and attended by Haribhau Naik, Nirmal Ghosh, Shyam Sunder Yadav, Lakshmi Prasad Singh(INTUC); A B Bardhan, D L Sachdev(AITUC); P K Ganguly(CITU); Veereshwar Tiagi(HMS) and Amarnath Dogra(BMS).

The meeting expressed serious concern over the continuing callousness of the government at the deepening crisis in the textile industry despite repeated representations made by the Joint Action Committee.

More than 132 mill in the private sector are closed rendering over two lakh workers jobless. Many more mills are reported to be sick and are on the verge of closure. Despite repeated appeals the government has taken no steps to convene the meeting of Tripartite Industrial Committee in Textile to discuss the sickness and take remedial measures. Even the recommendations of the Abid Hussain Committee have not been implemented for proper rehabilitation of the affected workers. So far as the NTC mills are concerned, the government has not yet taken any move to implement the 8-point unanimous agreement on modernisation and revival of the sick units. On the contrary, it has stopped all budgetary support. The wages of the workers have been withheld since July, supply of raw materials have ben stopped and even power supply has been cut off from the mills, resulting in total stoppage of production. Crores of rupees on PF, ESI, and electricity dues have not been paid.

In pursuance of the government policy, the organised mills are closing down the weaving sections

Massive strike by Unorganised Sector Workers in Bihar

About 1.25 lakh workers in unorganised sector for the first time unitely in the state resorted to strike which icncluded industrial area workers of Adityapur-Gamharia area of Jamshedpur, Patliputra industrial area and other places of Patna, Balidih in Bokaro dist, Bela of Muzaffarpur, stone quarry, china clay mines of Sahibganj, Pakur districts, bauxite mines in Lohardage district; more than 25,000 bidi workers of Sahibganj, Pakur, Munger, Jamui, Begusarai, Daslsingsarai and Bihar Shariff; Rikshaw pullers of Bhagalpur, Hazaribagh and Ara; contract labourers of Telco and Tin plate at Jamshedpur, Bokaro steel factory, DVC Thermal Power stations of Bokaro and Chandrapur and Tenughat Thermal Power stations, Gomia explosive factory; small shops, establishments and factories of Gaya, Patna, Ara, Ranchi, Muzaffarpur, Begusarai, head-loaders of Jahanbad and Gogri Jamalpur; press workers of Siwan and Ranchi and in other unorganised

and switching over to powrlooms, fleecing the powerloom workers with paltry minimum wage and without any labour laws and social security measures and forcing them to work 12-hour shift to produce 80 per cent of the total cloth production in the country.

In the handloom sector in the same way, the weavers cannot make the both ends meet due to extremely poor minimum wages.

The meeting reiterated the 9-point demands made by the National Convention of Textile Workers held at Delhi on 5th May, which included an integrated Textile Policy for a balanced development of all the three sectors so as to complement each other, generate employment and opening of all closed mills.

The meeting congratulated the textile workers all over the country for having completed joint conventions in all the major textile centres and for launching sustained joint demonstration, dharnas and rallies.

The Joint Action Committee called upon all textile workers, cutting across all differences to mobilise in full strength from all the textile centres and join the rally before Parliament **on the second day of opening of its winter session in November 1994.**

Joint demonstration, gate meetings, postering, wall writing and distribution of this joint statement should be launched in full scale by all the trade unions for mobilisation of workers in thousands for the Parliament rally with the slogan "Delhi chalo". The Parliament rally in November must be the most massive demonstration of trade union unity by the textile workers in the country.

Sd/- A B Bardhan(AITUC)

Sd/- V Tiagi(HMS)

Sd/- P K Ganguly(CITU)

Sd/- Amarnath Dogra(BMS)

Sd/- Haribhau Naik(INTUC)

Sd/- N M Barot(NLO)

sectors. About 400 workers in graphite mines in Garwa district and 400 gangmen of Lalmatia-Farracka rly were also on strike.

The strike call was given by the Bihar State Shram Sanghathan Manch, an united platform of CITU, AITUC, INTUC, HMS, BMS, UTUC, TUCC, UTUC(LS), AICCTU and AICTU. Earlier a state level joint convention was held at Patna on 4th June and a joint dharna was staged before the State Labour Minister's residence on 4th July. The Manch is now preparing for a massive cventral rally. The agitation is going on with 8-point demands including minimum wage, DA, etc.

Despite joint representation and disucssion, state govt is delaying fixation of VDA for this sector workers. The meeting of the Sangathan Manch decided to carry forward the struggle jointly and gave a call for massive demonstration in front of Chief Minister at Patna on 20th October, 1994. Thousands of workers are expected to join this massive rally,

Port and Dock workers for Nationwide Industrial Action

S R Kulkarni, president, All India Port & Dock Workers Federation, G Kalan, General Secretary, Indian National Port & Dock Workers Federation, Dr Shanti G Patel, president, All India Port & Dock Workers Federation (Workers) T M Aboo, general secretary, Port, Dock & Water Front Workers Federation of India, Subash Chakravorty, general secretary, Water Transport workers Federation of India, have issued the following statement to the press.

Five federations of port and dock workers in their joint communication addressed to Shri Jagdish Tytler, Minister for State for Surface Transport expressed in a meeting of the Bipartite Wage Negotiation Committee their strong resentment at the refusal of the Government of India to approve in toto the memorandum of understanding signed on 24th July, 1994 which included liberalisation of pensionary benefits.

The workers representatives protested at the breach of faith committed by the Govt of India which promised to approve the MOU. The proposal to delink the pension scheme was firmly rejected by all the workers representatives who made it clear that

Railwaymen's Struggle

National Railway Mazdoor Union (Central Railway) Annual Session at Pandharpur

The three-day annual session of the National Railway Mazdoor Union (NRMU) which was concluded on 23rd September at Pandherpur in Solapur Dist. of Maharashtra was important on several counts one of which is ofcourse the large membership strength of the union, 1.3 lakh, which had been represented in the conference by more than 5 hundred delegates. Perhaps the most important high light of the session was the resolution adopted in the conference appealing to All India railwaymen's federation (AIRF) to have more effective role in the ongoing struggle of the country's working class.

The conference was inaugurated on 21st September by J.P. Chaubay, General Secretary, AIRF, after Ganpat Rao Deshmukh MLA, Chairman of the Reception Committee welcomed the delegates and others in the open inaugural session. The open session was also addressed by Kanai Banerjee, Secretary, CITU and some other trade union leaders.

More than 50 delegates took part in a lively discussion on the General Secretary's report. Reply to the points raised by delegates were given by

without the liberalised pension scheme as was unanimously accepted they will not sign the settlement.

The workers representatives told the Minister of Surface Transport that they will resort to direct action if the Govt failed to give clearance to the MOU in tot by 26th October, 1994.

The five major federations called upon all the Port & Dock workers at the Major Ports to observe Thursday the 20th October, 1994 as All India Warning Day by holding joint rallies and protest demonstrations all over the country in the support of their claims that the MOU should be approved in toto before 26th October 1994.

All Unions affiliated to the above federations have been directed to serve notices to the Port & Dock managements about the proposed direct action if the Govt of India fails to clear the MOU in toto on or before 26th October 1994.

The federations appealed to all Port & Dock workers to rally behind them in their struggle for protecting collective bargaining rights of the workers.

Sd/- S R Kulkarni , Sd/- Dr Shanti G Patel , Sd/- G Kalan , Sd/- T M Aboo , Sd/- Subash Chakravarthi

import office bearers besides the general secretary and was greeted by enthusiastic cheers. A major resolution directed the General Secretary to take all necessary step to achieve all in unity of railwaymen and unity with other sections of the working class and toiling masses. While condemning the so-called new economic policies the conference has called for effective action programme to fight privatisation on the railways. Pointing out that railways constitute the life line of the country the conference declared that the working class movement of the country cannot be strong and powerful enough to save the country if the AIRF does not participate and take lead in the struggle against govt. policies (implied reference is obviously to the non participation Of AIRF in general strikes) and appealed to AIRF to assume leadership in the struggle.

Santi Patel, president HMS spoke in a seminar on Unity of the Working Class while Kanai Banerjee, Secretary, CITU spoke on GATT.

SL Dubey and P.R. Menon were re-elected as President and General Secretary respectively, along with most other office bearers of the previous term.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX NUMBERS FOR INDUSTRIAL WORKERS (BASE 1982 = 100)

Centre			Linking factor	Nagpur	286	292	4.99
for Old Base	May '94	June, 94		Nasik	289	295	---
All India	272	277	4.93	Pune	295	297	--
Gudur	263	269	4.33	Sholapur	286	291	5.03
Guntur	281	284	5.60	Barbil	267	272	5.00
Hyderabad	258	260	5.23	Rourkela	250	259	3.59
Visakhapatnam	260	261	--	Amritsar	255	255	5.19
Warrangal	265	276	--	Ludhiana	251	255	--
Doom-Dooma				Ajmer	275	284	5.01
Tinsukia	247	248	4.05	Jaipur	260	268	5.17
Guwahati	273	275	--	Coimbatore	266	267	5.35
Labac-Silchar	247	248	3.96	Coonor	285	284	4.80
Mariani-Jorhat	255	260	3.95	Madras	282	283	5.05
Rangapara-				Madurai	272	277	5.27
Tezpur	258	259	4.29	Salem	282	282	--
Jamshedpur	252	256	4.68	Tiruchirapally	281	285	--
Jharia	239	245	4.63	Agra	253	258	--
Kodarma	241	242	5.43	Ghaziabad	258	259	--
Monghyr	254	260	5.29	Kanpur	266	278	4.69
Noamundi	250	256	4.58	Saharanpur	259	261	5.06
Ranchi-Hatia	260	267	--	Varanasi	281	288	5.12
Ahmedabad	273	280	4.78	Asansol	253	258	4.77
Baroda	270	274	--	Calcutta	273	280	4.74
Bhavanagar	289	300	4.99	Darjeeling	248	251	4.55
Rajkot	271	274	--	Durgapur	276	283	--
Surat	283	294	--	Haldia	283	286	--
Faridabad	258	263	--	Howrah	285	291	4.12
Yamunanagar	245	251	5.53	Jalpaiguri	247	251	4.16
Srinagar	265	265	5.47	Raniganj	244	248	4.40
Bangalore	263	269	5.66	Chandigarh	263	264	--
Belgaum	279	283	--	Delhi	290	295	4.97
Hubli-Dharwar	277	280	--	Pondicherry	304	309	--
Mercara	266	266	--	Additional series of Labour Bureau			
Alwaye	271	275	5.19	Kothagudem	272	274	3.25
Mundakayam	272	281	--	HP	262	265	3.75
Quilon	288	291	--	Bhilwara	280	293	3.20
Trivandrum	302	306	--	Chindwara	281	279	2.59
Bhalaghat	266	269	5.24	Tripura	274	272	4.37
Bhilai	243	250	3.49	Goa	306	314	3.40
Bhopal	281	287	5.46				
Indore	284	294	5.18				
Jabalpur	298	300	6.41				
Bombay	306	309	5.12				

Note: Figures on old base can be obtained by multiplying the Index Number on New Base by the linking factor given and rounding off the result to nearest whole number.

Strike disrupts industrial activity

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

THE day-long nationwide general strike, called by the umbrella body of numerous mass organisations, on Thursday disrupted banking activities, halted work in industrial and mining sectors and partially hit railways and air traffic, ending the first phase of protest against the government's economic policy and signing of the Gatt treaty.

The strike by National Platform of Mass Organisations (NPMO) virtually turned into a bandh in West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura, Tamil Nadu and Bihar, paralysing normal life, NPMO sources told newsmen here.

Work in the banking and financial sectors throughout the



State Bank of India's main branch at Parliament Street, New Delhi, wears a deserted look during the one-day nationwide industrial strike. ■ PTI

in the Reserve Bank of India about 40 lakhs out of a total of

They said the banks were completely closed in most of the states.

Thiruvananthapuram: The strike virtually turned into a bandh in Kerala disrupting the pace of normal life. Shops and commercial establishments remained closed and buses, taxis and autorickshaws were practically off the road.

Tamil Nadu: The strike evoked mixed response. All the major industries in the industrial belts remained closed and buses and taxis and autorickshaws were off the road. Government offices reported thin attendance.

Maharashtra: Work in financial institutions and banks was seriously affected.

Kannur: The strike evoked a mixed response. Sources said

Bank employees stage rallies

From Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, Sept. 29.

Striking bank employees today held rallies and demonstrations in support of their demands of an early wage revision, bonus for all and to protest against the Government's move to privatise banks and other financial institutions. Normal hustle and bustle was missing from the Capital's industrial areas as workers went on strike in protest against the Government's new economic policies.

With the one-day strike by bank and insurance employees, transactions in the banks and work in the financial institutions in the Capital

Banks, industries hit by strike

Observer Political Bureau

NEW DELHI

THE day-long nationwide general strike, called by the Left-affiliated organisations on Thursday paralysed the functioning of banks, halted work in industrial and mining sectors and partially hit air traffic in protest against the government's economic policies and its signing of the GATT.

The National Platform of Mass Organisations' (NPMO)-called bandh virtually brought life to a standstill in most of the non-Congress-ruled states like West Bengal, Tripura, Tamil Nadu and Bihar. Normal life was also disrupted in Kerala.

While there were no reports of any major untoward incident, NPMO leaders claimed that about 1,500 persons were arrested in different parts of the country and police baton-charged protesters participating in demonstrations and picketing at several places. □ ;



Employees of the Reserve Bank of India holding a protest meeting at their New Delhi office on Parliament Street on Thursday.

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Strike hits banking operations

THE day-long nationwide general strike, called by the umbrella body of numerous mass organisations, on Thursday disrupted banking activities, halted work in industrial and mining sectors and partially hit railways and air traffic, ending

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Left-sponsored TU strike evokes good response

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI — The country-wide strike called by the Left trade unions in protest against the signing of the GATT and the economic reforms, affected normal functioning of the banks, financial institutions and the industrial sector in different parts of the country on Thursday.

While the public sector banks and the insurance companies reported a thin attendance, in several states normal life came to a halt during the bandh. The states severely affected by the strike are West Bengal, Bihar, Tripura, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The sponsoring TUs claimed that the strike evoked a good response in the banking, coal and the steel sectors.

"This strike is a bigger success than the earlier ones," Dr M. K. Pandhe, general secretary of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), said briefing the mediapersons. He claimed that 40 lakh state government employees throughout the country participated in the strike while about 80 per cent of the mine workers stayed away from work. A large

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What the Press Says about the Strike

Nationwide strike paralyses industry

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The day-long nationwide general strike, called by the umbrella body of numerous mass organisations, yesterday disrupted banking activities, halted work in industrial and mining sectors and partially hit railways and air traffic, ending the first phase of protest against the government's economic policy and signing of the Gatt treaty.

The strike by the National Platform of Mass Organisations (NPMO) virtually turned into a bandh in West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura, Tamil Nadu and Bihar, paralysing normal life. NPMO sources told reporters here last evening.

While there were no reports of any major untoward incident from any part of the country, leaders of the NPMO-affiliated mass organisations said about

1,800 persons were arrested in different parts of the country and police baton-charged protestors, participating in demonstrations and picketing, at several places.

Work in the banking and financial sectors throughout the country was paralysed due to the strike, which was supported by the joint action committee of trade unions of banks, insurance companies and other financial institutions. Clearing operations in the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) was also disrupted in Delhi.

Stating that the four-month-long first phase of the anti-Gatt agitation had ended, NPMO leaders said the second phase would be chalked out in November and it would be a "broader struggle involving many more sections of employees, including journalists who are fighting against foreign media entry".

Union government employees, especially those in posts and tele-

graph, telecom, income-tax, audit and accounts and about 40 lakh out of a total of 60 lakh state government staff took part in the strike.

Other strike industries include steel and

The cent of Coalfields, and the and M while banks through, Salem and Bhilai.

Train South-e totally d

The a nes we manage

flights with a very small number of passengers. Air Corporations Employees Union and those of the National Airports Authority



Bank employees staging a dharna in front of a State Bank of India branch in the Capital on Thursday. Express photo by R K Dayal.

Strike paralyses banking services

FE NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, SEPT 29

The one-day nationwide general strike called by major trade unions on Thursday against the Government's econ-

was converted into a bandh in West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Tripura and Bihar.

Reports from other centres also indicated "massive participation by the working class" they said.

According to them, over se-

Nationwide strike hits

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI, September 29.

The nationwide one-day general strike called by most of the trade unions today left banking and insurance activity in the country totally paralysed. The strike disrupted air and train services and was largely successful in coal mines, pharmaceutical and fertiliser industries.

Delhi.

Senior government officials admitted that the strike was successful in the banking and insurance sectors where middle-level officials also joined the workers in the strike. But it was partial in most other sectors, they said.

All the central trade unions except the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) and the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh

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this scal While t ployees ments jo way", a most of ments fu the Cen Jabalpur said.

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Supporters of bandh against the new economic policies attack a Pepsi distribution centre in Patna on Friday. — PTI photo

National Convention Against Privatisation

A national convention against the Malhotra Committee report and Privatisation of Insurance Industry was held at Mavalnkar Hall, New Delhi on August 25, 1994. The convention was jointly organised by the All India Insurance Employees Association, All India LIC Employees Federation, General Insurance Employees' All India Association, Federation of LIC Class I Officers' Associations, All India Life Insurance Employees Association and General Insurance Officers' All India Association. Over 1000 delegates from far and near, attended the convention.

The convention was conducted by a presidium consisting of N M Sundaram, M S Upadhyay, R Rajagopalan, A V Nachane, Mukesh Kumar, Sanat Bhattacharya, and P Bhardwaj. A resolution was moved by N M Sunderam, General Secretary, AIEA and was seconded by Umedh Singh, GIEAIA. The resolution was unanimously adopted.

Dr Arun Ghosh, a distinguished economist and former member of Planning Commission, inaugurated the convention. He dealt at length on the evil effects of the policy of economic liberalisation adopted by the government, which as shown by three years' experience, had caused immense damage to the economy and threatened the very sovereignty of the country. By this policy, the government was divesting itself of all social responsibilities to the people. Privatisation of insurance was pernicious, as it sought to destroy a public sector industry which had fulfilled all objectives before it and whose productivity and profitability was undisputed.

Among other speakers were Madhu Dandavate, former Union Finance Minister, Dr Ashok Mitra, MP, former Finance Minister, West Bengal, E Balanandan MP, president, CITU, A B Bardhan, General Secretary, AITUC, Chitta Basu MP, Forward Block, Virendra Kataria MP (Cong-I), Tarakeshwar Chakraborty, General Secretary, AIBEA, A D Nagpal, HMS and Dipankar Bhattacharjee, AICCTU.

Madhu Dandavate referred to his experience as Finance Minister in a meeting of the IMF, when R N Malhotra as the then Governor of RBI strongly opposed suggestions for privatisation of insurance on the plea that for fulfilling social obligations, insurance industry had to remain in the public sector. Dr Ashok Mitra traced the antecedence of the policy of economic liberalisation and described its social consequences even in advanced industrialised

countries. With entry of MNCs, foreign laws and courts would determine disputes, not to speak of Parliament's sovereignty or sovereignty of Indian courts. Constitution and laws would also be jeopardised. He deplored that even as the Government was claiming to evolve a national consensus, talks were going on with foreign companies for providing them entry into the insurance sector. Coms Balanandan and Bardhan exhorted the employees and officers to remain united and integrate their struggle with the broader struggle of the toiling and democratic masses. Com. Chitta Basu referred to submission of the memorandum to the Prime Minister that day containing 55 lacs of signatures opposing privatisation of Insurance. He added that there was no alternative to struggle.

Virendra Kataria, MP (Cong-I) briefly narrated the background of nationalisation and described how false claims were made and how the private sector practised unscientific and unethical management practices. Nationalisation was effected for protection of the ordinary people. After nationalisation, LIC and GIC had fulfilled the objectives and helped in national development. It was a matter of regret that in the name of competition and extraneous reasons, privatisation was being contemplated and Indian private companies and MNCs were being invited to open their shops. There was an attempt to push back whatever progress had been achieved by the nationalised industry. Such an attempt would naturally meet with opposition. Social insurance and investment was the need of the people. Nationalised industry had provided protection and created confidence. He reminded the delegates that theirs was not a struggle for their own cause but for the cause of the people and particularly for the weaker sections. What was the use of freedom if we could not keep their basic necessities in mind. It was the objective of the freedom struggle. He concluded saying that, insurance should remain in public ownership and that he would take up the issue in Parliament.

Tarakeshwar Chakraborty, A D Nagpal and Dipankar Bhattacharjee, extended all support and cooperation.

The convention ended on a note of enthusiasm and unity and with a strong determination to carry forward the struggle against privatisation of insurance sector. Saroj Chaudhury, president, AIEA proposed vote of thanks.

Social Security of Women Workers in the Unorganised Sector

□ Pramila Pandhe

The National Commission for Women convened a meeting on security of women in unorganised sector on Sept 19, 1994. At the outset the meeting was addressed by ILO Director Ms Josephine Karavasil. She expressed her concern about the plight of women workers in unorganised sector. She further emphasised the need to cover these workers under Industrial Disputes Act. She informed that a delegation of ILO is visiting India to survey such sectors.

Mr Subramanyam from Ministry of Labour placed before the meeting the information about the social security fund for workers in unorganised sector to be contributed by the Ministry of Labour.

Mrs Padma Seth, member of the Commission explained about the importance of the meeting and to discuss the issue jointly.

While speaking in the meeting on behalf of CITU, I highlighted the conditions of women workers working in Anganwadis, one of the biggest unorganised sector of women under the ministry of Human Resources.

These women are called social workers. And in the name of social work they are ill-treated, humiliated and forced to work more which is beyond their capacity, by their senior officials.

I enquired from the member of Ministry of Labour, National Labour Organisation and NGOs what security this so-called scheme chalked out by the Ministry is providing to these innocent women workers where they are harassed by the bureaucrats.

Here we talk about the security of women worker in unorganised sector when women workers in organised sector are harassed, ill-treated, molested and discriminated by the managements of private sectors.

What security is provided to them by the govt.

The govt is thinking of bringing amendments to the Industrial Disputes Act to thwart the right of the workers to defend themselves from the onslaught of managements.

Why the govt is not taking action against those managements who are repressing the workers. Already women in unorganised sectors and especially the Anganwadi workers have commenced struggle against the gross injustice done to them. Unfortunately, the Govt of India is not keen to take action against persons in authority and employers who maltreated women workers.

I further pointed out that some time back the Ministry of Labour was planning to bring an amendment to the maternity benefits Act denying maternity benefit to a woman worker after second child. She may not get promotions and may lose her job if public sector authorities think necessary.

Surprisingly, the National Commission on Women okayed it. The CITU and All India Democratic Women's Association protested against it and letters were sent to National Commission on Women. However, there was no reply from the chairman Mrs Jayanti Patnayak and from Mrs Padma Seth.

Com. Amarjeet Kaur, AITUC and Com. Bhatnagar from Construction Labour Organisation also highlighted the plight of women workers in unorganised sector and enquired how the social security fund and social security for women workers scheme will be implemented where the women workers are not able to contribute anything.

The meeting was concluded without any proper suggestions from the organisers of the meeting.

Trade Unions Demand Passing Of Participation of Workers in Management Bill, 1990

After long drawn presurisation, the government called a meeting of the Tripartite Committee on Workers' participation in Management on 20th September, 1994.

It is to be recalled that the Tripartite Committee was constituted in August, 1984 to discuss a scheme on workers' participation prepared by the Government in December, 1983.

This scheme did not stipulate participation of workers at Board level, nor did it specify secret ballot as the mode of representation of workers in the participative forum, which were the two major demands of the trade unions.

After a number of meetings of the Tripartite Committee till 1988, it was found that the 1983

scheme had failed to ensure meaningful and effective participation of workers in the management mainly because of the two reasons above.

The Tripartite Committee was therefore of the consensus that a Central Legislation was necessary with inclusion of the above two major points in the Act.

In the above background, a National Seminar was called by the Government in January, 1990, which also was of the consensus that workers' participation should be upto Board level and their representation should be by secret ballot. The National Seminar was followed by the 29th session of the Indian Labour Conference held in April, 1990,

which gave the same consensus.

Accordingly, the Government introduced a bill in the Rajya Sabha on May 30, 1990. The Bill included the provision of workers' participation upto Board level and secret ballot as the mode of their representation.

The present Government however did not pursue with the Bill. When it called the meeting of the Tripartite Committee after a lapse of six years on 20th September, 1994, a section of the employers representing the private sector objected to the bill itself and demanded its total withdrawal on the plea that in the era of liberalisation and globalisation any sort of workers' participation if at all, should be statuteless, and that Article 43A of the Constitution

which requires the state to take such legislative measure, should be abrogated.

The trade unions unequivocally condemned such anti-labour and anti-constitutional approach of the section of private employers, and demanded further mandate on the private sector to ensure workers' participation upto Board level in the Bill and get it passed in the forthcoming winter session of the parliament. It warned the Government against any move to withdraw the Bill.

From the trade unions the meeting was attended by P.K. Ganguly (CITU), T. Francis (AITUC), Raja Kulkarni (INTUC), V. Tiagi (HMS), H. Dave (BMS) and N.M. Barot (NLO).

Tamilnadu News Letter

Tamilnadu Workers prepare for Bonus Struggle

□ A.K. Padmanabhan

While the Government of India is refusing to amend the obsolete Bonus Act, workers in Tamilnadu are preparing for struggles all over the State demanding amendments to Bonus Act and for Bonus without any wage ceilings.

Protest Day

The CITU State Committee had decided to observe 16th September as Bonus Day. Gate meetings and demonstrations were held at the gates of factories and offices all over the state. There was massive response to these meetings. CITU State Committee has decided to intensify the struggle after the general strike on 29th September.

State Public Sector Convention

A convention of representatives of CITU unions in State Public Sector and Cooperative Industrial units in Tamilnadu was held on 4th September. The issue of privatisation and Bonus was discussed in the convention. Representatives of unions from various state public sector units including transport, electricity, civil supplies, water and drainage board, milk federation, tea and rubber plantations and industrial units like minerals, magnesite, explosives and steel attended the convention.

D Janakiraman, general secretary of Electricity Employees Union presided. A Soundararajan, Asst General Secretary of State CITU moved the resolution. Representatives of various unions participating in the discussion, explained the offensives of the state government as also the efforts to deny them just bonus. Among those addressed the

convention were T K Rangarajan, A K Padmanabhan and S Pancharathnam.

The convention resolved to observe 16th September as bonus day and to go ahead with the preparations for a united movement to obtain bonus. As on today, only a few workers will get bonus, because of the ceilings. It was also resolved to make efforts for a joint movement against privatisation. State Govt has already decided to sell Tamilnadu explosives, Tamilnadu steels, Tamilnadu Cements, etc. Local level struggles are going on against privatisation.

Joint movement

The CITU, AITUC, INTUC, and LPF(DMK) have decided to go for a joint movement for bonus at State public sector units. After a meeting in Madras, in which top leaders of the four organisations participated, the decision for a united movement was taken. Strike notices will be served on 3rd October, in all the State public sector units. Joint demonstrations will be held in front of the factories and offices on that day.

A joint statement issued by T K Rangarajan(CITU), S S Thyagarajan(AITUC), P K G Menon(INTUC), and C Kuppusami(LPF) called upon all unions to participate in this struggle for settlement of bonus dispute.

While statewide preparations for the rail roko on 20th processions on 27th and general strike on 29th September are going on all over the state, the month of October is also going to be a month of massive, struggles against the Government of India's denial of bonus to vast sections of workers.

Minimum Wages with VDA announced by the Government

(We are publishing hereunder the Order issued by the Ministry of Labour on 16.9.94 regarding minimum wage and VDA in some sectors of industries including agriculture---Ed)

No.1(2)/94-LS.II

Government of India, Ministry of Labour
Office of the Chief Labour Commissioner(C), New Delhi

Dated 16.9.94

ORDER

In exercise of the powers conferred by the Central Government vide notifications S O 1009(E) dated 7.12.89, No.S O 620(E) dated 12.8.92 and notifications No.S O 512(E), 513(E) & 514(E) all dated 12.7.94 of the Ministry of Labour and in furtherance of these aforesaid notifications, the undersigned, hereby orders the rates of Variable Dearness Allowance in respect of the scheduled employments listed at paras I, II & III below and revises the rates of VDA ordered vide para IV of this office order No.1(2)/94-LS.II dt 24.3.94 in respect of Agriculture workers, on the basis of the average consumer price index No. for the preceeding period of six months ending on 30.6.94 vis 1325.35(Base: 1960 = 100, series for industrial workers) and 1172.67 (Base: 1960-61 = 100, series for agriculture workers), as under and directs that this office order shall come into force on the 1st October, 1994:-

10. RATES OF VDA FOR EMPLOYEES EMPLOYED IN EMPLOYMENTS (i) IN THE CONSTRUCTION OR MAINTENANCE OF ROADS OR IN BUILDING OPERATIONS, (ii) IN STONE BREAKING OR STONE CRUSHING, (iii) IN MAINTENANCE OF BUILDINGS AND (iv) IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF RUNWAYS.

Category	Rates of VDA	per day (in
(Rs)	A&B Areas	C Area
1. Unskilled	1.22	1.00
2. Semi-skilled/ Unskilled/supervisory	1.44	1.22
3. Skilled/Clerical	1.77	1.55
4. Highly skilled	2.22	1.77

II. RATES OF V.D.A. FOR EMPLOYEES EMPLOYED IN RED OXIDE, QUARTZ, QUARTZITE AND SILICA, MAGNESITE, GRANITE, GRAPHITE, LATERITE, STONE, KYANITE, STEATITE (including mines producing Soap stone and Talc), OCHRE, ASBESTOS AND FIRE CLAY, COPPER, URANIUM, IRON ORE, HEMATITE, ROCK PHOSPHATE, CHROMITE, MAGNETITE, GYPSUM AND BARYTES, DOLOMITE, CHINA CLAY MARBLE AND CALCITE AND MICA MINES.

Category	RATES OF V.D.A. for work above ground (in Rupees)	PER D for work below ground (in Rupees)
1. Unskilled	1.00	1.22
2. Semi-skilled/ unskilled/supervisory	1.22	1.44
3. Skilled/clerical	1.44	1.77
4. Highly skilled	1.77	2.11

III. RATES OF V.D.A. FOR EMPLOYEES EMPLOYED IN LOADING AND UNLOADING IN RAILWAYS' GOODSHEDS AND IN ASHPIT CLEANING IN RAILWAYS.

AREA	RATE OF V.D.A. (IN RUPEES)	PER DAY
'A'	1.46	
'B'	1.15	
'C'	1.02	

IV. Rates of V.D.A. for employees employed in

Agriculture: Rs.15.58/- per day.

2. THEREFORE, the minimum rates of wages showing the basic rates and V.D.A. payable w.e.f. 1-10-1994 to the employees employed in the following employments will be as under:-

A(i) IN THE CONSTRUCTION OR MAINTENANCE OF ROADS OR IN BUILDING OPERATIONS (ii) IN STONE BREAKING OR STONE CRUSHING, (iii) IN MAINTENANCE OF BUILDINGS, AND (iv) IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF RUNWAYS.

Category of workers	AREA					
	Basic		Basic		Basic	
	Wages(V.D.A)		Wages (V.D.A)		wages(V.D.A)	
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
1. Unskilled	36	+ 1.22	34	+ 1.22	28	+ 1.00
Total	37.22		35.22		29.00	
2. Semi-skilled\Unskilled						
Supervisory	43	+ 1.44	41.00	+ 1.44	34.00	+ 1.22
Total	44.44		42.44		35.22	
3. Skilled/Clerical	57.00	+ 1.77	51.00	+ 1.77	43	+ 1.55
Total	58.77		52.77		44.55	
4. Highly skilled	65.00	+ 2.22	63.00	+ 2.22	51.00	+ 1.77
Total	67.22		65.22		52.77	

B. EMPLOYMENTS IN RED OXIDE, QUARTZ, QUARTZITE, SILICA, MAGNESITE, GRAPHITE, GRANITE, LATERITE, STONE, KYANITE, STEATITE(including producing Soapstone and Talc), OCHRE, ASBESTOS, FIRE CLAY, COPPER, URANIUM, IRON ORE, HEMATITE, ROCK PHOSPHATE, CHROMITE, CLAY & WHITE CLAY, MAGNETITE, GYPSUM, BARYTES, DOLOMITE, CHINA CLAY, WLFAM, MANGANESE, FELSPAR, BAUXITE, MARBLE, CALCITE AND MICA MINES.

Category of workers	for work above ground				for work below ground			
	Basic wages		V. D. A		Basic wages		V. D. A	
	Rs	Rs	Rs	Rs	Rs	Rs	Rs	
1. Unskilled	28.00	+ 1.00	= 29.00	34.00	+ 1.22	= 35.22		
2. Semi-skilled	34.00	+ 1.22	= 35.22	41.00	+ 1.44	= 42.44		

unskilled supervisory

3. Skilled/ clerical $41.00 + 1.44 = 42.44$ $50.00 + 1.77 = 51.77$

4. Highly skilled $50.00 + 1.77 = 51.77$ $60.00 + 2.11 = 62.11$

C.EMPLOYMENTS IN LOADING AND UNLOADING IN RAILWAY'S GOODS SHED AND IN ASPHIT CLEANING IN RAILWAYS

AREA	RATES OF WAGES PLUS V. D. A. PER DAY		
	Basic wages Rs	Spl. allowance Rs	Total Rs
'A'	42.00	+ 1.46	= 43.46
'B'	33.00	+ 1.15	= 34.15
'C'	29.00	+ 1.02	= 30.02

D EMPLOYMENT IN AGRICULTURE

Category of workers	AREA					
	A		B		C	
	Basic	V.D.A.	Basic	V.D.A.	Basic	V.D.A.
	Wages		Wages		Wages	
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
1. Unskilled	33.00	+ 15.58	28.00	+ 15.58	26.00	+ 15.58
Total	48.58		43.58		41.58	
2. Semi-skilled/unskilled supervisory	41.00	+ 15.58	35.00	+ 15.58	29.00	+ 15.58
Total	56.58		50.58		44.58	
3. Skilled/ clerical	48.00	+ 15.58	41.00	+ 15.58	34.00	+ 15.58
Total	63.58		56.58		49.58	
4. Highly skilled	58.00	+ 15.58	50.00	+ 15.58	41.00	+ 15.58
Total	73.58		65.58		56.58	

3. The classification of workers under different categories and the classification of cities under different areas will be the same as in the notifications referred to in Para 1 as amended from time to time. The present classification of cities into areas 'A', 'B' and 'C' is enclosed at Annexure I for ready reference.

Sd/-
(SURENDRA NATH)
CHIEF LABOUR COMMISSIONER (C)

JOINT STATEMENT

By The General Federation of Trade Unions of Korea and The Centre of Indian Trade Unions

The delegation of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) headed by the Secretary General comrade M.K. Pandhe visited the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from August 27 to 30 at the invitation of the General Federation of Trade Unions of Korea (GFTUK).

With the extreme and profound grief at the sudden passing away of the great leader Comrade Kim IL Sung, the outstanding leader of the international communist movement who illumined the path of the Korean people and led them to historic victory, the delegation laid a wreath before his statue on the Mansu Hill and expressed its deep condolences.

It also visited Mangyondae and several places in Pyongyang and Nampo.

The delegation during its visit held a detailed discussion with the leadership of GFTUK led by its chairman comrade Ju Song Il.

During the talks, both sides mutually informed of the situations of the two countries and of the activities of their organizations, exchanged opinions on developing the relations between the two countries and on the matters of common concern and expressed their satisfaction with the fact that the two organizations early established the bonds of friendship in the joint struggle against imperialism for independence and supported and cooperated each other closely.

The GFTUK highly appreciated the great progress achieved by the CITU in the struggle for the improvement of working and living conditions of workers and congratulated it on the success of the 8th Conference which was held in March this year and sincerely wished it greater successes in its future struggles for the implementation of its decisions.

Considering it a great pleasure to have the friendly CITU with excellent traditions of the anti-imperialist struggles as the close friend, the GFTUK expressed its full support to and solidarity with the Indian working class and people in their struggle for building an democratic, independent and prosperous society.

The GFTUK expressed its support to the stand of the CITU which respects the sovereignties of all countries and nations, opposes all the political and economic conditions based on domination and plunder and insists on complete withdrawals of aggressive military blocs and all lethal weapons.

The CITU expressed its great appreciation on the fact that the working class and the people of Korea have expressed tremendous sorrow at the loss of the great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung whom they held in high esteem, and firmly rallied around Comrade Kim Jong Il, the great leader of Party, State and army, in successfully carrying forward his revolutionary cause.

The CITU recognized that the indomitable will and spirit displayed by the Korean people and workers at this grave moment of history are attributable to the fact that the great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung brilliantly left his deep heritage to the cause of revolution which will be carried forward the dear leader Comrade Kim Jong Il, who symbolises firm determination of the working class and the people of Korea to carry for the revolutionary cause of the great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung.

The CITU highly appreciated that Democratic People's Republic of Korea is successfully implementing the tasks of the period of adjustment by vigorously carrying out the three revolutions-ideological, technical and cultural-under the wise leadership of the dear leader Comrade Kim Jong Il, and expressed its conviction to win victory in its struggle for the cause of Juche-oriented socialism which keeps popular masses at the centre.

The CITU highly appreciated the invariable peace-loving activities and efforts rendered by the D.P.R.K. Government to show its transparency on its peaceful nuclear activity, realize peace and security in the region centering on the Korean peninsula, resume the third round of DPRK-USA talks and bring the positive result.

Considering that the peace and reunification of Korea are very important issues which are directly connected with the peace and security of Asia and

the world, the CITU expressed its full support to and firm solidarity with the Korean people and workers in their struggle for achieving the reunification of the country by way of a Confederation on the basis of one nation, one state, two governments and two systems according to the three principles of independence, peace and great national unity and the "Ten- point Programme of Great Unity of the Whole Nation for the National Reunification" put forward by the great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung, and strongly demanded to stop immediately the provocative manoeuvres for another war of south Korean authorities, their ruthless suppression of the activities of trade unions, and abolish at once the fascist notorious legislation "national security law".

Both sides expressed the common view that the current developments in the international arena showed more clearly that capitalism cannot solve any problem faced by mankind, while socialism can alone ensure the independent development, prosperity, durable peace and security of the countries and nations and provide all the people with genuine freedom and happiness as the real masters of society, and expressed their firm determination to safeguard the socialist cause and to defeat the counter-revolutionary attacks of imperialists and reactionaries.

Both sides expressed common views that today when the regional cooperation between countries in Asia is expanding and developing and the spirit of

taking the road of independence is being raised higher than ever before, the cooperation and solidarity between trade unions in Asian countries should be strengthened in the struggle for building a new independent, peaceful and prosperous countries in Asia.

Both sides strongly appealed that under the situation when imperialists are fiercely committing subjugation moves, progressive T.U. organizations in every country of the world should firmly unite on the basis of the principle of independence, conduct more vigorously the anti-imperialist, anti-war, anti-nuclear weapons, peace campaigns by broadly forming an anti-imperialist joint front all over the world.

Both sides noted with satisfaction that the current visit of the CITU delegation to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea greatly contributed in deepening the mutual understanding between the working peoples and the trade unions of the two countries and in strengthening the ties of friendship and cooperation.

The CITU delegation, at the conclusion of its visit to the DPRK, confirms that the Korean working people will smash intrigues of imperialists to isolate and stifle the DPR of Korea and certainly with their victory in implementing the socialist construction and the cause of the national reunification by firmly uniting around the dear leader Comrade Kim Jong Il, the supreme leader of the party, state and army.

French CGT hails Indian Working Class on the eve of 29th September Industrial Strike

The French CGT which enjoys the allegiance of the widest section of the working class in France has sent the following message to CITU hailing the Indian Working Class on the eve of the countrywide strike on 29 September 1994.

French CGT hails Indian workers and their unions occasion national general strike 29 September.

As yourselves, CGT rejects restructuration policies imposed by IMF, BM and GATT agreements which entail particularly privatizing state sector, mass penetration foreign capital, open door transnationals and serious danger for economic and general independence countries. They mean concretely in India relinquishing traditional self reliance, closure many Industrial units, millions more unemployed, increased poverty.

CGT hails large civil disobedience campaign involving lakhs people in first place workers as prologue general strike.

Assures through you Indian workers unflinching solidarity and constant support their struggles.

Wishes full success 29 September strike reflecting aspiration Indian people to independent and dynamic development in interest all.

Editorial Board

M.K. Pandhe (Chairman)

P.K. Ganguly (Working Editor)

Niren Ghosh, M.M. Lawrence,

Vimal Randive, Ranjit Basu

Solidarity Message from ZENROREN

To

Nationwide General Strike in India on 29 September

National Confederation of Trade Unions (ZENROREN) of Japan extends its full support and solidarity to Nationwide General strike in India on 29th September in protest against the economic policies of Narasimha Rao Government which immensely harm the interests of the country and its workers and people and thus clear the way to the rule by multinational corporations and international financial organisations.

Activities of IMF-World Bank and multinationals on the whole have negative effects on life of workers and people in developed capitalist countries including Japan and not to speak in developing ones. The GATT-Uruguay Round has made it clear that to work out the rules to protect the interests of multinationals largely harms the stability of living of not only the peoples of India and Japan but also billions of people throughout the world, and the interests of development of their national economy.

The new World Trade Organisation (WTO) which replaces the GATT will help further consolidating imperialist economic dominance over the people of India and other third world countries. The new GATT agreement will allow access to the multinationals into the vital agricultural, financial and service sectors, and it will give foothold to the multinationals to intellectual property rights over seeds and other areas, which will finally curtail your food self-sufficiency, forcing you to import 3 to 5 percent of your food requirement.

In Japan, Murayama coalition-Government, which is succeeding to the Liberal Democratic party politics and further accelerating it, has accepted full liberalisation for import of rice and all other agricultural products, abandoning the policy to protect its agricultural industry which reflects on the sovereignty of the country. On the other hand, Japanese big business and financial circles have promoted also a policy to open the rice market of the

country for their own interests as multinational corporations so as to create investment environment and free trade structure favourable to them along with the U.S. based multinationals. Under the economic policies of Japanese government in cooperation with the U.S. and in the interest of Japanese big monopoly corporations, the workers and people are suffering from cuts down in social welfare, tax increases and deep recession.

ZENROREN is struggling for big wage increase and job security against the revision of pension system and restructuring of industries under the prolonging recession. At the same time, Zenroren is promoting a big campaign in cooperation with other mass organisations of farmers, smaller entrepreneurs, women, youth, etc. to protest the liberalisation of rice import and to prevent a ratification by the Diet of the GATT agreement.

Zenroren does honor to all the Indian workers and people rising in the Nationwide General Strike on 29th September and wish this strike action a grand success and your nationwide struggle further advance. Let's further strengthen international cooperation and solidarity of workers and trade unions for a democratic control on multinational corporations and international financial and trade organisations and for a New International Economic order based on independence, equality and fairness of all nations of the world!

COMMISSION PAPER

The CITU has published the Commission papers on the 9 commission subjects as discussed in the 8th conference of the CITU held at Patna from March 3-7.

The commissions have been published in booklet in English, Pricing Rs.10/- for each copy.

Please send your orders to the CITU centre.

Enough with the Storage of Dangers and of Playing-With its Risks

(Following is an article published by Granma on 18th August under the title- Ed.)

A cable of FP dated in Washington on August 15th was published yesterday in Granma newspaper as a warning to the international and national conscience on the dangers being stored in the Guantanamo Naval base with the concentration of around 16,000 Haitians under inhuman and crowded conditions.

And to demonstrate that those playing with fire run the danger of being burned, the news dispatch reports, according to Pentagon sources, the riots and disturbances of last Saturday in that military enclave, where 45 Haitians and 20 U.S. militaries were injured and four hours to restore the order in the base.

On the margin of comparison between the brutality of this event and the result of the "famous" Cuban riots of the past days, the fact could have gone on without being noticed, if not for the fact that 120 refugees threw themselves in the water to swim to the other coast, with the intention of reaching the Cuban territory.

What would have happened if those suffering Haitians, humiliated by the conditions they live under and submitted to discriminatory treatments by those who do not want to receive them in their territory, trying to abandon the naval base, had gone through the mined fields on both sides of the fence or had provoked military incidents between the armies guarding the enclave?

On April 16, The Minister of the armed forces, Raul Castro Ruz, warned about the danger that in the issue of security and détente in the area. Represented the attempts of illegal departures by Cuban citizens through the base. On a more recent date, August 10th, a statement of the Ministry of foreign affairs presented its strongest protest for the use of the Guantanamo naval base as a concentration camp for Haitians.

Is it not time for the United States, that has taken a piece of national territory by force, to put an end to this "new" use of that obsolete military facility, which according to Commander in Chief Fidel Castro is one of the most grotesque, unfair and arbitrary things they have done in the Guantanamo naval base?

Without even asking for the Cuban opinion, the only party with moral and legal force to decide what can be done in its own soil, the U.S. conceived a plan to store quite close to us and well distant from their shores, 20,000 Haitians. In only four days the project

reached the amount of 2,500 persons concentrated and currently is close to 16,000.

No one is unaware of the smell of provocation that this attitude has, mainly when those planning it have not hesitated in using the most unimaginable weapons against the revolution. Furthermore they expose the region of Guantanamo and its population to possible diseases. And there are proofs that vectors coming from the base have infected other areas of our national territory.

The Government of the Republic of Cuba demands once again of the authorities of the U.S. to put an end to the illegal transportation of Haitian immigrants to the Guantanamo naval base and demands on behalf of the most fundamental human rights to stop this policy of trafficking with human beings.

Wouldn't be good that those who name themselves the champions of human rights pay attention to decision as wild as these?

Nothing is more similar to an irresponsible attitude, than that of a government storing dangers and playing with the risks.

CUBA DETERMINED TO FIGHT ITS BLOCKADE

Cuba is determined not to allow that the migratory crisis provoked by the United States diverts its central effort from the national movement aimed at solving the problems of production and economic reorganization concerning to the country in spite of the punitive measures announced by the White House, as another effort aimed at beating the besieged Cuban economy. The statements of the top political and administrative local leaders are devoted to mark the paths of what they consider an historic and decisive battle for the Island.

The punitive measures against Cuba, announced by the United States have, among others, the characteristic of being contrary to a real international consensus favourable to the cease of the pressures and the blockade against the Caribbean island. The President William Clinton, in harmony with the demands of the most aggressive sector of the anti-Cuban groups existing in Miami, banned the family remittance to Havana, reduced the flights between both countries, threatened with an increase of the broadcasting campaign against Cuba and wishes to involve the United Nations in his plans.

"Privatisation? No."

— David Cockroft, Actg. General Secretary, ITF

(David Cockroft, the Acting General Secretary of International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) gave a clarion call to oppose privatisation on railways while addressing the 66th annual session of the AIRF held in Calcutta in December 1993. Indeed opposition to privatisation is the basic theme of his speech. We excerpt below from the text published in the official AIRF organ Indian Railwaymen the passages dealing with privatisation which actually cover major part of the speech-Editor)

Today the international trade union movement faces greater changes and greater challenges than at any time in its history. The globalisation and liberalisation of the world economy, symbolised by the signature yesterday of the GATT agreement in Geneva, will require greater international solidarity between unions in every part of the world if it is not to become a capitalist charter for the exploitation of labour and the repression of human and trade union rights. It is an unbalanced deal with no social clause, and does nothing for workers' rights.

Transport is not, of course, directly connected with the GATT process, but it is increasingly subject to the same social pressures, as governments seek to cut public deficits and as international leading bodies such as the IMF and World Bank insist on policies of privatisation, deregulation and contracting out of public services.

Railways are a key target for the liberalisers, and Indian Railways share the characteristics which they dislike. They are publicly owned, regulated and highly unionised with relatively good social conditions. In India, as elsewhere in Asia, Europe and America, the challenge today is to defend the railways, defend public services, oppose the policy of privatisation and contracting-out and defend the central role of railway unions in negotiating not only on wages and conditions but also in determining jointly the future of the railways.

We must defend the role of the railways in an overall transport strategy.

We must ensure that the railway compete fairly with other modes of transport. We must ensure that when change takes place— as it will and must—it dies so only with the consent of railway trade unions and in a way which protects and enhances the jobs and conditions of railway workers.

This can only happen if you have industrial strength. In the AIRF have confidence that you have the power to make this happen.

You have already made a good start in opposing World Bank pressure for contracting-out of railway workshops and, if you maintain your strength and unity, I am sure that your campaign to defend the public railways will continue to meet wide success. You can rest assured that in this struggle, as in many

other struggles which the AIRF has conducted in the past, the ITF and all its affiliates will give you 100 per cent support.

The ITF holds very dear the old trade union principle "an injury to one is an injury to all". In the case of an old and treasured member of our family, we take it even more seriously. The fight to preserve public railways is a fight which every single railwaymen's union—from developed and developing countries, from Asia, Pacific, Europe and elsewhere supports fully.....

India is a big country. A country with a proud tradition of independence and self-reliance. A country which can and should set world trends and not just follow ideologies set by others. The Indian Railway Network is the world's largest. It is one of the few which returns money to the government rather than draining money from it. It deserves to be treated as a success and not as a failure. It needs to be strengthened through greater investment and negotiated improvements in productivity, not weakened by constant attempts to contract-out, privatise or deregulate this or that aspect.

In my country, the UK, the privatisation of railways is underway and it will be a disaster. No-one wants to buy or operate anything but a few key trunk routes. The rest of the network will continue to be starved of investment and to follow the downward spiral of lower investment, worse services and higher fares. Let India not make the same mistake as the half-witted ideological fanatics who currently make up the British Transport Ministry.

What do your railways need? Privatisation? No. They need investment.

They need new investment in track, Signalling, Molling stock and Complex Systems.

They need new investment in higher technical safety standards, and better crossings to avoid tragic accidents like that in Pune earlier this week.

They need new investment in people—the workforce, which is the source of the railways' success, needs to be better trained, better rewarded, better recognised. They do not need the axe of sub-contracting and the fear of unemployment hanging over their heads.

Italian Unions Set Stage for Pitched Battle

Italy's labour unions have tightened their belts to fight a decisive battle with Premier Silvio Berlusconi's conservative government, declaring a general strike on October 14 to halt promised cutbacks in welfare state benefits.

Berlusconi later said the measures are intended to save 50 trillion lire (\$ 32 billion). They include cuts in pensions, public health assistance and defense, and a six-month hiring freeze on public servants.

He also promised the measures would not increase the overall tax burden or raise inflation. The unions' announcement came after pension reform talks between the government and labour federations broke down on 27th September night. The government sought to show unconcern with the strike.

"There's no worry over public order," said Maurizio Gasparri, Undersecretary in the Interior Ministry.

Pietro di Muccio, a leading deputy in Berlusconi's Forza Italia party, said the unions were showing themselves to be increasingly irrelevant.

"They behave like those who whistle in the night to give themselves courage," he said.

The credibility of Berlusconi, a multimillionaire business man, is riding on his efforts to rein in the budget deficit. The government is hoping for major savings from the bloated and fraud-riddled pension system.

Berlusconi held firm on pensions. He announced plans to save 10 trillion lire (\$ 6.4 billion), a higher figure than what had emerged during the talks.

The measures block early retirement for the rest of the year, slows the rate of accumulation of pensions, reduce cost of living increases and lengthen the time for eligibility at full benefits. The budget measures must still be approved by parliament. Berlusconi's coalition has an easy majority in the chamber of deputies, but falls just short in the senate.

While the government was drawing the ire of unions, financial markets reacted favourably to the budget-cutting moves.

The government has "done its job" while the unions were acting with an "antiquated view," said a Rome trader, who asked that his name not be use.

Promising in the election campaign not to raise

taxes, Berlusconi intends to cut spending and tax evasion, widespread in Italy.

Giancarlo Fontanelli, an official of the UIL labour federation, announced "a hard fight the hardest fight possible," after the talks collapsed. Italian unions have traditionally used the general strike to force the government to back down from any threats to workers benefits.

It will be a major test for Berlusconi's conservative coalition, which triumphed in the march elections with support from the middle class and over hostility from the unions.

Fontanelli promised a campaign of regional strikes and a struggle by the leftist opposition in Parliament, along with the general strike, against the government's plan to cut the budget.

The premier is caught between the need for dire budget cuts to control an awesome deficit, and warnings from unions against making too much of a dent in the social welfare state.

Italy's bloated and much abused pension system accounts for some 40 percent of government spending in a country with a \$ 100 billion budget deficit.

The two sides differ over retirement eligibility. Unions want full benefits after 35 years of service. The government says workers must reach the minimum retirement age first. It is also trying to slow cost of living increases. Source: Associated Press, Rome. Published in the Financial Express, New Delhi on 30.9.94

BOOK POST