



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

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Editorial Board

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Niren Ghosh Sudhin Kumar

Lessons Of Port And Dock Strike

THE glorious strike of 2 lakh port and dock workers was an expression of unprecedented urge for unity prevailing among the rank and file workers. The long-standing grievances of the workers and the refusal of the authorities to settle these issues brought the workers together for common action.

The five year period of the operation of the First Wage Board for port and dock workers was over on 31st December 1973 and a new wage revision was due since 1st January 1974. Had the Government been serious about revision of wages it would have formed a bipartite wage negotiation machinery during 1973 itself. It was however deliberately using dilatory tactics to postpone the constitution of such a machinery.

The trade unions unitedly demanded Rs. 100 as interim relief in view of steep rise in price level and inordinate delay in settlement of their wage claims. The Government was paying no heed to the just demand of the workers.

Ultimately when the Government formed a machinery it made a mockery of wage fixation. It formed a three man Committee with a retired judge as its Chairman, a Joint Secretary of the Union Labour Ministry and an economist thus excluding representatives of trade unions. The CITU had been demanding constitution of bipartite negotiation Committee with the representatives of Central trade unions including the CITU. The demand was turned down by the Government and a Committee suited to its requirement was imposed on the workers.

Moreover, the machinery was authorised to go into the question of wages of workers in Major ports only. Even in that case, though Mangalore and Tuticorin have been declared as major ports, they have not been included in the terms of reference of the Committee. The workers in ports which are considered as minor ports have also been excluded from the purview of the Committee.

Several workers working on the crafts of Calcutta and other port Commissioners like Chipping and Painting workers as well as watchmen have also been excluded from the purview of the Committee. Such tactics have been adopted to disrupt the united movement of the port and dock workers.

The port and dock workers have been fighting since long demanding bonus to the workers. The Bonus Act has denied right of Bonus to these workers. The Bonus Review Committee has continued this injustice done to the port and dock workers. The workers through organised strength established their right though it was paid as an ex-gratia payment. The Government however decided to keep the bonus payment to the minimum level though workers secured more than the minimum last year. This arbitrary action of the Government caused deep resentment among the port and dock workers and they were demanding higher quantum of bonus as in the past. The Government however refused to see the reasonableness of this demand.

There were also many other outstanding issues like merger of DA with basic wages and the arbitrary recommendations of one man Committee of Shri N. N. Chatterjee for Calcutta dock workers, which were also allowed to be dragged on for a long time despite repeated demands by the trade unions.

The CITU appealed to all the unions to conduct a joint struggle in order to force the Government to accept the demands. The 3 recognised federations belonging to the HMS, INTUC and AITUC however refused to do so and were trying to settle the issue by getting some minor concessions.

The Government knowing the weakness of the leaders took a firm posture and offered Rs. 50 as interim relief from 1st Jaauary

1975 and a lump sum payment of Rs. 300 for the year 1974.

Seeing the mood of the workers the leaders found it difficult to withdraw the strike which was to begin on 16th January 1975. The workers responded magnificently to the strike call and loading and unloading was totally paralysed all over the country.

The Government immediately invoked DIR and banned the strike throughout the country. Territorial Army and Navy units were used to break the strike but without results. The strike continued unitedly despite the threat to use draconian powers and the morale of the workers was at its height. The meetings and demonstrations held during the strike showed a remarkable urge to carry forward the strike till the demands are achieved.

The Congress leaders got panicky after the strike. They hoped that after the suppression of the railway strike the workers would hesitate to face the onslaught of steam roller machinery of the Government. Rajini Patel, President Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee and G. Ramanujam INTUC General Secretary intervened and prevailed upon the leaders of the INTUC and HMS (who are also Congressmen) to withdraw on the terms dictated by the Government. The vacillating leadership, afraid of a longdrawn confrontation with the Government, immediately surrendered and agreed to the terms offered by the Government before the strike. Only the quantum of

Rs. 300 was split up into Rs. 120 for a period upto 5th July 1974 and Rs. 180 for the period of 6th July to 31st December 1974.

The leadership did not bother to consult the workers before withdrawing the strike on 20th January because they knew well that workers would not accept their letting them down. They accepted the official wage fixation machinery which they were threatening to boycott earlier.

The AITUC leaders did not hesitate to mortgage their self respect to the Government. Though they were not called to negotiate after the commencement of the strike they shamelessly signed the statement arrived at in their absence. Strangely, they signed the agreement after the strike was already withdrawn. No further proof is necessary to show that the so called recognition of the AITUC waterfront federation was an act of mercy by the Government and to preserve that the AITUC leadership has to remain servile to the Government.

The Union Labour Ministry headed by Shri K. V. Raghunatha Reddy was behaving like a silent spectator throughout the strike period. It had practically no role to play in the strike. Labour Minister had enough to give *sermons* on Socialism but he had no time to pay attention to a subject which is considered to be an all-India subject.

The CITU unions in Calcutta, Marmagoa and Cochin played a notable role in the strike. They explained to the workers the issue involved in the

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CITU's Letter To ILO On Suppression of Trade Union Rights in West Bengal

The CITU has, on several occasions, drawn the attention of the I. L. O. to the suppression of Trade Union and democratic rights of workers in West Bengal since 1971-72. Despite this, attacks on trade union and democratic rights of workers continue unabated with the active connivance of the Police and the Government. Recently, on January 5, a meeting of the Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union (CITU), due to be held at Kamarhaty in connection with the Jute strike, was most arbitrarily banned by the police who imposed Sec. 144 in the area. Jyoti Basu, Vice-President CITU was to have addressed the meeting along with leaders of other Trade Unions. The meeting was banned on the plea that a rival meeting was planned by the ruling Congress on the same day. The police, however, took no action against the culprits who burnt down some arches erected by the BCMU on the occasion.

B. T. Ranadive, President CITU addressed the following letter to the Director General, I. L. O., protesting against the incident and urging the I. L. O. to take immediate steps in the matter.

Dear Sir,

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions has drawn attention of the I. L. O. on several occasions to the suppression of trade union rights in West Bengal. We are however, extremely sorry to note

that the attacks on trade union and democratic rights of the workers continue unabated as a result of which normal functioning of trade unions in the State is becoming increasingly difficult.

We are bringing to your notice a recent incident which goes to show how the rights of trade unions are being curtailed day by day.

All the trade unions in Jute industry in West Bengal including the INTUC gave a proper notice of strike from 6th January 1975 in support of their demands and against non-implementation of past agreements in full. The preparations of strike were going on unitedly and in a peaceful manner.

Bengal Chatkal Mazdur Union, our affiliate, planned a meeting of jute workers on 5th January at Kamarhaty and the police authorities granted permission for it. Shri Jyoti Basu, Vice-President of CITU was going to address the meeting. However, police issued order under Section 144 of Cr. P. C. banning all meetings on the plea that subsequently a rival meeting was declared by the ruling party on the same occasion. Some arches erected by the Bengal Chatkal Mazdur Union were also burnt down on 4th January night but no action has been taken against the culprits.

This deliberate obstruction in the activities of a trade union by the ruling party is not an isolated instance. Similar attacks are

Solidarity Funds For Orissa State CITU Office

The office of the Orissa State Committee of CITU situated at Cuttack was burnt down by hired gangsters on the night of 3rd December last (see report in our January, 1975 issue).

B. T. Ranadive, President CITU has, in a circular, requested all State Committees to contribute some funds to the Orissa State Committee for the rehabilitation of their office.

Contributions should be sent to :
Com. Ajeya Rout,
Secretary,
Orissa State Committee

of CITU
Mastan Darga, Buxi Bazar,
Cuttack-753001.

Reports so far received by the CITU Central indicate encouraging response from the State Committees. The West Bengal State Committee has already raised Rs. 1700 towards the solidarity fund, as per the decision of its Second Conference held on December 25-28 last. The Goa State Committee has already contributed Rs. 100 and the Rajasthan State Committee has promised to contribute Rs. 500. More contributions are expected from other State Committees.

being launched which have made a mockery of right to organise and freedom of association.

I would therefore request you to make enquiries into the matter and take immediate steps so that the suppression of trade union and democratic rights is stopped forthwith.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,
B. T. Ranadive

KUNEITRA IN RUINS

L. Silva

Secretary of the Trade Unions International of Agricultural, Forestry and Plantation Workers. (T. U. I. A. F. P. W.)

The expansive policy of Israel, supported by and carried out in the interest of US imperialism, troubles since many years the lives of Arab peoples, and seriously injures the sovereignty of the countries while occupying their territories and maintaining a climate of tension in the Middle East area. This not only makes harm to the economy of the invaded countries, but threatens the process toward detente now taking place on international scope.

In full disregard of the elemental rights of the citizens and the people, the aggressors are carrying out a policy of discrimination and racism in the robbed Arab lands, violating human rights and freedoms and, even worse, obliging the Arab people of Palestine to abandon their native soil and leave the country so as to keep the space free for those Israeli people who are still living outside Israel. The invader's devouring appetite does not care for any limits in ravaging the wealth and resources of the occupied Arab Lands.

Wherever the Israeli troops may enter, they always leave behind traces of brutality and do not spare even the areas from which the international agreements forced them to withdraw.

It is sufficient to pay a visit to the Syrian city El Kuneitra in order to get an idea about the atrocious crimes committed by Israeli troops in the occupied

Arab lands. You will find there an obvious and eloquent picture of the aggressor's mentality.

Kuneitra was a city of about 53,000 inhabitants and its economy mostly dependent on agriculture. The city has been modernized, it possessed a secondary school, a hospital and many other improvements.

Kuneitra was invaded during the 1967 war. In May 1974, an agreement was signed between Syria and Israel, according to which the aggressor's troop should withdraw behind the line of demarcation agreed upon by the two countries and which runs along the limits of Kuneitra suburbs.

However, before falling back, the Israeli troops deliberately plundered and destroyed Kuneitra by tractors and gunfire. This well premeditated crime makes evident the invader's mentality. There remained nothing from the hospital but few seriously damaged walls, equipment and even the beds were carried away. The secondary school had the same ill fortune. From vandalism did not escape an Orthodox church the installation of which was destroyed up to the switches, and more the less the Christian cemetery where the tombs were profaned, the defuncts robbed of valuables, and several bodies left aside the graves, in flagrant disregard to the feelings of the relatives. In the cemetery of

the army you may find the graves of Syrian soldiers, both Christians and Muslims, which date from the different periods, the Zionist beast has torn off the marble tombstones and transported them to the other side of the line of demarcation. The devastation by Israeli troops was complete and nothing was spared.

Cultivable soil near Kuneitra remains occupied. This makes rather complicated the possibility to repopulate the city which turned into a vigorous and significant witness of the Israeli aggression and cruelty.

I've seen in my own eyes the results of this violence. The destruction of the peaceful Kuneitra city is a reality, and so is the Syrian people's and workers' desire to live in peace and progress. Wherever in Syria we talked to the politicians, trade-union leaders and in particular to agricultural workers we could feel this very same spirit. And we could also state that they kept in memory the bitter experience of Israeli aggression and were resolutely decided to reintegrate to their fatherland the territories still occupied by Israel.

Positive results obtained by the peasant farming-units prove that people are working hard to build up an economy which would meet the needs of society. The President of the Peasant Union in the Tartous State told me: "Eighty per cent of our agricultural yield go for our country's

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Civil Court and Industrial Law

The Industrial Disputes Act and other Industrial Laws give certain rights to the workmen and at the same time prescribe some procedure for enforcing those rights. The vexed question to what extent ordinary courts of law have also the jurisdiction to entertain claims regarding them has now and then cropped up. In those cases where the remedy is adequate and can be initiated by the worker himself, the worker was not at all too eager to rush to civil court, because civil courts are expensive compared to industrial court and tribunals. There are, however, rights, as under the Industrial Disputes Act, to enforce which a worker has to depend on the will of the executive. A whole series of provisions, namely those in chapter V A of the Industrial Disputes Act lay down substantive rights, such as the right to lay off compensation, retrenchment compensation etc. Claim of those rights might give rise to disputes and they may be referred to a Tribunal by the appropriate Government under section 10 of the Act. The reference is, however, completely discretionary and, unless the Government is satisfied that an industrial dispute exists or is apprehended, no reference can be made. And the existence of the dispute or the satisfaction of the Government relating thereto is not justiciable. That has been concluded by the decision of the Supreme Court in Sarathy's case decided in 1953.

An elaborate case law has also evolved round the question of industrial dispute or apprehension thereof—an elaboration which was perhaps beyond the ken of the legislators. In fact, this is one of the instances where the wit of the Courts gall the kibes of the legislators. For who would have thought that, in order to be a dispute, it must be sponsored by a Trade Union?

Obviously, therefore, to go to a Tribunal is not easy. What about the rights then? Would they be in cold storage, until a Government chose to hatch them into life and activity?

The situation was shrouded in confusion till only lately and we were too accustomed to hear the Civil Court chiming in whenever an industrial dispute was submitted in a plaint to the Court, why should not the worker go to a Tribunal.

A Bombay High Court case, however, following in the wake of a Calcutta High Court case seems to have settled the issue. In the Calcutta High Court, a suit was filed by pump drivers working under the Commissioners for the Port of Calcutta for a declaration that the report of Jeejeebhoy Committee fixing the scales of pay prescribed for different classes and categories of posts including the posts of pump drivers is binding on the defendant and for further declaration that the plaintiffs are entitled to a scale of pay as prescribed by that report. The

plaintiffs also prayed for a mandatory injunction directing the defendant to implement the Report of that Committee. It was contended in that case, reported as B. K. Chatterjee v. Commissioners, Port, Calcutta (1) that it was an industrial dispute and, therefore, the Civil Court had no jurisdiction to entertain the suit. Justice Mukherji agreed that it was an industrial dispute within the meaning of the Industrial Disputes Act, but at the same time came to the conclusion that the Industrial Disputes Act did not expressly or impliedly bar the remedy of a suit, particularly because relief under the Act might for ever elude the grasp of the worker as with the proverbial Tantalus. The judge dismissed the preliminary point of jurisdiction and disposed of the case on merits.

In the meantime, the Supreme Court had decided in the case of Dhulabhai v. State of M.P. (2), though not in any matter arising out of the Industrial Dispute Act, the principles governing Civil Court's jurisdiction. Ouster of Civil Court's jurisdiction is not readily to be inferred, according to that, unless there is an express bar of the jurisdiction of the Court. There may be an implied bar, as when the statute gives finality to the orders of the special Tribunals, but only in cases where the remedy is adequate and such as would be normally available in a Civil Court. Even in these cases, jurisdiction of a Civil Court is not excluded "where the provisions of the particular Act have not been complied with or the

statutory tribunal has not acted in conformity with the fundamental principles of judicial procedure”

In both the cases of express and implied bar, particularly in the latter case, the scheme of the Act has to be examined to find the adequacy or the sufficiency of the remedies provided under the Act, though such an examination is decisive only in the case of implied bar.

The Bombay High Court relied on that case of the Supreme Court in holding that the Civil Court can grant an injunction restraining the employer from unilaterally imposing terms and conditions of service on his workmen without following the procedure. In the case of Premier Automobiles v. K. S. Wadke (3), the plaintiffs who were members of the Engineering Mazdur Sabha were enjoying incentive bonus under a scheme under an agreement with that Union. It transpired that the Company entered into an agreement with the defendant no. 2, the Association of Engineering Workers, which according to the plaintiffs, adversely affected their right to receive the incentive bonus payments under the incentive scheme. The Plaintiffs filed a suit, in a repre-

sentative capacity, for a declaration that the settlement between the Company and the defendant no. 2 is not binding on the plaintiffs and other concerned daily rated and monthly rated workmen of the Motor Production Department of the company, and, also for a permanent injunction restraining the company and its agents and servants from enforcing or implementing the terms of the said settlement.

The Court held that, ‘for preventing recurring breaches of existing contract or preventing a recurring implementation of a new contract unilaterally by the employer, there seems to be no remedy provided by the Act at all. It is difficult to tell the plaintiffs that they will not file a suit for claiming an injunction restraining their employer from enforcing a particular contract which is not binding on them. The attempt of the employer to enforce that contract month after month could be prevented only by an appropriate injunction of a civil court and such an injunction seems to be beyond the competence of any Labour Courts or Tribunals provided by the Act.”

Thus, the Bombay High Court upheld the jurisdiction of the Civil Court on the ground of adequate remedy because “the recurring claims and recurring breaches could not be sufficiently dealt with by the Industrial Disputes Act.”

- (1) (1970) 2 L. L. J. 148
- (2) AIR 1969 S. C. 78
- (3) (1974) 29 F. L. R. 365

Arun Prokas Chatterjee

Kuneitra in Ruins

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defence and only twenty per cent can be used to promote further progress, the results of which you may already see. As soon as there is a possibility for us to work in peace, the rhythm of agricultural development will go forth without any limit”.

The President of the General Union of Peasants, the political and trade-union leaders, students of the Trade Union School of 8th of March, agricultural workers, all of them asked our TUIAFPW to let the people throughout the world know about their ardent desire to live in peace, freedom and progress and to expose the character of Israeli aggression perpetrated against their country.

Fortresses have been built up in the summits of Golan Mountain and near Kuneitra, and Zionist guns aim at Syrian territory challenging the UN resolution, the rights of the Syrian people and the world public opinion. The aggressors are asserting that they cannot hold off these positions as the defence of Israel depends on them.

It is evident that such hateful enemy will not give up his policy unless the forces of peace and progress bear the necessary pressure so that peaceful solution to the conflict is found, the occupied Arab lands returned back to the respective countries and the legitimate rights of the Arab people of Palestine fully satisfied.

In Marathi

WARG YUDDHA

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Central Government Employees Defrauded On The Question Of DA

AFTER a lot of dilly-dallying and prevarications, the Central Government announced on 25th January the payment of three instalments of D.A. to its employees which have fallen due between June 1 and September 1, 1974. However, the mode of payment announced simultaneously amounts to a huge fraud perpetrated by the Government on its own employees in collusion with a section of the reformist leadership.

According to the pressnote issued by the Government, 50 per cent of the payments will be deposited into the Compulsory Deposit account. The arrears on account of the remaining 50 per cent for the period up to December 31, 1974 will be deposited in the Provident Fund accounts of the employees. Only the other 50 per cent of the payments due for the period commencing from January 1, 1975 will be paid in cash.

Thus the so-called DA payments have turned into something worse than the proverbial "donkey's carrot" for the employees. According to the DA formula recommended by the Third Pay Commission, the Central Government employees are entitled to get five instalments of DA. Not only are they being offered only three instalments, even out of the amounts due for these three instalments the employees will get less than 15 per cent in cash, the rest being impounded in the Compulsory Deposit and Provi-

dent Fund accounts. Out of the total amounts to be paid on this account amounting to Rs. 98 crores, Rs. 49 crores will go to the Compulsory Deposit account, another Rs. 37 crores to the Provident Fund account and only Rs. 12 crores will be paid to the employees in cash.

In doling out this shabby deal to its employees, the Central Government received able support from the Madhusudan-Gupta faction of the Confederation. Betraying the interests of 28 lakhs Central Government employees in the country they struck a deal with the Government ignoring the unity and fighting mood of the employees and the appeal for united action made by the leaders of the Confederation.

While talks were going on for bringing about structural unity in the Confederation for developing a united programme of action to resist the offensive, the reformist leaders unilaterally called for an indefinite hunger-strike from January 18 and work-to-rule from January 20. That they did not take this seriously was evident from the fact that they did not care to consult the Confederation in this matter nor did they prepare the employees throughout the country for this action. Neither of the programmes, however, ultimately materialised as the reformist leaders in the meantime carried on their confabulations with the Government, struck the deal behind the back of the workers and called off the

hunger strike in the evening of January 18.

The Confederation of the Central Government Employees and Workers not only refused to be associated with the discussions with Government on such a scheme, they have also refused to be a party to the scheme announced. In a circular issued on January 19, S. K. Vyas, Secretary General of the Confederation has called upon the Central Government Employees to carry on the fight to defeat the wage-freeze offensive. At its call, an "All-India Protest Day" will be observed by Central Government employees all over the country on January 31. The National Executive of the Confederation will meet on February 3 next to take stock of the situation and decide on further programme of action.

Betrayal of Employees Condemned

Priya Gupta, General Secretary of the All India Railwaymen's Federation on 28th January demanded full payment of DA in cash. As reported in Times of India, he alleged that "the minority section in its eagerness to bail out the Government had betrayed the workers by signing the agreement allowing the government to impound the DA at a time when the workers happened to be the worst victims of inflation". He further said that the Government had made "a show of consulting to deny the workers their due".

According to AIRF, only Madhusudan—one of the eight members of the Standing

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CITU Criticises Port and Dock Agreement

Comrade B. T. Ranadive, President CITU has issued the following statement to the press.

The Port and Dock agreement signed at Delhi yesterday was a total surrender by the representatives of the recognised Federations who agreed to withdraw the strike virtually on the terms offered by the Government prior to the strike.

When a complete strike was on, the acceptance of the unfavourable terms has immensely harmed the port and dock workers movement all over the country. The leadership did not even bother to consult the workers before their surrender. This attitude will only embolden the official wage fixation machinery to depress the new wage standard for the port and dock workers. Moreover these leaders have given up the demand of workers' nominees on the wage fixation machinery.

The CITU appeals to the

(From page 7)

Committee of the National Council of the Joint Consultative Machinery, was a party to the agreement. S. M. Banerjee and O. P. Gupta, who were instrumental to bring out the "anti-workers agreement" were not full members of the Standing Committee.

B. K. Nag Chowdhury of the Confederation in a statement condemned the treacherous agreement. Many more statements have been issued by other Central Government employees Organisations condemning this betrayal of the employees.

port and dock workers to understand the seriousness of this surrender which has kept all the issues of port and dock workers unsettled. It calls upon the workers to prepare for another round of struggle so that the Government is made to accept the long-standing demands of the workers at an early date

CITU Condemns Use Of Army Doctors In Bihar

Comrade B. T. Ranadive, President, CITU has issued the following statement to the Press :

"The Centre of Indian Trade Unions strongly condemns the use of army doctors in major hospitals in Bihar to suppress the struggle of over three thousand Government doctors, internees and the house surgeons for better pay and service conditions.

"The refusal of the Bihar Government to accept the just demands of the doctors was responsible for break down of health service in the State. The CITU appeals to the working class and people of Bihar not to get misled by the false propaganda and rally behind the just struggle of the doctors.

"The CITU congratulates the doctors of Bihar who have shown to carry forward their struggle despite intimidatory tactics of the authorities.

"The CITU demands immediate settlement of all the issues of the Bihar doctors and withdrawal of army personnel from all hospitals without any further delay".

West Bengal Trade Unions Plan United Movement

A meeting of representatives of five Central T.U. organisations—CITU, UTUC, TUCC, HMP, and HMS, and other organisations of workers and employees in West Bengal was held at Calcutta on January 20 last. Besides the Central T.U.'s, the Co-ordination Committees of Central and State Government employees, LIC and Reserve Bank Employees Association, P & T, Mercantile Employees Federation, Federation of Engineering Workers, State Irrigation and Health employees, M T P Railwaymen's Unions and others were also represented at the meeting.

The meeting unanimously decided to launch a series of united movements culminating in an Industrial Action (one day strike) in the end of March, 1975 on the major issues affecting the workers, employees and the people like food, high prices, unemployment wage freeze, restoration of T.U. and democratic rights, reinstatement of evicted workmen, release of political prisoners and withdrawal of DIR, MISA and National Emergency.

The meeting decided to hold a State Convention of representatives of workers and employees' organisations at Calcutta on February 10 and a Mass Rally of workers and employees on March 4 at Saheed Minar Maidan, Calcutta on the above issues.

Goa Newsletter

Special Session of CITU Unions

A special session of all CITU unions and units in Goa was held on December 15 at Velgaum. 75 delegates representing over 12,000 workers in various industries including Port & Dock, mining, engineering, chemical, textiles, beverages etc. attended the session. It was presided over by Y. N. Govekar, a mining workers' leader.

The session adopted resolutions demanding 20 per cent Bonus for all mining workers, protesting against wage freeze and demanding reinstatement of all victimised Railway employees.

15 delegates took part in the discussion on the report submitted by Gerald Pereira, General Secretary, Goa State Committee of CITU.

The session decided to form two new unions—Goa Mine Workers Union for mining workers and Mill Mazdoor Union (Goa) for textile workers. The session also decided to hold the 3rd Conference of Goa State CITU in March, 1975.

Coca-Cola Lock-out Declared Illegal

The lock-out imposed by the Coca-Cola management in their factories since November 22, 1973 and against which the workers, led by the CITU, had been carrying on a long-drawn struggle including the historic Goa Bundh of February 18, 1974, has been declared illegal by the Industrial Tribunal. The Tribunal also declared the

dismissal of A. Fernandes, leader of Coca-Cola workers, and two other workers as illegal and unjustified. The Tribunal directed the management to pay full wages and emoluments to the workers for the entire period of lock-out. This victory of the Coca-Cola Workers has created great enthusiasm among the workers and a victory rally was held on December 22 in front of the Coca-Cola factory at Borim.

CIBA Employees Join CITU

The CIBA-Geigy of India Ltd. Employees Union, with a membership of 300, has decided to affiliate the Union with the CITU. The decision was taken unanimously at the 2nd Annual Conference of the Union held on January 8 last at Corlim.

Mine Workers prepare for First Conference

The game of disruption resorted to by George Vaz, who defected to the AITUC, has been thoroughly exposed and the militant mining workers of Goa have utterly rejected the pro-employer and pro-INTUC role of the AITUC. Barring some 400/500 workers of M/s. Salgoacar, almost all other workers numbering over 6000 have joined the newly formed Goa Mine Workers' Union (CITU). Under the leadership of the CITU the workers are carrying on struggles and agitations throughout the mining belt of Goa. The First Conference of the Union will be held in March-April 1975 for which hectic preparations are going on.

AIPWF Office Bearers Meet

AN extended meeting of the Office-bearers of All India Plantation Workers' Federation met in Calcutta on December 14 last with K. Ramani in the chair.

After paying homage to the memory of Comrades Herekrishna Konar, K. G Bose and K. I. Rajan, the meeting took some important organisational decisions.

The meeting decided to postpone the Second Conference of AIPWF till the second week of May, just before the third CITU conference to be held in Bombay. The venue of the Conference will remain the same, i.e. Peermedu, Vandiperiyar in Kerala. The exact dates of the Conference will be intimated in due course. The next meeting of the Working Committee will be held at Peermedu on the eve of the 2nd Conference.

It was also decided that delegates to the Conference will be admitted on the basis of affiliation paid up to 1974. The affiliated unions have been directed to send reports on their activities to the Central Office before the end of February, 1975.

The meeting also discussed the take-over of two tea-gardens in Jalpaiguri district and decided to call for detailed report from the Jalpaiguri district union.

The Second Conference of West Bengal State Committee of CITU was held at Malbazar, Jalpaiguri district in North Bengal from 25th to 28th December, 1974. The Conference was held after three years. It took place in the background of semi-fascist terror pursued by the Congress Party and its Government in West Bengal and the heroic battles of the working class of West Bengal to defend its own rights as well as the rights of other sections of the democratic people against this attack. Malbazar is predominantly a tea garden area, situated in Dooars of North Bengal. The whole area came forward for preparation of the Conference. Though all the unions in North Bengal affiliated to CITU and organisations of teachers, students, youths and women participated in the preparation of the conference and share the responsibility, the tea garden workers bore the main brunt. They contributed one day's wage and ration. It is significant to note that people from all walks of life—agricultural workers, peasants, students, youth, middle class people—all came forward with financial and material help. The whole Dooars area saw a resurgence of democratic opinion and fighting spirit among the masses and it is this very spirit which could foil all attempts and conspiracies of the enemy to disrupt the conference. The preparation of the conference was impressive. Over five hundred volunteers worked untiringly day and night to make the conference successful. That the tea garden workers could success-

fully host the conference signifies a high degree of consciousness and organisation among them.

The venue of the conference was named "Hare Krishna Nagar". The conference began at 4 p.m. on 25th December with Md. Ismail, President of the State CITU in the chair. Subodh Sen, a veteran leader of Jalpaiguri District hoisted the Red Flag. Ratanlal Brahman, a pioneer of tea garden workers of North Bengal and the Chairman of the Reception Committee, and Parimal Mitra, General Secretary of Chabagan Mazdoor Union and the Secretary of the Reception Committee welcomed the delegates. At the outset, a condolence resolution moved from the Chair and condoling the deaths of Comrades Muzaffar Ahmed, Harekrishna Konar, K. G. Bose, and others who died during this period, was passed; a resolution paying homage to the martyrs who laid down their lives for the cause of the working class was also passed. All delegates stood in silence for one minute.

B. T. Ranadive, President CITU inaugurated the Conference. In his inaugural address, he paid tribute to the heroic working class of West Bengal. He analysed at length the deepening economic crisis faced by the country and the efforts of the ruling classes to shift the burden of crisis on to the shoulders of the toiling people. He pointed out that the ruling classes were not in a position to suppress the growing struggles of the working class and the other toiling people.

Second Conference Of West Bengal CITU

—A Grand Success

He also pointed out that the present economic crisis led to the crisis in democracy. He drew the attention of the delegates to the fact that the Government has singled out the CITU for repression because it offered most determined resistance to the anti-people policies of the Congress Government. He said that the CITU must continue its struggle with greater determination and called upon the delegates to attach still greater importance to the basic need of forging worker-peasant unity.

Monoranjan Roy, General Secretary of the West Bengal State CITU in his report dealt with the major international development in the last three years and pledged solidarity with the people of Vietnam, Chile and other countries who are fighting courageously against imperialism. In his report, he analysed the economic crisis in India. He specifically dealt with wage-freeze Act, the lessons of Railway Strike and the major struggles in Jute, Plantation, Engineering and various other industries. He dealt with galloping unemployment, increasing lay-off, closure and retrenchment, soaring prices and called upon the delegates to prepare for united struggles. He pointed out that despite semi-fascist terror being continued in West Bengal, the struggles are mounting and the CITU is growing in strength. He pointed out that the coming days would be

more difficult and full of arduous battles. The report pointed out that lessons should be taken from the Railway Strike. This strike had shown that to suppress the struggle of the working class, the Government could tear off its mask of democracy. The report said, "In the coming days, our main struggle will be those for food, need-based minimum wage, restoration of democratic rights and removal of unemployment.....This has to be coupled with the movement for withdrawal of repressive measures on railway and Government employees...and movement to protect the peasants' right to the land and produce and against eviction, and to support the struggles of the agricultural workers, the movement against corruption and for basic reforms in the educational system".

In the organisational report, it was pointed out that the number of unions affiliated to CITU, West Bengal has risen from 900 in 1970 to 1120 at the present moment and the membership rose from 470000 to more than five lakhs.

Fifty delegates representing different districts and various industries took part in the discussion and supported the main analysis and conclusions of the report.

Fraternal greetings were conveyed to the Conference by different organisations—Kisan Sabha, S.F.I., DYF, 12th July Committee, UCRC, IPTA,

ABPTA and others. Messages of greetings were received from Maharashtra State Committee of CITU, All India Plantation Workers' Federation and others.

Jyoti Basu, Vice-President of the CITU summed up the deliberations of the Conference. He said that the tasks of the trade unions continued to be difficult. The ruling classes are depending more and more on repressive measures as the strength of the Trade Union movement grows. He warned the delegates not to minimise the gravity of the situation. He pointed out that in Kerala a bitter struggle was being waged against Right C.P.-Congress Government, and the working class of Kerala look for solidarity support from West Bengal. He pointed out about the importance of continuing struggle in support of railwaymen. As regards Bihar, he asked the delegates to resist with all strength the attack against democracy but at the same time the delegates should remember the limitations of the movement there. In conclusion, he stressed the importance of sustained campaign for unity in struggle, of continuous effort for developing political consciousness among the working class, and for building up and strengthening worker-peasant alliance.

Among others, resolutions were passed expressing solidarity with the heroic people of Vietnam and Cambodia and in support of the Chilean people's struggle. Resolutions supporting Bihar people's struggle, express-

ing solidarity and support with peasants' struggle, for withdrawal of Wage-freeze Act, expressing support to jute strike, on Sikkim, on power crisis, on autonomy of Darjeeling District were also passed. The main resolution of the Conference called upon the working class of West Bengal to prepare for a State-wide General Strike within coming three months, for withdrawal of Wage Freeze Act, against growing unemployment and rising prices, for food, against semi-fascist terror in West Bengal, for withdrawal of DIR, MISA and other repressive measures, for release of political prisoners, for the demands of the peasants and agricultural workers etc. The resolution greeted the decision of the UCTU to prepare for an All-India General strike in co-operation with Central Trade Unions and National Federations.

The Conference unanimously elected the Executive Committee with Comrade Md. Ismail, as President and Monoranjan Roy, as General Secretary.

The conference was followed by a rally on 28th December. Numerous colourful processions came from different areas from the very morning. The rally was one lakh strong—the biggest ever in North Bengal, and was composed mainly of tea garden workers; women constituted a considerable number in the rally. B.T. Ranadive, Jyoti Basu, Md. Ismail, Monoranjan Roy, Suhrid Mullick Chowdhury, Ratanlal Brahman, Parimal Mitra and other leaders addressed the rally.

With the Second Conference of the CITU—West Bengal achieving such a grand success, the delegates returned with greater determination and confidence to prepare for the coming battle and pursue the CITU's policy of "Unity and Struggle" with greater vigour.

NEWSLETTER

Tamilnadu

Madurai City Alluminium Vessels Manufacturing Workers Union, in their meeting held on December 16, have decided to affiliate with CITU. This Union was affiliated with DMK Labour wing and workers from all 51 alluminium vessels manufacturing companies are its members.

Workers of the Christian Medical College and Hospital at Vellore are on strike from 7th January demanding re-instatement of 24 employees including one Doctor discharged by the management. The movement is supported by students and other sections of people.

2000 Electricity workers at Puthur (Near Madurai) Head Quarters staged a Dharna on 9th January demanding increased D.A., Security in Service, CPF Pass Book and condemning repressive measures and victimising attitude adopted by the authorities.

Madurai Corporation workers will get additional wages and leave benefits at the initiative of their CITU representatives.

All 115 workers (CITU) of Kali Mark Churut are on stay-in strike from January 11, demanding wages for 4 festivals holidays not given to them in 1974.

The 2 months old strike by Cement Factory workers (CITU) at Sankagiri demanding increased Bonus, wages and other benefits, still continues. Many are kept behind bars and the strikers and their family members are attacked by Police and goondas

engaged by the Management. Even women and children are not spared.

Following the strike by Sankagiri Cement Workers, the workers of Thalayuthu Cement Factory also went on strike from December 10, demanding 25 per cent Bonus. The strike is completely successful and 7000 workers of both Sankagiri and Thalayuthee Cement factory are firm and resolute in their determination to continue the strike till victory. In Sankagiri, more than 1100 workers have courted arrest and womenfolk of the striking workers are staging a Dharna before the factory. Meanwhile, the Tamilnanu Government has referred the issue to a Tribunal.

About 1500 workers of Alangulam Cement factory (Ramnad Dist.), a State-owned enterprise, went on strike from December 15 on their 11-point demands including 20 per cent Bonus etc. They rejected a 6 per cent ex-gratia declared by the management in collusion with a stooge union. The strike is countinuing.

Coarse and Fine variety producing Handloom workers of Madurai Dist. went on strike from December 5 last, against the unilateral deduction in wages. The fine variety producing weavers, numbering 9000, joined the strike on December 9. More than 300 workers and 600 weavers courted arrest and hunger strike was also conducted for 6 days, after which a settlement

was reached before the District Collector agreeing not to deduct wages. The strike was sponsored jointly by CITU, AITUC, INTUC, DMK and ADMK unions.

Workers of all the 16 sugar factories of Tamilnadu went on strike from December 23 on their 11-point demands including Rs. 314 as minimum wage and D A. at 1.75 paise per point over 200 C.P.I. (1960 base). The strike is jointly led by CITU, AITUC, ADMK, and DMK Unions. The State Labour Minister suggested a formula on the U. P. model which has been rejected by the workers. The strike continues.

A Convention of Transport Workers was held at Madurai on December 22. Workers of privately managed Transport concerns, State Transport and Pandyan Roadways Corporation attended. The Convention was inaugurated by V. Karmegam (CITU) and was addressed by V. Chintan, Vice President of the State CITU and others. S. Mannerswamy, General Secretary presented the report. The Convention adopted a resolution on a 20-point Charter of Demands including Rs. 315/- as minimum wage for unskilled workers, 30 paise per point rise over 952 points (1936 C.P.I.), interim relief of Rs. 100, night allowance, 10 per cent P.F. and other benefits etc. After the Convention a big procession paraded the streets. The Pandyan Roadways workers have served strike notice on these demands on December 23 and similar strike notices have been

served by ADMK and National Transport Workers' Unions.

5000 workers of the Tamilnadu Small Scale Industries (TANSI), a State Government undertaking, went on a one-day strike on December 11 last last on their 17-point Charter of Demands including revision of wages, D.A. of 35 paise per point over 1936 C.P.I. (Madras), 16.66 per cent Bonus etc. The strike call was given by the TANSI Workers' Federation composed of CITU, ADMK and independent unions.

Kerala

2,000 Coconut Fibre workers of Thalikkulam, Anthikkad and Manalur Panchayats began an indefinite strike from 15th December last under the leadership of Trichur Distt. Fibre Workers' Union, demanding implementation of minimum wages.

Bakery workers of different establishments of Cannanore belonging to the CITU started an indefinite strike from 21st December demanding increase in wages, weakly leave, etc.

Workers engaged in the construction of the Cochin Shipyard were lathicharged on 21st December by the CISF due to which 22 workers including women were admitted to the hospital with injuries. The workers in the Rigwork which is being done by the Contractors' firm of Tarapore Company struck work on the 21st December demanding reinstatement of some workers retrenched from this department. The lathicharge was resorted to on the instruction of the Company. When the

news of the lathi-charge spread, entire workers engaged in the construction of the Shipyard struck work paralysing the work completely.

Taxi A u t o Rickshaw-B u s workers of Kanhangad (Cannanore Dist.) struck work on 31st December in protest against the arrest and beating of a car driver by the police. Police resorted to lathi-charge against the striking workers who were demonstrating against the police action.

The entire workers of Travancore Rayons, Perambavoor (Ernakulam Dist.) started an indefinite strike from 4th January in support of their demands of Bonus for 1973, etc. The strike call was given jointly by all the unions in the factory. 2,000 workers are employed in the factory.

Employees of Financial Enterprises (a Government of Kerala institution) resorted to a one-day State-wide pen down strike on 6.1.1975. The employees for the last one month have been carrying on a movement including go-slow in support of their various demands.

Plantation workers of Chathamuthu area (Muvvattupuzha Taluk) went on an indefinite strike from 5th January in support of their demand for minimum wages, under the leadership of the CITU. The Strike has spread to 14 gardens.

Workers of loading, unloading and wood sections of Commonwealth Tile Factory, Puthiyara (Calicut) resorted to a one-day strike on 10th January in support of their demands.

Overwhelming majority of coir workers of Quilon District started an indefinite strike from 12th January.

Led by the United Action Council, N. G. O's and Teachers in Kerala are to go on indefinite strike from 5th February, 1975 on the demands for D.A. as per recommendations of the Third Pay Commission and withdrawal of control imposed on loans from Provident Fund. The Action Council was formed at a meeting of delegates of different organisations of NGO's and Teachers held on January 15 last. Similar Committees will be formed at every district level to ensure success of the strike.

At the call of the Confederation of Central Govt. Employees' Unions and Associations, a big demonstration of Central Govt. employees was held at Calicut on January 17 on the demand for increased DA as per Third Pay Commission recommendations. LIC, P & T, Akashvani, Railway and Income Tax employees participated in the demonstration which ended in a public meeting addressed by the leaders of Central Government employees.

Indore Workers on Continuous Struggle

Led by the Laghu Udyog Kamgar Union (CITU) the workers of Raj Traders India are continuing a bitter struggle since December 16 last in support of their demands for higher wages, D.A., gratuity, leave etc. They have warned the management of still higher form of struggle unless their legitimate demands are met.

Railwaymen Continue The Struggle

Defeating all attempts to break their morale and disrupt their unity, the railwaymen continue the fight. At Bitragunta (SCR) when authorities wanted to revert some locomen from Diesel to steam or enforce penal transfers, workers resisted through mass hunger strike and forced the authorities to beat back a hasty retreat. At Quillon (SR), the casual labour conducted "Dharna" and agitation and secured wage increase. At Adra (SER) a workers Convention was held on January 7, which was addressed by Samar Mukherjee M. P. and a programme of mass squatting before the Officers' Bungalow on January 27 and 28 was adopted. At the call of United Committee of Railwaymen, mass squatting was held all over N. F. Railway on December 9. The Loco Running Staff of ER & SER demonstrated before their respective General Managers on November 30, but Sec. 144 was imposed and workers were held up by the police.

Conventions and meetings have been held at different places. At the call of NCCRS at NFR, local Conventions have been held on December 31, and a zonal Convention at Gauhati on January 8. At the call of the Asansol Divisional Co-ordination Committee, a workers Convention was held in the Municipal Hall on January 20, which was addressed by Dipen Ghosh and Nrisingha Chakraborty, amongst others. A workers

Convention was also held at Khargpur on the same day under the auspices of work-shop Staff Committee. Conventions were also held at Bankura on January 12, Purulia on January 13 and Hatia on January 16, at the Call of the Divisional Railwaymen's Action Committee.

At the call of the AIRF "Anti-Victimisation & Trade Union Rights Day" was observed throughout the country on November 27. At Calcutta, the railwaymen mobilised before the Raj Bhawan and Monoranjan Roy M.P., Secretary CITU addressed them amongst others.

Railwaymen participate in the democratic movement.

Denial of five slabs of 'Dearness Allowance' which has fallen due even according to the Third Pay Commission, has made the railwaymen aware of the Wage-Freeze policy of the Govt. Their participation in the Conventions against Wage-Freeze is also increasing as is seen from the reports of Gauhati (NER), Tatanagar and Rourkella (SER), Calcutta (ER), Vijayawada (SER) and Madras (SR). M.V. Subbaiah, Convenor, NCCRS, Vijayawada Division, headed the Convention there.

Working Committee of Confederation of Railway Employees meets.

On January 5 to 6, the Working Committee of the Confederation of Railway Employees met at Mughal Sarai and decided upon a programme of "Dhitkar Divas" and also

mobilisation before the Parliament in the last week of March '75. It has also decided to hold its Convention at Secunderabad on February 21 & 22, in which all the constituent units of NCCRS and members of the Action Committee, will be invited to attend.

Loco Running Staff carry out Programme.

As decided in their Itarsi meeting the AILRSA has observed Anti-Victimisation Day on November 7, and 'Demands Week' between November 24 & 30, 1974 all over the country except Southern Railway. On November 30, 'Democratic Conventions' were held by them at Calcutta, Gauhati and Garhara. The Convention at Calcutta was addressed by Samar Mukherjee M.P. Treasurer, CITU. As the old agreement has not been implemented so far and also as fresh attacks are being made, the Locomen of Varanasi Division (NER) and also of ER, have already started some agitation. The Working Committee of AILRSA would meet at Lucknow on January 21 & 22, to decide upon the next course of action.

AIRF Leader decries Spontaneous action.

The workers of Matunga Workshop (CR) went into a spontaneous action on December 4, in protest against a heinous goonda attack by the Central Railway Mazdur Sangh (INTUC) on the previous day on the meeting called by the AIRF union. S.N. Patkar and other leaders were injured, and two

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Real Face of Nationalisation of Sick Textile Undertakings

The much advertised The Sick Textile Undertakings (Nationalisation) Act passed by the last Session of Parliament, seeks to create an impression that the Government is taking steps towards nationalisation of textile undertakings and reopen the closed textile units. In practice, however, it gives fat compensation to the millowners who have misappropriated huge funds from the Companies and hits workers by depriving them of their rightful dues and other service conditions.

The Government took over the management of 57 textile mills under the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act while management of another 46 mills was taken over under the Sick Textile Undertakings (Taking over of Management) Act. In these cases the number of workers were reduced by imposing higher workload on the workers and introducing modern machines and rationalisation, their facilities curtailed and the trade union and democratic rights were suppressed. Government provided huge funds through budget for the purpose by imposing more taxation on the people.

While explaining the objects and reasons of the Bill, C. Subramaniam said "with a view to reorganising and rehabilitating the said textile undertakings so as to subserve the interests of the general public by the augmentation of the production and distribution at fair prices, of

different varieties of cloth and provide employment continuously to the large number of employees in these mills, it has become necessary to nationalise the said undertakings".

Most of the mills were closed due to misappropriation of funds by the then managements who extracted many times more funds than what they invested. However the Government has offered them a compensation of nearly Rs 40 crores which is nothing but premium on their malpractices. Some of the glaring cases of the compensation are given below :

Ahmedabad Jupiter	Rs. 3.72 Crores
Appollo Mills, Bombay	Rs. 1.20 Crores
Mahboole Shahi, Gulbarga	Rs. 1.35 Crores
Muir Mills, Kanpur	Rs. 1.37 Crores
Osmanshahi, Nanded	Rs. 1.07 Crores
Mohta Mills, Akola	Rs. 1.02 Crores

The Act also provides payment of 4 per cent interest to the erstwhile millowners till the compensation is paid to them in full.

The National Textile Corporation and its subsidiaries State Textile Corporations which will be responsible with running these mills are top-heavy organisations. The bureaucratic bungling witnessed in other public sector undertakings will be repeated here also, causing heavy drain on financial resources of the Corporation.

The Government has already announced plans of introduction of automatic looms and other sophisticated machines in these

mills and crores of rupees have been provided for the purpose in the fifth plan. When these schemes will be implemented thousands of workers will be thrown out of jobs and trade union movement will have to resist these attacks.

Though the Act provides that the terms and service conditions of the workers would be protected after the so called nationalisation, it does not give any guarantee of claims of workers from the erstwhile employers. Such a worker will have to "enforce his claim against the owner of the sick textile undertaking but not against the Central Government or the National Textile Corporation".

Even the Industrial Disputes Act will not be applicable in respect of such claims against the Textile Corporation. The experience of Coal mines nationalisation has shown that workers lost crores of rupees of their claim due to such legal provision. The Government could have realised the money out of the compensation paid to them on a priority basis, but this is deliberately not being done to favour the owners of these mills.

Moreover the workers who were not taken back on duty while taking over the management of the sick mills continue to remain out of job. Many badli

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FIRST CONFERENCE OF ORISSA STATE CITU

The first Conference of the Orissa State Committee of the CITU was held at Rourkella from 17th to 19th January, 1975. B. T. Ranadive, President CITU inaugurated the Conference. Ajeya Rout, Secretary of the Orissa State Committee of CITU presented the report on the activities of the CITU in Orissa since the formation of the State Committee.

While inaugurating the Conference, Ranadive greeted the delegates and congratulated them for courageous struggles being carried on by the CITU unions in Orissa. He also condemned the recent attacks on the CITU office and members of CITU unions in Orissa by the hired goondas of the ruling Party and said, "There is no doubt that our movement here will defeat this cowardly offensive of the ruling Congress and continue to strengthen the resistance of the working class."

Referring to the rising struggles of the working class in Orissa, he said, "In 1966, the number of disputes was 13, number of workers striking was 15,000 and mandays lost 17,000... In 1972, the number of disputes increased to 41. Though the number of strikers fell to 14,000, the mandays lost increased to 176,000, revealing the prolonged character of the strikes." He went on to add, "As in the rest of India, the worker in Orissa had to fight a more and more bitter battle against the deteriorating economic situation, and the policy of the employers and

the Government to impose a deteriorating standard of living on him."

Backward Condition

Referring to the backward condition of the State and the decline in the number of workers employed in factories and mines, he said, "They obtain because under the capitalist path which the Congress Government has imposed on the country, neither rapid nor balanced industrial development of the country is possible...The present regime and system has to be replaced if rapid development of resources and avenues of employment are to be ensured for the people."

He further added, "If between 1961 and 1971, mining employment went down by 18 per cent and factory employment remained stagnant for the last few years, the number of agricultural workers in Orissa increased from 17 lakhs to 19 lakhs. Where will they get employment, if mining and industrial avenues are clogged. Is it any surprise that unemployment in Orissa like the rest of India is rapidly increasing?"

Low Wage Level

Ranadive pointed out that, although according to official statistics Orissa has the highest average wage in India for factory workers drawing less than Rs. 400 per month, "In reality, the Orissa wage is extremely low and the policy of the Congress Ministry is extremely anti-labour."

Referring to the plight of contract labour he said, "Though

the Government of India has accepted abolition of contract labour long ago, in Rourkella itself 15,000 workers continue to be employed under contractors on sweated wages...They constitute the lowest paid and the most exploited section; their wage in Rourkella is varying between Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 per day. There is no provident fund, no medical no ESI or DA for them. They do permanent jobs for the public sector Steel Plant, yet they are treated as slaves and the Government refuses to accept them as permanent workers."

"Equally scandalous is the treatment of mining labour in captive mines," he said and added, "in some of these as in the Kalta mines under the Rourkella Steel Plant labour camps for such unfortunate miners exist which are nothing but slave camps...The workers do not know how much they are paid for their labour, their wages being collected by the sardars. They are kept under guard with no freedom for organisation and agitation,"

Workers treated as slaves in Public Sector Undertakings

Referring to the treatment meted out to workers in Public Sector undertakings in Orissa, Ranadive said, "The workers are treated as slaves, as feudal retainers...He cannot hold meeting within the township area without the management's permission. He cannot circulate leaflets, newspapers, without the management's sanction. He can be dismissed at the management's

sweet will if the authorities "think" he is a security risk." He cited the instance of the Barsua Mines (a public sector undertaking) where sixteen workers, active leaders of the union, were dismissed because they held a meeting without permission, and are not being reinstated despite the High Court verdict.

Line of United Action

Ranadive then highlighted the important successes achieved by the CITU by following line of united action, the united struggles led and initiated by it against wage freeze, high prices and food shortage. He referred to the railway strike as 'the biggest achievement of the united efforts of the trade unions' and called upon the entire trade union movement to fight against the victimisation of railwaymen.

He called upon the CITU unions to orientate their efforts in the direction of drawing newer sections of the people, who have hitherto kept away from T. U. movement, in the common movement against wage freeze.

While explaining the significance of the Bihar movement, he referred to the ruthless repression mounted by the ruling party on the trade union and democratic movement and said, "It is against this regime of starvation, high prices and political suppression accompanied by the most widespread corruption that the people have started fighting, demanding immediate redress to their grievances." He warned trade union movement and the working class to be vigilant about the danger of this movement being utilised by reactionary parties for their own ends, and called upon the

organised T. U. movement to "throw its weight behind the democratic demands and lend its support to them."

Recession—the greater menace

In conclusion, Ranadive sharply drew the attention of the working class and the trade union movement to the alarming situation arising out of the recessionary tendencies already in evidence. Pointing out that it presages closures, loss of jobs and wage reduction for the working class, he said, "It is a menace which faces the entire working class and employees and it threatens all sections of our toilers—the agricultural labourers, poor peasants." He called upon the entire working class, all trade unions "to resist this offensive more all-pervading and pernicious than the wage freeze."

Conventions Against Wage Freeze & Price Rise

Coimbatore district

THE Coimbatore District Convention against Wage Freeze and Price Rise was held at Coimbatore on January 3 last. More than 650 delegates and observers from different parts of the district attended. The Convention was jointly organised by CITU, Labour Progressive Federation, HMP and Joint Trade Union Council of Coimbatore.

The main resolution against Wage Freeze moved by K. Ramani (CITU) demanded immediate withdrawal of the Wage Freeze Act and refund of

the money already impounded. The Convention decided to organise a signature campaign against Wage Freeze and Price Rise and to hold Mass Dharna on January 27 before the Collectorate. The resolution was adopted unanimously.

Resolutions were also adopted condemning the victimisation of Railway employees and demanding repeal of MISA, PDA, DIR and National Emergency.

The delegates session was addressed by P. Ramamurty, General Secretary CITU, Kattoor Gopal (LPF), Kalyanasundaram (AIIEA) and others.

A mammoth public meeting held in the evening was addressed by P. Ramamurty, P. S. Chinadurai, K. Ramani and others.

Kolar District

A district level Anti-Wage Freeze Convention was held at Chickaballapur, Kolar District (Karnataka) on January 12. The Convention was organised by the Co-ordination Committee of the Working Class, Chickaballapur. The Co-ordination Committee is widely represented by employees of State Electricity Board, LIC Banks, P & T, State Government, Local Bodies, Teachers and general workers.

Conference Of Orissa State Transport Employees Federation

THE Third Annual Conference of the State Transport Employees Federation (Orissa) was held on January 13-14 at Dhenkanal. About 200 delegates from different districts attended the Conference.

At the invitation of the Federation, Comrade Sujit Das, General Secretary, All India Road Transport Workers' Federation (AIRTWF) attended the Conference and greeted the delegates. In his address, Sujit Das called upon the State Transport workers of Orissa to participate in the "All India Protest Day" called by the AIRTWF on 26th February next.

Plantation Workers In Bokekhan Estate Forcibly Evicted

A. M. Prabhu, the manager of the "Bokekhan" Estate in Chikmagaloor District, Karnataka discharged all the 36 workers and evicted them from this estate from December 17, just because they were members of Karnataka Plantation Workers Union, affiliated to AIPWF. Despite repeated complaints and deputations to the Police Superintendent, Labour Officer, Deputy Inspector General of Police etc. no action was taken against the manager or the goondas. On the contrary these workers, among whom there are 15 women, were thrown out of their houses on December 11 with the help of Police and the goondas employed by the manager.

The workers on behalf of

The Conference unanimously adopted resolutions deciding to participate in the "All India Demands Day" on 26th February and to take all steps to successfully observe "Protest Day" on February 4 against Wage Freeze and Price Rise, which was decided at a Trade Union Convention held in December at Cuttack.

The Conference unanimously re-elected Harishchandra Bankim Patra as President and Lalmohan Roy as General Secretary of the Federation.

The open session of the Conference held on January 14 was addressed by Sivaji Patnaik (CITU) and other leaders.

their union complained to the police, Chikmagaloor demanding the restoration of the quarters with no result. The workers are taking shelter in the nearby jungles at present.

The Karnataka Plantation Workers' Union has lodged complaints to the Labour Officer and Deputy Inspector General, South Zone, against the inactivity of the police department Chikmagaloor, and demanded restoration of the quarters to the workers.

The All India Plantation Workers' Federation has sent a memorandum to the I.G. and Deputy Superintendent of Police demanding their immediate intervention. A letter also has been despatched to the Chief Minister, Shri Devraj Urs, requesting him to give justice to the workers.

Sick Textile Undertakings

(From Page Fifteen)

workers of the sick mills have already become destitutes. The Act does not give such workers even priority in the matter of future recruitment.

The Textile Corporation will take over only the sick mills while the profit earning concerns are allowed to remain in the hands of the big business houses. To compete with such big business concerns the Corporation will try its best to reduce the wage costs and depress the working conditions. The Trade Union movement demanded nationalisation of all mills but Government rejected the demands in the Act.

Therefore even after nationalisation of 103 mills, the trade unions working in them will have to continue the struggle against further onslaught to protect the interest of the workers. Their demand for nationalisation of all textile mills and ending of bureaucratism in the nationalised undertaking will have to be pursued more vigorously in the days to come.

Railwaymen Struggle

From Page Fourteen

workmen were murdered. The authorities had to open negotiations for a settlement of the issue. While talks were in progress, Shri Mahdeswar Acting General Secretary of the AIRF union, walked in and announced that the union would not support any spontaneous action. Workers were thus betrayed.

Indian Rare Earth Strike Ends In Victory

THE 125-day old strike by the workers of Indian Rare Earths, Kalamassery (Cochin) came to an end following agreement between the management and the Workers' Unions in the presence of the Regional Labour Commissioner on 20th January. The terms of settlement were adopted unanimously at a joint general body meeting of the workers.

According to the agreement, discussion on DA ceiling would be conducted by the management with the unions when the DA amount reaches the figure of Rs. 300/-; in the event of failure of talks, the issue will be referred to adjudication. The management has also agreed to continue giving DA till Rs. 350/-.

In addition to the fixed D A, the management would pay from January 1971 to November 30th, variable DA at 25 paise for every point above 650 of CLI and after that at the rate of 26 paise.

12½ per cent increase in basic salary will be given. The minimum increase will be Rs. 26 and maximum Rs. 50.

The management has given in writing that the suspended workers will not be retrenched whatever be the conclusions of the enquiry. Enquiry will be completed within two months.

Some small increase have been made in the other allowances.

A new agreement should have come into effect from the 1st January 1974 when the earlier long-term agreement expired. In October 1973, the unions had submitted a memorandum to the management and numerous discussions had been held. At a conference Convened by the Asstt. Labour Commissioner on 16th September, 1974, in which the Managing Director of the Company himself had participated, the management said that no assurance could be given about a long term agreement and in these circumstances, the workers were compelled to go on strike from 18th September, 1974.

During the strike although the management agreed to sign a long-term agreement, they came forward with a demand that a ceiling on D.A. should be fixed at Rs. 275/. The unions were not prepared to accept this. At a joint general body meeting of all the unions, it was also decided that the strike would not be withdrawn leaving the fate of the suspended workers at the mercy of the management. A General Strike in the Alwaye-Eloor-Kalamassery area had been planned to take place on 24th January.

Jute Workers United Strike Continues

Over two and a half lakhs workers in West Bengal are carrying forward their united strike since 6th January demanding among others non implementation of earlier commitments by the IJMA. The strike is complete even according to official sources and the morale of the workers is high to undertake a long drawn struggle.

The strike is jointly led by all the Central trade unions including the INTUG. Workers of Raigarh Jute Mills in Madhya Pradesh have also joined the strike.

Despite several bipartite and tripartite talks the strike still continues because both the management and the West Bengal Government are not interested in settlement. The Union Labour Minister Reddy in a Consultative Committee of M. P. s in New Delhi on 25th January said that the Central Government would not intervene because the West Bengal Government was dealing with the matter.

Trade Unions are jointly holding rallies throughout West Bengal calling upon the workers to remain firm and united. In a mass rally held at Calcutta on 22nd January leaders of all the Central trade unions called upon the workers to prepare for a long drawn struggle.

Bengal Chatkal Mazdur Union has appealed to all the trade unions to contribute solidarity funds to fight the struggles against the jute monopolists.

Blatant Violation of Trade Union Rights of Workers

The Andhra Pradesh Government is now openly supporting the private managements in suppressing the Trade Union rights of workers. Even the elementary right of the workers of presenting a memorandum to the Chief Minister is not permitted by the Government where the interests of private management are at stake.

About 150 workers of Khand-sari Sugar Factory at Chebrolu (W. Godavari Dist.) were summarily rejected and they were not taken for work by the management of the factory when the crushing season started in November, 1974, although they have been working here for the last six years. They were refused work on the plea that they were casual labour, but the main reason was that the workers formed a Union in 1974 which was not to the liking of the management.

Although representations were made to the Labour Minister and the Labour Department but they pleaded their inability to do anything because the proprietor of the factory happens to be a relative of the Chief Minister.

Under the leadership of the Union, the workers are carrying on agitation in the form of Dharna, relay hunger strike and courting of mass arrests. However, when the workers wanted to present a memorandum in a

deputation to the Chief Minister, who was on tour in the area in the first week of January, all the workers proceeding on deputation including A. Subba Rao, State Committee Member of

Koraput Convention Against Wage Freeze

The Koraput District Convention of Working People against Wage Freeze, Price Rise and Unemployment was held at Jeypore (Orissa) on January 26.

The Convention discussed the programme of united movement against wage freeze, price rise, unemployment and other problems. The convention condemned the dismissal from service of the Union leaders of J.K. Paper Mill and demanded their reinstatement. The convention also demanded job security for casual N.M.R. Workers, employment for all or unemployment relief and supply of essential commodities at low prices.

The Convention also resolved to support all demands of adivasis, landless podu and fallow-land tillers and agricultural labourers.

The Convention was address-

Correction

In the January, 1975 issue of the Working Class, in the **Consumer Price Index Numbers** the months given in the column-heading should read as "Aug. Sept. Oct." and not "July Aug. Sept."

CITU, were arrested on the way.

The agitation of the workers is continuing. Solidarity actions in support of the workers' struggle were organised at the District headquarters and sister unions and neighbouring villages are providing fraternal help to the workers.

ed, among others, by Manmohan Mishra, Executive Member of Orissa State CITU, Jeeban Das (Rayat Sabha) and Harihar Patra (Kisan Sabha).

A huge public meeting held in the evening was presided by Brundaban Boxi Patra (CITU) and addressed by the leaders of different organisation represented at the Convention.

Editorial

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strike and called upon the workers to remain united and firm till their demands were accepted. The workers were let down, but not defeated, due to the surrender of the leadership.

The Port and Dock strike has kept all the outstanding problems of the workers unsettled. They were given only Rs. 50 as interim relief half of which will be impounded under the Wage Freeze Act.

The Port and Dock workers will have to carry forward their struggle despite the withdrawal of strike. It is only through united struggle that they can win their unsettled demands. The All India Convention of Port and Dock workers and Seamen to be held in Calcutta on 12th-14th February next will be an important step in co-ordinating their forthcoming struggles.

End This Inhuman Exploitation Of Our Seamen !

A serving Deck-Serang on board the Indian vessel 'Vishva Kanti', Jetha Harmat was illegally and summarily discharged from service in April, 1974 by the Master of the ship. In collusion with the Shipping Master, Calcutta, the Master of the ship forcibly made some adverse remarks on the Continuous Discharge Certificate of Jetha Harmat and threw him out. He was not even paid his legal wages and other dues for full 12 months in violation of the provisions of Merchants Shipping Act, 1958 and the current National Maritime Board (N.M.B.) agreement which governs the service conditions of Indian Seamen. His only crime was that he justifiably refused to allow the 40-odd ship's crew under him to be irregularly engaged in extra work in the ship's hold, without payment of extra remuneration, while the ship was in port.

Jetha Harmat



.....victim of callous exploitation.

Such is the lot of not only Jetha Harmat alone, but the entire seamen-force of Calcutta and Bombay ports who have been groaning for the past 200 years

under the yoke of a worst form of slavery and oppression—a slave trade dating back to the days of British rule but continuing in one form or other even to-day. This is how the Indian seamen of Calcutta and Bombay, one and all, are treated by the shipowners with the active connivance and encouragement of the Government of India.

But the story does not end there. Unlike their hapless predecessors of yester-years, the seamen of to-day are more conscious of their strength and rights and are trying to put up organised resistance against this oppression. The inhuman treatment meted out to Jetha Harmat sparked off a spontaneous reaction and led by the Forward Seamen's Union and other categorywise unions and with the solid support of hundreds of Port and Dock workers, the seamen gheraoed the ship for days completely paralysing all work on the ship. The shipowner was forced to admit defeat, remove the ship's Master and pay the full wages and emoluments of Jetha Harmat.

This emerging militancy, a fighting unity born out of the desperation of age-long slavery, provides the background to the historic strike of 10th May, 1974 in which Port and Dock workers and Seamen of Calcutta joined forces under the leadership of the 'Port-Dock-Seamen's Sangrami Morcha', and the more recent demonstration of 24th December, 1974 by the Seamen before the chairman of the 49th meeting of the National Shipping Board held in Calcutta.

Growing Unemployment of Seamen

Due to the various anti-seamen practices adopted by the shipowners, the number of seamen have steadily gone down through the years. Due to the nature of their work, the seamen have no scope for getting permanent employment; they work on contracts which on account of their low

bargaining strength, are invariably loaded with clauses adverse to their interests. The so-called National Maritime Board agreements since 1957 have invariably cheated the seamen of their due rights and increased their workload enormously. These agreements have resulted in the loss of job opportunities to more than 1800 active and able-bodied seamen. Moreover, the inhuman working conditions, bad food, inadequate rests and sustained ill-accomodation on board the vessels have resulted in the permanent physical incapacity of 50% of the 40,000-odd registered seamen of Calcutta and Bombay.

The employment of seamen also depend on the whims of the shipowners and Union-activists not liked by them face serious difficulties in getting a vessel after completing one voyage. By manipulating the Roster of seamen, the Shipping authorities also deny the seamen the facility of getting further employment on seniority-in-waiting principle. For instance, in the Calcutta port the Seamen's Employment Office maintains two sets of Rosters one of which is loaded with names of companies which have very few sea-worthy vessels. Over and above this, the strong-arm methods employed by the thugs of National Union of Seamen of India (a Congress-led Union patronised by shipowners) have further curtailed the scope of Rotation system of employment for seamen.

The Indian seamen have also to face serious difficulties in the matter of registration for employment. Although the Merchant Shipping Act provides that Seamen's Employment offices must be opened in ports where crews are available the shipping authorities, in their eagerness to serve the shipowners, have opened employment Offices only in Bombay and Calcutta. As a result crews of Madras, Goa, Cochin and Visakhapatnam ports have to face a lot of trouble and expense to travel a long distance and come to Bombay and Calcutta for registration. Despite the long-standing demand of the crews of these ports the Director General of Shipping has refused to act on the ground of avoiding inconvenience to shipowners.

Unemployment of seamen has been further aggravated due to the absence of Manning Scale according to the tonnage of a ship which leads to increase in work-load in under-manned vessels.

Moreover, the Government is also sanctioning large loans to shipowners out of the Shipping Development Fund for modernisation of ships and introduction of Automation which is further reducing job opportunities in ships. Introduction of modernised, containerised, ultra-sophisticated and mechanised vessels, bulk carriers and Tankers is posing a serious threat to employment potentiality in Indian shipping industry.

Starvation Wages

The seamen who are fortunate enough to secure a vessel have to work on starvation wages. The minimum basic wage for seamen recommended by the I.L.O. is £48 or Rs. 908 per month, which was endorsed by the 1972 Convention of the International Transport Workers' Federation. The Government of India, which is a member-country of the ILO, has not only refused to compel the shipowners to pay the ILO minimum to seamen but actively connives with the Shipowners to keep the wages down. The minimum wages and other benefits paid to Indian seamen according to National Maritime Board agreements are lower than the ILO minimum and the N. M. B. wages paid to British and other foreign seamen. The Director General of Shipping has even canvassed that Indian Seamen's Unions should demand at the I.T.F. Congress that Indian shipowners be allowed to engage crews on N.M.B. wages and not the ILO wages. An Indian seaman, working 44 hours a week, gets a minimum wage of only Rs. 275 per month. Since he is forced to go without employment for a long time after completing one voyage, only starvation and ruin can be his lot. It may be mentioned here that N.M.B.—wages are paid only to the Indian and British crews; other countries of the world including even small Asian countries like Pakistan, Singapore etc. pay the I.L.O. minimum of £48 to their crews. When the Government of India itself, to protect the interests of the shipowners, metes out such shabby treatment to its own national seamen, no wonder that Indian seamen are given a most humiliating and discriminatory treatment by foreign shipowners who treat them as 'crews of convenience'.

The seamen of India are also denied many of the benefits like Bonus, housing and medical

facilities etc. which are enjoyed by workers in other industries.

Appalling Working Condition

The condition under which Indian seamen are forced to work for months together, while on voyage, are shocking to say the least. Although the I.L.O. has prescribed standards of food and provisions, accommodation and other benefits for all seamen, irrespective of rank and rating, while serving on board the ships, the conditions prevailing in most of the Indian ships is appalling. The food and provisions provided for ordinary ratings are of extremely poor quality and they have to live in ill-ventilated, unhygienic accomodation provided for them. The working conditions are worse in the old, condemned and even un-seaworthy vessels—many of which are being allowed by the Shipping Board to continue operation in the interest of Indian shipowners, completely violating the international standards. No wonder that a large number of seamen, after working for months together under such conditions (bad food, unhygienic accommodation, insufficient rest and over-work) get physically incapacitated after one or two voyages and lose their jobs permanently.

No Job Security for Seamen

The seamen are also subjected to invidious discrimination in the matter of issue of passports which is necessary for constant employment. By refusing to issue passports to ratings, along with their Continuous Discharge Certificates, the authorities deprive the ratings from the facility of constant employment.

The Disciplinary Sub-Committee is another device which is being utilised by the Shipping authorities and shipowners to victimise and repress seamen belonging to particular unions not to their liking. The registration of seamen members of such unions are often suspended or cancelled by the Committee on flimsy or trumped-up charges. How seamen, belonging to unions other than the pet union of the authorities, are openly victimised can be clearly seen from the letter of Smt. Anjali Chatterjee, wife of a victimised seaman, given in Appendix "B". Constant Company Medical Examination, instead of one-way Government Medical Examination, is another handy devise used

by the shipowners to harrass and victimise the seamen.

The law affords very little protection to seamen in these matters. The Merchant Shipping Act and Workmen's Compensation Act contain many anti-seamen provisions and unless these provisions are replaced Indian seamen will continue to suffer. Since the seamen are not covered by the Industrial Disputes Act, there is also no scope for speedy relief for seamen in disputes with their employers.

Illegal deductions and Forcible Collections

Serving and discharged seamen are subjected to illegal deductions as to Income-tax, Land and Air Customs Duty, Border Security Force Duty etc. Economically hardpressed as they are, these illegal deductions aggravate their hardships all the more. Over and above this, they have to pay bribes to the Police on one pretext or another to save themselves from unnecessary harrassment.

Since 1972, a new dimension has been added to the misery and hardships of Seamen, particularly of Calcutta Port. Activists and goondas of the National Union of Seamen of India (NUSI), the Congress-led recognised Union, have made it a practice to realise forcible contributions from seamen taking their payment. Harboured and encouraged by Shipping authorities and protected by the Police, these anti-socials have created a reign of terror in and around the Marine House, Calcutta. Under threat of physical assault collections are made in the presence of officers and even the Police, and any seaman refusing to be cowed down by threats is mercilessly assaulted. A number of cases of assaults on seamen, for refusing to pay forcible collections, have been brought to the notice of the authorities but without any result whatsoever. The Director General of Shipping even admitted that, being the recognised union, NUSI has been allowed to collect subscriptions but naively denied any knowledge of collection by force. The depredations of the NUSI goondas have gone to such length that officials and activists of other unions are not even allowed to enter the Marine House, Calcutta to represent cases of their members.

Growing Unity and Militancy of Seamen

Weakness of the trade union movement of seamen and disruptionist activities of stooge unions like NUSI had so long prevented the seamen from build-

ding up a fighting unity to resist the intense exploitation of shipowners and realise their rightful dues. Since its formation, the Forward Seamen's Union (CITU) has been making organised efforts to forge unity of seamen of Calcutta Port. Although faced with serious odds, the Union has led a number of movements of seamen. In the last two years it successfully fought more than 1200 cases of victimisation of seamen in the face of goonda and Police terror. Their efforts to build up a broad-based unity to realise the demands of seamen have ultimately resulted in the formation of the Port-Dock-Seamen's Sangrami Morcha which led the historic strike of 10th May last. It is hoped that the All India Convention of Port and Dock Workers and Seamen to be held in Calcutta from 12th to 14th February, 1975 will give a lead in establishing a firm basis for this growing urge for unity by forming an All India Port & Dock Worker's Seamen's Federation. Without such a united platform, seamen and Port and Dock workers will not be able to fight back the onslaught of the powerful Government-shipowner combine.

Big Demonstration by Seamen

Led jointly by the Forward Seamen's Union, Progressive Seafarers Union, Dock Shramik Association and Calcutta Port & Shore Mazdoor Union, more than 250 seamen of the ports of Calcutta and Bombay staged a big demonstration on 24th December, 1974 before the Chairman of the 49th meeting of the National Shipping Board held in Calcutta. Port and Dock workers of Calcutta also joined the demonstration which continued for three hours after which a small deputation of representatives of Forward Seamen's Union, Progressive Seafarers Union, Calcutta Port & Shore Mazdoor Union and Dock Shramik Association met the Chairman, C.M. Stephen, and submitted a joint memorandum demanding immediate settlement of their 48 point demands which have been lying unsettled since 1966. Smt. Anjali Chatterjee, wife of a victimised seaman, also accompanied the delegation and submitted her grievances regarding victimisation of her husband.

Apart from the demands on issues mentioned above, the joint Memorandum submitted by the deputation of Unions to the Chairman of the National Shipping Board meeting, also included

some other urgent and long standing demands of seamen, viz. (a) introduction of a scheme of unemployment allowance for seamen in Calcutta; (b) pension benefit for every seaman; (c) guarantee of constant employment facilities; (d) stoppage of illegal promotions and curtailment of dues, increased wages, extra dues and benefits, non-implementation of internationally accepted wages and other benefits according to whims of National Maritime Board members; (e) supply of accurate accounts of Seamen's Provident Fund; (f) introduction of scheme for long-term House building loan free of interest out of Seamen's Welfare Fund; (g) introduction of insurance scheme for the safety of seamen's life at sea and ashore; (h) amendment of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 in the interest of seamen by deleting the anti-seamen provisions and by making provision for adjudication of disputes through special Court; etc. The memorandum also demanded—merger of D.A. with basic pay, immediate payment of Bonus at 11.86 per cent, setting up of a Wage Negotiating Machinery to fix-up need-based minimum wage and declaration of interim relief with effect from 1.1.1974 for the Port and Dock workers.

Earlier, Md. Ismail, M.P., Vice-President CITU and member of the National Shipping Board, submitted a note on the long-standing demands of seamen at the 49th meeting of the National Shipping Board held in Calcutta. He highlighted some of the pressing demands of the seamen and strongly demanded that the forcible collection of subscription from seamen by NUSI-led gangsters and attack on seamen and activists of CITU unions at the Calcutta port by these gangsters must be stopped and the T.U. rights of the seamen and their unions to function freely must be restored. (For full text of the Note see Appendix 'A').

How long will the Seamen continue to Suffer ?

It is unquestionably clear that neither the shipping magnates nor the Government of India and the National Shipping Board have the slightest intention of willingly settling the urgent demands of Indian seamen to end, once for all, the inhuman injustice and exploitation they are undergoing even after 26 years of independence. On the contrary, the whole texture of the arguments put forward by the Chairman at successive meetings of the National

Shipping Board makes it abundantly clear that the Board is primarily interested in defending the interests of the shipowners, even if it means the perpetuation of the age-long exploitation of seamen.

The time has come when the seamen of India must realise that it is only their own unity and fighting strength which can liberate them from the bondage of slavery and exploitation. The more broad-based the unity, the greater their determination to fight unitedly to the end, the quicker will be their victory.

APPENDIX "A"

(Note submitted by Md. Ismail, M.P., Vice-President CITU and Member, National Shipping Board at the 49th Meeting of the Board held on 24th December, 1974 at Calcutta.)

Growing unemployment of Seamen in Calcutta

The nature of the jobs of the crews is different from that of the other working class. They have got no scope for getting themselves permanently employed. Their employment depends on the whim of the shipowners. Moreover, the activists of Union not liked by the shipowners face serious difficulties to get another vessel after the completion of a voyage.

The peculiarity of the Seamen's Employment Office is that two Rosters are maintained by the Director, Seamen's Employment Office one is 'General' Roster and the other is the 'Rosters' of the different companies. The secret story of the rosters of the different Companies is that the total number of vessels have decreased for various reasons but the companies maintain rosters for those unseaworthy vessels also. The James Finlay and Co., the Brocklebanks' Calcutta Agency Ltd., the Gladstone Lyall & Co. Ltd., had large number of vessels, but each Company now possesses very scanty number of vessels. But the interesting thing to note is that the Seamen's Employment Office at Calcutta maintains Rosters of all these companies, showing the total number of vessels which they possessed earlier. The suffering of the crews has originated due to the maintenance of two sets of Rosters. The system of rotation to get further employment as per seniority in waiting cannot operate under this condition. The system of

Rotation has totally collapsed due to the interference of the National Union of Seamen of India in the Seamen's Employment Office.

The employment position of seamen in Calcutta as supplied by the Director General of Shipping is fictitious. So long as the system of maintaining 2 (two) Rosters continues it is not possible to get the correct figure showing the employment position of seamen at Calcutta.

No registration facilities for Seamen at ports other than Bombay and Calcutta

The lengthy reply of the Director General of Shipping to Agendum 3 clearly expresses his attitude towards the under-paid Indian crews and the money-hunting Indian shipowners. Throughout this reply he has talked much about the inconvenience of the shipowners; he had, however, no word for the convenience of the crews. He has quoted the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, but he has forgotten to mention that in this Act it was clearly stated that Seamen's Employment Office must be opened in ports where crews are available. It has been the long demand of the crews of Madras, Goa, Cochin and Visakhapatnam that Seamen's Employment Office must be opened in these ports. It is not a matter of dispute whether the crews are available in these ports. The Director General of Shipping may be requested to go through the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958. In this Act, there is no condition that minimum number of crews of all categories should be available in ports or minimum number of ships should come to the ports. As the crews are available in all these ports, the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 obliged the Director General of Shipping to open Seamen's Employment Offices at these ports. So, the condition for setting up Seamen's Employment Office at any Port, mentioned by the Director General of Shipping are later innovations of the Government. These conditions have been mentioned simply to deny the just demands of the crews of Madras, Goa, Cochin and Visakhapatnam.

The Director General of Shipping in his reply said that the Foreign companies recruit crews from Bombay and Calcutta as they are what the Director General of Shipping declares as "the major ports of recruitment of Indian seamen in India." The Director General of Shipping should know that the

companies recruit crews not only from Bombay and Calcutta but also from other ports. Had there been an opportunity of the crews to be registered at Goa or Visakhapatnam or Madras or Cochin they must not have taken lot of troubles and sufferings too to get employment by coming down at Calcutta or at Bombay.

The Director General of Shipping has proved himself not above the level of a child when he says that the seamen coming from South and getting themselves registered either at Bombay or Calcutta "are not necessarily staying at the Port but are staying in the interior parts of the State." Even a lay man knows it that the crews of Madras, Goa, Cochin and Visakhapatnam live on sea-side. It requires the power of imagination to push the crews of these ports in the interior parts of the State. The Director General of Shipping further states that "even if the Employment Office was set up at the Port of Madras," the crews must take hardship of joining and expenses of joining. This sort of argument should not be made by a man as responsible as Director General of Shipping himself. Does he think that the expenses incurred by a crew living in South for his coming down to Madras to find employment is equal to the expenses that he would have to incur for coming down to Bombay or Calcutta.

The Director General of Shipping wants to "avoid inconvenience to shipowners in getting full compliments of crews for the ships in time so that they sail according to their schedule". The attention of the Director General of Shipping may be drawn to the practice of the Shipping companies. For the interest that will serve them the shipping companies recruit crews of all categories from different parts of different countries. The names of companies, such as, B.I.S.N. Company, Clan Line, Bank Line, Ellerman's City Line may be mentioned here to substantiate the argument that the companies recruit crews from different parts of different countries.

The Director General of Shipping has neglected Madras Port as recruiting centre, but Messrs. South India Shipping Corporation Ltd. has recruited all categories of crews only from the Port of Madras.

The Director General of Shipping has recorded the opinion of shipowners with regard to the ques-

tion of opening employment offices at other ports. As the shipowners are unwilling to maintain offices at other ports the Director General of Shipping was kind enough to accept their views. He has completely neglected the just demands of the seamen without whose hands the vessels could not sail. It requires no intelligence to understand that the Director General of Shipping has all through supported the cause of the shipowners.

Humiliating and discriminatory treatment given to the Indian Seamen.

The Indian crews have been subjected to severe form of humiliation and discrimination for number of years even after independence. In the face of serious economic crisis bringing with it hardship for the working class, the Indian crews are pushed to the level of starvation by the conspiracy of the Indian shipowners and Government of India itself. The crews enjoy the privilege of selecting vessels which they will serve. In 1972 Convention the International Transport Workers' Federation endorsed the ILO—minimum of £48 for crews. When the Government of India is a member of I.L.O. it clearly ignores the International decision on minimum wages with regard to the seamen. The Indian shipowners by raising the question of their inability to pay the minimum of £48 flatly denies to pay the minimum; the Government of India does not take any step to compel the shipowners to pay the minimum wages, accepted by the I.L.O. This is simply a case of protecting the interest of the shipowners. The Director General of Shipping has mentioned the case of detention of a ship on 11/4/72 at New Castle in Australia by the Waterside Workers' Federation. He seems to be very much annoyed with this detention. He himself in his statement, has mentioned that "the vessel was released by the Union only after an undertaking was given by the Master that the crews would be paid on return at the I. T. F. standard." This clearly indicates that there was an "undertaking" which was given by the Master. But the fate of this undertaking can be known from the statement made by the Director General of Shipping in the 47th Meeting. To quote him "The seamen on return, however, were paid of wages in existence according to the National Maritime Board Agreement." This is clearly a case of breach of what the Director

General himself mentions as undertaking by the Master. But he has no say on this breach of undertaking. This is simply one case of denial of privileges to the seamen; innumerable number of denials may be mentioned to substantiate the sufferings and indiscriminations which the Indian crews receive every day.

The Director General of Shipping mentions that in the meeting of I. T. F. which was attended by I. S. F. held in November, 1973, it was agreed that National Maritime Board—wages should be paid by the shipowners of the respective nationality. But here it should be mentioned that National Maritime Board wages are given only to the Indian and British crews under the different set-up of N.M.B.—agreements. Other countries of the world including the small Asian countries like Pakistan, Singapore, etc. follow the £48 minimum as principle.

To mention the discriminating attitude of the Government of India itself, the passport policy followed by it may be stated in particular. According to Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 (amended upto 1/7/73) all persons except Master, Pilot and Apprentice, are crews. So, both the rank and the rating are entitled to have same rights and privileges. But the Government of India, by following the policy of divide and rule, issues passport to the ranks whenever requests for issuing so are made by ranks. But the ratings are denied the right to have a Passport to serve a Foreign Flag vessel excepting the British and Indian Flag vessel. Our demands have been that such passports should be issued both to the rank and the rating. But the Government of India did not take notice of this gross injustice for the reasons best known to them.

The Director General of Shipping has claimed that the Indian viewpoint that the National Maritime Board wages should be paid by the shipowners of the respective nationality has been accepted at the meeting of I.T.F. held in November, 1973. It does not cover the whole truth. A glance at the National Maritime Board wages of U.K. and the National Maritime Board wages of India is sufficient proof to show that a rating of British nationality draws much more wages and benefits than a rating of Indian nationality doing same category of job. The comparison, therefore, between the National Maritime Board—wages of

U.K. and that of India is not only irrelevant but also motivated.

The Director General of Shipping in his concluding line of reply to Agendum-2 has observed that the "I.T.F. Congress is again meeting in August, 1974 and it is expected that the Indian unions will strongly take up the question of allowing the shipowners to engage crews on N.M.B.—wages and not compel the shipowners to pay the rate of £115 as earlier decided by the I.T.F.". The Director General of Shipping in a recent affidavit submitted to the Calcutta High Court on the 19th April, 1974, in Civil Rule No. 1224(Writ) of 1972, declared himself as Liaison Officer, acting on behalf of the Government of India. If it is so, he should not say anything on the matter whether shipowners would pay at the rate of £115 or less than that. He was expected to take a policy of neutrality. Instead of doing that, the mode of his expression indicates that he is supporting the cause of the shipowners. As he is the Liaison Officer on behalf of the Government of India as he himself has declared in the said Affidavit-in-Opposition, submitted to the Calcutta High Court, it is beyond his jurisdiction to make any comment in the question whether the shipowners would pay at the rate of £115.

Compulsory Collection of Subscriptions from Seamen at Marine House, Calcutta

In the last 47th meeting of the National Shipping Board which was held at Madras on the 6th July, 1974, Md. Ismail, M.P. raised the stated Agendum. In that meeting the Director General of Shipping, Government of India took the stand that the "National Union of Seamen of India, Calcutta having majority number of Calcutta seamen as their members have been regarded as the recognised union so far as that Port is concerned and therefore, have been allowed the facility of collecting subscription from their members." It was further stated that "No specific case has so far been brought to the notice of this Directorate wherein the collection has been made by NUSI, Calcutta by force", a total falsification of facts. It has been the practice of the activists of NUSI to come to the Marine House, Calcutta and threaten the seamen there taking payment. The seamen who were unwilling to be cowed down by threats were physically assaulted. There are number of cases which were

brought to the notice of the authorities concerned. But to the great surprise of the seamen the authorities did not take any notice of it. The collection of subscription by force are even made in presence of the officers and even the Police.

The Government of India stated in the 47th meeting that it was not in the know of any case of threat or intimidation. In order to enlighten the Government of India a few cases may be stated here.

(1) Bimal Kumar Roy, a member of Forward Seamen's Union was seriously assaulted by NUSI goondas on 8.4.71 inside the Government Shipping Office, Calcutta. A case No. 100 is still continuing in the Court of Metropolitan Magistrate, 12th Court, Calcutta. It was a Police Case.

(2) Narinder Nath Okhal was seriously assaulted by NUSI men and a criminal Case is yet pending in the Court of the Metropolitan Magistrate, Calcutta.

(3) Wali Mohammed, a member of Forward Seamen's Union was threatened to be killed by NUSI-goondas. He went to the Police Station and lodged a complaint against the NUSI-goondas. S.P.P.S.—G.D. entry No. 1227, dated 15.5.74 is mentioned here to substantiate the case of Wali Mohammed.

(4) G. Methesi Raj, a member of Forward Seamen's Union was seriously assaulted by NUSI-goondas on 16.11.73 inside the Muster Hall of the Govt. Shipping Office, Calcutta. A Police Case, S.P.P.S.—G.D. entry No. 1358 dated 16.11.73 was made.

(5) As the 36 serving crews of m.v. "VISHVA VIBHUTI", all members of Forward Seamen's Union, were threatened by the notorious elements of NUSI on 4.7.74 because of their refusal to pay subscriptions and donations. This incident took place in presence of the Deputy Shipping Master, Shri S.K. Bagchi.

(6) Kanai Lal Chatterjee and Guru Prasad Banerjee, members of Forward Seamen's Union were selected from open muster and subsequent medical fitness on 22.8.74 for the vessel: m.v. GOURI SANKAR". But since they were members of Forward Seamen's Union, they were denied to have one month's wages in advance as per existing provisions of the Articles of Agreement. They were not allowed to join the vessel. This threat to these two members of the Forward Seamen's Union was made in presence of Shri J. P. Mallick, the Director, Seamen's Employment Office Calcutta, on 27.8.74. On the same day an appeal was made to the Director General of Shipping, Govt. of India against this sort of gross injustice.

The Police of S.P.P.S., Kidderpore, was also informed of the matter and the Police Station accepted the complaint on 27.8.74.

The above cases are only a fragment of the notorious story that is taking place almost every day in the Marine House, Calcutta. It is interesting to note how the Director General of Shipping made a statement that "No specific case has so far been brought to the notice of this Directorate wherein the collection has been made by NUSI, Calcutta, by force". Before making this sort of statement which is certainly irresponsible, the Director General of Shipping should have collected information from the local authorities entrusted with the responsibility of law and order including the Courts.

APPENDIX "B"

(Letter of Smt. Anjali Chatterjee, wife of Sri Kanailal Chatterjee, victimised seaman, submitted before the Chairman, National Shipping Board on 24th December, 1974. This is a translation of the original letter written in Bengali)

Sir,

My petition is that, for about 16 months I am facing extreme hardship along with my children due to the fact that my husband, Sri Kanailal Chatterjee, is out of employment for the past 16 months. In my opinion, the Director of the Calcutta Seamen's Employment office is solely responsible for this.

In spite of being selected on 22.8.74 for the Ship "Gouri Sankar" and declared fit by the Company Medical Officer, my husband was not allowed to sign on for the ship. He was also selected for the ship "Ratna Usha" and declared fit on Medical Examination, but was again not allowed to sign. Why was he not allowed to sign for these two ships? When my husband wanted to know the reason for this from the Director, Seamen's Employment Office, the Director rebuked him and wanted to know to which union he belonged and added that he could talk with him if he had been a member of NUSI. He could not talk with him if he was a member of F. S. U., and he could not do anything in regard to why my husband could not sign for these ships.

I think that it is for this reason that my husband is out of employment for the last 16 months. Such things happen frequently at the Calcutta Shipping office. I now draw your attention to consider how I can remain alive with my husband and children under these conditions. I request you to take steps so that my husband can secure a job as early as possible.

Yours truly,