

THE WORKING WOMAN

IN THIS ISSUE:-

- * APRIL 28 - DEMANDS DAY.
- ** THE SCOURGE OF RAPE.
- *** INSIDE THE SWAKARI MATCH FACTORIES:
- **** NURSES STRUGGLE IN BOMBAY:
- ***** AIR HOSTESSES FIGHT BACK:
- ***** AGAINST PRICE - RISE.
- ***** WOMEN IN THE WEST LOSING JOBS:

PRICE RE: 0.50P

FOR MEMBERS ONLY

Message - FROM - PRESIDENT - CITU.

I greet the publication of the working women bulletin. It should help to focus attention on the problems facing the working women.

These are in part the common problems faced by the working class and the employees - the struggle for better wages and salaries, better living conditions and more trade union rights, more freedom and civil liberties. The working women along with the rest of the working class fight against capitalist exploitation, low wages and take a prominent part in trade union activities.

But, there are certain disabilities from which the working woman suffers under the present social dispensation in India. Forced to enter the labour market to support herself and her family, and in spite of acquisition of required skill, merit and competence, she is treated as an intruder and accepted on sufferance.

She is discriminated against when recruitment takes place. She is discriminated against in the matter of wages and promotion to responsible and strategic positions. Her inferior status in Indian society dogs her at every step despite the constitutional guarantee against discrimination on the basis of sex.

The result is that women generally crowd the most illpaid professions. This makes a farce of the Equal Remuneration Act (equal pay for equal work). In July the Labour Minister told the Rajya Sabha, quoting from the Third Occupational Survey of Plantation Industry, that the average daily earnings of men were higher than those of women in the Plantation Industry. The differences he said were mainly due to proportionately larger employment of women in comparatively less remunerative occupations. This is how the Equal Remuneration Act functions. The trade union movement on the whole has failed to take notice of this discrimination and wage a common struggle on behalf of the women workers. This weakness can be cured only by the women workers taking the initiative on their pressing problems and urging the trade union leaders to pay attention to them. This demands their more active participation in trade union activities.

The bulletin should help the working women in their struggle against discrimination and other disabilities. It will also act as a constant reminder to our unions not to neglect the problems of women members.

Sd/- .

JULY 29, 1980.

(B.T.RANADIVE)

APRIL 28, 1980

DEMANDS DAY
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The All-India C.I.T.U. Working Women's Coordination Committee at its meeting in Delhi on March 24, 1980, gave a call for observance of DEMANDS DAY ON April 28, 1980 concentrating on the following demands:-

- Implementation of a living wage.
- Security of the working women.
- Abolition of Contract-labour system.

The Day was observed in different parties of the country.

KANPUR

The Kanpur Kamgar Mahila Samiti, observed April, 28, Demands Day, with two meetings.

Both meetings were presided over by the President of the F.K.M.S., Dr. Lakshmi Sehgal, the first on April 28 in a predominantly working class area, and the second at Kidwai Nagar, a very large suburb of Kanpur. The first meeting was attended mainly by women working as contract labour in two local textile mills, some women in domestic service, primary school teachers and house-wives.

After a brief report from the President of the meeting of the All India Coordinating Committee of Working Women held in Delhi on March 24-25, and of the work ahead, two textile workers, Smt. Kamla and Smt. Jagpathi, from the New Victoria Textile Mills, made spirited speeches on the struggle they were presently waging against the contract labour system. They narrated how, inspite of repeated promises by the management to terminate

this mode of hiring labour, and to employ them as regular mill workers eligible for E.S.I., Provident Fund and other benefits, so far nothing has been done. The workers had decided to wait till the elections were over before reviving their struggle.

Other speakers were Smt. Shamin who supported the demand for abolition of the contract system, Km. Neellam Chaturvedi, who spoke on the general exploitation of women and the evils of the dowry system, and Comrade Afzal Hussain, Secretary of the District Committee of the C.P.I. (M), who offered the full co-operation of the Party in all the work of the Samiti.

In the Kidwai Nagar meeting the audience was composed of teachers from private schools, social workers, a worker from the Family Planning Centre, ayahs working in nearby primary schools a number of women who undertook piece work at home, such as stitching petticoats, making leather straps for sandals etc., and some housewives.

Dr. Sehgal explained the aims and objects of the Kamgar Mahila Samiti, and stressed the need for working women to get organised in order to fight their exploitation. Km. Sumti Ghosh on behalf of teachers in private schools, spoke on the ways in which they were exploited, and Smt. Khairunnissa, an ayah in a private school, frankly stated how she was made



to work after school hours in the Principal's house, without any extra remuneration of course, and under threat of dismissal if she refused. Smt. Rama who stitches petti-coats, narrated how they had to buy the thread themselves, and how, out of every dozen petticoats, one or even two were always rejected on some flimsy excuse.

The housewives were very vociferous in their demand for adequate water supply and Fair Price Shops. It was decided to take a deputation to the Municipal authorities for help on these issues. Km. Neelam Chaturvedi spoke on the dowry system, the increase in the incidence of rape, and on other social disabilities of women.

FARIDABAD.

In preparation for Demands Day, two meetings were held of working women from textile mills, electronics assembly, engineering, foam factory and a paper factory. The women decided that on the 28th April a Memorandum of Demands would be presented to the District Commissioner, including the demand for the provision of a local bus service within the township to meet the specific transport requirements of workers working in the various factories in Faridabad.

Accordingly, on the 28th, a delegation of ten women, representing workers from five industries of the town gathered at the D.C.'s Office. It was no easy matter for these five to come. Pushpa, who works in a paper factory in Faridabad but lives in Delhi, had started from her home at 6.30 in the morning, and changed three buses altogether covering a distance of 45 Kms. Janaki Devi, working in an electronics assembly

left a seriously-ill daughter at home, because she considered it important to be there at the D.C.'s office to present the Memorandum. Chanderkala postponed her weekly household chores in order to be able to protest to the D.C. against the unfair practice resorted to by the managements in various factories of utilising female goondas against the women workers. For all the five it would have been their day of "rest" from the factory though not from their household work, of course.

In the absence of the District Commissioner, the Memorandum was handed over to the General Assistant. He promised to investigate their complaints and take speedy action to rectify them. Before leaving, the delegation made it clear that if this was not done, the entire working women in Faridabad would come in dharna before the D.C.'s Office for fulfilment of their demands.

A week later a meeting of about 50 women was held to report back on the discussions with the Administration. It was decided to immediately start contacting other working women in their areas, to mobilise for a conference at which the future programme of action could be chalked out. A concerted effort will have to be made to draw in larger sections of working women in the many different occupations in Faridabad and set up and organise them in the Coordination Committee of Working Women.

BHILAI.

A very successful demonstration was held in Bhilai, organised by the Bhilai Coordination Committee of Working Women which passed through the main streets of the steel town. Over 250 working women participated, mainly women contract labour. The procession culminated in a meeting presided over by Smt. Rukmini Singh, Convenor of the Committee, who spoke of the varied problems facing women workers, the need for the women themselves to organise and fight against

- 2 -

the system of contract labour as in other parts of the country. But first and foremost, it was absolutely essential to build the organisation, and she appealed to the women workers to join, work in and strengthen their union.

TAMILNADU.

At the second meeting of the Tamil Nadu State Committee of the Working Women's Coordination Committee, held on April 4, at Trichy, it was decided to observe Demands Day with the following programme: i) Wearing of badges, a rally and meeting at Madurai, Coimbatore and Salem, and seminars at Trichy, Thanjavur, Dindigul, Arupukottai.

Accordingly meetings and seminars were held. Madras distributed 3,000 leaflets and badges and put up 200 posters. A dharna was staged by the striking women workers of Ba lu Garments, Tablets and Pest Control, 'thar' contract labourers and women belonging to other CITU unions. A memorandum was handed over to the Adviser to the Governor. In Trichy, leaflets, badges and posters were utilised and a rally held. In Dindigul a seminar was held with women from different professions participating. Meetings and demonstrations were also taken out in Arakonam, Walajpet, Vaniyambadi, Gudiyattam in North Arcot District, and at Sivakasi and Aruppukkottai in Ramnad District. Wherever possible a memorandum was submitted to the local authorities.

MAHARASHTRA.

In preparation for Demands Day the Maharashtra Mahila Kamgaar Karmachari Parishad held a series of meetings in various offices in Bombay at Western Railways, Bombay Telephones, MIDC (Industrial Estate, Andheri) Ruttonsha Electronics, Provident Fund office, as well as among

the fisherwomen.

On April 28, a dharna was held at Flora Fountain, in the heart of the city, from 10.30.A.M. onwards. Women from the slubs of Wadala and Antop Hill participated; processions of women workers from Andheri and of the fisherwomen joined the dharna, along with the women from Ruttonsha Electronics which had declared a lockout. During the lunch hour employees of the Bombay Telephones, Western Railways and nurses came to sit in dharna. The dharna was addressed Dr.A.B. Sawant (CITU) Smt. Kumud Chowdhury and Manju Gandhi (Bhartiya Mahila Federation) and the President of the MMKKP, Ahila Rangnekar. Subsequently a deputation representing the various organisations and sections of women, led by Comrade Ahilya, met the Advisor to the Governor, Shri Banerjee, and presented him the memorandum listing the working women's demands.

April 28th was also observvd elsewhere in Maharashtra in Telassery, Ichhalkarnji, and in Nasik.

ANDHRA.

In response to a call by All India Coordination Committee of Working Women, to highlight the demands of the working women, about 1000 men and women workers organised a meeting on April 28 at the mine gate at Purnapani. The speakers while addressing the meeting, called upon the working women to unite and fight against their exploitation and for their democratic and trade union rights.

A similar rally was organised at the gate of the Spinning Mill in Nellore. Posters and badges marked the day.

THE
SCOURGE
OF

RAPE

DRASTICALLY PUNISH
THE GUILTY !

-:7:-

Maya Tyagi a pregnant women was stripped naked, while being dragged in the street in Baghat on the 18th of June, while her husband and two others accompanying her were straightaway shot and murdered. This happened near the police station, with hundreds of people watching but no-one daring to offer help to this unfortunate woman. A lungi thrown on her from the people, was thrown back. She was beaten at the police station so much that she aborted. In Durg, in the month of June in the Nandini Coal Mines in Madhya Pradesh, a pregnant Santhal woman, 36 year-old Rukmini, was charged with the theft of gold jewellery by the general foreman of the mines, arrested and taken to the police station. There she ~~she~~ stripped naked in front of her grown-up son and raped by the police. She too aborted. A woman was raped by a Railway Policeman in Purnea District in Bihar on July 7-8. A Lok Sabha member told Parliament that she was tortured by the CRP with a hot iron rod! There was a mass rape of tribal women near Gonda village in Banda District U.P., by armed gangs on June 28.

A number of such cases of individual raping and mass raping of Harijans, Santhal and agricultural women are being reported daily in the Press. Increasingly more atrocities on women are being committed by the Custodians of the Law, the police, at the police stations! The landlords, mahajans and the whole chain of oppressors, along with goondas, are the true rulers in the village. The lives of the poor people are in their hands.

Molestation and sexual harassment of women today has become a class weapon in the hands of the employers, landlords and police, to

terrorise and intimidate both the men and women who are in struggle. It is not accidental that the largest proportion of atrocities against women, upto brutal beating, molestation, robbery and rape, particularly by the police, is against women from the working class and agricultural labour - i.e., working women, or the wives of workers, the toiling people generally. This was seen in the struggle of the workers in the Spinning Mill in Hansi, Hissar District in Haryana in February 1980, when police and goondas entered the houses at night and raped a number of women while their menfolk, fearing arrests, were away. It is perhaps not so well known that in the Indian Penal Code, in cases of rape, less punishment is prescribed for the police! This attitude is reflected in the utterances of some Chief Ministers and officials.

The former M.P. Chief Minister says, "To rape is human." The Inspector General of Police of the same state has instructed his force not to ~~commit rape~~ during the Assembly session because that creates an uproar in the Assembly! In other words, this sanctions the police having any type of liberty with the womenfolk any other time. With such attitudes on the part of officialdom, the guardians of law and order are not afraid to commit such crimes even in broad daylight, at the police stations!

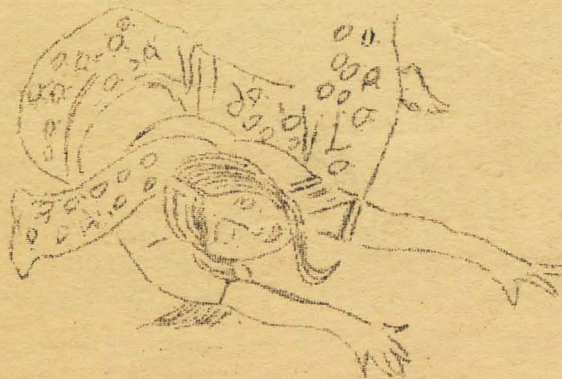
It is to the credit of various women's organisations, groups, and other progressive individuals that these issues have been brought to the forefront, appealing to the conscience of the common people to put a stop to such heinous crimes against women. Because of the pressure of this movement, and the large publicity given in the press, the Government has been forced to promise enquiries into the various episodes, to bring about changes in the Rape Law, instruct police stations not to bring arrested women in the night to be put in the lock up-etc. However, in the Baghat case, despite widespread protest and revulsion throughout the country Indira Gandhi, is still not prepared to

order even suspension of the Police Officers and personnel guilty of outraging and dishonouring Maya Tyagi and murdering her husband and his companions in cold blood. Instead we have justification and almost eulogies from officials, no less than the I.G. of Police and the local District Magistrate, that the murdered persons were dacoits-with no shred of evidence in support. By contrast, on July 6, when three policemen attempted to outrage the modesty of a Bengali woman at Sealdah Station in Calcutta, they were immediately suspended by the Left Front Government and an enquiry against them instituted.

Therefore, while demanding a drastic change in the existing laws regarding rape and other harassment of women, we must also demand:

- a) immediate suspension, prosecution and drastic punishment of the police personnel responsible for these and all similar incidents. The Central and State Governments must discipline their Police Force.
- b) representatives of women's organisations should compulsorily be attached to the machinery of enquiry.

Public conscience must be aroused against such inhuman crimes. And last, but by no means the least, women's voice must be raised everywhere, whenever such atrocities are committed, to demand justice and protection for the dignity and honour of women.



GALLANT DEFENCE OF A FELLOW - WORKER

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A pregnant woman, working as a telephone operator in the Trunk Exchange in Hyderabad, was put on all kinds of operations considered very arduous even for a normal female operator. She pleaded for less arduous work, or alternately grant of leave as she was already in an stage of pregnancy. The officer-in-charge refused and saw to it that she continued manning the same points. In the course of discharging these duties, she fell down and became unconscious. The other lady operators immediately downed tools on a lightning strike. The staff union took up the case and an unconditional apology was demanded from the Assistant Engineer responsible for this harassment.

While the Telephones Administration was inclined to meet the demand to end the strike, intervention from higher up, countermanded the order and the struggle continued. Begun on July 4, the strike was gaining further strength with the involvement of male workers from the Exchanges and Post Offices in Hyderabad, when instructions came from Delhi advising the engineer concerned to tender unconditional apology to the women in the Trunks Exchange. On the further assurance of no victimisation, the strike was called off on July 7.

Two Million Women Raped in India Every Year

Mr. Peter Layton, an official of the Marie Stopes Society, stated recently in Amritsar, quoting statistics provided by the Police Deptt., that nearly two million women are raped every year in India. An equal number die each year on account of careless handling of cases of abortion and other women's diseases, by unqualified practitioners.

GARMENT WORKERS FIGHT RUTHLESS EXPLOITATION

Balu Garments factory in Madras employs 500 women workers and has been closed since March 18, 1980. The fact that the management owns many different concerns like Balu Exports, Rasi Exports, etc., besides Balu Garments, enables it to exploit the workers ruthlessly.

The working conditions and wages of these employees are miserable, to say the least. The starting wage of a helper is Rs.70 and that of a tailor, about Rs.100. Even after several years of experience tailors get about Rs.150 or Rs.175. Most legal provisions are flouted by the management. Only single wage is paid for overtime and holiday work. Workers are sent back home or two hours' wage cut if they come even 5 minutes late.

Only from this year P.F. deductions have been made, and that, too, only for about 100 workers. Bonus was given this year for the first time after the union was formed. It is quite common for the workers to be clouted on their heads or to be made to stand on the benches- a kind of treatment that would be resented even in our primary schools.

The management of Balu Garments also runs a hostel-an attached roofed structure, with very primitive facilities-for the women workers from Kerala. These girls are often threatened with instantaneous eviction in order to ensure their total submission to the management's illegal practices. One instance of such illegal practice is to force the workers to sign on blank stamp papers. The hostel residents have so far signed on five such papers.

Three years ago the management started a union for the workers and deducted monthly union fees. But there has not been a single

union meeting and no one knows how the amount collected from them was spent.

It is in these circumstances that the workers, unable to bear their wretched conditions any more, started a union of their own. Immediately, the owner of the company called the worker who had been elected union President and threatened to 'finish' him. Then several workers were dismissed in batches. The hostel residents were harassed in all possible ways. Their water and electricity connections were severed. The workers did not relent and refused to accept without protest the mass victimisation of nearly 150 workers. In retaliation the company was closed on March 18. The workers have refused to accept the settlement offered and are still fighting for justice. But the management has not cared so far to attend even a single negotiation called by the Labour Department.

On May 9, 1980, the C.I.T.U. Coordinating Committee of Working Women of Tamilnad sent a representation to the then Adviser to the Governor of Tamil Nadu, requesting the Government to intervene and take all necessary measures to ensure that the factory is reopened without further delay and that all the workers are taken back to work. This was in accordance with a decision taken at the second meeting of the T.N. State Working Women's Coordination Committee, to call for district-wise demonstrations, in coordination with the Women's Democratic Association, in support of the Balu Garments workers, and telegrams to be sent to the Governor of Tamil Nadu, besides submitting the memorandum.



-:13:-

"WE ARE WORKING WOMEN , NOT SEX SYMBOLS"

AIR HOSTESSES:

Twenty Air-Hostesses of the Indian Airlines Corporation have alleged sexual discrimination against them by the airlines' management in a writ petition admitted by the Supreme Court on May 8, 1980.

Accusing the airlines of hostile discrimination on the grounds of sex, they have stated in their petition: "The airlines obviously views female cabin attendants merely as sex symbols whose utility vanishes at the age of 30 but whose working life can be extended at the discretion of the General Manager, and subject to medical tests every two years, up to 40."

The disputed rule reads: "An air-hostess shall retire from the service of the corporation on attaining 30 or when she gets married, whichever is earlier. The general manager, however, may retain in service an unmarried air-hostess up to the age of 40 years."

The air-hostesses stated that the Airlines made an invidious distinction between female and male cabin attendants in respect of tenure of service and permission to marry and rear children. Male attendants are permitted to continue in service until 55 and as a rule can secure three years extension thereafter. This distinction is made despite the fact that there is complete identity of functions of male and female cabin attendants. This is borne out by several procedures and practices of the airlines. In other jobs in the airlines, the rules do not make any distinction between males and females. Thus a women pilot, for instance, can look forward to serve

until the age of 58, and get married and have childre, as she chooses, but not the air-hostesses.

Foreign airlines have been forced to liberalise their rules regarding the employment of air-hostesses, and now do not make any distinction on ground of sex in retirement age.

In a similar protest by an air-hostess the Madras High Court has upheld an order of the Regional Director of the Indian Airlines Corporation issued on January 23, 1980, retiring from service Mrs. Teresa Parakka, "with immediate effect," for contravening the rule and service condition that she should remain unmarried for a minimum period of three years of joining to post. She was appointed as an air-hostess in March 1978, and got married in December, 1979.

The learned judge dismissing the petition, opined that there was no discrimination against the petitioner on the ground of sex nor any infringement of her rights under the constitution. It was only a case in which the parties had entered into a contract. The Judge, (however) recommended to the Indian Airlines Corporation to sympathetically consider the petitioner's case and see if she could be employed otherwise than as an air-hostess.

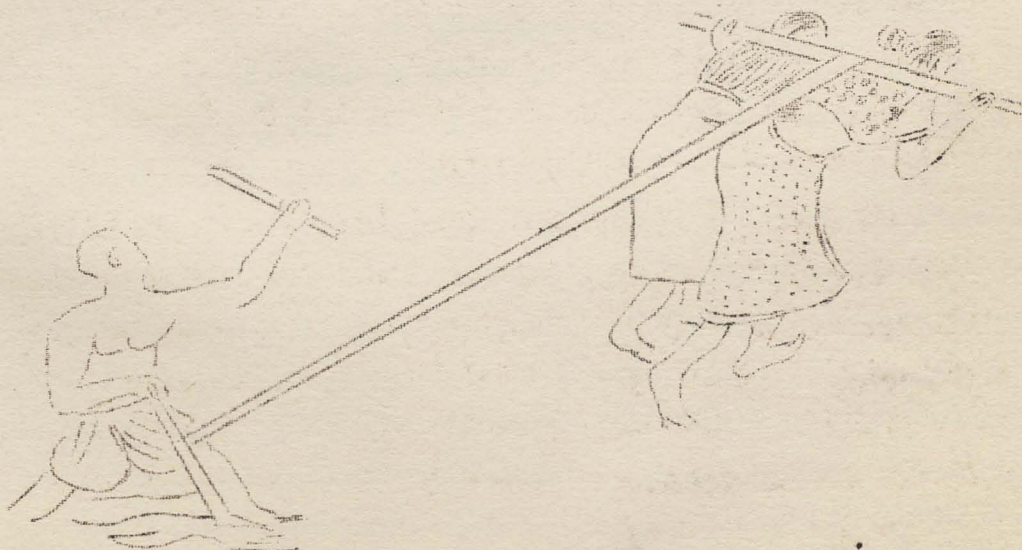
(It is good and correct that Mrs. Teresa is offered alternate employment-but this is not the solution to the problem. For airhostesses, and all other working women.) But the point of protest and struggle is precisely against such invidious and discriminatory provisions, in the contracts and service conditions governing women's employment. If the law is helpless, there is no other way than to fight to change service rules.

And most recently the Chief Air Hostess of IAC in Delhi, Miss R.P. La Touche has also challenged in the Supreme Court the Service Rule requiring her retirement on attaining the age of 40 in August of this year.

WITHOUT COMMENT

SHRI O.J. JOSEPH(CPM) TODAY
ALLEGED IN THE RAJYA SABHA
THAT IN ANDHRA PRADESH RECENTLY,
TWO WOMEN WERE YOKED TO PLOUGH
A FIELD. THE FARM WHERE THIS
TOOK PLACE FALLS IN THE PRIME
MINISTER'S CONSTITUENCY OF MEDAK,
IN A CONGRESS(I) - RULED STATE

JULY 29, 1980



Contract

LABOUR WOMEN
FIGHT BACK

From the 24th November 1979 to the 13th March, 1980, 45 women employed by a contractor in Cawnpore Textile Mills waged a successful struggle against arbitrary dismissal. Being contract labour, they were not covered by the Factory Act and were not getting any of the benefits of organised labour, like a weekly holiday, E.S.I., Provident Fund, etc. With the help of the CITU and the Kamgar Mahila Samiti, they made an application to the Labour Commissioner asking him to send an Inspector to report on the conditions under which they were working.

Incensed by this initiative the contractor dismissed all 45 women and 14 young boys. The women staged a relay hunger-strike followed by a dharna outside the mill gates. During the recent Lok Sabha election campaign, all the candidates addressed the women and promised to have them reinstated, but conveniently forgot all about them after the elections.

The CITU and the Kamgar Mahila Samiti took up the matter with the Labour Commissioner. An agreement was reached on January 15th, that all 59 workers were to be taken back, but the contractor refused to honour the agreement. Repeated demonstrations, processions, and meetings were held at the mill gate, as also talks at the Labour Court. Finally, Comrade Daulat Ram, the General Secretary of the U.P. State C.I.T.U., and Comrade Lakshmi Sengal, President of the Kamgar Mahila Samiti decided to go on an indefinite fast outside the mill gates. Only then did the contractor capitulate, and after four months of struggle, all 59 workers were reinstated through an agreement signed on March 14.

-17-

Dr. Shyamala Rajender, former professor of Chemistry, has, after years of litigation, won a sex discrimination suit against the University of Minnesota.

Originally hailing from Madras and now a U.S. citizen, Dr. Rajender, 53, was appointed professor at the University on a year to year basis. "But when I asked for a permanency", she explained, "I was told that the university didn't believe in hiring women on a regular basis."

At first she filed what is called an internal grievance. An 11-member committee, appointed by the University to look into her complaint, unanimously ruled that the chemistry department had discriminated against her because she was a woman and because of her national origin. The university president overruled the committee's finding, and her annual contract was not renewed. She then filed a complaint in the U.S. district court in 1973.

Her attorney in 1977 changed the complaint into a class action suit, which meant that all female academic employees of the University and applicants for those positions, both past and present, and not simply Dr. Rajender became subject to the verdict of the Court. The case was tried for eleven weeks before the settlement was recently decided. The consent decree not only gives Dr. Rajender \$100,000 but includes a provision whereby two of the next five individuals to be hired by the chemistry department of the university for regular faculty positions, have to be women.

Dr. Rajender's victory is a landmark not only because hers is the largest settlement of its kind anywhere in the U.S. The suit resulted in a judgement against a university with a history of discrimination against women.

Women in Industry.....

THE MATCH FACTORIES OF SIVAKASI - APPALLING CONDITIONS - EXTREME EXPLOITATION:

Typical of the exploitation and degradation of women at work are the conditions in the match factories of Sivakasi, in Ramanathapuram District, one of the most backward and perennially drought-stricken areas of Tamilnadu. About 90 per cent of the workforce here is made up of women, some of whom are in the factories, mainly on a piece-rate basis, with a few on a monthly wage; a large number of them work at home.

WORKING HOURS & CONDITIONS.

In the factories, in periods when no strict working hours are adhered to, women are found to be working from 10 to 12 hours a day, just to ensure a daily wage of Rs.5 . During periods of peak demand the management enforce strict timings, which means a minimum of 12 hours, night work twice or thrice a week, and a summons back to the factory even after midnight. Refusal to comply instantly carries the threat of dismissal. Rarely in such periods is permission granted to leave early.

To ensure a further full and ready labour supply, factory buses go round the neighbouring villages in the middle of the night picking up particularly teen-age girls and little children. The children are left to sleep on the factory verandah or in the compound, till awakened with black coffee. For the young girls there is the worse and all too common fate, in those early hours, of sexual exploitation by the factory staff and contractors. Any ensuing pregnancy means immediate loss of work. Women on the night shift have similarly perforce to suffer the same sexual abuse.

WAGE-RATES.

Wage-rates are expectedly very low, and vary according to the operation:- For filling 144 boxes with 52 matches per box, the wage is 20 paise. Beginners can earn about Rs.2 - per day. After considerable experience, a woman can average about 20 gross a day, i.e., 2880 boxes, and earn Rs.4. . For stacking 53 woods splints in a bundle, a worker gets Paise 13, 20 such bundles in a day fetches Rs.2.60. The job of sticking on the top and bottom parts of the match box is given to women and children to work in their homes, and brings 10 paise for 144 boxes. Leisure and playtime are things unknown to the children of Sivakasi, even to those few who attend school, for on their return they too are forced to work.

BONUS.

A so-called bonus is paid twice a year, not as a matter of right, but at the will of the management. All decisions regarding the amount and date are taken solely by the management. Usually the rate works out at Rs.10/- for Rs.100 earned. But even this is hedged in with conditions the worker must report in person to receive it; in several cases bonus paid not in cash, but an entitlement to buy clothes up to a certain amount in the company-owned shops; only those who have worked continuously (i.e. without taking leave even for a day) for two to three months prior to the date of payment, are entitled to bonus. As absenteeism among women is very high due to chronic ill-health and family responsibilities, their 'bonus' earnings are always low.

In the name of incentive bonus, a very heavy workload for paltry rewards, is forced on the women, with extremely adverse consequences for their health: For filling 2880 boxes a day, a ribbon worth 50 paise; for filling 3,600 boxes, a bindi set worth Rs.1.50; for filling 4320 boxes continuously for one month, some ever-silver vessel or a gadget

worth Rs.7 , for filling 4320 boxes continuously for one week a plastic bucket.

In their eagerness to get these trifling rewards, and not realising how they are being exploited, the women work for long hours without a break and proper food. Children and home are neglected, and the women themselves soon become ill and bed-ridden.

Such low wages make indebtedness inevitable, and the money lenders are again the employers, who use this as a weapon to increase production, intensify exploitation and control the workers totally. Depending on the production given by the workers, loans of Rs.20 to Rs.200 are advanced. As a result, double or triple the normal rate of production is worked, by putting in long hours and foregoing the lunch break.

STATUTORY BENEFITS.

The implementation of legal provisions varies from factory to factory, but even where provident fund or ESI maternity benefits are in force, rarely does the eligible woman enjoy the full benefit. Firstly the maternity leave is given only if no leave has been taken prior to this period, and secondly the lowest monthly income is taken for calculating the maternity benefit. Creche facilities exist only in a few big factories like Tanzing and Lotus. In other factories women leave their babies in the traditional cloth cradle tied in a tree or lay their babies on the floor near to their workspot. The ESI hospitals are to be found only in Sivakasi town and two neighbouring areas. The Standard Match Factory, in operation for the last 20 years has no ESI facilities. Of the 150 factories located at Thayil Pathi, not a single one has ESI facilities. This in effect means that a great number of women have no access to subsidised medical facilities, to which they are legally entitled. There is a panchayat hospital but

it is too far away, too crowded and its quality of medical care very poor. To go there the worker has to take leave and lose a day's wage.

The nature of the work, sitting for long hours gives rise to fatigue, back-ache and a general body-ache. Then the constant and fast finger movements causes various nervous disorders. Normally after every 10 days work, 2 days rest becomes imperative; with insufficient time to cook, the women make do with snacks from outside, further aggravating their nutrition problem. In addition are the occupational hazards:- while filling the boxes, sometimes the materials catch fire, injuring their fingers, or dipping the sticks in the incendiary chemical. often burns holes in their fingers, and the wounds take a month to heal, with all the adverse consequences that this implies.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS.

Since most of the workers in Sivakasi are migrants from neighbouring villages and their numbers are added to daily, there exists an acute housing shortage, high and rising rents which eat up nearly 25 per cent of their income. With no local relatives on whom, they can rely at least for temporary support, they become totally dependent on the factory managements for survival. The following instance of Mariamma is typical:

A widow with two sons aged 11 and 13, Mariamma came from Mallapathi village to Sivakasi in search of work. All three found jobs in Vinayaka company, which pays them in addition to their wages a house rent allowance of Rs.25. In return, five days in the week, Mariamma has to work any time of the day she is called from 7 A.M. to 5.P.M., when she gets a two-hour break to cook, then back to the factory at 7.P.M. to work till 10.30. One a day a week she has to

work upto 1.a.m. Mariamma is one of the very few workers who has Sunday all to herself, a privilege she was given as a Christian. Her Hindu counterparts work all 7 days, not daring to take a day off for fear of the management. Her two boys work the same long hours, and earn about Rs.3.75 each a day. They complain constantly of shoulder pain, fall sick, and have to be forced to go to work every day. Today Mariaam is worried because the management plans to cut her house rent allowance after Divali.

The CITU Working Women's Coordination Committee in Tamilnadu has recently taken up the case of these women workers. Two basic demands have been raised before the Government to begin with: (1) For an 8-hour working day to be enforced for these women and (2) To make this possible abolition of the existing piece-rate wage system and its replacement by a monthly minimum wage. The State Coordination Committee has received information that the Tamilnadu Government proposes setting up a Committee for Minimum Wages for Match Workers. The Coordination Committee has recommended that Comrade Mythili Sivaraman be taken as the representative on this Committee. This first small step has been taken. Only the mobilisation, organisation and persistent struggle by these women themselves, backed by the powerful support of other unions and CITU, will lift them from their present morass and show them the path to end this exploitation for ever.

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IN KERALA

-:23:-

CRECHES HOSTELS PENSIONS FOR WORKING WOMEN

In the Governor's Speech at the inauguration of the new Left & Democratic Front Government in Kerala, certain promises were made with regard to amelioration in the conditions of women, and provision of creches and hostels for working women. Already the Government has begun implementing these promises.

This year, to begin with, 236 creches are to be set up. The sites selected are the employment centres as well as the residential areas of agricultural, coir and handloom workers. Ayahs will also be provided to look after the children. The creche for Government employees and others working in the Trivandrum Secretariat has already started and is functioning well. More than 30 children are being looked after and more are being admitted. Fifteen creches in the coir cooperatives have also begun working and money for the construction of pucca buildings to house the creches, has been sanctioned and released.

With separate provisions in the State Budget for the building of hostels for working women, the Government has asked the organisations of working women to take the initiative to start hostels. Government will provide the funds and give the land, where Government land is available, or try to provide land for them where there is not.

In every Panchayat, five women members are included in the Vigilance Committee, whose job it is to control prices and see that no black-marketing takes place.

A grant of Rs.500 each is available to unmarried mothers in the State to start some handicraft work in order to earn their livelihood.

In addition to the Rs.40 monthly pension paid to widows who have no other support, the Kerala Government has sanctioned Rs.1000 for the marriage of the daughters of such widows.

IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

CONDEMNED TO BACKWARDSNESS

A study sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Science Research once again brings out the fact that women's employment in public sector industries is doomed to stagnate because of their poor access to training facilities, socially "low status" in the industrial sector, and the adverse effects of protective labour laws.

A splendid vicious circle has been set up industrial training institutes cater mainly to men; when it comes to employment, managements cannot select women because "trained women are not available for certain types of jobs!"

A glance at the figures shows the complete lack of any change in this situation during all the 33 years since Independence:

- the number of women trainees in the engineering trades was just 143 in 1966; twelve years later, in 1978, it was still only 625;

And men? 92,078 in 1966,

1,40,212 in 1978,

Thus throughout all these years female trainees have always constituted less than one per cent of all engineering trainees.

In the non-engineering sector, female trainees are slightly greater in number- 1,684 in 1966 and 5,245 in 1978. Here the proportion of female trainees has been over 42 per cent throughout. As the study points out, women have been virtually excluded from the engineering trades: on the other hand they constitute a large segment of the trainees in trades like tailoring and stenography.

A case study of a heavy electrical unit, where training facilities for women were almost non-existent, revealed that the management felt

provision of training facilities for women would mean, "a big investment for nothing." The reasons given are the common argument of employers all over the world for the last hundred years, against higher training for women viz., "women stick to their jobs only till they are married." While this may be true of a certain section of women, increasingly young women are coming out to work because they desire to do so, all their lives. It is the service rules in both private and public concerns, at one time in the IAS also, that allow women to stick to their jobs only till they are married, and debar them after marriage.

Similarly protective legislation, recognised universally and embodied in the ILO Conventions as necessary to safeguard women's health/and child-bearing functions, is used to deny more qualified appointments to women. A recent case relates to the Udyog Mandal training laboratories attached to F.A.C.T. in Alwaye, Kerala State, a Central Government-owned enterprise. Three women were included among a recent batch to undergo training. On completion of the course only the men trainees have been absorbed in regular service and the women trainees rejected on the grounds that prohibition of night work for women, means extra night shifts for the men. Therefore they cannot be taken into service. Subsequently, male trainees junior to these three ladies, were given employment.

When F.A.C.T. authorities were approached in this matter, their response was that they are under no obligation to employ all trainees, though in fact, all the male trainees had been absorbed. When it was pointed out that vacancies existed in some branches where these women could be absorbed without disturbing the men, nothing was done. Now two ^{of} the women have already been sent out of the factory and the third is awaiting her dismissal.

Even though the Union Petroleum and Chemical Minister was apprised

of the situation and promised to intervene, nothing has so far happened. Unfortunately, even the trade unions are not taking up this problem sufficiently strongly. Questions in Parliament receive evasive answers from the Ministers concerned.

All this only shows that unless and until the working women themselves unite and fight against discrimination, there will be no improvement in the state of affairs. Working women must understand that they must be prepared to join the trade unions and exert pressure from within for the union to take up their problems.

YOUNG WOMAN WORKER MURDERED IN BOMBAY

The Maharashtra Coordination Committee (the MMKKP), successfully took up the issue of the murder of a young woman worker Susheela Manjrekar. Susheela was murdered on the premises of a small factory in the Ghatkopar Industrial Estate near Bombay, on the evening of March 24. A joint procession with The Forum Against Rape was taken out to the Factory in which both men as well as women CITU members participated.

A meeting was held in front of the factory and the factory owner gheraoed until he met representatives of the Coordination Committee and CITU and agreed to pay compensation to the bereaved family. Only after several meetings did he finally consent to the sum of Rs.7,500, over and above all the statutory payments due to the mother.

The Coordination Committee has also similarly moved in a fight for justice for a young girl in Turbe, Thana District, who was raped by two police constables. The Committee is trying to have this question raised in the Assembly also.

Bombay Nurses

PERSISTENT
STRUGGLE
WINS
DEMANDS

Once every decade in the past, the nurses of Maharashtra have struggled to have their demands met. Each time they were offered sympathy, but the 9000 nurses have been offered little else. This time things have been different.

In the first place the nurses decided in early March to affiliate their Federation to, and become a part of the Maharashtra Mahila Kamgar Karmachari Parishad, and it was under their banner that the struggle this time was conducted in the J.J., G.T., and St. George's hospitals.

IMMEDIATE DEMANDS.

The struggle centred round their most urgent grievances requiring immediate attention and rectification, and they prepared themselves for a long drawn-out battle. ^{A strike was called for} September 9, 1979, followed by demonstrations outside various hospitals including the ESIS hospitals. In St. George's Hospital the nurses went on a lightning strike when their quarters already occupied by doctors, were being transferred to other hospital employees instead of being handed back to the nurses. These rooms included the changing room and visitor's Room in the all-female Nurses Hostel. Later together with the MMKKP leadership, a two-hour gherao of the Deputy Superintendent was undertaken, and a general strike in all hospitals threatened if the rooms were not returned.

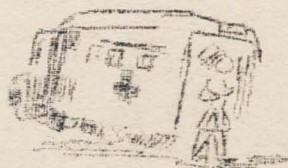
Finally the then Chief Minister, Sharad Pawar agreed to meet a delegation led by Ahilya Rangnekar, President of the Parishad. After protracted negotiations the following demands were conceded:-

1. The Federation was given immediate recognition.

2. The appointment of two hundred staff nurses was immediately sanctioned - all of them were absorbed in just one hospital! And another 200 would be appointed by the first week of October.
3. A 7-hour duty shift for nurses was accepted, and implemented within 48 hours --- in place of the earlier 9-hour shift, which had meant an extra 48 hours of work per month.
4. Night-shift, always of 12 hours duration, would hereafter carry an overtime allowance, plus the next day off.
5. The 50 per cent cut in the Rs.100 mess allowance to be restored with immediate effect.
6. A Government Committee to look into the question of restoration of nurses' quarters to the nurses, and adequate protection for them in the rural areas. Many times, nurses coming to duty late at night, have been raped.
7. The anomalies in pay-scales to be looked into.

The nurses quarters in the Bombay hospitals were vacated within three to four days of the agreement, and the transfer orders against an Assistant Matron who had supported the nurses, were cancelled.

The jubilant nurses held a celebration rally at Poona, and are now preparing themselves to struggle for their other demands.



The nurses are the most exploited section, with long hours of duty, strenuous work, night duty, topped with harassment by the authorities. Their immediate demands relate to:-

- Last year the nurses in Willingdon Hospital went on a record strike of 65 days, during which demonstrations, hunger-strikes, etc., were organised, for their demands. But the situation is unchanged.

Increasingly a number of non-nursing duties such as storing of linen, stationery, stocking of empty bottles, etc., are being forced upon them, in the wards, cutting down on the time and attention they are

able to give the patients. Such tasks should be given to non-nursing orderlies.

Despite the recommendation by the Third Pay Commission that every hospital employee should get at least two promotions during his/her tenure of service, there is no regular practice yet regarding promotions.

Like working women elsewhere, nurses too have to face the problem of abuse of them as women. In June of this year, angry nurses of the AIIMS had to demonstrate before the Hospital Management Board before the Board for suspension of a nursing orderly for making advances to one of the staff nurses. A few months back, the nurses and IV Class employees of Willington Hospital had to come out ~~enmasse~~ in protest against an attack on one of the nurses by an arrogant doctor.

Despite questions being raised in Parliament and submission of a memorandum to the Union Health Minister, the Government is making little attempt to meet their demands, and the Nurses' Federation is being forced to consider going on strike.

FORMATION OF STATE COORDINATION COMMITTEES
OF WORKING WOMEN.

Coordination Committees of Working Women have been set up in the following States and cities:

- *. KERALA **TAMILNADU *** ANDHRA ***~~KARNATAKA~~
- *. M.H. RAJASTHAN ***~~GUJARAT~~ B.D.
- *. BIRDA (GUJARAT) *** RAIPUR (U.P) *** BHILAI (M.P)
- *. DELHI.

TEACHERS IN DELHI'S POOR COLONIES

ALL WORK AND LITTLE PAY

This is the story of the women teachers of Mangolpuri, one of the Resettlement Colonies under the Delhi Administration.

All the 60 teachers employed in the 60 Schools have completed the Montessori Training Course after Matriculation, some after graduation, and have been working ⁱⁿ these schools for the last two years. These teachers have to singly conduct classes of 25 children ranging from 3 to 6 years, from 9-1 in the morning for which they are paid Rs.150 per month, and take adult-literacy classes for 10-15 women from 1 to 3 in the afternoon for which they secure an additional Rs.50.

Though these schools are aided and therefore recognised by the Delhi Administration, these teachers and their helpers are not getting the facilities accorded to other aided schools, viz., earned leave of 12 days in a year, summer vacations, festival holidays, etc. They are given just the weekly Sunday-off, Government holidays and three national holidays.

The helpers who work the same number of hours, are paid just Rs.50 per month. Both teachers and helpers are constantly harassed sometimes beaten by the heads of the schools, made to sign blank papers under pressure, and forced to leave their jobs.

The teachers are not allowed to bring their children to their schools on the ground that the children should be sent to the school in the block where they live. No such rule, of course, applies to the teacher.

Hesitant so far of complaining to the higher authorities in case they may lose their jobs, these teachers have now resolved to go in deputation to the Education Ministry to lay forth their grievances and demand improvement.

CRISIS IN THE CAPITALIST WORLD -

WOMEN RAPIDLY LOSING JOBS

~~oooooooooooooooooooooooooooo~~

Half-way through the U.N. Decade for Women (1975-85), U.N. reports indicate that the economic crises of the 1970's have settled on the shoulders of women, and five years after the launching of the Decade for Women, at the 1975 Conference in Mexico City, which adopted a 14-point global plan of action, the women of the world are worse off than before.

The share of women in the total number of wage and salary earners in Europe and North America is about 35 per cent. Economic necessity, caused by the rising cost of living, is an important factor accelerating the increase in women working in the capitalist countries. There is also an increase in the number of women who are the sole breadwinners of the family.

The changes taking place in industry as a result of the development of science and technology, give women access to many new branches and trades. The natural qualities of women ensure the extensive use of female labour in the electrical engineering, electronics, radio and television, machine building and other industries.

But in conditions of the capitalist economy, this trend encounters a whole number of restraining factors. The concentration and rationalisation of production, the deep and drawn-out crises threaten the very right of women to work.

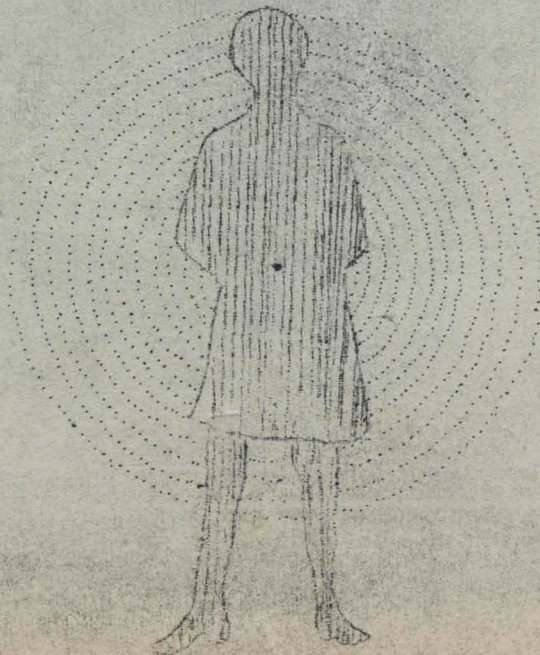
In France, for instance, as a result of automation it is intended by 1985 to liquidate 135,000 jobs in the manufacture of ready-to-wear clothes, and 170,000 jobs in the textile industry. In other words, more than 300,000 jobs held mostly by women.

According to the forecasts of the Institute of World Economy in Kiel, 250-300,000 workers will be dismissed by 1985 at West

German garment factories alone.

Women comprise the majority of the unemployed. Girls and young women under 25 suffer most from the crisis of unemployment. According to ILO statistics, in the period from May 1975 to May 1976, seven million women lost their jobs in W. European countries, the U.S., Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand. The problem of employment is particularly acute in Italy where female labour has been steadily shouldered out of production for the last so many years. In fact in the period from 1961 to 1977 the share of women among all wage and salary earners in Italy dropped from 24.9 to 19.6 per cent. This is the smallest per centage among all developed capitalist countries.

In May 1977, the number of unemployed women in West Germany reached 51 per cent, in France - 52.8 per cent in Denmark - 43.2 per cent, and in Belgium - 60.2 per cent, of the total number of jobless.



WOMEN ON WARPATH

BOMBAY MORCHA

A 300 - strong mahila representatives meeting was held in Bombay on July 18, at the call of the Women's Anti-Price-Rise United Committee, composed of women from various Political Parties and organisations such as the Sramik Mahila Sangh and the All-India Women's Federation. The meeting was held in the Dadar area, the heartland of thickly populated lower and upper middle class families.

On July 14, a deputation had met the Chief Minister, A.R. Antulay, on the question of controlling prices.

An intensive campaign preparatory to a massive resistance movement has now been chalked out.

MADRAS DHARMA

A dharna was held on July 2 by women from the Post and Telegraphs, Railways, Banks, Central & State Government and Private Sector Employees, outside the Office of the Manager, Southern Railways, Madras, to press their demand for more women's compartments in the suburban electric services. The dharna was organised by the Tamilnadu Working Women's Coordination Committee

DELHI PROTEST.

More than 500 women from all walks of life including the women of Baghpat, staged a day-long dharna outside the residence of the Prime Minister, on July 18, to protest the continuing Police atrocities on women. Organised by the women's, students and other organisations of Delhi, the dharna demanded immediate arrest of the Police culprits and their drastic punishment. The demands were presented by a deputation including women M.P.'s and other women leaders, to the Prime Minister, who would give no assurance on the women's demands.

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Message FROM Smt. K.R. Gourie

It is indeed a matter of pleasure that you propose to start publication of a bulletin named "WORKING WOMAN". While the exploitation in various forms against the working class as a whole continues, the womenfolk among them are subjected to further injustices in the form of disparity in wages, prohibiting them from working in managerial posts in some sectors, and also retrenching them, if they get married. These disparities still continue in many fields except perhaps in Government Services. Apart from the traditional ties of subservience, they are faced with other forms of discrimination and unfair dealings even in the present day. Recently there have been instances of shocking atrocities against women which have not been dealt with seriously as people want, to prevent their recurrences.

I hope the "WORKING WOMAN" will be a strong weapon to fight against the inequalities and injustices women are put to, and to elevate their status in all walks of life. I wish all success.

SMT. K.R.GOURIE
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE &
SOCIAL WELFARE

29 JULY, 1980.

GOVERNMENT OF KERALA:

Message FROM - NIRUPAMA CHATTERJEE

Minister of State-in-charge
Welfare Branch of Relief and Welfare Department
Government of West Bengal

I am very glad to know that the All India Co-ordination
Committee of Working Women is going to publish a bulletin
"Working Woman" very soon. The aims of the bulletin to focus
the general demands of the working woman will be a remarkable
endeavour .

With Warm Greetings,

JULY 29, 1980.

Issued by the All-India Co-ordination
Committee of Working Women, (CITU),
6-Palkatora Road, New Delhi-110001.
