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THE WORKING CLASS

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WORKING CLASS MUST ASSERT



FIGHT BACK LIBERALISATION

DEFEAT COMMUNALISM

STRENGTHEN LEFT, DEMOCRATIC AND

SECULAR FORCES

MUMBAI FAREWELL TO VIMALDI

On July 25, 1999, the All India leadership of the CPI(M), CITU and AIDWA along with the state and district leadership of these and other organisations in Maharashtra bade a last emotional farewell to Comrade Vimal Ranadive, veteran leader of the Party and of the trade union and women's movements. Vimaldi, passed away on July 24 at Sion hospital in Mumbai at the age of 84 after a prolonged illness.

Her body, draped in the Red Flag of the Party, was placed in Janashakti, the state headquarters of the Party and CITU in central Mumbai. Hundreds of people, including Party and mass organisation activists and family members filed past the body and offered floral tributes.

Among the leadership who paid their last respects to her memory were CPI(M) Polit Bureau Members E. Balanandan (CITU President) and M.K. Pandhe (CITU General Secretary), CPI(M) Central Committee members Susheela Gopalan (AIDWA President), Prabhakar Sanzgiri (CITU State Committee President) and Ahilya Rangnekar (AIDWA State President), Brinda Karat, AIDWA General Secretary, CITU Treasurer Ranjit Basu, CPI(M) state secretariat members P.B. Rangnekar, Krishna Khopkar and Mahendra Singh, CPI state secretary Govind Pansara, AITUC state president Gangadhar Chitnis, NFIW leader Tara Reddy, Lal Nishan party leaders Jayant Chavan and M.A. Patil, K. Hemalata, Anganwadi Workers Federation general secretary and several others. Vimaldi's son Uday, daughter-in-law Nilima, her two grandsons and other family members gave her tearful farewell.

The funeral procession started from Janashakti in the evening. In front of the truck carrying Vimaldi's body were young volunteers of the CITU and DYFI marching with red flags held at half mast, and the truck was followed by AIDWA women volunteers, after whom came the other participants in the procession. Giving slogans like "Long Live Com. Vimal Ranadive!", "Red Salute to Com. Vimal Ranadive!", the procession wound its way to the Shivaji Park crematorium.

Here, a well-attended condolence meeting was held, in which many of the above leaders while paying homage to Vimaldi, highlighted various events from her life and different aspects of her work. These included her participation in the freedom struggle; her lifelong devotion to the working class movement; her contribution to the women's organisation; the five years that she spent in jail; her life partnership with Com. B.T. Ranadive, a towering stalwart of the Communist and working class movement; and her simple, sincere and self-sacrificing life in the revolutionary cause for nearly six decades. After the condolence meeting, Comrade Vimal Ranadive's mortal remains were consigned to the flames.

One more link in the great and glorious chain of Communist revolutionary patriots, who began their life and work in the pre-Independence era of India, has disappeared from the scene. But this remarkable chain will continue to remain a rich source of inspiration for generations of Communist revolutionaries to come!

(Report from Ashok Dhawale)



THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

SEPTEMBER 1999



Stop it at once — Washington has asked us to exercise restraint!

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THE BATTLE AHEAD : SAVE THE COUNTRY

The next general election will decide the direction of the future of the country and the working class will have to exercise its franchise to decide in which direction the country shall move : whether the trend of disaster and decline in every sphere of the economy and life will continue or the same can be brought to a halt.

In last 18 months, all round deterioration in the economy has affected the entire working people in worst possible manner. The tall talk of kick-start of growth and prosperity has ended in gloom and sickness all around. Deep recession in economy has resulted in job-losses, unemployment, vanishing social securities, closure, lock-out, lay-off and retrenchment.

We cannot forget that it is the congress party which initiated the disastrous policy of liberalisation setting in the process of decline in the country's economy. And it is the regime of the BJP led combine which made the process of liberalisation much faster and committed such crime on the country's economy in 18 months time that surpassed the record of preceding seven years' pre-BJP period of liberalised regime. It is also distressing that in all pro-MNC, anti people move of the BJP led govt in respect of Patent Amendment Bill, Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill etc, Congress party joined hands with the BJP govt.

Never before have the workers' right come under such all round attack. Labour legislation are being violated with active patronage of the Govt which are again being sought to be changed further in favour of the employers. Exploitation of women workers and child labour have reached its peak. PF, Gratuity and pension fund money are being usurped by the employers with impunity. Now the BJP combine has proclaimed that workers savings in PF and pension fund will be invested in share market, which means whatever old age benefits are available will be robbed of in near future.

Never before have the divisive forces been so active at the factory gates trying to divide the workers in line of religion, caste, creed and community. They are out to destroy the unity of the working class and integrity of the country. Never before the most heinous crime against the humanity, brutal rampage and atrocious carnage by the communal outfits on the civil society, not even sparing the children and women, the missionaries and the nuns, mosques and the churches, got such active patronage from those in governance. This grave scenario enjoins upon the working class the urgent task of exposing the anti-people and anti-national policies of the ruling class and strengthen the left and democratic forces who have been consistently fighting against such disastrous policies and against the anti people activities of communal outfits of Sangh parivar. It is also our foremost task to ensure a stronger left presence in the parliament and at the same time the decisive defeat of the communal forces and their allies in the election.

It is a uphill task. It is a great battle ahead— to save the country , to save the working class. The battle has to be won.

ECONOMY ON RAILS ! HEADING WHERE ?

At every step the so called success of Fund-Bank authored liberalisation policies and progress of the neo-policy measures are being measured by the Govt and their hired pen-pushers by rates of GDP growth, foreign exchange reserves, fiscal deficit and many other aggregates.

However, the statistical jugglery apart, the common people are experiencing perpetual poverty, all round decline in quality of life, loss of jobs and mass scale casualisation and contracterisation of jobs, widespread unemployment etc. Therefore, the aggregate measures of growth rate carry no lights of hope to the jobless worker of a closed industrial units, distressed agricultural labour having no employment for more than six months in a year or to the young unemployed who see only darkness before them.

In an interaction, as the FINANCIAL EXPRESS reported, the observation of Dr S P Gupta, an eminent

economist and member of Planning Commission corroborated such trend of happenings in the Indian economy as given hereunder:

“Economic growth, employment generation, equitable income distribution and poverty alleviation are factors, India can ill-afford to ignore. An integrated approach to employment and poverty programmes is the need of the hour....Not all growth pattern lead to employment generation or poverty reduction there is instance of elasticity gone down with faster growth

.....Poverty reduction in India was 3.1% per annum between 1983 and 1990-91. But they went below 1% in 1990s....In fact inverse trend between poverty reduction and growth become prominent in 1993-94 onwards, poverty increased from 33.07% to 37.23% in the aggregate. During this period GDP growth rate increased to 7.5%.... Over the same period, employment rich richer at the cost of poor becoming poorer, a phenomenon, which even the

growth rate was hardly 0.7% lowering the employment elasticity to 0.1%.... As for rural and urban rich, general experience shows that.... their earning rate has gone up thereby increasing their household income..... on the other hand any increase in employment in the form of disguised unemployment with a low rate of wages will fail to contribute to the growth of per-capita income of the people below poverty line...”

(*The Financial Express*, 15-8-99)

Above observation exposes clearly as to what pattern of growth strategy being adopted by the Indian rulers at the dictate of Fund-Bank which is made the govt-appointed Planning Commission member could not afford to ignore.

Yet, the govt of the day has been clamouring from the house-top that they have brought the “Economy on the rail” ! Can the people be fooled for all the time ?

HAI SWADESHI !

“India will be built by the Indians”- this swadeshi slogan was the main plank of the BJP led combine before the last election. After coming to power, the modulation started changing till it was a complete about turn-on the eve of 13th Lok Sabha election from pseudo Swadeshi to real Videshi. The mask is out The game of the liberalisers of Indian economy, in line of the

Fund/Bank doctrine was to make the ground for wholesale take-over of the country's industrial economy by the MNCs. It started liberal patronisation of joint venture exercises with foreign companies allowing the latter to have footings in Indian Industrial soil at a low cost and liberal concessions including hurdle-less repatriation of

profits, consultancy fees and other incomes abroad. Thereafter the stage has been cleared for gradual handing over the controlling stake of the joint venture companies to foreign partners-onward to wholesale take over by them.

During the post liberalisation period, take overs of more than 60 Indian companies by foreign MNCs have taken place. In fact

more than 75% of the FDI inflow had gone to fund those takeover operation without contributing in the least to Indian economy , rather indulging a faster process of resource-outgo in the form of profit repatriation. In that process, "Parle" was gobbled up by Cocacola, "Malhotra Blade" by Gillete and in the same manner TOMCO was gobbled up ultimately by giant UNILEVER through merger with Hindustan Lever route.

The BJP Combine, while committing before the people to reverse the trend before the last general election, by their so called swadeshi thrust has not only facilitated the pace of such take-over game in a big way, they are further easing out whatever minimal regulatory formalities are there to create a total-raj of the foreign companies on Indian Soil.

The BJP govt has demonstrated a total bias in favour of Suzuki of Japan in the recent Maruti-Suzuki controversy. Moreover, with active patronisation of the Govt in the centre, the foreign partners of the joint venture companies are being allowed to

establish wholly owned companies to produce and market the same product as being produced by the concerned joint venture company.

As for example, despite the Hero-Honda joint venture company operating in two-wheeler sector in India, the Japanese Honda Motor Company has been able to manage clearance from the govt to establish a wholly owned susidiary to produce two-wheelers. Given the world wide recessionary situation in the market of the concerned product including in India, the full-fledged operation of Honda in the Indian market in the same two-wheeler segment would inevitably marginalise the joint venture Hero- Honda product, ultimately turning it sick and surrender to Honda wholesale.

Three years ago, just as a regulatory mechanism, a requiring provision of a "No objection certificate(NOC)" from the joint venture company was introduced. Now as Times of India reported, the BJP govt has been reportedly considering

scrapping this requirement of NOC to give a warmer welcome to the foreign companies on Indian soil.

The Industry Associations like CII and FICCI, despite their bonhomie with the BJP combine, have to express strong objection to such a move and have written to the govt demanding not to discontinue the provision of NOC besides urging upon introducing a two years' cooling off period to debar the foreign partner of a joint venture company in setting up a wholly owned unit within that period.

But who is going to hear them since the so called "Swadeshis" are out to sell out the swadesh itself to prove their unflinching loyalty to their foreign masters. In that process, the recent announcement/clearance by the Foreign Investment Promotion Board(FIPB) has allowed gobbling up of the joint ventures like Usha-Beltron, Godrej Pacific Technology, Sriram-Honda, Modi-Xerox and many more by the respective foreign partners. **Everything has a limit, perhaps the FRAUD has not.**

BJP/NDA MANIFESTO - WORKING CLASS IS NOWHERE

As per Govt's own admission the number of people who belong to working class are about 35 crores. It consists of workers in industry, agriculture, mines, ports, services, shops, establishments, petty jobs and self-employeds. They and their families make the bulk of Indian population. But alas! True to their rabid anti-working class character the BJP/NDA manifesto for the 13th Lok Sabha election has not spared a single line for them, save and except that "will make labour an equal and proud partner in the production of nation's wealth!" And it has promised that "equal wage for men and women will be strictly implemented." This is **National Duplicity Alliance** - unlimited. Contrary to unprecedented unjustified concessions to capital, labour has already got a raw deal from them during their 18-months' rule. High sounding evasive hollow slogans like "equal and proud partners" cut no ice to the ignored, marginalised and exploited working class of India.

The list of deprivation will be unending. The working class is reeling under attacks from all corners. The employers have a field day. The govt and labour department are silent spectators.

Ignored, ostracised working class knows how much hatred is there in BJP combine about labour. The BJP/NDA should get a fitting reply to their perfidy in the next election.

CHALLENGES BEFORE THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT TODAY

M K Pandhe

With the advent of globalisation the world trade union movement is facing a big challenge to-day. One of the major objective of the process of globalisation is to marginalise the trade union movement. Even in the advanced capitalist countries we find that membership of trade unions in most of the countries is declining at a faster rate. The trade union rights are under attack and the employers in Germany are making efforts to run several undertaking without the existence of a trade unions. The workers will sign a direct contract with the employer for a specific period and the working conditions during that period would be spelt out in the agreement. A worker has to give a commitment that during the period of agreement he would not raise any dispute and after the period of expiry of the agreement it would be the prerogative of the management to retain him and sign a fresh agreement for a later period. During the period a worker has to give a commitment that he would not join any trade union. The ILO in its recent report has admitted that the globalisation has resulted in marginalisation of the trade union movement. In a competitive environment when the employer producing at the cheapest labour cost can compete effectively in the market, labour conditions and standards tend to be lowered due to this fierce competition. In a number of advanced capitalist countries the trade unions have accepted wage cuts and lay offs. Closure of several factories and establishments on the plea that they are uneconomic have become the order of the day. Several humiliating agreements(?) have been imposed on trade unions hitting at the working and living conditions of the workers. The class collaborationist trade unions have failed to resist the onslaught resulting in workers losing their faith in the trade union movement itself. There is no wonder that the only single existing national trade union centre in USA has only 14 per cent membership out of the total workforce in that country.

GROWING UNEMPLOYMENT

The massive dose of unemployment is the direct result of the Structural Adjustment Programmes

(SAP) imposed on the countries by the World bank and the IMF. As a result of modernisation of industry and introduction of job killing devices the job potential has declined drastically with huge army of unemployed swelling all over the world. The Human Development Report of the UNDP has clearly noted the jobless growth of the economy. The growing unemployment has brought down the collective bargaining strength of the working class since people are available to work at less wages and bad working conditions.

Particularly worst hit are the women employees. They are the first to be retrenched in the drive for job shedding. Despite tall talk of social safety net the compensation offered for retrenchment though at times euphemistically called voluntary retirement or golden handshake, is extremely inadequate which makes the workers destitute after some months of retirement.

OFFENSIVE OF PRIVATISATION

The privatisation of public sector undertakings has become a key slogan in the SAP today. Valuable assets of public sector are handed over to the private undertakings or foreign companies at throw away prices. Public sector which played an important role in building a self-reliant economy in several developing countries is thus being liquidated and the floodgates of the economy are opened for the MNCs.

Wherever privatisation is undertaken social objectives are given a go bye. The number of workers are drastically cut and their service conditions are reduced substantially. Trade union rights of workers are also drastically curtailed in the name of enhancing profitability of such privatised units.

In India, the public sector undertakings developed national level bipartite negotiations which contributed much to building of national level unity in the trade union movement. Now, Govt is trying to do away with such national level bipartite forum. The unity of the public sector employees movement which is at the forefront of the general TU movement in the country is sought to be weakened through such mechanism.

The public sector managements due to difficulties faced by liberal imports have taken some steps without consulting the national bipartite committees, which seriously harm the interests of workers. This has resulted in decline of bipartism in the country. The idiotic guidelines issued by the Department of Public Enterprise have stalled wage negotiations in public sector undertakings.

CHANGING STRUCTURE OF THE WORKING CLASS

The so-called economic reforms have drastically brought down the regular employment while the number of casual and temporary workers are increasing everywhere. All the benefits which are generally available to the regular employees are denied to the casual and temporary employees which enables the employers to bring down the cost of production. The number of contract workers are increasing rapidly since the labour laws are generally not implemented by the unscrupulous contractors and the government behaves like the silent spectator. The wages of these workers are extremely low. The growing phenomenon of child labour all over the world also reflects employers' desperate desire to engage cheapest available workforce.

This has become a global phenomenon while the form varies from the country to country. The speedy emergence of export processing zones/ Free Trade Zones all over the world with no implementation of labour laws and total absence of job security is also the worst manifestations of exploitation of workers. The governments generally encourage such systems since it is yielding good returns and adds to the foreign exchange earnings.

In USA the prison labour is being used with impunity where the government shamelessly hands over the convicts to the private employers who are permitted to exploit them mercilessly. In the recent ILO conference it was reported that the wages of these prison labour as low as 1/4 to 1/10th of the regular workers. The system has spread to Great Britain, Australia and other countries which virtually amounts to engagement of forced labour.

THREAT TO HEALTH, SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT

The introduction of new technology is accompanied by new health hazards for the workers. 80,000 chemicals are being used all over

the world causing serious risks for the workers. Millions of workers have become victims of occupational diseases. The industrial accidents are increasing rapidly resulting in loss of life or limbs of workers on a large scale. The environmental pollution has caused several health hazards to the workers and their family members whose life span is getting reduced due to the menace of pollution, land, water and air are affected by pollution and normal life of the working class is threatened by it.

Uprooting large number of families in several projects have become a common phenomenon and no efforts are being made to rehabilitate the victims. Their struggle for adequate compensation and rehabilitation is considered as a cry in wilderness.

ANTI-WORKERS LAWS IN THE OFFING

Whatever labour laws enacted as a result of long drawn struggles in the past are being watered down in stages or being scrapped in the name of liberalisation. Cut in social security expenses in Europe is becoming a common phenomenon. The BJP government, when announced the Second National Labour Commission in India has brought in the entire concept of liberalised economy and the change of labour laws to match the process of liberalisation through the terms of reference of the commission despite opposition by all the trade unions in India. The multinational companies are already raising a hue and cry that the present labour laws are not conducive the free entry of foreign capital in India and do not match the needs of market economy.

The TU and democratic rights of the working class are already under attack while right to strike is being curtailed every where.

The abolition of provision of Inspection oby govt inspectors of factories in some states in India is a clear mockery of the labour legislation itself.

GROWING INEQUALITY

The liberalisation has resulted in increasing inequality in the country. The gap of income in the advanced capitalist countries and the developing countries is also growing with each passing day. According to UN Statistics the per capita income of advanced capitalist countries is 78 times the per capita income of the least developed countries. The GATT agreement and the WTO are seeking to increase this gap still further which would adversely affect the standard of living of the working class and other poor people in the world.

Already top 20 per cent of the world population is enjoying 85 per cent of the world income while the bottom 20 per cent of the world population has only 1.3 per cent of the world income! Moreover the process of liberalisation is also widening the disparity between the rich and the poor at a faster pace within each country with more and more people falling below the poverty line.

NO NEED FOR FRUSTRATION

Attempts are being made by the advocates of globalisation to tell workers that we cannot oppose globalisation since 'there is no alternative' to this process. Even some trade union leaders openly advocate that despite our opposition, the globalisation has come to stay and we should try to protect the interests of the workers within the framework of globalisation. The deteriorating economic situation and rising unemployment is also helping to strengthen the frustration among the workers.

However, if globalisation is allowed to continue the conditions of the working class all over the world will deteriorate at a faster rate. This would make the struggle for elimination of poverty meaningless. It is now an acknowledged fact that all assurances given in the Declaration of World Development summit held in Copenhagen in 1995 have remained only on paper while the profit hungry multinational companies continue to garner more and more profits at the cost of livelihood of common people all over the world. We must fight back this menace.

GLOBALISATION CAN BE FOUGHT

If trade unions unite at a global level, they can meet the challenges of global capitalism effectively. The massive struggles of the working

class in South Korea, France and Brazil have shown that globalisation can be resisted if the working class unitedly fight against the menace. The nationwide 5 strikes organised by the trade unions and mass organisations in India have shown that working class is ready to fight if they are mobilised on common issues facing the toiling masses.

The second international TU conference against globalisation being held at Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) on 1-3 September 1999 is a global attempt to meet the challenges posed by global capitalism since the first conference held in Havana (Cuba) in 1997 created awareness among the working class all over the world to fight the machinations of multinationals on a world scale.

'The Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights' to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa on 25-28 October 1999 is another attempt to mobilise the working class to fight the new economic policies of governments dictated by the IMF and the World Bank.

These conferences will pave the way to meet the challenges faced by the trade union movement in the world today. It is also notable that through these initiatives many ICFTU and WFTU unions are coming together in raising their voices against World Bank/IMF policies and their menacing impact, thus harnessing wider unity of world trade union movement. If the trade union movement rises to the occasion and strengthen the national struggle with more determination and enhance international solidarity action, it can effectively meet the challenges and defeat all machinations of global capitalism against the working class and the common people.

CONDOLENCE MEETING OF SAROJ VASISTH

On August 1, 1999, the condolence meeting of Com. Saroj Vasisth, Convenor of the Haryana State Co-ordination Committee of Working Women and a State Committee member of Haryana CITU, held in Rohtak has drawn several thousands of people all over Haryana.

Com. Saroj was a leading organiser of the CITU in the state who was murdered along with her 6 year old daughter by her husband.

Condolence meeting was organised jointly by CITU, Haryana Anganwadi Workers Federation, Sarba Karmachari Sangha & Haryana Unit of All India Democratic Women Association.

Among the speakers, who addressed the meeting and offered homage to Com. Saroj and her daughter were Com. Tapan Sen, Secretary, CITU, Hanan Mollah, Secretary AIAWU, Brinda Karat, General Secretary AIDWA, Satvir Singh and S.N. Solanki, General Secretary and President of Haryana State CITU respectively, and Nilima Maitra, President, All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers & Helpers.

BAIL OUT FOR PRIVATE SECTOR AND SELL OUT OF PSUs

The BJP-LED Govt. at the centre has been working overtime for bailing out Private Sector Companies with several thousands crores of public money from the public sector financial institution.

As per press report the public sector financial institutions, at the initiative of the Finance Ministry are sanctioning a total amount Rs.5200 crores to private Steel Corporates including the Ruis (Essar Steel), Mittals (Ispat Group) and Jindals. These companies have drawn huge amount of money from public sector financial institutions for building Steel Plants but diverted big amounts illegally to other ventures including speculative activities. This led into a serious crisis and they urged for fresh bail-out money from the Govt. for completing the projects deliberately left incomplete by them.

As per authentic records it is revealed that the Ispat Group of Mittals have deliberately diverted funds from their steel project to the total of Rs.443 crores, to stock market (15 crores), real estate (99 crores), joint ventures (120 crores), advance to sister company (107 crores). For all these illegal

transfers they should have been punished but they instead they again got huge money as bail-out. And same is the story with regard to ESSAR and others.

On the other hand, in the same steel sector, the public sector SAIL has long been pursuing for the loan from steel development fund to be waived off as the said 'Steel Development Fund' is built up by SAIL's own contribution along with minor contribution from TISCO. Govt. is yet to respond in positive terms even after passage of more than a year since the SAIL submitted its proposal. On the contrary, the govt. is pressurising SAIL to close down or sell-out some of its vital units including captive power plants as a condition for consideration of its proposal.

Govt. is on its toes to bail out private sector despite their financial irregularities. It would benefit the private owners and also may take care of private interests of those in Governance.

But for public sector, sell-out is the only option offered by the Govt.

A real Government indeed!

(CITU, AITUC and HMS have jointly, in a communique, demanded immediate amendment of the Payment of Bonus Act through an ordinance to ensure coverage of the entire working class and early payment of Bonus/ Ex-gratia to them in view of the ensuing festive session. We reproduce below the text of the communique. - Editor)

GOVT. MUST AMEND THE PAYMENT OF BONUS ACT RIGHT NOW

The Central Trade Unions have been all along demanding the removal of ceilings of entitlement and amount of money payable as annual bonus for industrial workers but Govt. has remained totally silent on the two vital issues affecting the entire working class in India.

The ceiling on entitlement have become totally irrelevant as the wage level has increased because of constant rise in prices and increase in DA and even the unskilled workers have also become non-entitled to get annual Bonus. The ceiling on amount payable is also unrealistic and does no justice to workers. The amount notified by Govt. is far below even 8.33% of wage which was statutorily payable to each workers since 1972. The amount now falls even below 3% of annual wage of the skilled, highly skilled and supervisory workers, sometimes even below that.

The workers are restless on the issue. With the festival season only weeks away and Bonus payment has to start from September onwards, we demand that Govt. must revise the ceilings upwards through a Presidential ordinance so that workers are not deprived of their rightful earning of Annual Bonus. If necessary, clearance from Election Commission should be obtained immediately to effect the Ordinance.

We also demand that for the Public Sector employees also clearance should be given for payment of Ex-gratia amount, suitably upgraded, as per the usual practice, where ex-gratia is paid in lieu of Annual Bonus.

THE GREAT FERVOUR OF THE 1930s

VIMAL RANADIVE

We are observing 50th Anniversary of Independence I remember the time when I was about 12-13 only, and in 6th standard. The years 1929-30 were the years of national movement led by Congress whose leaders were Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu and others. Some of my friends in the school and myself were so much influenced by the slogan of independence that we threw ourselves in the movement completely.

A SEVA DAL VOLUNTEER

The whole movement was against the British rule, but not violent; non-violence was the creed. There was Muslim League led by Jinnah. Sometimes there were riots in Bombay and the Congress used their platform for Hindu Muslim unity when we used to attend. The main forum of the movement of the time was salt satyagraha, picketing on foreign goods, public meeting on unity, etc. The 1930 movement in which I participated, and was jailed for six months, was the first memorable event in my life. That time there was no other strong party except the Congress. The CPI had just started doing its work in some working class strong holds. Being a student and aged only 13, I was enrolled in Seva Dal, a volunteer organization under the Congress. Our leader was Mr. Sayyad, the father of Comrade Leela Sundarayya. Seva Dal organisation used to have Prabhat Pheries (morning

march) daily at 6.30 to 8 or so, singing songs "Brothers and sisters arise, wake up. How can you sleep when our country is on fire.." These types of songs were sung in various parts of Mumbai.

When the public meetings were held, we used to be present for the flag hoisting ceremony to give salute and slogans. In the school, our headmistress was very strict. She used to punish those of us who participated in such programmes. At that time, wearing of white sarees was also banned in our school. White saree was a symbol of patriotism. Many times, we were driven out of the class because we wore white sarees! Three-four of my friends used to participate in hartal when calls were given by our leaders. One can not imagine now how almost all schools used to come out at the call, when we used to proceed from one school to the next. But missionary schools allowed their students to join. Not only that once I remember, before we went in front of the school in the Fort posh area, the principal of school, poured filthy water on the road and prevented from approaching the gate. But the whole atmosphere all over the country including Bombay was so thrilling, with the patriotic feelings against the British rule, we cared a little for such things.

REVOLUTIONARY ZEAL

The programme of picketing the foreign shops in the foreign market was announced by the leaders. Batches of women volunteers were fixed for specific

dates. Leaving the school, I joined the batch with my girl friend Kusum from my school. We were waiting in the Congress office for our chance, and we got it at last. We were asked to go to picket the foreign cloth shop. At about 10 am, both of us were taken in a car to the shop. As soon as the manager saw us with our flags, he closed the shop! We were highly disappointed. Now no arrest! We were taken back to the office! At about 12 noon, the message came that he had opened the shop again and we were immediately asked to proceed. We got down from the car and went to the doors of the shop, asking people not to buy the foreign cloth! And the British soldiers just ran towards us and dragged us to the police van! When we sat we saw hundreds of people cheering us, they showered flowers on us, shouting slogan "British Raj Murdabad, Congress Party Zindabad". We were taken straight to the court nearby and produced before the magistrate. We were in a heroic spirit! We were forced to stand before the magistrate, Mr. Dastur. He asked our names. I said 'Vimal Sardadesai'. Then he said "you are minors and you do not understand anything about politics! So you apologise and go home!" These words made us furious. We told him, "We know what we have done and for what. We won't apologise!" He got so angry, that he just said "then go to jail for six months, rigorous imprisonment class C..."

Yes, myself and Kusum got astounded no doubt. But were also happy that we got six months in jail! In the next day's papers, it was reported that the two youngest girls were sentenced for six months, rigorous imprisonment. The same day, we were taken to Yerwada jail in Puna district by train with male police escort. My uncle came to see me there. He was happy, not angry. Our family was in fact pro-Congress.

There were nearly 500 women in this jail. The jail life occupied every one from morning to night. We were locked at 5 pm and the doors were opened at 5 am. Since I was given rigorous imprisonment, I had to stitch five-six jail wardens' clothes. Food was C class, worse than what B class prisoners got. Sarojini Naidu, Kandadevi and others were in a different flat type bungalows since they were class I prisoners. Very rarely we had their Darshan!

And the days passed quickly. We studied, played dramas while some sang Bhajans and other religious songs. One thing I hated to work on Sutkatai on Charaka or the other small instrument! Nor did I sit for Bhajan!

We were released after about five-six months when the Gandhi- Irving Pact was signed in England for our "independence". In fact this was some sort of adjustment between Congress, Muslim League and British rulers. And we all got disillusioned about this step of Gandhiji and the other leaders, after our release.

CHANGE IN THINKING

The thinking process started since we did not get "independence" as we

understood at that time. The ideas started coming that if we would have weapons we could do something! I do not yet visualise as to why and how we approached Dr. Savarkar, a revolutionary at that time, who was in Ratnagiri district under house arrest, to have his advice! He had escaped while he was being taken to Andaman by ship! He was now a hero for us. We went by boat and reached his house. He welcomed us and asked what did we want. "We want revolution! We went to jail under Congress for independence but failed - disillusioned. Now you show us the way!" Dr. Savarkar perhaps was perplexed by our audacity or whatever it may be! He just said, "go back and join your school. Then you come back for my advice!" Kusum and myself were again disappointed and returned to Bombay and joined school, passed our examination and so on.

One thing I must say, whatever compromises the congress was doing with the British, the common people were with the Congress wholeheartedly during that period. I never saw such huge gatherings of people, flag hoisting ceremonies, satyagraha, where people, boys and girls like me joined en-masse. Muslims, Christians, other minorities too used to join. They were prepared to sacrifice anything for the Congress leaders. Mahatma Gandhi sitting in a simple way and addressing, and men and women donating ornaments, money, like anything, was a sight to watch! The repression by the soldiers was unheard of. The meetings were dispersed by the horses let loose on the people. Once at

Azad Maidan, the horses were let loose on a procession, many were crushed with injuries. One of our fighter Krishna Kumari was injured under the hoofs of the horse. We escaped and were saved.

There is no comparison between the present corrupt Congress and 1930 Congress which I have been talking about.

The Congress at that time was quite different in nature than what it is now. Then, the slogan of independence from British rule went like wild fire through all the sections of people; caste, communalism and so on taking back seats. Now, when I read the daily happenings in our country like caste riots, communalism, atrocities on caste basis, sexual harassment and what not, question comes to our mind again and again "did we fight and sacrifice for such an independence and did the sacrifice by Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev went in vain?" Sacrifice of our people in Jalianwala Bagh, did it go vain? Should we not also resolve to bring back the real independence for our people where people will have peace of mind and feel secure?

(Courtesy: People's Democracy, 26 July 1998)

TO SAVE THE COUNTRY

STRENGTHEN

LEFT DEMOCRATIC

AND

SECULAR FORCES

COM. VIMAL RANADIVE - A LIFE SKETCH

Com. Vimal Ranadive is no more. Born on 10th April, 1915 in a middle class Maharashtrian family, she was one of those fortunate few who found their life's mission at an early age. She joined the nationalist movement at the tender age of 12-13 as a Seva Dal volunteer in the Congress. In the Civil Disobedience movement in 1930, Com. Vimal was arrested by the police of the British Raj while picketing in front of a foreign cloth shop. When the court of the British Magistrate, in view of her and her other companions' tender age said, "You don't understand anything about politics" and asked them to apologise and go home, she replied, "We know what we have done and for what. We won't apologise". She along with her companion was sentenced to 6 months' rigorous imprisonment. Her first baptism was complete, a baptism in struggle for the cause of the country. At the age of 15 the course of her entire future life was determined, a course from which she never wavered for a moment.

It was from her cousin, late Com. S G Sardesai, a very respected figure in India's Communist movement, who died some time back as a leader of the Communist Party of India, that she got acquainted with the ideas of communism. The wave of the 1930 movement receded. There was disappointment among the younger generation to which she belonged. She found new light in the ideas of Marx and Engels which were also put into practice by Lenin and Stalin. The immortal ideas and their actualisation illuminated the path to the future of mankind and she unhesitatingly started her march along this path. It was her second baptism in the cause of the working class and all toiling people, in the principle of class struggle which she never compromised in her life.

She had to earn her living and maintain her brother and sister. She did it as a school teacher and even as a film and stage actress in which role too she made her mark but she was, all the time, preparing heart and soul for her future life as a communist. Her inspiration was La Passionaria, the legendary leader of the

Communist Party of Spain on whom she wrote her first article. Already during 1936-37 she started to actively participate in political work. She became an organiser and leader of the women's movement in and around Bombay. In 1939 she and Com. BTR got married hurriedly because he was to go underground immediately to avoid arrest. "The same night he disappeared and his whereabouts were not known to anybody," wrote Com. Vimaldi.

She played an active role in the 1940 general strike of workers in Girni Kamgar Union. The militancy of the workers in the 40 day long strike particularly that of the women workers was remarkable. In her later life when she devoted the major part of her time and energy in organising women workers, the impression of their militancy during the Girni Kamgar strike must have repeatedly come to her mind.

It was in 1946 that the popular upsurge in India's freedom struggle reached its climax. The revolt of the naval ratings and the upsurge of the Bombay working class along with similar upsurges elsewhere represented the high water mark of our freedom struggle. Com. Vimal, along with other leaders, especially the women leaders played a glorious role in the struggle, when the working class of Bombay was fighting the British police and Army on the streets of the city.

She was arrested for the second time in 1948. At that time their son Uday was only 2 years old. Along with others she was on hunger strike for 17 days in the jail where they were detained for about two years. Once again during the 1962-64 India-China border conflict she was arrested and detained for another two years. Along with Com. BTR she had to go underground during the emergency promulgated by Indira Gandhi.

Earlier, as a woman activist she played an important role during working class struggles but not as a trade union worker. It was in the 1967-68 period, however, while in Calcutta, that she got organisationally linked with the trade union movement and gradually evolved into one of its main leaders. She took up work in the plantation sector, and first became the General Secretary

when the CITU Plantation Workers' Federation was formed. Later she became its President and was in that post till she breathed her last. In that capacity she attended meetings and conferences in different states. She was also the Vice-President of All India Beedi Workers' Federation.

When the CITU took the decision to specially organise working women, and the first convention of the working women was held in Madras(Chennai) in 1979, the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women within the frame work of the CITU was formed. Com. Vimal was elected as its convener. She effectively discharged her responsibility till her final illness. It was a difficult job to keep above feminism and yet fight for special needs of the women workers. She succeeded in maintaining a wonderfully balanced position. She was also the Vice President of the All India Democratic Women's Association.

Her contribution to the movement of the Anganwadi workers will be remembered not only by those organised under the banner of CITU but also by the comrades belonging to other organisations. She was the President of the CITU federation as well as the convener of the Coordination Committee of different Anganwadi federations with different affiliations. She was elected secretary of CITU in 1987, in which capacity she continued her dedicated service to the working class movement, until death. She was elected to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India(Marxist) in the 13th Party Congress in 1988 and she continued in that capacity till death.

She had represented CITU many times in the working women's and plantation workers' international conferences and conventions, seminars and workshops not only in India but in different countries of the world.

She has left a considerable volume of literary work. For a long time she edited a cyclostyled bulletin of the CITU plantation workers federation. She also edited the Voice of the Working Woman in English and Kamkaji Mahila in Hindi as the journals of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women. Some of her articles in the latter journals and

some published elsewhere are of lasting value for the trade union movement in general and for the women workers in particular.

Com.BTR and Com.Vimal Ranadive lived an austere life. Like Com.BTR's hers was also a strictly disciplined life which should serve as an example to us all. To the last day in Delhi she came to office in time and never left office before time, even on Sundays. "I cannot sit at home, I must meet people, comrades, women. I have to hear them...I must hear their problems...How much I learn when they speak about their problems". This is Com. Vimal Ranadive.

Her immense love for people as is evident from her statement above, her motherly affection for her comrades endeared her to every one. Every one working with her loved her and at the same time feared her. A non-serious attitude and frivolity would not be tolerated by her.

Com.Vimal Ranadive is no more but all the organisations with whom she was associated bear the stamp of her personality. She, as a leader, remains and will remain for ever in the hearts of those who were acquainted with her. Her single minded devotion to the cause of the working class in general and women workers in particular, her complete dedication and the profound wisdom born of her long experience in struggle and above all her steadfast adherence to the spirit of class struggle gave her a unique position in our trade union movement. The void left by her is not easy to fill.

We pay our respectful homage to the memory of this noble personality.

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MADHYA PRADESH STATE COMMITTEE MEETING

August, 6, 1999, Madhya Pradesh state committee of CITU met at Bhilai steel township to review the implementation of the decisions of the last state committee meeting held on 17-18 February, 99 and the state office-bearer meeting held on 14th April, 99 and decide on the next course of action and urgent tasks particularly after the announcement of General Election in the country. Comrades Jibon Roy and Tapan Sen, both secretaries of CITU were also present in the meeting.

The meeting was presided over by com S Kumar, president of State CITU. Com Badal Saroj, General Secretary of the state committee had submitted written report on the activities during the intervening period and the general situation facing the trade union movement in the state.

It was noted that during the intervening period, the trade union movement sought to be developed in the state by the CITU unions had to face severe repression from the employer and the state administration. Braving the severe repression and disruptive effort of the employers to break the morale of the struggling workers, the Rice mill workers at Dhamtari had been continuing strike action since last five months. On 24th July police brutally lathicharged on the striking workers injuring many including women workers and 134 workers were arrested. Against this atrocity solidarity action could be successfully organised through general strike in the region.

In Mandidip industrial area near Bhopal, workers of Anantpur Spinning mill went on strike from 22nd June, 99 which continued for more than one month braving attacks by police and gangsters. Ultimately employer had to negotiate with the CITU union and settle with them. In Shibpuri district, Com S K Ahuja, state committee member of CITU and an employee in a state govt run establishment has been victimised by the state govt through forcible retirement. Similarly the state vice president of

CITU, com Ajit Kumar Lal has been subjected to vindictive pressure by his employer at the instance of state administration for his active role in Rice-mill workers' strike. The contract workers in Bhilai steel plant, the trade union activists in BALCO Plant at Korba and the workers and leaders of M/s Optail, a state govt undertaking were also facing victimisation and attack from the management and local administration.

The CITU State committee after detail review of the situation in all those areas has decided to organise protest against repression on the TU movement by the state administration in connivance with employer and the state labour deptt all over the state. It was decided that on 23rd August a day-long dharna and massive demonstration will be held before the residence of the Chief Minister, Madhya Pradesh to protest against the anti labour policy and repressive measures by the state govt.

The state committee also deliberated on the task before the working class in view of the ensuing parliamentary election. The need of the hour is to make the working class aware about the disastrous impact of the rule of BJP led communal combine at the centre in terms of their own experience through massive campaign and ensure a crushing defeat for them in the election. The state committee called upon all the affiliate and friendly units to plan and plunge into such awareness campaign in an organised manner throughout the entire state.

While reviewing the organisational position, membership situation etc, state committee directed that all the unions must ensure submission of affiliation fees alongwith annual return copies to state centre within next fortnight for further forwarding the same to CITU centre. It was also decided that immediately after election, three day long organisational workshop will be organised in the state.

STATE CONVENTION OF PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONS

Madhya Pradesh state level convention of public sector trade unions was held on 7-8 August, 1999 in Bhilai steel township. Around 100 delegates from 12 central public sector units and two state PSUs attended the two day long sessions and deliberated on the perspective of public sector

workers movement in the state in the context of countrywide struggle of the PSU workers and the organisational position of the public sector trade unions in Madhya Pradesh.

Among the industries wherefrom union representatives took part in the convention were

Bhilai steel plant, NTPC, Coal, Balco, HSCL, Bharat Refractories, BHEL, Cement Corpn, NTC, Pharmaceuticals etc alongwith two state PSUs viz MP Tourism Corpn and OPTEL.

The convention was inaugurated by com M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU and presided over by a presidium consisting of S Kumar, President MP State CITU, Kameshwar Singh(Coal), I P Verma(HSCL), Pramod Pradhan(BHEL), M K Nandy(Pharmaceuticals) among others.

In his inaugural address, com Pandhe gave a detail exposure as to how the policy of the successive govts at the centre have been eating away the vitals of even the most well run PSUs in the country and pushing them towards total dismantling and demolition much to the detriment of the interest of the country's self reliant economic development. Not only the workers of the public sector were the worst victim of this anti public sector policy of the govt, it was also serious harming many other industries linked with and dependent on the public sector network thereby putting in jeopardy the interest of the common people as well, Pandhe asserted. It is the bounden task of the public sector workers movement to involve and mobilise the common people in the struggle to defend public sector. Pandhe also explained how the anti public sector tirade has reached its peak during the BJP regime and the public sector workers must ensure the decisive defeat of this anti national political combine in the ensuing election.

Com Badal Saroj, General Secretary of the state presented a written report in the conference on the ground level situation in various public sector units in the state and the organisational position

and activities of the CITU unions there. While presenting the report Com Saroj emphasised on greater initiative by the CITU units to strengthen CITU organisationally in the PSUs to effectively confront the challenge of the situation.

The convention deliberated on two sessions on the impact of the policy of liberalisation on the concerned PSUs in the state and on organisation and the future perspective of united struggle. Delegates from all the industries stated their experience and put forth various suggestions in both the sessions for improvement of the organisational position. It was noted that while the central public sector units are facing serious problems and crises situation owing to the policy of the BJP govt at the centre adding to sufferings of the workers, the Congress-run state govt in MP is also following the same policies and has been trying to sell out/close down many state level undertakings against which statewide struggle is required to be built up.

While dealing on the CPSTU programmes, the convention called upon all the public sector unions to take all out initiative to make the programme of mass signature campaign in defence of public sector reach not only every public sector workers in all the PSUs but also to mass of the common people of the adjoining areas well before the election so that our effort can generate greater awareness among the masses on the disastrous policy of the govt and expose their evil design.

Com Jibon Roy, Ardhendu Dakshi and Tapan Sen, all secretaries, CITU also addressed the convention. Com M K Pandhe summed up the deliberation and the convention elected a 25 member state level Co-ordination committee with com M K Nandy as convenor.

VERIFICATION

ALL STATE COMMITTEES AND AFFILIATE UNIONS TO NOTE PLEASE

* CITU HEAD QUARTERS TO SUBMIT MEMBERSHIP LIST **BY NOVEMBER'99** ON THE BASIS OF MEMBERSHIP AS ON 31-12-97 (*as per annual return received at the CITU Centre*)

* VERIFICATION PROCESS WILL START BY END OF DECEMBER'99 OR JANUARY'2000

OIL SECTOR WORST HIT UNDER BJP RULE

SWADESH DEV ROYE

The oil and petroleum sector is the most efficient and highest profit earning sector amongst the entire public sector industries in our country. Out of the top ten profit making PSUs, six are from oil and petroleum sector alone. Which have posted 46.06 per cent of the total pre-tax profits of Rs.20,266.69 crore earned by the entire public sector in 1997-98. They have generated appreciable internal resources and allocable surplus. At the end of the financial year 1996-97 IOC had a free reserve of Rs.1,051 crore, ONGC Rs.18,637 crore, BPCL Rs.2,350 crore and GAIL Rs.2,292 crore totalling Rs.34,000 crore. Despite such a bright record, the PSUs under this sector are facing the attack of liquidation and privatisation through different routes.

The Buyback Route

When the 'market God' failed to help the BJP-led Govt. in fulfilling their odd desire for massive realisation from sale of PSU shares, they ultimately embarked on the unprecedented disastrous path of buyback of shares and/or cross holding of shares by the blue chip public sector oil companies. The whole exercise was nothing but robbing the investible surpluses from the concerned PSUs. In this process the BJP-led government could rob the PSUs Rs.6,500 crore in 1998-99. The IOC and ONGC have exchanged 10 per cent of equity holding. According to report IOC has paid to the government Rs. 2,280 crore for the equity it

acquired from ONGC and GAIL. Similarly ONGC has paid to the government around Rs.1,500 crore for acquiring the shares of IOC and GAIL. Apart from the equity cross holding, the total shares disinvested by the oil and petrochemical PSUs is as follows; BPCL ... 33.80%, BRPL ... 25.54%, CRL ... 6.12%, GAIL, 3.4%, HPCL ... 48.94%, IOC ... 8.74%, IPCL ... 40.05%, MRL ... 16.92%, ONGC ... 3.86% (PS Survey 1997-98, Vol. - I).

The dangerous Fallout

The immediate fallout of the buyback move had been that, " the market capitalisation of these public sector oil companies plummeted by Rs.21,698 crore or 24.36 per cent since the government announced its cross holding plans. ... In effect, by trying to raise Rs.6,000 crore in a hurry, the government exchequer incurred a loss of over Rs. 20,000 crore ..." (Business Standard 15.2.99). However, this fall did not stop at that level only. It further went down to an alarming level of about 40% fall. Moreover, in this process heavy extra financial burden has fallen on the PSUs. Because the PSUs were compelled to pay market price for the shares which the government originally subscribed at par (Rs.10.00 per share). Thus IOC has paid Rs.152.34 per share for acquiring ONGC's equity and Rs.60.00 per for GAIL. On the other hand ONGC had to purchase IOC share @ Rs.262.00 and that of GAIL @ Rs.60.00 per share.

The Nitish Sengupta Committee

The Nitish Sengupta Committee appointed by the Vajpayee Government, have made sweeping recommendations to restructure the public sector oil companies including cross holding of shares among the public sector oil companies, which are, by and large, in line with policy of robbing the PSUs, pursued by the BJP-led government.

Moreover, the Committee have gone beyond their jurisdiction and have recommended " that all pipelines owned by the existing (public sector) oil companies ... should be transferred to an independent entity. " Also the Committee have recommended the constitution of a Petroleum Regulatory Body with wide ranging authority/powers, to help the process of deregulation and privatisation. The Committee noted; it is required to, " ensure smooth transition to deregulation (better read privatisation).

As per newspaper report the Vajpayee Government have accepted the recommendations of the Committee.

Mad Drive for Privatisation

The most damaging step under the policy of liberalisation and privatisation in oil sector is the gifting away of discovered oil fields to private sector. Since 1991 eight rounds of open bids have been invited and contract for 30 discovered fields and 35 exploration blocks have already been awarded to private capital. Further 48 exploration blocks, 26

offshore and 12 deep offshore off the East coast of India 10 onland blocks have been identified by the BJP-led Government for offer under the NELP. Basin information dockets and data packages, model production sharing contract, petroleum tax guide and other bidding documents have been finalised and the notice inviting offers with bid closing date as 18th May, 1999 has been issued in January, 1999. Promotional presentations have been made in Delhi, London, Houston, Calgary and Singapore. (Annual Report, 98-99, Ministry of P&NG)

The small discovered fields have been exclusively given to private companies. But for the medium size fields, our oil PSUs have been asked to be junior partners with the MNCs ! Some of the notable foreign private oil companies who have been awarded contracts are; Enron, Petrodyne, Mosbacher, Okland International. Vaalco Energy, Samson International, Occidental International, Medallion all from USA, Niko Resources, (Canada), Commandf Petroleum, (Australia), Videocon, (Japan), Essar Oil (U.K). and Geofinanciere, (France).

The successive Governments have been telling that privatisation shall augment crude oil production. But in reality, crude oil production has started going down. "The production during April to November as compared to the same period in 1997-98 registered a negative growth of 4%". Thus self-reliance is eroding fast and import is increasing and is estimated to go up from present level of 35

MMT to 78 MMT in 2001-02. The dependence on imported oil will rise from present 60% to 70%.

Private Sector Dominating Refining Sector

At present there are 15 refineries in the country in public sector having a total refining capacity of 67.55 MMTPA. With the entry of the private oil companies — both foreign and Indian, the command over the refining sector is systematically being transferred by the government from public sector to private sector. Most of the private sector refineries with very high capacity, modern technology and logistic locations have need based product varieties as a result of which these refineries will have low cost of production and better commercial efficiency.

Further to prove their loyalty and commitment to foreign oil companies the BJP-led Government have started dismantling the Administrative Pricing Mechanism in phases. This shall surely enable the MNCs to fleece the common men. An unlimited betrayal to our people indeed.

The marketing units in public sector have been forced by the government to enter into joint ventures with the foreign oil cartels - Shell, Esso, Caltex etc. The established retail outlets are handed over to these foreign oil companies and the market for various products is being captured by the foreign MNCs at the cost of public sector. It has been reported that many oil PSUs have lost a substantial share of market for lubricant in the country to foreign oil companies with whom they entered into joint ventures.

Leading Role of Working Class

The current oil & petroleum policy pursued by the government is definitely at the dictate of World Bank and IMF is to benefit the foreign oil companies and their agents in the country. The disastrous impact of the policy on the industry, economy and on self-reliance in crude oil is crystal clear before us. Foreign oil companies' domination is being re-established after a gap of 50 years ! Bravo ! the spineless, politically bankrupt knave, Governments of our country in the fiftieth year of our independence!

At the advent of the 'new economic policy' in 1991, the BJP had lamented that the Congress (I) party has stolen their economic policy. It was, therefore, obvious that the BJP-led government became desperate to prove that they were more committed to the Fund-Bank dictated policies of liberalisation and privatisation. The BJP-led government is bartering the economic sovereignty of the country to show their loyalty and efficiency to IMF and World Bank in ruining the public sector.

In our country the Public sector came into existence and flourished fighting the opposition of the imperialist forces. It is imperative that public sector shall have to be defended by defeating the enemies of our public sector at all levels within and outside the country. It is the national task for the patriotic forces to mobilise under the leadership of the working class to defeat the game plan of the imperialist forces and their stooges.

(Country is going to face General Election in September-October 1999. Various political parties are coming out with their manifestos listing out their programmes and promises. Public sector workers all over the country have witnessed during the preceding years - the anti PSU tirades of the successive governments in the centre aimed at completely dismantling the public sector net work of the country to the detriment of national interest, and such anti-PSU frenzy of the government has reached its peak during the BJP-combine regime.

The Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions comprising public sector trade unions affiliated to CITU, AITUC, HMS, Joint action Front, Bangalore and PSU Trade Union Co-ordination Committee, Hyderabad have addressed an open letter to all political parties on 4th August'99 urging them to come out in open regarding their stand and policy on future of the public sector in the country. Signatories to the letter are MK Pandhe (CITU), H Mahadevan (AITUC), R A Mittal (HMS), Michael Femendez (JAF, Bangalore) and Y Adinaryana (Hyderabad PSU Co-ord. Committee) Reproduced below the text of the said letter.

- Editor)

OPEN LETTER TO ALL POLITICAL PARTIES

To
The President/ General Secretary

Dear Sir,

The Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions (CPSTU) comprising the public sector trade unions affiliated to AITUC, CITU, HMS, Joint Action Front, Bangalore and PSU Trade Unions Coordination Committee, Hyderabad and various other independent industry-wise federations, representing overwhelming majority of around 20 lakh public sector workers all over the country seeks to draw your attention to the serious problems and crisis confronting the public sector industries in the country owing to the negative and anti-PSU policies of the successive Govts at the Centre, following the pursuit of the Structural Adjustment Programmes as per design of World Bank and IMF, much to the detriment of the interest of the country and her common people and the public sector workers in particular.

You will appreciate, the public sector industries still hold the foundation of the industrial base of the country and have been, since independence, the steering wheel of the economic growth.

The CPSTU and the public sector workers in general, view the Govts' policy of hostility towards public sector and related economic policy measures as one having dangerous and disastrous consequences on the national economy which got reflected during last eight

years' experience of the post liberalisation period. Right from signing of the WTO agreement at Marrakech by the then Govt to the hasty passage of the Patent Act in Parliament few months back, successive slashing down of the customs duty on import to the advantage of the foreign companies with no concession (rather steep increase in many cases) in excise duties on the PSU products, discrimination and debarment against PSUs in respect of orders from Govt deptts and other PSUs, stoppage of budgetary support to PSUs in case of urgent need, refusal of Govt to invest for revival and modernisation of sick PSUs even in respect of potentially viable ones on the plea of resource crunch while allowing the big monopoly and corporate houses to plunder public fund by deliberate default in paying back the Bank/FI loan, and reckless drive for privatisation of profit making PSUs at any cost and by any means — all are aimed at completely dismantling the public sector network of the country, besides faithfully arranging space for the foreign companies in the Indian market. which by no means serve the interest of the country, in the least. Many of the state Govts are also following the same anti-PSU policies causing irreparable damage to the economy in several sectors.

The causes of sickness of PSUs are the negligence of authorities and the ruling polity and undue political and bureaucratic interference which are rooted in the disastrous economic policies pursued by the successive Govts. Instead of taking steps to revive the sick units, the Govt of

the day has decided to close down eight sick PSUs ignoring the fact that the cost of closure is much more than the cost of revival. On the other hand, the profit making PSUs which are major contributors to our national exchequer, are being sought to be handed over to Foreign and Indian private companies through mad drive of disinvestment and strategic sale, and by so called restructuring and joint venture exercises. Disinvestment in PSUs is being done only to meet the budgetary deficit. The Govt is extending undue financial and administrative support even to the deliberately defaulting and tax-evading private sector companies and also to the foreign companies quite liberally at the cost of public sector and for that matter at the expense of the economic sovereignty of the country.

And such disastrous policies have been casting negative impact in all the sectors of the economy, not to speak of PSUs alone. Grim prospects of closure and privatisation of PSUs all of which tread in the vital sectors of the national economy such as power, coal, steel, telecom, defence production etc, has also been affecting the operation and survival of many other industrial and ancillary units down the line and also the large section of population attached to those units. Kindly note, contrary to all expectations and forecasts by the policy makers and their ideologues, during last couple of years, the negative impact of the anti-PSU policies being followed by the Govts at the centre got clearly reflected in all round slowdown of the economy, loss of employment, poor revenue collection, sharp decline in industrial growth and sharp increase of net outflow of resources from the country.

CPSTU is of the considered opinion that all those

policies towards public sector are squarely anti national in character and warrant immediate reversal. CPSTU opines that in the interest of the self reliant growth of the country's economy, the Govt at the centre must revise its policies to ensure, inter alia, 1) revival of the sick public sector units and necessary investment for the same and constitution of a permanent(rotating) fund for the purpose, 2) strengthening of all PSUs with positive policy support, 3) regular flow of orders to PSUs, 4) protection from unfair and unequal competition from foreign companies and ensuring level playing field for the PSUs, 5) not allowing foreign and monopoly capital in the Insurance sector and other vital and strategic sectors of the economy, 6) stringent action against dumping of foreign products in Indian market, 7) forthwith stoppage of disinvestment of PSU shares alongwith scrapping of Disinvestment Commission and 8) re-tuning the financial/fiscal/revenue policies in those directions.

CPSTU urges upon your party to consider the above policy measures in the national interest. We importunate upon you to spell out your party's policy on the public sector and their future in the interest of the country and its self reliant economic growth in clear and unambiguous terms. We strongly urge upon you to explain this in your Election Manifesto being released on the eve of the ensuing Parliamentary/Assembly elections to enable the people in general and the public sector workers in particular to comprehend the position and take a stand. We expect your party to keep the national interest in the uppermost in this regard.

Thanking You,

UNORGANISED SECTOR WORKERS CONVENTION AT CALCUTTA

CITU, Calcutta District Committee organised a district level convention of unorganised workers on 12 August. Calcutta alone has about 10 lakh workers in 42 identified trades from self employed headload workers to Anganwadi women. The convention noted that despite some impressive struggles and resultant gains, there still much to be done the unorganised sector, since in the present day economic liberalisation their condition has worsened. The convention resolved to take fresh initiative to organise specially the women workers in Beedi, tailoring, saleswomanship, hawking, ICDS and municipal health services, etc. It resolved to carry out relentless campaign for elimination of child labour in this sector. As the immediate task, on the face of next parliamentary election, it was emphasised the need to defeat the fundamentalist BJP and Trinamul combine and also Congress party who are responsible for the sub human life of workers in these trades, jobs. Com.Md Nizamuddin presided over the convention.

Com.Ashim Banerjee placed the report. Raghunath Keshari and Jayanta Dasgupta spoke on the immediate task and explained the role of the Left Front.

CONTRACT LABOUR BOARD RECOMMENDATION

It is reported that the Central Contract Labour Advisory Board has submitted its final recommendation in the matter of deployment of contract labour in various establishments of Indian Airlines, Air India and Airport Authority of India Ltd. on 20th July, 1999.

There have been numerous cases where workers and trade unions have moved to High Courts seeking abolition of contract labour and "by and large, these writ petitions have been disposed by the high courts with the order that the matter should appropriately be dealt with under section 10 of the Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act, 1970 and therefore directing the Central Govt/ Central Advisory Contract Labour Board to dispose the matter under this section of the Act, within specified time limit."

Accordingly, the Contract Labour Advisory Board has examined the case in its various meetings on the basis of representation from various contract workers' trade unions functioning in Indian Airlines, Air India and Airport Authority and also on the basis of from the trade unions and the concerned management and representatives of the concerned ministry and submitted their final recommendation to the govt of India. The CITU Unions in all the Airports also took up the matters with right earnest with the Contract Labour Board and other authorities.

In the said report, The Contract Labour Advisory Board has recommended abolition of contract labour system in various operations in the Indian Airlines, Air India and Airport Authority in respect of 1) aero bridge workers and lift operators (as in Chennai) and sharp shooters (as in Calcutta) 2) in day to day maintenance and operation of air conditioning plants, generator sets and electrical installations except where these are being undertaken by manufacturer/original supplier as part of the supply arrangements (and except in case of annual overhauling and major breakdown/ replacement of components, 3) maintenance and operation of effluent treatment plants, 4) telephone operators, 5) apron cleaning activity, 6) canteen vendors and cabin catering cleaners, 6) activity of cargo-handling, 7) day to day maintenance and

operation of all fire fighting equipments including fire extinguishers and appliances, except annual periodical maintenance, 8) Split Flap Display system operation, 9) conveyer system, 10) electrical maintenance of high mast towers, car park and flood lights and street lights, 11) maintenance (not repair) of air curtains and sliding doors in Airport Authority. The Board also categorically recommended that the question of abolition of contract labour system need be confined only the 16 Airports in respect of activities of Airport Authority of India, Air India and Indian Airlines, viz, Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Calcutta, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Thiruvananthapuram, Ahmedabad, Goa, Calicut, Cochin, Guwahati, Coimbatore, Mangalore, Varanasi and Pune.

The Contract Labour Advisory Board did NOT recommend abolition of contract labour system specifically in respect of 1) in plumbing, carpentry and masonry work, pump operation, pump repairing and gardening, 2) activity of flushing of aircraft, 3) operation of water treatment plant, 4) bird scaring operation, 5) Trolley Retrieval, car parking counter clerks, 6) jobs of frisking of visitors and passengers in Airports, 7) bush cutting, 8) servicing, major/minor repairs and overhauling of folk lifts and tractors, repair/maintenance/servicing of air conditioners installed in any kind of vehicles, upholstery on all kinds work of vehicles, repairing and painting of vehicles, stitching of container curtains and telephone mechanics in Air India, 9) activity of cleaning of computer terminal and associated equipment.

Further, the Board has also commented in specific terms that the question of status of canteen employees (whether run on contract or through a co-operative or committee of workers) should be examined at greater length as a general question as to whether an essential welfare activity, can be, within the framework of section 10 of the Act, be construed as necessary or incidental to the trade or occupation of the principal employer.

The Board also recommended that in all Airports wherever contract labour system is in vogue or allowed to be continued in respect of operations of Airport Authority, Air India and Indian Airlines,

the salary paid to the contract workers shall not be less than the lowest minimum emoluments (consisting of basic pay and dearness allowance) that are in force in respect of the regular employees concerned of Airport Authority of India, Indian Airlines and Air India.

While examining the case of contract labour deployed in the township and housing colonies related to Indian Airlines, Air India and Airport Authority, the Board observed that while there was no statutory compulsion to establish and maintain these townships, it was done essentially as a welfare measure. Since the entire question of the interpretation of the term "establishment" and applicability of the Act to township is now pending before a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court, the Board noted that it may be advisable to await

the ruling of the Supreme Court in that regard. It is learnt that many of the workers' representatives in the Contract Labour Advisory Board have not agreed to with the Board's recommendation in respect of continuance of the contract labour system in many areas of operation in those three establishment related to civil aviation. In fact, many areas like Trolley retrieval, Car parking counter, frisking of visitors and passengers, servicing/maintenance/repair of vehicle, folk lift and tractors, water treatment plant and many other operations, the jobs are of permanent and continuous nature and warrant discontinuance and abolition of the contract labour system. In respect of those areas the matter has to be taken up with the concerned authority by the trade unions.

CONSPIRACY TO ROB WORKERS' SAVINGS

The most dangerous news for wage earners has come out in the press on 20th August. BJP/NDA have "pledged" in their election manifesto to their national and international big business friends that if elected, they would amend acts so that huge amount of money from Provident Fund, Pension Fund and Insurance Funds would be made available to them to be invested in stock (share) market. In a poor country like ours, these are the only savings for wage earners to take care of their old age. So far utmost caution and care has been taken so that the funds are not misused, frittered away or wasted by way of wrong or unsecured investments. Govt. have so far been cautious in recommending institutions, schemes or bonds for investment so as to ensure full protection of the life's savings of a worker. The amount of money in all three funds will add upto a staggering two lakh crores of rupees.

Now the big business, the foreign financial institutions, the speculators have their watering month for this huge money, and BJP/NDA has promised to make them to be happy. They are out to loot the poor workers money to be used in speculative activities which is nothing but gambling in share market.

It is not a fact that money from these funds are not available to the industry or commerce. LIC, GIC, UTI, IDBI and many such institutions get money from these funds and invest in industries, infrastructure development projects and also in business. But still the sharks are not happy. They want to grab it fully and BJP is out to oblige them, and, of course, get enough in return.

But this is workers' money. This is not the property of BJP or any other party neither they have the right to decide on that. The Central Board of Trustees (CBT) for PF where trade unions have equal representation, decide on all the investments. Nobody in the CBT not to speak of any trade union representative have given any suggestions for investment in stock market. Then how and why the BJP and its cohorts can make such an irresponsible promise to big business and 'dalals' over workers' money?

We, upto a single worker, must stand up and fight against this monstrous conspiracy to usurp hard-earned savings of the workers by big-business and teach a lesson to those conspirators. CITU, INTUC, BMS, AITUC and HMS have jointly opposed the conspiratorial move of BJP/NDA in a statement issued on 18th August'99.

REPORTS & EVENTS

TAMIL NADU

POLICE ACTION ON TEA GARDEN WORKERS

The Manjolai tea estates are located in a very picturesque, mountainous part of Tirunelveli district in Tamil Nadu. The workers in the Manjolai tea estates were worst exploited and are not even getting their meagre wages, their wages for couple of months now. Trade unions have been involved in organising the workers — a large proportion of whom are dalits. But they are facing an adamant and high-handed management supported by the DMK government.

More than a month ago, the workers staged a demonstration in front of the camp office of the district collector of Tirunelveli. 652 workers — 454 men and 198 women were arrested and sent to the central jail in Tiruchirapalli, nearly 300 kilometers away.

On July 23, 1999, several political parties — including Tamil Maanila Congress (TMC), Puthia Tamilagam (PT), CPI(M) and CPI-organised a massive procession to the district collector's office in Tirunelveli, seeking the release of workers and payment of their wages of several months. The district

administration amassed the police in large numbers to terrorise the protesters. The leaders of the political parties — Balakrishnan of TMC (leader of the opposition in the state assembly), V Palani (CPI-M) district secretary), Dr Krishnaswamy (leader of Puthiya Tamilagam), M S Thenu (CPI

district secretary) went in a jeep, to present a memorandum to the collector. The police refused to let them proceed. While the leaders were talking with the police officials, the police fired in the air and then began pelting stones at the procession and at the political leaders. Comrade Palani was badly hurt by a stone thrown by the police. He suffered a head injury and did not recover consciousness until two days later. Currently, he is in the intensive care unit of the government hospital at Tirunelveli.

The police pushed the crowd into a corner, and brutally lathicharged them. Surrounded on three sides by the rampaging police, and on the fourth side by the river Tamiraparani, many people simply jumped into the river to save themselves from the police. Unable to swim, several men and women, including a two-year-old child were drowned. So far nineteen bodies have been recovered (as of July 26), and it is feared that several more may have died. Xavier, a photographer from the Tamil daily Dinamani was assaulted by the police even as he was taking pictures of the scene, and his camera smashed to pieces. Far from expressing regret at the turn of events, DMK law minister blamed the protesting workers and the opposition parties. In a belated move and in an effort to stem the rising tide of people's opposition, the DMK government released the

652 estate workers on July 24.

The opposition parties as well as independent opinion leaders have condemned the barbaric police action. On July 28, a hunger strike by leaders of the opposition parties was held at the secretariat building at Chennai, which had drawn large crowd. The DMK leadership's attempt to give a casteist twist to what is essentially a working class action has not cut ice with the public.

The CITU state secretariat has called for statewide demonstrations on July 30 condemning police brutality, and demanding: action against the district collector and the superintendent of police; Rs five lakh compensation to the family of each person killed, and adequate compensation for those injured; and Inquiry on the whole incident by a sitting High Court judge.

(From A Balu)

COMMUNAL
FORCES
SHALL NOT BE
ALLOWED
TO TAKE OVER
INDIA !

REPORTS & EVENTS

WEST BENGAL

STATE CONVENTION OF PSU UNIONS

Representatives of the various central TU's working at different sectors of the economy got together in a convention in Calcutta on 10th August. The TU's taking part in the convention were; CITU, AITUC, INTUC, TUCC, UTUC, 12th July Committee, BEFI, and UTUC (Lenin Sarani). Several trade union leaders and activists from the PSU unions from all over the state took part in the convention. Addressing the Convention, state general secretary of the CITU, Chittabrata Majumdar said that the new industrial policy of the 'caretaker government' in Delhi was assuming dangerous dimensions. Desperate in its financial imbroglio, the BJP-led government had taken to drastic measures in doing away with the state sector while seeking to draw

as much personal financial gain as possible for the ministers and their henchmen.

Majumdar said that liberalization of the economy has reached a stage where the sovereignty of the nation was being sold down the river. It was also robbing the national reserve of foreign exchange. The MNC's work ethics, Majumdar continued, was acting in reducing workforce while the country is groaning under the burden of a spiraling unemployment. The BJP government had singled out the public sector in the country to dismantle and demolish at the command of their Fund-Bank bosses.

Majumdar also pointed out how the province of Bengal, in particular, was subjected to deprivation. During its 13-month-

long misrule, the BJP-led government had made sure that seven leading state sector units of the province simply wither away by cutting of all necessary budgetary allocations. More than 50 thousand of the workers here have been forced to accept the VRS.

In a resolution adopted unanimously at the convention, it was said that the BJP-run caretaker outfit up in Delhi must put a halt to the process of disinvestment of the state sector, and instead of weakening the state sector, must provide the necessary start-up capital to those industrial units which have fallen sick or are about to face closure. Leaders of the trade unions from coal, steel, fertilisers and other PSUs also addressed the convention.

(From B Prasant)

STEEL WORKERS OBSERVE PROTEST DAY

The new wage agreement in steel industry is long overdue, from 1-1-97. But the workers demonstrated exemplary patience considering the serious crises in the industry and demanded interim relief to be paid immediately pending final settlement. After a lot of negotiation the steel management had agreed in the national bipartite forum -NJCS for a monthly adhoc payment to the workers roughly equal to 12% of the basic pay from

July, 99. But the management of SAIL and TISCO did not implement their commitment, rather came out with stringent conditionalities of curtailment of many of the existing benefits monetary or otherwise, in lieu of the payment of said monthly adhoc payment.

The Steel Workers' Federation of India in its working committee meeting held on 9th August, 99 at Rourkela decided to oppose such a negative design of the Steel

Management and organise massive protest of workers in all the steel centres all over the country. Till going to press, reports of massive demonstration have been received from Durgapur, IISCO, Rourkela, Salem, Bhilai, and marketing offices and stockyards at Calcutta, Mumbai, Indore, Ahmedabad, Ghaziabad and other cities and in the iron ore mines and Quarries under SAIL in response to the call.

MORNOI TEA GARDEN MURDERS

MANAGEMENT-INTUC NEXUS EXPOSED

On 16th May this year Smt Sita Marandi a woman trade union leader of Morno TE in Kokrajhar district of Assam and a State Committee member of CITU Assam along with her two associates Smt Misfa Guria (27) and Smt Namlin Guria (30) were gunned down by some armed assassins. The gruesome incident was preceded by the ghastly murders of Smt Sagarika Soren, founder Secretary of Morno garden unit, Namani Asom Chah Mazdoor Sangha (CITU) whose deadbody was kept hanging from a tree in September 1996 and Smt Anabrita Barla, Asstt Secretary of the unit on 31st January this year. CITU Assam State Committee and its affiliated union at Morno TE had so long been expressing deep apprehensions that the assassins involved in these murders were hired by the owners of the Morno TE in league with the leadership of INTUC affiliated unions with a sinister design to physically liquidate the leaders and activists of CITU affiliated union there. This was aimed at stemming the growing influence of CITU among the workers of Morno TE.

The worst apprehension of CITU was confirmed in the FIR dated 2nd June 1999 submitted by 6th Jat Regiment Army to the Office-in-Charge of Gossaigoan police station. The FIR stated that at around 4.25 PM on 1st June 1999 the army successfully

apprehended a person named Budhi Ram Baskey a member of action group of Adibasi Cobra Force along with weapons and ammunition like on .38 revolver marked "made in USA" and six live rounds of 9 mm calibre cartridge from Sapkata relief camp. FIR while giving details of the confessions made by Budhi Ram Baskey stated that the said Baskey admitted about his personal involvement in the murder of Mrs Sita Marandi and about the involvement of his accomplice Chandan Soren in killing Mrs Misfa Guria and Namin Guria. The FIR further stated that Budhi Ram Baskey "has confessed of getting Rs 1,00,000 every three months for Adivasi Cobra Force from the management of Morno Tea Estate." The said Baskey also confessed that Sebastion Hemkam and Ignathus Hemram residing in Morno TE provided shelter and support to the Adivasi Cobra Force. These startling revelations bring to light the despicable length to which the owners of the Morno TE have gone in thwarting the advance of the CITU so as to perpetuate their ruthless exploitation on the workers in brazen violation of all rules including the Plantation Labour Act in league with the INTUC leadership.

In the light of the facts mentioned by the above FIR of the Army, the CITU, Assam State Committee

urged upon the State Govt to institute a high level inquiry by the CBI to unearth the whole facts regarding involvement of the owners of the Morno TE in all the five murder cases including that of Mrs Sagarika Soren and their act of abetting the terrorist forces to serve their narrow personal design.

MASSIVE RALLY OF SOLAPUR BEEDI WORKERS

The public meeting on the 25th of July marked the beginning of the election campaign of Adam Master, the sitting CPI(M) MLA. The President of the Lal Bawta Beedi Kamgar Union, Mangala Hotgi, started the meeting with a condolence resolution for Comrade Vimal Ranadive, the Vice President of the All India Beedi Workers Federation.

The beedi workers in Sholapur number about 50,000, of whom more than 90% are women. For the past many years a significant number have been organised under the CITU banner.

A mass rally beedi workers, joined by power loom and other sector workers, was held at Solapur on 25th July'99. Adam Master, MLA, P K Ganguly, Secretary, CITU, Ranjana Nirula, AICCWW, K L Bajaj, Vivek Monterio, Suman Sanzgiri and other addressed.

MUMBAI: TRADE UNION SEMINAR ON GLOBALISATION AND COMMUNAL DANGER

"It is now stated that globalisation must have a human face but market knows only profiteering and hence cannot have a human face. The trade unions stand for secularism, democracy and social justice in this multilingual and multi-religious country. The working class stands for communal harmony and should defeat the forces of communalism and fundamentalism. The best force to fight against the impact of globalisation, liberalisation, privatisation and the forces of communalism are the trade unions, which should unitedly face these challenges."

This was the call given by the Trade Union Seminar held at Mumbai on 1-2 August, 1999 under the auspices of Shramik Pratisthan.

The seminar on 'Trade Union Movement on the Threshold of 21st century' was attended by a host of representatives. Among them were P.R.Krishnan and K.L. Bajaj from Maharashtra State Committee CITU, K.L. Mahendra (AITUC), Umaraomal Purohit (HMS), Sukomal Sen and R.G.

Kanniah (All India State Government Employees Federation), Shanti Patel and S.R. Kulkarni (Mumbai Port and Dock), Raja Kulkarni and Trivedi (INTUC), Bagaram Tulpule, Mohit Sen and others.

On behalf of the Shramik Pratisthan, Chitnis of AITUC explained the aim of the seminar. Indrajit Gupta, President, WFTU, inaugurated the seminar. Shanti Patel presided.

A number of written papers, including that of Sukomal Sen, General Secretary, AISGEF was read out in the seminar and discussion followed. The seminar was unanimous about the new danger posed by the neo-liberal globalisation. The question of the danger of communalism also came in for discussion. The offensive of globalisation and the danger of communalism and religious fundamentalism can be met only by a united trade union movement.

On the question of trade union unity, several view points were placed. Some suggested merger of all trade unions. The case of the

failed attempt for merger of AITUC and HMS was also raised. CITU representatives expressed the view that the best and plausible course for achieving total trade union unity is to form a confederation of all trade unions and national federations.

The question of organising the vast multitude of unorganised labour and the formidably rising unemployment also came in for discussion. Necessity was felt to link the organised trade union movement with that of the unorganised labour and the unemployed.

The impact of new technology on the working class was also a point for discussion. Speakers expressed the view that new technology is being used only for extracting more profits at the cost of labour. While not opposing new technology, the speakers felt that the workers should have a say on the choice of new technology.

The seminar ended with an open session attended by about 200 activists of several trade unions and finally a declaration was adopted.

TAMIL NADU STATE CITU MEETING

Tamil Nadu State Committee of CITU has appealed to the people of Tamil Nadu, to ensure the defeat of the communal forces, in the ensuing elections.

The State Committee met at Chennai, under the chairmanship of J. Hemachandran, President of State CITU. The Committee condemned the police brutalities against the demonstrators in Thirunelveli, on 23rd July, which resulted in the death of 18 people. The committee also condemned the privatisation drive of the central and state government, demanded reopening of closed units and sanction of relief of Rs.1000 per month to the workers of closed units. (Report from A.K. Padmanabhan)

Consumer Price Index Numbers for Industrial Workers on base: 1982 = 100

Sr. No	Centre	Apr 99	May 99	June 99	Sr. No.	Centre	Apr 99	May 99	June 99
1	Gudur	422	430	431	45	Amritsar	377	375	371
2	Guntur	406	414	415	46	Ludhiana	379	377	376
3	Hyderabad	391	396	394	47	Ajmer	396	408	410
4	Visakhapatnam	400	407	406	48	Jaipur	388	384	382
5	Warangal	408	409	410	49	Chennai	440	445	447
6	D D Tinsukia	387	388	388	50	Coimbatore	386	390	395
7	Guwahati	423	432	438	51	Coonoor	405	412	410
8	Labac-Silchar	363	378	380	52	Madurai	410	416	420
9	Mariani Jorhat	412	410	408	53	Salem	403	402	408
10	Rangapara-Tezpur	400	400	401	54	Tiruchirapally	450	463	460
11	Jamshedpur	385	385	383	55	Agra	388	388	388
12	Jharia	352	354	355	56	Ghaziabad	431	436	436
13	Kodarma	365	368	371	57	Kanpur	418	418	422
14	Monghyr Jamalpur	392	392	403	58	Saharanpur	381	384	386
15	Noamundi	368	369	368	59	Varanasi	464	468	475
16	Ranchi-Hatia	399	399	406	60	Asansol	387	392	392
17	Ahmedabad	406	416	420	61	Calcutta	422	427	428
18	Bhavnagar	434	442	446	62	Darjeeling	375	376	382
19	Rajkot	402	405	402	63	Durgapur	426	426	426
20	Surat	422	424	432	64	Haldia	450	452	458
21	Vadodra	400	402	405	65	Howrah	462	470	473
22	Faridabad	426	426	428	66	Jalpaiguri	384	391	393
23	Yamunanagar	385	386	387	67	Raniganj	369	369	369
24	Srinagar	483	462	453	68	Chandigarh	440	449	450
25	Bangalore	400	403	405	69	Delhi	471	471	470
26	Belgaum	450	455	455	70	Pondicherry	454	461	458
27	Hubli-Dharwar	425	430	434					
28	Mercara	443	441	441		All India	415	419	420
29	Alwaye	421	426	423					
30	Mundakayam	433	437	443		Additional Series of Labour Bureau			
31	Quilon	425	424	424	1	Kothagudem	415	422	426
32	Thiruvananthapuram	468	467	475	2	Himachal Pradesh	404	400	399
33	Balaghat	374	378	381	3	Bhilwara	414	414	413
34	Bhilai	362	367	371	4	Chhindwara	417	404	417
35	Bhopal	437	440	442	5	Tripura	404	412	414
36	Indore	420	420	423	6	Goa	475	479	483
37	Jabalpur	424	426	429					
38	Mumbai	464	470	468					
39	Nagpur	432	432	435					
40	Nasik	420	424	428					
41	Pune	460	469	466					
42	Solapur	439	436	443					
43	Barbil	378	384	383					
44	Rourkela	387	390	390					

Government of India
Ministry of Labour
Labour Bureau
Shimla - 171 004

TRIBUTES TO VIMALDI



In a condolence meeting held at Pyarelal Bhawan, New Delhi on August 2, 1999, glowing tributes were paid to Comrade Vimal Ranadive by leaders of different trade unions and mass organisations.

The meeting was organised by CITU and presided over by Kanai Banerjee, Secretary. Several hundred workers, including many women, attended the meeting.

M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, who spoke first, recalled his long association with Vimaldi and her contribution to the working class movement in India, particularly in the CITU.

She concentrated on organising the unorganised workers: in beedi, plantations, and anganwadi. She always emphasised the need to organise women workers for which she travelled widely throughout the country in spite of her advanced age. Her valuable contribution and commitment to building the working women's movement in India will always be remembered, he said.

Jaya Jaitly (HMKP) remembered Vimaldi as being soft spoken and mild with all her comrades and very strong in the struggle. Jaitly said that though she differed with Vimaldi on ideological issues her contribution to the joint movement for women's welfare can never be forgotten.

Amarjeet Kaur, Secretary, AITUC, said that Vimaldi was one of those who are 'made of a special metal' and it was really an experience to

work with her. Kaur remembered her association with Vimaldi in the Anganwadi movement and said that Vimaldi was always concerned about the well-being of those she worked with.

Brinda Karat, General Secretary, AIDWA, recalled Vimaldi's role as a founder of the AIDWA and her significant contribution to the women's movement. Brinda spoke about Vimaldi's commitment to communist ideology and her understanding that the fight against the oppression of women could only be successful as part of the larger fight for an end to exploitation in society. She said that Vimaldi took up women's issues and fought for gender equality in the trade unions.

Kanai Banerjee, Secretary, CITU, remembered that even though she was the wife of the late Com.B T Ranadive, she was known in her own identity throughout her life. Vimaldi took up the cause of working women and it was her firm belief and commitment to the tenets of scientific socialism which gave her the strength to work among the masses, he said.

Others who paid their homage were R Sharma UTUC(LS), K Neogi (AICCTU), N K Shukla (AIKS), S R Saini (AIIEA), Ashok Rao (NCOA), Suneet Chopra (AIAWU) and K Hemalata.

S B Bharadwaj placed the condolence resolution on Vimaldi.

A photo exhibition on her life was displayed at the venue.

(Kali Ghosh, Secretary, is the CITU nominee on the ESI Corporation. He has been mounting persistent pressure on the ESIC for effective implementation of the beneficial provisions of the ESI Scheme and also to remove various problems and harassment faced by the workers. His efforts in regard to medical benefits for permanently disabled and retired workers have yielded results. Here is a report. Similar efforts can be made at other regions as well. Editor)

ESI BENEFITS FOR DISABLED/RETIRED WORKERS

The Employees State Insurance Scheme, came into being in the year 1950. The CITU while criticising the inadequacies of the scheme, had been making consistent efforts to improve the benefits under the scheme.

One such area for improvement was in relation to the workers who are permanently disabled and those who have retired/superannuated.

In 1991, Rules 60 and 61 were inserted by a Notification dated the 22nd January 1999, extending medical benefits, as contained therein, with effect from 1st February 1991. The relevant rules are reproduced below:

60. Medical benefits to insured person who ceases to be in an insurable employment on account of permanent disablement.—An insured person who ceases to be in an insurable employment on account of permanent disablement caused due to an employment injury shall be eligible to receive medical benefits for himself and his spouse at the scale prescribed under the Act and the regulations made thereunder till the date on which the he would have vacated the employment on attaining the age of superannuation, had he not sustained such permanent disablement, subject to:

i) the production of proof by such

an insured person that he ceased to be in an insurable employment on account of permanent disablement due to employment injury to the satisfaction of such officer as may be authorised by the Corporation; and

ii) the payment of contribution at the rate of ten rupees per month in lump sum for one year at a time in advance to the concerned office of the Corporation in the manner prescribed by it.

61. Medical benefits to retired insured persons: An insured person who leaves the insurable employment on attaining the age of superannuation after being insured for not less than five years, shall be eligible to receive medical benefits for himself and his spouse at the scale prescribed under the Act and the regulations made thereunder, subject to:

i) the production of proof of his superannuation and having been in the insurable employment for a minimum of five years to the satisfaction of such officers as may be authorised by the Corporation; and

ii) the payment of contribution at the rate of ten rupees per month in lump sum for one year at a time in advance to the concerned office of the Corporation in the manner prescribed by it.

But the ESI authorities were very

reluctant to implement these rules.

The Insurance Commissioner of the ESIC, in response to the communications of Kali Ghosh, Secretary, CITU, had instructed the Regional Office at Calcutta, to undertake the following measures:

a) To give maximum publicity to the benefits available under Rules 60 and 61 to the insured persons so that they can get the medical benefits without unnecessary delay.

b) To issue fresh instructions to the local authorities in this regard.

c) To make available appropriate informations to the members of the Local Boards of the ESIC

d) To put up notices in this regard in all the ESI hospitals and dispensaries.

e) To ensure sufficient availability of the required forms etc in all the local offices for facilitating the insured persons to claim these benefits under these rules.

The ESI authorities have also clarified that it is not necessary that five years insurable employment should be continuous prior to the superannuation. Such retired Insured Persons who have completed five years of service, during the tenure of their insurable employment, may be considered eligible for medical benefit under ESI (Central) Rule 61