

CENTRE OF INDIAN TRADE UNIONS

172, Lenin Sarani  
Calcutta.13.

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Com.B.T.Ranadive, President, Centre of Indian Trade Unions has issued the following press to the Press:

The CITU warns the public against the mischievous and deliberately misleading statements of the Railway Minister which create the impression that the situation on the railways is returning to normal. The fact is that the Railways have now become a boiling cauldron of discontent, resentment and anger and the nearly two million workers are poised for one of the biggest mass actions on 8th May.

The Railway Minister is doing his best to conceal reality and yet he is unable to do it. Hundreds of trains stand cancelled. While he is prattling about normalcy, he has to admit the use of the territorial army personnel to run the trains in Gujarat; the paralysation of traffic in Bombay, in Madras and several other places. Thousands are already on strike and the Railway Minister describes it as just absenteeism. The arbitrary and illegal arrests of nearly five thousand railway workers and leaders including Com.George Fernandes and Com.Barua, General Secretary of LRSA have failed to intimidate the workers and made the strike inevitable. The Congress majority in the Lok Sabha has stultified itself by acting as the rubber stamp of an irresponsible executive and has done its best to reduce the Parliament to a talking shop.

The railway workers are not asking for the moon. They are producing enough surplus. They are subsidising cheap transport - the entire subsidy amounting to more than Rs.250 crores. The main beneficiaries of this subsidy are not the people but the capitalists and profiteers. The Railway Minister presents a false picture of railway finances and cites figures to show that the workers' wages have been continuously rising. This is nothing but petty chicanery in argument. The fact is that all these monetary increases are due to inflationary prices resulting from Govt. policies and have not added an iota to the real wage of the railway workers. The Pay Commission itself found out that all those who earned above Rs.85 per month had their wages eroded during the last twenty years. Its contention that those below Rs.85 got a real rise of 5 per cent is also debatable. The railway minister conveniently by-passes this fact to prejudice the public against the workers.

The CITU warns the public against this game of incitement. Anti-social elements have already been recruited to assault the workers and intimidate them. And these gangster attacks will be represented as the intervention of a suffering public. The people must protest against these hooligan methods and stand firmly by the railway workers, notwithstanding the inconveniences that might be caused by the strike. They must also denounce the administration's proposal to use the territorial and regular army personnel, for strike-breaking purposes. The jawans are recruited to fight the enemies of the country, not to fight the strikers and attack democratic rights.

The Govt. must take heed of the situation that is

reaching a climax. The Central employees driven to desperation have also decided to observe work-to-rule agitation and resort to strike from 10th May if the Govt. remains unresponsive.

The people will have full sympathy for their struggle.

There is yet time to save the situation. The Rly. administration has refused to discuss three main demands including the need-based wage, parity of wage with public sector undertakings and bonus. They have refused them out of hand and asked the workers to be satisfied with some minor concessions. This attitude must change if the negotiations are to be meaningful.

But the Congress Party and the Govt. seem determined to use brute force to crush the railway workers. If they do this, it will destroy whatever credibility the regime possesses. If the parliament allows them to choose the path of repression, it will only mean that the Congress majority has not only ceased to have any contact with popular suffering, it has become anti-people.

For favour of publication:  
To  
The News Editor,

MUC PANDIT

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