

THE VOICE

OF

THE WORKING WOMAN



Vol IV No 3

May 1984

Re 1.00



In This Issue

President CITU Greet Women On May Day	2
Mahila Samiti, West Bengal holds huge Rally	3
Observance of 8th March	4-5
Women in Bengal come Forward in support of Jute Strike	6
3rd Convention of Working Women	7-10
Dahej Virodhi Chetna Manch submits Memorandum to PM	
Delhi Women hold Dharna	11
Gwalior, Kota and Ganganagar Conference of AIDWA	
Convention of Working Women in Orissa	12-13
We have become human beings under CITU	14
7th Five Year Plan and Women	15-16
Air Hostesses Against Pollutant Discrimination	17-18
Make Equality real, not formal—WFTU	
Peasants Women's first National Assembly	
Welcome Dorothy Nyeme	19-21
Working Wives and Their Lives	22-23
Greetings from WFTU	
Anti Dowry Bill Introduced at last	24

President CITU Greet Women on May Day

On behalf of the CITU, I offer my warm May Day greetings to "The Voice of Working Woman" and its readers. I am glad to know that the Voice of the Working Woman is expanding its circles of readers. This reflects the growing consciousness among working women who have registered significant advances in the past year. Their awakening is seen in the fact that the CITU unions are now seriously engaged in taking the problems facing the women workers. The convention of working women held on April 17th will no doubt give a further impetus to the movement. In several places, the women have secured successes against unfair and unequal wage, against denial of minimum amenities. Many are coming to the forefront in the struggle of their trade unions. Yet much remains to be done.

I am sure, this year will see further advance with women participating in the leadership of the unions, waging a relentless fight against discrimination joining hands with all progressive forces and defend democracy at home and peace abroad.

B. T. RANADIVE

FORM IV

1. Place of Publication
6, Talkatora Road, New Delhi-110001
2. Periodicity of Publication
Bi-monthly
3. Printers name whether citizen of India, Address.
Vimala Ranadive, Yes, 6, Talkatora Road, New Delhi-110001.
4. Publisher's name, whether citizen of India, address.
Vimala Ranadive, Yes, 6, Talkatora Road, New Delhi-110001.
5. Editor's name, whether citizen of India.
Vimala Ranadive, Yes,
6. Name and Address of individuals, who own the newspaper and partners or shareholders holding more than one per cent of the total capital.
Centre of Indian Trade Unions
6, Talkatora Road New Delhi-110001.

I, Vimala Ranadive, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated: 2nd March, 1983

Sd/-Vimala Ranadive
Publisher

(From IV could not be published in the March issue due to inadvertence although the matter was ready for the press).

West Bengal Mahila Samiti holds huge rally of women

Calcutta City witnessed a huge meeting of women, perhaps for the first time in the history, attended predominantly by various sections of women in industry and in the offices on 10 April 1984 organised by Gantantrik Mahila Smiti (AIDWA). Women started arriving by buses and trains one day earlier at Sialdha and Howrah stations. Almost all districts, were represented in the meeting. Women workers from Plantation in Darjeeling District, agricultural women from Cooch Bihar, Adivasi Santhal women from Birbhum, women workers in mines in Asansol and Raniganj, teachers, nurses, office employees from every department women poured at Shahid Minar to hear their leaders. Two processions, one from Sialdha and another from Howrah arrived at Maidan shouting slogans with the flags of Mahila Samiti. Mothers with small babies sleeping in their arms, grand daughters holding the hands of their grandmas walked in line in the procession. It was in fact a day for women!

Com. Jyoti Basu, the Chief Minister addressing the huge masses said without the participation of women in the struggles, no democratic movement is possible and successful. He cited the example of mass participation of women of all classes in the national movement challenging the British rulers. There will be no progress in the society unless half of the population joins the mainstream of the movement. He said it was a fact that the political consciousness of the exploited women in West Bengal has increased, they have become leaders in the villages and towns. But what about the present position of women in our country under a woman Prime Minister? He inquired. Dowry deaths continue, Harijan children are burnt, women can not move out in the capital after dark. While turning to the conditions of working women in West Bengal he said the Left Front Government was paying

attention to the employment of women, to implement the Equal Remuneration Act. No Congress ruled state was able to implement this Act. While explaining the present situation in West Bengal he stressed the point that "while the reactionary forces were raising their heads in West Bengal, the women's movement and the democratic movement of the people must go ahead hand in hand to defeat them". He appealed to the women to come forward for changing the present set up of the society..."

Com. Kanak Mukherjee, the President of G.M.S. presided over the meeting. The 12-point charter of demands was presented by her to the Chief Minister to be forwarded to the Prime Minister. Com. Shyamali Gupta, the General Secretary of G.M.S. explained as to how the propaganda work was organised all over Bengal resulting thousands of women joining the rally. The women's committees in the districts worked for three months continuously to make the rally a success. She appealed to women to fight for peace.

Com. Nriupama Chatterjee, Minister for Relief & Rehabilitation said women have been given some jobs in 80 blocks in West Bengal. In villages and towns women are fighting to assert for their rights.

The massive meeting of women in Calcutta opened a historical page in the democratic movement in West Bengal. An ordinary peasant woman told the organisers that 'I have come, not to visit Calcutta, but come to attend the meeting... to hear...'

The 12-point charter included : Supply of 14 essential articles at moderate price through ration shops; broadening the scope of women's education and employment; inclusion of the right to education and the right to employment in the Constitution as Fundamental Rights; carrying into effects of the Dowry Prohibition Act; outlawing of lockouts, and closures; Equal pay for equal work and immediate implementation of the Maternity Benefit & Plantation Labour Acts.

Observance of March 8 : International Womens Day

Durgapur, W. Bengal

In response to a call from the Steel workers, Federation of India like last year, International women's Day was observed on 8 March 1984 in all the Steel Cities. Convention and rallies were organised by working women which were participated by broader democratic women mass. Big participation of house-wives in those rallies were remarkable.

The convention organised in SWFI Head-quarter was most impressive. Nearly 500 women from every walk of life were present in the convention. Due to the active cooperation of organisations like Teachers Association, Woman's Cooperative, Contractor Workers' Organisation, local base unit of SWFI and also of Democratic Women's Organisation the gathering of women was quite impressive. Notable feature of this gathering was the participation of good number of Adivasi women, who are downtrodden both economically as well as socially. They participated not merely as mute audience but their representatives, Smt. Parvati Das and Smt. Chandmoni Baske delivered forceful speeches.

A presidium comprising of Smt. Shanti Chatterjee, Smt. Sabita Chatterjee, Smt. Mudra Patra, Smt. Chandmoni Baske, Smt. Rekha Roy, Smt. Dipali Bose, Smt. Baruna Banerjee and Smt. Chandana Sengupta, who represented different organisations and professions, conducted the proceedings. Altogether 12 women speakers, some of whom delivered their first public speeches, spoke in very animated fashion. Many women speakers regretted that though the Prime Minister of India was a woman, even then the very elementary rights and personal honour of women were not ensured. All the speakers unequivocally supported the main resolution. General Secretary of SWFI, in his speech stressed the need of

women's participation in mainstream of struggle that was being waged through the length and breadth of our country against the bourgeois-landlord misrule. He cited the examples of socialist countries like Soviet Union and China to prove that true emancipation of women was possible only under a socialist society.

Purnapani-Orissa

In Purnapani, Orissa, a public meeting was held to observe the International women's Day. They demanded that oppression on women must stop and that women should get equal rights. Smts. Premi Suria Bahmani, Jitmi Vadaik said that the doctor guilty of rape should be punished severely failing which they will fight. Congress (I) boys who gang raped an Adivasi woman should be punished severely. Purnapani Mines Mazdoor Union also congratulated the women for coming forward and fighting for their rights. The meeting also condemned gang-rape by some Congress hoodlums of an Adivasi girl.

Ganganagar-Rajasthan.

In Sriganganagar, Rajasthan Janwadi Mahila Samity held a meeting to observe International Women's Day in the Sugar Mill Colony. The women in textile, sugar mills, Mazdoor Colony, Guru Nanak Basti, Gandhi Basti and Purani Abadi have helped to make the meeting a success. Gomati Sakya said that apart from day to day demands, we have to struggle for peace and against war. Sumitra Swami spoke of the danger posed by American imperialism on mankind. She also spoke against dowry, rape and rising prices.

Bhavnagar-Gujarat.

Janawadi Mahila Sangh Gujarat Committee observed International Women's Day at Bhavnagar. They participated in a conference,

called by Pushpaben Mehta, Bajaj Award Winner, on the suicides and murders of women and what social organisations can do about it. Niru Patel, Malini Baraiya, Ira Mehta, Laxmi-ben, Kashiben took part in the discussion. On March 11, a huge public meeting was held in Bhavnagar where Principal of Teachers Training College, Ushaben Patel, and Ex-President of Chamber of Commerce spoke about present condition. In Baroda a procession went round the bazar on March 8 shouting slogans against dowry and demanding equal rights. Later on they submitted a memorandum to the Collector. The delegation consisted of Sudh Khale, Jayantika ben and others.

Bombay

The threat to world peace and imperialist attempts to promote communal and divisive forces were highlighted in a joint meeting held by Shramik Mahila Sangh (AIDWA) and others on the International Women's Day in Bombay. More than 300 women attended the meeting. Dr. Anees Syed explained how history is distorted to fan communal hatred. She said this was done by those who had a vested interest in keeping the common people away from struggles for their rights. Today because of the economic crisis and the inability of the system to provide people their elementary needs, chauvinism is being encouraged by the ruling classes, said Dr. Nalini Pandit. Meetings were also held at Uran & Talassery. In Uran 2000 women attended the meeting. Uran is the area where in the struggle of the local peasantry against the Government, 5 peasants were shot dead and many including 2 women were wounded. Those were felicitated. The main speaker was Ahilya Rangnekar. At Talassery a meeting of 300 Adivasi women was held. Dr. Sujata Dhawale was the main speaker.

Bihar

Democratic Women's Association observed

the International Women's Day in Vaishali, Patna, Lakhisarai, Madhubani, Saharsha, Jamshedpur and Khagaria. 'Mashal Julus' were taken out and street corner natak staged in many places. Women demanded better living conditions. They resolved to struggle for liberation and to end economic, social and political exploitation.

Punjab

It was difficult to hold mass rallies at district headquarters due to the deteriorating communal situation and due to the fact that all districts were under curfew in Punjab. P.D.W.A. decided to hold meetings in rural areas to observe International Women's Day against divisive forces and to strengthen democratic and secular forces. PDWA gave a call in the daily Loklahar to observe holding meetings from March 1 to March 15. Meetings were held to unite to struggle to fight for women's genuine rights and for communal harmony. The role of the Central Government was exposed in not solving the Punjab tangle. Women were told to struggle to avert nuclear holocaust and to stand by the peace loving socialist countries against Imperialism.

In Hoshiarpur, Sub-Divisional Level functions were organised at Mukeria, Gardiwalla and Garshankar. In Batala, Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Ludhiana, Patiala, Mansa, Ferozepur and Abohar, meetings were held to mark the International Women's Year.

At Patiala the working women's coordination committee was established last year on 7th March '83 on the initiative and efforts of Com. Asha. Only about 25 working women gathered that time. But this year on the same place more than 150 women employees collected to celebrate 8th March, the international women's day. At least 5 ladies including Ravinderjit Kaur, the Secretary of Patiala Co-ordination committee spoke about the importance of inter-

(on page 21)

Women in West Bengal in support of Jute Strike

Com. Sarala Maheshwari, West Bengal

The indefinite strike by about 3 lakh Jute Workers in Bengal continued for 84 days with a magnificent victory for the jute workers celebrated with a huge meeting at Shahid Minar on April 8, 1984. The introduction of grades and scales of pay for all categories of workers with immediate effect was the most significant victory for which the trade union movement has been fighting for two decades.

It is to be noted that a large a number of women working in jute industry was drastically reduced after the enactment of the Maternity Benefit Act. The present agreement arrived at between the AIJWF and the jute Mill Owners, it was agreed to maintain and improve the employment of women workers in the jute mills within the frame-work of Factories Act.

The solidarity actions by all section of people in support of the strike from all over India, the sympathy and protection extended by the Left Front Government of West Bengal were the decisive factors in the victory. The women, students and youth in West Bengal came forward to support whole-heartedly. The report received from Gantantrik Mahila Samiti did show as to how the committees worked tirelessly for the victory of the strike of the jute workers. The Gantantrik Mahila Samiti of West Bengal adopted a programme all over Bengal to hold meetings, conventions etc, in support of the striking workers.

A convention of 700 women was held on March 3 in 24 Pargana District at Titagarh. On the same day Calcutta District Committee held meetings at different places. On March 5, at the call of the State Committee, Mahila

Samiti, women demonstrated in thousands in front of the Office of Indian Jute Mill Association at Calcutta. They came in a procession from Curzon Park to the IJMA Office where Com. Shyamali Gupta, Secretary of the Mahila Samiti moved the resolution in support of the demands condemning the callous attitude of the jute owners.

Com. M. Amin, Secretary Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union was the main speaker who explained the demands. Others who addressed the meeting, were Com. Kamal Sen Gupta, Rekha Goswami and Sarala Maheshwari. Com. Prabha Chatterjee presided over the meeting. The resolution was passed unanimously.

Blood Donation By 53 Members

Under the leadership of 24 Pargana Distt. Committee of G.M.S. 53 members donated blood to the Blood Bank, the money thus realised was donated to the Jute Workers' strike fund. Com. Kamal Sengupta, the Distt. Secretary stated that this was the second time the women have donated the blood, first time at the time of drought situation in Bengal. Com. M. Amin the General Secretafary of B.C.M.U., while expressing his gratitude towards the women said that democratic women under the G.M.S. implemented the slogan of "giving blood for the workers" in practice, tying their unbreakable co-brotherenship with the Jute Workers. Apart from this, the local committees of G.M.S. sent resolutions to the Prime Minister demanding nationalisation of entire Jute Industry. Conventions in District and villages, collection of funds by women continued till the victory of the jute workers.

Fight Against The Attacks On Employment

The Third Convention of Working Women, organised by the AICCWW, (CITU), in New Delhi on April 17, was a vivid reflection of the times and conditions in which the working women in our country have to live and fight for survival. On the one hand all round attacks on their jobs, wages and conditions of work: on the other unprecedented militancy, determination and a readiness to struggle and sacrifice, which has resulted in long drawn-out actions.

In all there were 184 delegates from seventeen States - a near total all-India representation, although slightly lower than last time and fewer than originally expected, because it is examination time through out the country.

It was also interesting to note that the largest contingent of women, 29 came from violence-torn Punjab, where as recounted by one of their speakers, some were faced with threats if they dared to move out, leaving their homes and areas. This was followed by 28 from Delhi, 26 from Bihar, which has seen some grim struggles by gramsevikas, 24 from West Bengal, 22 from Tamil Nadu and 15 from Andhra Pradesh, and seven from Kerala.

A presidium consisting of Leela Das (W.B.) Rampukari Devi (Bihar) Shanta Kumari (Kerala) Laxmi (Tamilnadu) D. Sharada (Andhra) and Suman Gite (Maharashtra) conducted the proceedings. Com. Nirupama Chatterjee was the chief guest. The credential committee was announced with Com. Pramila Pandhe Mrs. Hashmi and Rekha Kamat. Com. Susheela Gopalan, M.P. in her inaugural address explained as to how the employment of women is attacked by the new technology throwing thou-

sands of women workers out of jobs. Already a large number of women were retrenched due to introduction of thrashing plant in Tobacco in Andhra. A small machine was going to be introduced in Match Industry as per the reports which would throw out women and children working in Sivakasi. The attack was coming in P & T also. She told women as to how women in coir industry in Kerala fought and broke the machinery when they were faced with retrenchment. She gave a call to women to be ready to fight the mechanisation, and retrenchment of women and fight for the right of employment for a women or man

Vimal Ranadive Secretary AICCWW highlighted in her report the various militant struggles fought under the CITU during last 2 years. She welcomed the delegates assembled from 17 states despite the short notice at the disposal of the committees in states. The important point noted in her report was, with correct guidelines at the Kanpur Conference of CITU, State Committees worked among the section of women workers under CITU while not neglecting the work among middle class women with the result, that a large section was organised under CITU giving expression to their grievances. The State Committees of CITU also helped the committees in mobilising and guiding women workers. Nirupama Chatterjee, Minister of Relief, while greeting the delegates on behalf of Left Front Government, West Bengal explained as to how the Government was helping women to organise to fight for their demands. Even the Government employees who were not allowed to participate in the struggles under Congress rule, now came forward to fight for their just

demands. She told the gathering that under the social welfare departments, all benefits used to go to upper class people earlier. The ICDS project has been expanded from 2 areas to 800 places all over Bengal, the women working here organised in trade unions under CITU.

16 delegates from the different states participated in the discussion placing their own experiences mainly how did they stand through the severe repression in the struggles, their own specific problems with regard to meagre wages, legislations, promotion, and denial of the minimum needs like toilet etc. despite major section employed were women.

Laxmi from India Meters, Madras, said there was no opportunity for job training. In leather factories there was total absence of sanitation and cleanliness leading to epidemic and illness. She gave example as to how in "Horlicks" they won demands after a successful struggle, but when the factory was transferred to other place, they were all out of jobs.

Rampukari, the General Secretary of Gram-sevika Association, Bihar, explained in detail the worse conditions of women who are employed for 25 years as Gramsevikas, with no proper training. The Government abolished these posts but through our united struggle the Bihar Government was compelled to take us back.

Meena Deshpande from LIC, Delhi said that inspite of large sections of women in LIC no provision of creche exists. She raised the question of Maternity Leave which can not be materialised due to uncertainty of confinement. Regarding promotion, men were generally given preference.

Naima Kabirana Secretary of Calcutta Municipal Corporation, West Bengal explained the huge mobilisation of women on 10 April submitting a charter of demands to Jyoti Basu, Chief Minister to be handed over to Prime Minister.

She also told how the women's movement was advancing with the help of Left Front Government.

Nazimunnissa from Kerala raised an important point of large participation of women in major struggles in Kerala, which is not reflected in their promotion on the executive committees. But with the discussion with state committee of CITU and the Coordination Committee this lag was being removed. She pointed out that most districts had now committees consisting of all sections of working women in these districts.

Gangamma from ILTD, Andhra told about the retrenchment of women due to machanisation in Tobacco in Andhra and how they were fighting against this danger.

Ravindra Jeet Kaur from Panjab emphasised the need for creche for working women which was most essential. She also raised the question of transport for women who had to work late and their safety needed to be assured. Women were called sometimes to work on holidays unofficially, sometimes they were harassed on duty. She pointed out maternity leave was given without pay. For these demands, struggles were launched under Patiala Co-ordination Committee.

Suman Gite from Bombay explained the glorious struggle of woman in Kanak Garment who have not got any wage increase for the last 10-12 years. These woman have no security of jobs. They were still fighting under CITU.

Pramila Pandhe gave details of the conditions of women workers under social welfare centres who have now been organised under CITU.

Khatoon Bibi's speech representing Rajasthan was appreciated by the delegates when she mentioned the struggle of landless labourers who fought for getting some land for housing.

They were thrown out from place to place and had to fight directly against the Government. She specifically mentioned the class character of the Government which tried to divide the working class, landless peasants on communal lines and caste lines, and therefore stressed the need to direct our strength against the Government which protects the interest of a particular class.

Jagamaya Dey, from Orissa stressed the need to raise the democratic consciousness among working women.

Basanti Das from Assam pointed out the odds against which the women had to fight, against the communal and divisive forces, while noting the fact that the forces of democracy were going ahead.

Sudha Khale from Gujarat highlighted the exploitation of women as a worker and as a woman, and appealed to fight against the social evils like Dowry.

Kiran Kappar, Himachal Pradesh pointed out lack of initiative on the part of the male comrades to involve their women folk in the political process.

Mythily Shivraman, Tamilnadu while moving the resolution on promotion of women in trade unions pointed out the problems faced by working women and the non-co-operative attitude of men in the house and in trade unions. She mentioned the lack of social services by the Government thereby the burden on women was double with no time at their disposal for social and cultural activities. Large sections were in the unorganised sector with no job security. With this situation therefore there was less percentage of women on the higher committees. She appealed to fight against this deviation.

Laxmi Saigal moved the resolution on "War & Peace" emphasising the great need to orga-

nise women to defend the world peace. Both the resolutions were passed unanimously.

Ahilya Rangnekar while summing up the discussion emphasised the need to work as the sub-committees of CITU, and to fight for equal pay, minimum wage, training facilities for working women, for employment as a fundamental right, and against reservation for jobs which was a disruptive slogan for the working class. She also said there was a great need to work among agricultural women and in the unorganised industries.

The President-CITU, B. T. Ranadive who was invited to address the gathering regretted that women had not enough time to express their views, relate to each other their experiences while working under the Co-ordination Committees. He said future convention, therefore, should be for two days minimum, which was appreciated by the delegates. He pointed out that women were an important section in the movement of the working class but their participation was very low. This was because of various constraints and feudal attitudes prevailing among men. He mentioned about the lack of facilities provided by the Government, unequal wages under the capitalist system while under socialism unequal wage and other difference were removed. He said, that women's movement was thus directed at two levels, one against the bourgeois-landlord state and the other against the feudal social attitudes, and that too in public sphere and at home. Without linking the women's question to the working class struggle, our movement will not be a revolutionary one. The working women's struggles are to be carried out through the trade unions and not from outside trade union movement. Then turning to the world situation, and the danger of war from imperialist countries he stressed the need to rally behind the socialist forces to strengthen the fight for peace. While mentioning about the Punjab

situation, he appealed to fight against the divisive forces to save the unity of the country.

Considering some weaknesses in organising, the convention on the whole was successful with participation of women from 17 states, and some deliberations could take place. But it was also a fact that more speeches on the movement from Bengal and Kerala should have been made. Unfortunately only one delegate could speak from these states due to lack of time. Another point to be noted was that there was not much discussion on their participation in the unions, and on the executive bodies. Perhaps the discussion on the resolution moved by Mythily could be of some help, and this lag would have been filled. The worse conditions were reported from women workers in Ranchi, a good 25-30 young girls who were working in Cold Drinks, Brewery, Casting Iron, Bharat Chinis etc. That no delegates could speak from these sections was also one of the weaknesses of the convention. A delegate from Dhanbad Colliery, who was the member of the Colliery Mazdoor Union, CITU could have stated her experiences in coal mines. It was due to lack of co-ordination that 50 women workers from Indore (M.P.) could not be brought to the venue of the convention from the camp. A new committee consisting of 45 women was formed.

From the credential forms, it was noted that even the minimum needs like toilets were not provided for women at their work places. The delegates also wrote in 4-5 forms their disgust with "no facilities available at all", meaning provision of creche, toilets, rest room etc. Women in P & T from Andhra reported an absence of rest room and toilets where major section are women workers. West Bengal and Kerala reported about discrimination in promotion. They reported there was no facility of creche, transport. Sexual harassment

too was mentioned by some delegates in Patiala at work places. Many women reported that they were still temporary workers. In Assam, a few delegates from P & T reported about non-availability of creche.

Taking into consideration the weaknesses, the organisers of the convention promised that the next convention would try to remove them by holding it for two days. With Com. Ranjana thanking the delegates on behalf of Delhi and AICCWW and amidst the slogans of "CITU Zindabad", the convention ended.

A Woman delegate who could not reach the Convention

Badrunissa Shaikh could not reach the venue of the Convention of Working Women held on the 17 April despite her strong will to attend and speak. She missed the train at Bombay Central by a few minutes leaving other delegates at the station worried as to what happened to Badrunissa. To their utter surprise, she presented herself at the rally at the Boat Club on 18 April, at 1 P.M. with her belongings, tired and pale. "How did you reach here?" Badrunissa said, she missed the train at Bombay Central, then travelled by the Janata, reaching Ahmedabad, changing train for Delhi which took more than 36 hours! Directed by the people and the police she somehow reached the Boat Club!

Badrunissa is employed in Kohinoor Mill No. 2 now taken over by the Government, since 1983 when her husband employed in the same mill died in 1972. Badrunissa somehow managed to get a job in the same mill. But this was not liked by the INTUC bosses, since she did not beg them for getting the job. This was her fault for which INTUC demonstrated against her employment she said. She had to borrow money just not to starve...

(on page 21)

Dahej Virodhi Chetna Manch Submits Memorandum to Prime Minister

The D.V.C.M. held an impressive dharna at the Boat Club on 27 April 1984 demanding an immediate introduction of Dowry Amendments Bill in Parliament and formation of family courts. About 250 women sat on Dharna. A delegation on behalf of the committee met the Prime Minister, the Speaker and the Law Minister to impress upon them the urgency of bringing the Bill. The delegation stated while meeting the P.M. that despite the assurance given to them by her to bring the bill in the last session, it did not see the light. The number of married women due to burning or suicide according to the Home Minister was 228 during the period from 1st December 1983 to 31 March, 1984 which was shocking. The Dowry Cells are not at all effective to deal with the cases and the criminals are being released with the connivance of the police. The Prime Minister assured the delegation that the Bill would be introduced in this session. She posed the question about the Sikh Personal Law about which there was some talk in the press. The representatives of the delegation expressed their opposition to that while demanding a common civil code for women of all communities. The representatives later reported about the visits to the women sitting on Dharna. Amidst shouting of the slogans "Indira Tere Rajme, Bahue Jalkar Marti Hain" (daughter-in-laws are burnt under your rule-Indira), the Dharna ended at 4.P.M. The delegation included the following :

Susheela Gopalan M.P. and Vimala Ranadive (AIDWA), Vimala Faruqui and Pramila Lumba (NFIW), Pramila Dandavate (Mahila Dakshata Samiti), Kunti Sondhi

(AIWC) Mary Khemchand (YWCA) and Ambika Soni (Congress-S).

Delhi Women hold Dharna

Com. Maimoona, Delhi

In response to a call given by the AIDWA, the Janwadi Mahila Samity, Delhi, organised a Dharna on April 12. The Dharna was to protest against govt. inaction and inordinate delay in bringing the Anti-dowry Bill inspite of the fact that the recommendations of the parliamentary joint select committee on dowry have been gathering dust for the past two years. The Govt. has been promising every session that the Bill will be brought in and passed but so far it has just been sitting tight on it. About 400 women took part in the Dharna which started from Boat Club and went to the PM's residence. A delegation of consisting of Com. Susheela Gopalan, Com. Rita Karat and others then submitted a memorandum demanding immediate introduction of the Bill in this session itself. Com. Susheela Gopalan told the militant woman who were raising slogans that if this is the attitude of this Govt. and of Indira Gandhi towards women than women should retaliate by voting this Govt. out of power, now that the elections are round the corner.

1st Working Women & Democratic Women's Convention in Orissa

The first Working Women Convention of Orissa was held in A. G. Recreation Club at Bhubaneswar on 27 March with a view to give the movement of Working Women an Organisational shape. Com. Vimal Ranadive, Secretary, All India Working Women Co-ordination Committee, inaugurating the Convention, congratulated the delegates, those who had come forward for organising the women's movement in state. She told that they should fight for the common interest as women, inspite of difference in language, caste, creed. The All India Co-ordination Committee is formed during last 4/5 years. There are so many problems like creche, transport, unemployment and so on and so forth. Particularly now-a-days the women workers were being thrown out of job as because of mechanisation and employers are not prepared to bear the extra burden arising out of certain legislation. CITU has gathered maximum strength and we must take this opportunity and work for the amelioration of grievances and problems of women in general and working women in particular.

Comrade Ajeya Rout, General Secretary of CITU Orissa State Committee, congratulating the delegates promised all help and assistance for the development of Working Women's movement, which he narrated from his own experience as vital in the sphere of T.U. movement in the state. He recalled how bravely women fought in crucial junctures when congress and CPI hoodlums attacked in B.T.M. at Jharsuguda in the month long strike and against the ferocious attack by Police in Kalta Mines, solidarity action of municipal workers at Balasore, strikes at CRRI in Cuttack etc. He also pointed out the gradual development in democratic women's movement in the state.

The convention was presided over by a presidium consisting of Comrades Kalyani Das, Sumati Marsa Hembram, Mukta Das, Jamini Das, Sakuntala Mishra and Urmila Badajena. Indumala Nandi presented the report of the preparatory committee on which 15 delegates participated in the discussion. Resolution was passed on issues like (1) Closure, Lockout and retrenchment (2) Heinous brutal action of police in striking Paradip Port Workers, (3) War & Peace (4) Atrocities on women, Harijan and Adivasis etc.

A 13 person committee with Com. Indumala Nandi and Jogamaya Day as Joint Convenor was elected. Another 15 member state level Committee for Democratic Women's Association was also elected with Jamini Das and Sukuntala Mishra as Joint Convenor.

In the evening a public meeting was held, presided over by Com. Jamini Das where Com. Vimla Ranadive spoke as the Chief Guest. Among others who spoke were Com. Ajeya Rout, Indumala Nandi, Marsha Hembram, Kalyani Das and Pratima Patnaik.

AIDWA Dist. Conference

Second Gwalior District Conference of the Janwadi Mahila Samity was held on February 26, in which about 250 women participated. Com. Rita Karat inaugurated the conference stressing the need to make the samity stronger. Resolutions were passed against dowry, on oppression of women specially of working women, on Harijan and Adivasi women (their protection and progress) and on the rising prices. A 25 member Committee was elected with Gayatri Saroj as President & Usha Raghubans as Secretary.

We Have Become Human Beings Under CITU

Pramila Pandhe, Delhi

The first conference of the Social Welfare Mahila Karmachari Union was held on 24th April 1984. Over 160 women many of whom were nearing sixties from 13 centres out of 19 centres attended the conference. It was the first conference in their life time who had not gone anywhere except their work centres. There were 40 delegates.

A four member presidium consisting of Com. Sarala (Tilak Nagar), Com. Pushpa (Mahrauli), Com. Shanti (Chandni Chowk) and Com. Rukhmini (Lehana Singh Market) was formed to conduct the proceedings of the conference. Com. Susheela Gopalan, Vice-President CITU and M.P., Com. Chacha Shadiram, President, Delhi State CITU, Com. Vimala Ranadive, Secretary, All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women, Com. Rita Karat, General Secretary, Janwadi Mahila Samity, Com. Ranjana, Treasurer, CITU State Committee and Com. Bachan Singh, Secretary Delhi CITU attended the conference.

In her inaugural speech Com. Susheela Gopalan congratulated women for the success in getting two major demands. She drew the attention of women towards rising unemployment, retrenchment among workers and especially among women. She further said that discrimination in wages between men and women is still existing though there is an act of 'Equal wages for Equal work'. She said that number of deputations met Smt. Gandhi and drew her attention towards the discrimination and atrocities on women. However Smt. Gandhi only gave vague assurances. She appealed the women to come forward and fight against these ghastly attacks.

Com. Pramila Pandhe, while placing her report on the activities of the union, congratulated the women for their success in the recent struggle. She drew the attention of the delegates towards the danger of war by the imperialist countries by producing destructive weapons which would destroy whole humanity. The danger of war has also affected the economy of India, which has led to rising prices, retrenchment, closures, lay-offs and lock-outs. There is nationwide discontent resulting in demonstrations, strikes and dharnas by the workers against these measures. To curb the resentment of workers Smt. Indira Gandhi is introducing MISA, NSA and ESMA which would give the power to ban the strikes. The workers of India are unitedly fighting against these curbs and demanding that the government should withdraw such repressive acts.

She reported on the activities and struggles the union has conducted which were successful. She appealed to the women to support the workers who are fighting for the rights and get ready for further struggle whenever union appeals.

After the report a lively discussion took place. At first women were hesitant to speak but after a while one by one started coming to the dias to express their difficulties. Com. Shanti from Chandni Chowk told the women that in earlier days they were not able to say anything to the authorities who used to visit their centres. Whenever the authorities visited the women were told by the juniors not to complain and if asked by the authorities how much they were getting they had to tell a lie saying that they were getting Rs. 400/- to 500/-

per month. She said for the last 30 years they were working as not human beings but like bonded labourers. She further said after joining the union they trusted the union representatives and told them what had happened to them during the last 30 years. "Now we are human beings and not afraid of any big bosses. On the contrary the big bosses are avoiding to face the women".

Com. Kamala from Madangir centre said that there was no drinking water, no electricity and no lavatories. Once the senior official visited the centre and we drew his attention to the difficulties faced by us. Regarding the toilets he asked us to sit under the trees! They told him that their centre was on main road and it was not possible to sit under the trees. The official went back without answering.

Com. Premwati from Mehrauli complained that there was no drinking water, no electricity and above all there are insects in the stored water. The building in which they were working was very old and the plaster of the roof falls on their heads. They felt that sometime the whole structure would come down and all of them would be buried alive under it. They drew the attention of the authorities towards all these facts. However, the authorities were reluctant to change the place. Many of them said that there was no work at the centres. So the demand for the guarantee of work should be included.

After the discussion Com. Chacha Shadiram addressed the women and congratulated them for attending the conference though it was a working day for them. He appealed to them to unite and fight for remaining demands and make the union strong.

Com. Vimala Ranadive, while addressing the women drew the attention towards large-scale retrenchment in coal mines. Hundreds of

women are now fighting under the flag of CITU. She told that the All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women is taking up the issue of discrimination and atrocities on women and would fight till the government takes stern steps against them. She appealed the women to unite under the CITU banner and fight against these policies.

Com. Rita Karat referring to the struggle the women had recently fought, congratulated them for their boldness to face the difficulties during the struggle, she told about the atrocities on women, gang rapes on young girls, dowry deaths at the hands of greedy in-laws. The government has failed to bring to book the guilty persons resulting in more atrocities on women. The Janwandi Mahila Samiti has launched movement against these acts and making women conscious of their legitimate rights and fight to safeguard the rights.

Com. Bachan Singh while addressing the women stressed the need of raising consciousness among women to fight unitedly under the banner of CITU.

Com. Ranjana while summing up congratulated the women for making the conference a success,

The delegates passed the new charter of demands to be presented to the authorities of Delhi Administration. The 25% deduction had already been stopped and there was 50% wage revision from 1st February, 1984. The demands are :

1. Guarantee of work.
2. Expenses for the raw material should be borne by the Administration.
3. Old age pension.
4. Facilities to be given such as medical leave, casual leave, earned leave, P.F. etc as given to other employees.
5. Regularise all the employees.
6. Houses for employees.

7th Five Year Plan and Employment of Women

—Vimal Ranadive

As the General Elections draw nearer, a lot of noise is being made in the press as if the Government is serious about the weaker sections. Conferences and seminars of Adivasis and Harijans are held, schemes of welfare benefits for poor people are announced and the amount of money to be allotted in the 7th five year plan for the scheme is being discussed. Employment for women too is no exception. Very recently a meeting of National Committee on Women was held on 20-4-1984, Shri Virendra Patil, the Labour Union Minister was in the chair. It appears from the press reports that the discrimination made in different fields against women and the steps to be taken with regard to their employment were discussed in the meeting.

We may mention here that the CITU and AIDWA were not given representation in this committee discriminating against us. On writing to the Union Labour Minister the reply was: "In the reconstituted committee we have three employees' representatives. I regret that it was not possible to accommodate more representatives from employees' side..."

As per the report, in the committee's opinion there was scope and need for introduction of the concept of part-time work in selected identified areas in Government offices and public sector enterprises for women. Well, if the Government becomes really serious, they can provide women with part-time jobs. But one is unable to understand as to how the problem of huge unemployment among women, for which the policies of the present Government are only responsible, will be solved with part-time employment.

The number of women job-seekers according to the Labour Ministry increased from 22.66

lakhs in October 1981 to 30.70 lakhs at the end of October 1982 showing a rise of 15.2 percent. During January to October 1982, only 48,990 women were placed in employment as against 50,615 during 1981, the decline being 3.2 per cent.

According to the 1981 census, female participation rate in economic activity stood at 14.4 percent in the total population, the rural and urban ratio being 16.5 and 7.6 percent.

Under the present serious economic crisis, women in thousands are entering the labour market anew while all who are employed now are facing retrenchment due to mechanisation as is the case in Tobacco Industry in Andhra. The danger of match skillet machine to be introduced in Sivakasi Match industry which if the reports are correct, will again throw thousands of women and children out of jobs. It is also a fact that a continuous flow of women workers from the organised industries such as coal mines, textile, jute and so on is going on to unorganised sector, on contract, or temporary basis. It is reported that more than 1 lakh men and women in P & T and Railway are already employed as part-timers, work 2 hours on the salary of Rs. 135 only, and those who work for 5 hours get only Rs. 200/-. This Extra Departmental Personnel (EDP) as it is called is a system of exploitation by employing people on such a meagre salary, without any other benefits.

Are we to understand that, the Central Government is considering to introduce schemes for women for part time employment in such a situation? Is it the idea that because women have to look after the home and children, they are unable to do full-time work? The ILO and such other organisations too are popularising

the scheme of part-time job for women through their literature. Is it being thought as a way out for the ruling classes, as the women who desire jobs to survive, are likely to accept whatever jobs are offered to them?

But what does it mean for women? It means low wages for them, public or private sector, deprivation of any welfare measures like maternity benefit, creche etc. which are available for women under the Factory or other Acts and no statutory legislations concerning women since they are only part-timers while the employers garner super profits. Is the Government prepared to bring the part-timers under statutory legislations giving them all the benefits?

The minister promised that women would be given training facilities since they were making much noise about the non-availability and discrimination in training facilities. But what is the promise? "Women should be given vocational training in Brick-layers, mason, turner, plumber, painter, fitter..." But as everybody knows these jobs are considered to be inferior, and men are refusing to be employed on such. Is the Central Government therefore offering these jobs to women now, introducing them as something 'skilled'? Women workers are already doing the job of brick-layer, perhaps they are also doing the mason's work in construction. Their demand is they should be trained in more skilled jobs in the absence of which they are not getting skilled jobs which carry more pay.

The committee recommended as per the report that as the system of piece-rate work led to exploitation in the case of women and child labour, the concept of piece-rate wages should be substituted by a time-rate for employment in all spheres and activities..." The idea is very good, and if the Ministry is again serious a legislation should be brought forward to bring all the workers in the unorganised industries, men and women both, the major section of

course being women, under time-rate system. A large section of women in Beedi, Garment, Mica etc. continue to labour day and night on piece-rate basis endangering their health and falling victims to long diseases, just to earn a little extra money. There was a talk sometime back to prepare such a legislation for men and women in the unorganised sector, and it would not be difficult to do so.

The Ministry of Labour had taken up a few cases of discrimination against women in the departments of Government. As per reports, they received complaints on barring pregnant women from taking out a life insurance policy, as well as barring appointment to Government services to women in advanced stage of pregnancy etc. We would like to ask the ministry whether these were the first cases of this nature they came across? The employers in jute, textile and such other industries impose break in services of women workers so as to avoid paying maternity benefit under the statutory obligation. Do they not know that application of Equal Remuneration Act was one of the main reasons to dispense with the services of women in a number of industries!

Now that the 7th Five Year Plan (1985-90) is being discussed in the cabinet, planning commission, etc., working women do expect that more avenues for employment for women would be created and a specific amount should be set aside for this purpose.

The minimum things they can do according to us are as follows and the Government must accept:

1. Total ban on retrenchment of working women in any form and maintain at least the existing strength.
2. Cancel all the licences already granted for installation of green leaf threshing plants in Tobacco industry.
3. No mechanisation processes should be allowed in Match Industry.
4. A specific amount to be earmarked in the plan for employment and training facilities, for creating jobs for women in public and private sector.
5. Training facilities with stipend in all spheres without exception, and
6. Unemployment Benefit.

Air Hostesses Against Blatant Discrimination

Their smiling faces effectively mask their seething anger. Outraged at their employer's persistent refusal to vest their jobs with dignity and responsibility, some 10 senior air-hostesses of Air-India have taken the corporation to court. One of India's largest, Public sector undertakings faces the charge of practising policies which are violative of Articles 14, 16 and 19 of the Indian Constitution.

The Bombay High Court had before it two petitions, one filed by Nergish Meerza and five other air-hostesses in January this year against Air-India and the Air-India Cabin Crew Association, the largest trade union of the corporation.

The other was filed by the Air-Hostesses Union, a trade union created in January this year. Asha Mulgaonkar and three other air-hostesses challenging section of the Air Corporation Act which outline their job functions. The later petition has been rejected by the High Court which has however stated that some of the portions of the law which it referred to could be transferred to the first petition.

These women have jobs which are the stuff that adolescent dreams of glamour and adventure are made of. Today, these air-hostesses are saying they do not want glamour without respect. What they are asking for is, I believe, relevant to the struggles of urban employed women anywhere in India.

Gut Issue

The gut issue of both these petitions is gender discrimination. Such is the hierarchy within Air-India that regardless of her seniority and years of experience, an Air-India air-hostess must report directly to a flight purser. He may be a man with five years' experience in the same job, she may have had twenty. Yet, to all intents and purposes, he is her boss.

Why there are no answers, the rules say so.

The furthest an air-hostess can go career-wise is to become a chief air-hostess. Air-India employs 900 air-hostesses, yet the number of posts as chief air-hostess is just one. Her job is a managerial one. If she has to come on board the aircraft, on some rare and very special duty, she must report directly to the flight purser.

Below her, in rank comes the deputy chief air-hostess. Until 1977, this was also a post of the managerial cadre, which carried supervisory functions. When such a person flew, she reported to the in-flight supervisor and had a distinct status within the aircraft and on ground.

In 1977, this post was abolished. There were earlier 16 such appointees, they were phased out to five. Those left were informed that their supervisory and managerial functions were withdrawn. On flights they could not fly in their earlier role. Every report they made had to be countersigned by the flight purser. Their right to go on postings in a supervisory capacity to perform checks was taken away. They were allowed to fly only in a check capacity for the preconfirmation and confirmation checks of new recruits thus being virtually grounded and reduced to being non-entities. At every other level, the air-hostess has to work directly under orders from the purser regardless of her seniority.

In November last year, the Air-India Cabin Crew Association put forward a proposal to the management to re-institute the post of deputy chief air-hostess. But to the horror of the senior air-hostesses, they saw that all the post 1977 rules were proposed. And the deputy chief air-hostess would function exactly like all the existing air-hostesses directly under the supervision of the flight purser. Nothing would change for her but the title.

It was to challenge this proposal that Nergish Meerza and five other air-hostesses filed the petition in the Bombay High Court. Calling the AICCA an entirely male-dominated union, which had no concern for the interest of the air-hostesses, they said its recommendations were illegal and invalid. They had cause for alarm because on the basis of the union's proposal, the management had declared 20 such posts open and interview for the same were being conducted.

The air-hostesses also objected to recruitment to this designation by way of interviews. They said that when assistant flight pursers became flight pursers it was according to their experience and not by selection through interviews.

To prevent arbitrary appointments and maintain fairness in upward mobility, they suggested Air-India first create the post of senior check air-hostess and let the air-hostess move through this designation to the new one. They also demanded that if the role of deputy chief air-hostess is created, her designation on board the aircraft and in comparison with the other male employees in Air-India be altered. She must be given duties and responsibilities consistent with her supervisory and administrative position. Each flight must carry one deputy chief air-hostess. It insists that she be allowed to wear a badge which puts forward her designation and name a requirement which was withdrawn by Air-India, due to "technical reasons" post 1977. The hierarchy must function in accordance to seniority.

Much of today's unrest steams from Air-India's initial concepts of the qualifications necessary for a woman before she can be employed. It is the blatantly sexist definition of a woman's abilities and role which Air-India has accepted for the air-hostess which has led it to formulate much of its later policies.

But it went right on to defend the corporation's right to sack its female employees if they

married within four years of services. The judgment opined: "Apart from improving the health of the employee (marriage after the age of 23) it helps a good deal in the promotion and boosting of our family planning programme. Secondly, if a woman marries near about the age of 20 to 23 years, she becomes fully mature and there is every chance of such a marriage proving a success, all things being equal".

Family planning is the burden of women in general and Air-India hostesses in particular. Men have no responsibilities in limiting the number of children, women who marry before 23 may not make a success of the marriage. And finally, the courts of India and employers of Indian women have the right to legislate and direct the personal affairs of women. If anything is violative of a woman's constitutional rights, it is expressions like these.

The same court finds its conscience shocked at that "most arbitrary and unreasonable provision" of Air-India's that an air-hostess should have her service terminated on her first pregnancy.

I am reminded here of the millions of faceless women who form the backbone of our agricultural labour force, who work till the day of childbirth at jobs statistically proved to be more arduous than those done by men. Or closer home, to the thousands of women workers who provide domestic labour, women headloaders, vegetable vendors, bidi workers, even housewives, whose work day begins at dawn and ends at nights fall, for whom pregnancy forms no restraint nor merits any concern from those who benefit from their labour.

Equality Denied

The court condemned this as 'undoubtedly a most unreasonable approach' to be taken by a prestigious corporation like Air-India.

(Contd. on page 21)

Make The Equality Real, Not Formal

While equality may be formally enshrined in the constitution or any other enactments in a country, in order to implement the provisions of the constitution and the enactments, attention would also have to be given to meet the special requirements of women in all fields of activity — to make the equality real and not just formal.

Experiences in India fully bear this out. Although the Parliament adopted the Equal Remuneration Act, there has been no significant change in the position of working women in India because of inadequacies at the policy formulation stage and at the level of implementation of laws and regulations. In the 38 years since India's independence, whereas the industrial base has changed, the participation of women in the labour force has not changed to any great extent.

In the industries such as cotton and jute textiles, which had a high percentage of women workers, there has been a sharp drop in employment of women. Women's employment expanded in the new sectors of industries set up in the country including electronics, light engineering sectors and pharmaceuticals, etc. The bulk of working women continue to be engaged in traditional handicrafts and small-scale industry, agriculture and plantations.

Making the false claim that women lack training and the skills required for modern industry, the private employers first brought down the complement of women in enterprises where they were traditionally employed. The leading example was that of the textile industry. In the textile industry the justification was another equally false claim that women were not permitted to work at night and therefore retaining them in employment resulted in

considerable pressure on the employers financially.

Out of about 20 million registered unemployed in India, a quarter are women. In job hiring practices, there has been considerable discrimination. Many employers ask specifically for male labour, even where qualified women are available. The capitalist employers in India are pursuing a deliberate policy of keeping women confined to the least-skilled jobs and in labour-intensive sectors, paying them the lowest possible wages.

Arising from such a situation, one of the most important demands of working women today is a national minimum wage, which is clearly the best way in which the sweat-shop conditions and miserable exploitation can be dealt with through legislation and organized pressure by the workers and trade unions.

The question of vocational training for women has assumed special importance. The recommendation which accompanies ILO Convention No. 100 on Equal Remuneration provides that workers of both sexes should have the same facilities for vocational training, vocational guidance and in finding employment. Though the Equal Remuneration Act in India has already come into force, this recommendation of the ILO has not been taken up seriously. The government has particularly failed to take measures to protect the existing employment opportunities of women. Positive steps are therefore needed to foil attempts of employers to keep women in the lowest paid categories or to dismiss them from jobs altogether.

It is necessary to put forward realistic proposals on the question of training, taking into

account the "double-shift" working women perform — at the job and at home — which means extending the 8-hour working day at the place of work by another six hours or so for the work at home. Therefore, training has to be organized within the 8-hour working day, so free time for training should be found within normal working hours. At the same time, the long prevailing social attitudes which tend to regard women as unfit for most occupations must be overcome and so it becomes the duty of trade unions to fight such prejudices.

The problem of leisure time as applied to training has validity in relation to the time given for ensuring active participation in leading positions in the trade union movement as well as time to receive training and improve qualifications. Due to the lack of spare time, women workers find it hard to take on and shoulder responsibilities in trade unions. Here they have to face many difficulties because of the existing social inequalities and various prejudices and attitudes existing in Indian society. This is a field where the trade unions could find in the women's organizations a supporting role. The women's organizations could identify and concentrate in areas where there are a large number of women workers and help bring about a better attitude, encouraging a more active role of women in day-to-day trade union activities.

Unless radical socio-economic changes are brought about, the capitalists and monopolies will continue to use women workers as cheap labour and exploit them mercilessly.

The struggle for equal rights and against discrimination is thus linked with broader issues of economic policy, of fighting for radical social transformations, for peace and social progress. It is also linked with the struggle against archaic social attitudes and prejudices and for creating new attitudes among men and women workers alike in favour of greater unity

and united action, for peace, progress and democracy.

Peasant Women's First National Assembly

From 22-24 November 1983, in Santiago, was the Chilean Peasant Women's First National Assembly. That is an event that will go down in the history of the Chilean peasant movement. Many women, together with a few men, met to discuss the role women have to play in the trade unions, in the struggle for the recognition of their rights, against discrimination and for their participation in the struggle for democracy. This assembly was also a victory for the spirit of democracy over repression by the authorities. It was a small opening on the horizon, and now all efforts must be made to ensure it does not close up again.

Through its bulletin, the TUIAFPW sent its total solidarity to these women who have not hesitated to make their voices heard and have proved that "united struggle for victory" is not just a slogan, but also an aim of concrete action.

Welcome Dorothy Nyembe

On the 25th of March this year, Dorothy Nyembe the veteran of women's and peoples' struggles, sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment in 1969 for helping the soldiers of Umkhonto We Sizwe, was released from Kroonstad prison in South Africa. A message of greetings from working women in our country was sent to her on 3rd May '84.

"We welcome your release after 15 years in jail wholeheartedly. You have shown an admirable courage in fighting against brutalities heaped on you and others, by the white regime. You are the symbol of the suffering people as well of fighting. We are happy to receive you amongst us, oppressed and exploited women. Together we will fight our battle against all

(Contd. from page 20)

enemies of the people and liberate ourselves. Peace is most vital for all of us. American Imperialism and South African regime are the enemies of the people. Indian working women, welcome your return and demand release of all women in jail”.

(Contd. from page 5)

national women's day, present situations in international and national sphere and of Punjab particularly. They also related the general problems of women employees at Patiala, like creche, working women's hostel Govt. accomodation to widow employees, local bus for employees in the city in morning and evening with 50% reservation of seats for women employees, etc. After discussion on these problems, the resolutions were passed on keeping communal harmony in Punjab, and to bring pressure on the Trade Unions to pay attention towards the women problems.

A deputation of 12 employees led by Mrs. Ravinderjit Kaur, Secretary Co-ordination Committee went with a character of demands to the D.C., Patiala in his office on 8th March. The D.C. Patiala promised to convey the problems to the Government.

(Contd. from page 10)

It will be more than two years now she was not yet called for work. She was permanent. She said “how should I live with my three grown up children, myself only the breadwinners” The mill has not yet started working. A few hundreds, who are stooges of INTUC have been taken in, one worker is doing the work of four workers, increasing the workload. The workers belonging to CITU and Datta Samant Union, the organisers of the general strike are still out. Moreover, she said the management was demanding from us an

assurance that we would not go on strike, whatever work given to them, must be accepted, otherwise “you will be out”! “My reply was we would do the same work, in the same department, “why should we give an assurance?” She looked determined to continue her fight!

Badrunissa is educated upto Matric. She was repeatedly telling she wanted to attend the convention and speak, expose the tactics of INTUC, who were enrolling members inside the mill. “On asking what were the demands of the workers in Kohinoor Mill, she said “open the mill with full contingent, every worker must be taken back, bring down the prices...” Though she missed the opportunity to speak in the convention, she was happy to see the huge rally at the Boat Club with thousands of the red flags all over...”

(Contd. from page 18)

Today, three years after the Supreme Court's stern admonishments against Air-India, Asha Mulgaonkar tells me that an-air-hostess has to stop flying as soon as she is pregnant. All she receives, after she resumes work, is three months' maternity leave salary. For the full period of her confinement and after, her employer does not help her bear any of the costs of childbirth and after care.

Consequent to the judgment, air-hostesses now work till their third pregnancy. They retire at 45—but the yearly medical check continues after they are 35.

Nergish Meerza's petition before the Bombay High Court says that India's International airline, in making such a public display of the worst kinds of prejudices existing against women should not be patronized by anyone who pays even lip-service to the concepts of equality and justice.

Working Wives And Their Lives

Six working women have been recently invited to a forum sponsored by the editorial board of Women of China, to talk about the problems which concern most women in China. Here are some of the views presented at the forum. (From Women of China, March 1984).

Chairperson: I wish to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to you for coming to the forum. Among the topics we are going to deal with will be the lives of working women, their problems with balancing work, household chores, and bringing up children and how to solve them. At the same time, perhaps, we want to probe their reactions on the revived assumption that women should "return to their homes," based on the argument that in China, too many people were employed and women were heavily burdened by house-work.

When the idea emerged about two years ago, it provoked an angry response from many women and women's organizations. At the Fifth National Women's Congress held in September last year, Kang Kaqing, President of the All-China Women's Federation, opposed this viewpoint in unequivocal terms, pointing out that this idea was wrong because it was not in conformity with the socialist principle of sexual equality and women's emancipation, and would inevitably result in weakening the forces working for the nation's socialist modernization. The assumption, we think, was short-lived but still some middle-aged working women complain about the heavy work-load they have, particularly with the double burden of doing household chores. Yet most wives and husbands objected to the idea of women returning home.

Lu Jingxian: Since almost all urban women in China are employed, women's right to work

has been realised as a necessary step to equality. But it mainly depends on women themselves, whether they work hard enough to qualify for the posts they take and make significant achievements. If you don't work hard, you are bound to be belittle. In the Ministry of Forestry, most of the women, doing more than their share of the work, have proved worthy. My job is to investigate the natural forest resources. To obtain firsthand information, I must inspect the forests myself. Since most virgin forests are in northeastern and southwestern parts of China, I usually spend six months a year away from home.

Shen Xinyu: Women will gain respect and recognition from the society as long as they are serious about their work and accomplish something.

Lu Jingxian: I investigated some forests in 1963 just after I had graduated from the forestry institute. The local people were surprised that I was, at 22, still single. But I couldn't think of marrying and taking on the burden of a family at that time because I was devoted to my work and wanted to establish myself. So I married four years later. Some people think women are not suitable for this kind of work, but in fact we have many women working in the natural resources department. They have all successfully found a way to work and have a family. Many of our initially suspicious male colleagues finally gave thumbs up to their outstanding contribution.

Huang Shunxi: Indeed, women have to make great efforts to undermine the feudal conventions that still exist in our time. Many people would quite naturally look down upon us if we do not prove our worth. What is especially

important is that we can gain the prestige equal to men, when we show our competence.

In our office, six out of eleven comrades are women. Those around 40, like me, are now the mainstay of the unit. Since we are responsible for designing road bridges in Beijing's urban and rural areas, we are often out of the office. It was all right when I was single, but after I got married my life grew complicated. Somehow, I have managed to get through it. We are extremely busy since Beijing is undergoing massive reconstruction. We have designed the major flying junctions of the circular highways around the capital and many roads that now link the city with outlying areas. We are very excited whenever our designs become a reality. The respect we have earned gives us immense pride in being construction engineers.

Chang Yun: Women occupy an even greater percentage of the work force in the textile industry. Their role is so essential there, the popular topic of "returning home" never entered their minds. In our cardigan mill there are more than 1,000 workers, 80 per cent of whom are women, most of them young. Although they are allowed to have a six-month maternity leave after bearing a child, many would rather return to work after 55 days, they are so needed in the mill.

Chairperson: It has been generally accepted that no trade or profession in our socialist society should be without women, but when the "return to the home" idea resurfaced, it indicated that there are indeed some difficulties with women working that call for serious attention. In a forum we held last year at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the middle-aged technical personnel said that women at work were an important symbol of emancipation. Most women, naturally, would not be willing to go back home, and most men have sense enough to know they should not stand in their way. The question is, how to ease the burden

of many middle-aged women who have demanding work, many household chores and a low family income to support both the old and the young in the family. For these women, staying home might seem attractive. When work and household chores are at odds - Who should do what - this is a problem that must be received by the wife and husband themselves.

Huang Shunxi: I have heard this complaint, but I don't think women would really prefer homemaking, neither would men welcome the change. It should be noted that in almost every family, the wife's earnings are equal to the husband's so there are good financial reasons to continue work.

Fu Fuzhen: Of course, feudal ideas are rooted in some men's minds, they think it's a great idea to have everything done for them when they return home from work. But this idea is by no means widespread, most men do a substantial number of household chores.

Chairperson: How do working women deal with work and family duties? How do they resolve the problems that are bound to occur?

Chang Yun: For women around 30 years old like myself, the biggest problem has to be how to care for their babies. Although most factories have nursing rooms for infants over 56 days old, most work units simply are unable to provide such services and nurseries can only take children 3 years and over. Therefore, most working women face the problem of how to take care of their infants until they are 3 years old. Some women are unwilling to send their one child to nurseries, and would rather hire a babysitter, but then finding a satisfactory babysitter causes another headache for women.

Chairperson: So the establishment of vital social services seems to be the key to our problem. One thing we must be optimistic about is the increasing attention our society is paying to such matters. Although we certainly have a long way to go before we can say we are content, we are happy to find that more and more people are becoming concerned.

International Women's Day Greetings From WFTU

The world trade union movement and progressive forces throughout the world send greetings to all women on their International Day—8 March.

Our greeting go to those symbols of popular resistance to the nuclear arms race—the brave women of Greenham Common in the U.K., who have been continuing their struggle for years now against the installation of US first-strike nuclear missiles and the millions of women in all continents, spearheading the struggle for peace and to preserve the future of our civilization.

Our greeting of solidarity go to all the heroines who day in day out are battling against imperialist and neo-colonialist oppression and exploitation—the brave women who are in the front ranks of the struggle against racism and apartheid in South Africa and against the aggression of the apartheid regime against Angola and other frontline states; the women who fight against the US-backed Israeli aggression directed against the Arab countries and for the national rights of the Palestinian people; those who fight against the US imperialist aggression and political intervention in Nicaragua, in Central America and the Caribbean, who have condemned support for the military dictatorships and demanded respect of democratic liberties and human rights.

We greet the women trade unionists and all the working women engaged in the struggle for genuine equal rights in the capitalist and developing countries, for the right to work and against unemployment, for decent wages and working conditions, for economic and social

development and for a new international economic order.

We greet the women in socialist countries, active partners in the building of a new society and assured of broad rights enabling them to participate in planning the future of their respective countries.

Anti-Dowry Bill Introduced

The Government brought forward a dowry prohibition Bill, on 9th May, 1984, introducing it late in the evening, minutes before the Lok Sabha adjourned sine die.

The Bill was introduced by Energy Minister, Mr. P. Shiv Shankar, who said it should go a long way in combating the evil of the dowry system.

However, Mrs. Pramila Dandavate (J), Mrs. Gita Mukherjee (CPI) and Mrs. Susheela Gopalan (CPI-M) who had been vociferously demanding the Bill, were clearly disappointed by what was brought forward and described it as "a mockery".

Erratum

The article "I have chosen the 2nd And Ardous Way" published in March issue of the Voice of Working Women was from a Thai Woman, and not from a Hong Kong Woman as was reported. We regret the error.—Editor V.W.W.

THE VOICE
OF



THE WORKING WOMAN

Vol IV No 4

July 1984

Re 1.00



Dorothy Nyembe, Veteran Fighter, released on March 25, 1984 after 15 years in jail

IN THIS ISSUE

Congratulations, Bachendri Pal	2
Message from the Soviet Women	2
Attack on Cabin Crew—Air Hostesses	3-4
Women In Stone Industry Join CITU	5
Victory of Working Women of Hathua Metal and Vanaspati	5
Women Support Raptakos Brett Struggle	5
Whither National Integration	6
Stop Withdrawing the Concessions	7
Letter to Smt. Indira Gandhi	7
Conference of Women in Khagaria Dist. Bihar	8
Women to Observe National Integration Week	9
Constitute Women's Commission	10
Women's Place is in the Battlefield	11-13
Dwindling Employment of Women In Maharashtra	14-15
Training Class for Working Women	16
AIDWA Branch in Karnal	16
Kota and Ganganagar Conferences	16
Women should take up their seats around Negotiating Tables	17-18
T.U.I. Greetings on March 8th	18
6000 Nurses in USA on Strike	18
Women Engineers—A Myth	19
No Empty Promisses, Give us our Due	20-22
Delhi Janawadi Mahila Conference	23
Women Fight Against Dowry Deaths	24

WE CONGRATULATE YOU, BACHENDRI PAL

"The All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) hails the magnificent victory achieved by Bachendri Pal of reaching the highest peak, Everest Mountain on May 23rd of '84 thus becoming the first Indian woman to climb 8848 meters despite so many odds. Bachendri Pal with her 20 member team which included 7 women, took six and half hours to reach the last point. She was at the top for 45 minutes enjoying the fruits of her labour and dream which ultimately was fulfilled. Bachendri Pal comes from Uttar Pradesh, is 28 years old, and an employee of Tata Oil Mill.

The women all over India, including working women congratulate Bachendri Pal for her heroic feat which honoured her as the first woman to climb the Everest and wish success in her future adventures.

WE MUST PREVENT NUCLEAR WAR

A Message From Soviet Women

At this crucial time when our future and the future of our posterity are on the scales of history, we, women of the Soviet Union, are appealing to you, to your minds, hearts and conscience.

International tension and the race in arms, first and foremost nuclear arms, have approached a critical point. The deployment of Pershing II and Cruise missiles in Western Europe—first-strike nuclear weapons has confronted the world with the real danger of nuclear war. And the attempts to spread the arms race into outer space are increasing the threat of destruction of our planet many times over.

Continued on page 4

Attack On Cabin-Crew Including AIR-Hostesses

—Karuna Chattopadhyay

The Indian Air-lines management has recently launched an inhuman attack on eight of its cabin crew members, including five Air-Hostesses. This is another example of what its real masters, sitting at the top of the Govt. of India, are exactly doing against the working people of our country. When the Prime Minister is often shedding tears for the miseries of women, things are going on just the opposite, in all spheres of life. Thus the above mentioned incident in Indian Air-lines testifies to the hypocrisy of the Indian ruling class.

A batch of eight cabin crew, including five Air Hostesses and three flight Purseres, left Calcutta at 5.35 p.m. on 5th May, by a flight. On the same night, they reached Bombay via Delhi by another flight. They had their scheduled night rest there. These crew members were scheduled to reach Delhi on the next day and then to Calcutta. Three of them had their scheduled weekly off on the 7th May. On the 6th May, the flight was delayed by more than six hours in Bombay. So, they requested the Movement Control, Delhi, that no one of the eight Cabin Crew, should be given further flight, back to Bombay; because of the long delay of the flight, they are bound to land in Delhi after mid-night. This message was relayed to Movement Control, Delhi, both by S.S.S.B. and T.P.

On reaching Delhi after 1 A.M., at deep mid-night, the Cabin Crew team reported to the Delhi Movement Control and requested them for transport and Hotel accommodation in accordance with the message sent from Bombay. But to their utter dismay and desperation, they were told that they must take the next flight, back to Bombay. The fatigued, harrassed and mentally upset Cabin Crew members repeatedly requested the

authority not to send them further. They referred to the agreement between the authority and the Union. They also rightly pointed out that according to the International Standards and Practices, 'Rest Period' were intended for the purpose of recovery from fatigue. They stressed that they are fatigued and would not be of much assistance if an emergency arose. They also told that they had given prior intimation several hours back. This request of the Cabin Crew members were turned down. Over and above, they were threatened with dire consequences, if they do not follow the instruction. More ever, they were refused transport accommodation and food. Thus the eight Cabin Crew members, including five Air Hostesses, were left unattended, insecured and uncared for, for the rest of the night. Even their request for the hotel accommodation at their own cost, to be debited later on, was turned down.

India is a member to the Convention of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and is a signatory to the Convention of International Civil Aviation. The latter has its sets of recommended Standards and Practices for the operation of aircraft in commercial Air transport. As per the clauses of the said Standards, the Cabin Crew members shall establish and maintain training programmes. They should be capable in the use of emergency and as well as first-aid-kits and also be knowledgeable as regards the effect of oxygenation, lack of oxygen, also physiological phenomenon, accompanying a loss of pressurisation, etc. Govt. of India accepted those standards and norms by Gazette notification. Further, there is an agreement between the management and Air Crew Employees' Union, of which the Cabin Attendants are members.

The agreement was entered under the provisions of the Industrial Disputes Act. It has also got statutory force under the provisions of the said act, which provides exhaustive explanation on the 'Rest Period'.

But the management of Indian Air-lines, not only flouted all the above agreements, norms and International Standards, but preferred to issue suspension orders to the eight Cabin Crew members, followed by charge-sheets.

After hearing the news of attack on the Cabin Crew members, the other employees of Calcutta Station, burst out in anger. They started registering their protest by refusing to carry out the illegal orders. As a counterblast in total violation of the law, the management started inviting volunteers, who had no training at all as Cabin Attendant. Thus the authorities indulged in fraudulently issuing tickets to the passengers, involving total risk. They deducted ten-days salary from the employees' pay-bills, for their actions. The Cabin Crew members of Bombay and Delhi, successfully observed one-day' token strike, as a mark of solidarity towards the struggling Calcutta Crew members. After successful completion of ten-day's Struggle, the employees jointed their duty, at the instruction of the Union.

The Cabin Crew members, including Air-Hostesses, are inseparable part of Indian working class. Though they work in such a field, which is not much known to all and their status is apparently little well-off, yet they suffer the same humiliations and tortures in the hands of the management, as all the workers, including working women in our society. So the incident is not an isolated one. Rather it reflects the same symptoms of illness, that our entire class-ridden society is suffering from. But

the most significant chapter of the said episode is that, no attack on the working people of to-day, is allowed to go unchallenged, unprotested.

Continued From Page Two

Each of us must realize the nature and scale of the disaster that threatens us and resolutely oppose any doctrines about the "admissibility" of using nuclear weapons and about the possibility of waging "protracted" or "limited" nuclear wars. These doctrines are not only utterly inhuman, but fundamentally wrong. There can be no limited nuclear war. Inevitably, it would grow into a global conflict.

We must act decisively before it is too late. We are appealing to you for joining our efforts to prevent a nuclear war. By joint efforts let us bar the road to a nuclear conflagration and save our common home, the Planet—Earth!

Please Read And Subscribe :

THE WORKING CLASS

(Monthly Journal of CITU—English)

CITU MAZDOOR

(Monthly Journal of CITU—Hindi)

THE VOICE OF WORKING WOMAN

(Bi-Monthly Journal of All India

Co-ordination Committee of
Working Women CITU—English)

Price : Re. 1/- each

Yearly Subscription :

Rs. 12/- for the Working Class and
CITU Mazdoor

Rs. 6/- for Voice of Working Woman
Agency minimum 5 Copies

Available at

6, TALKATORA ROAD,
NEW DELHI-110001

WOMEN IN STONE INDUSTRY JOIN CITU

—Minoti Poddar, Bihar

As per the report of Santhal Pargana Division Pramandal Pathar Udyog (Stone Industry of Malpahari, Shaharkol, Kolajora, Sonajuri, Tilmitta of Pakur Sub-Division) and Mirzachowki of Sahibaganj Sub Division, there are about 15,000 tribal women working for several years in the stone grinding machine. This industry is running under the private sector management where these women are being brutally exploited by their management. Their inhuman exploitation can be noted from the following :

1. No record of work is being kept by the management of these working women due to which the management does not bother for its responsibilities. At the same time because of not being enrolled in the register, these women do not get any legal facilities. As there is no record of the work of these women, they do not get other facilities too such as, bonus, gratuity, provident fund, pension, etc.

2. They do not get any security of their job under any welfare scheme. Nor do they get maternity leave, or toilet facilities. There is no welfare scheme for them.

3. This industry is under the Central Govt. control; even then they do not get the minimum wages for their work that is fixed by the Govt. rule. Now they have decided to join the union under the CITU and struggle for their demands.

VICTORY OF WORKING WOMEN OF HATHUA METAL AND VANASPATI OF PATNA

The working women of above said industry were not getting any leave and even at the time of festivals or other important occasions they were supposed to work.

Com. Shibani Chaudhury represented all the working women and placed a demand before the management for granting leaves at the time of festivals, etc. But the management refused to do so. At last all the working women decided not to go to work at the time of festivals. They went on strike on Holiday festival, with the result that the management had to accept their demand and declare all the festival days as the holidays.

WOMEN SUPPORT THE MOVEMENT OF RAPTAKOS BRETT FIELD WORKERS

Since January last, the field work in Raptakos Brett and Co. Ltd., a monopoly drug company remained totally paralysed due to countrywide agitations launched by the Federation of Medical Representatives' Associations of India. FMRAI, under which the medical representatives are organised, submitted a charter of demands on behalf of them to the company in July 1983. When these field workers were patiently waiting for a negotiated settlement, the management started attacking them without any provocation. Trade Union functionaries and negotiation committee members were dismissed and transferred. The management filed false cases against a number of field workers. In this situation, the workers launched agitation, such as a one day strike on 29th November, 1983, again 2 days strike and dharnas have been staged in every state before the company's establishment. The management remained adamant and to suppress the movement bribed the police officials recruited anti socials and RSS hoodlums as field workers.

The movement took a new turn with the participation of the family members in it. In Bihar, the mothers, sisters, and wives of medical representatives staged dharnas

Continued on page 7

Whither National Integration

Years back when some of the leaders in the ruling Cong. (I) party raised the slogan of jobs for the 'sons of the soil' in order to cover up their failure to take steps for employment generation or accept the demand of right to work as justiciable fundamental right, the democratic opinion had warned the powers that with that the death knell to the national integration has been sounded. How true was the warning will be seen from the following sordid story.

Every one knows the special problem in NE Region. After 37 years of independence the region still remains industrially as backward as it was before, and the mounting unemployment problem there needs immediate attention. Hence when the Central Govt. decided that employment in this region should be limited to candidates sponsored by the employment exchanges of this region, there was no opposition. In accordance with this rule vacancies in Silchar Telegraph Traffic Division comprising of telegraph offices of Karimgani, Silchar, Agartala, Dimapur, Kohima, Imphal and Aizawl were being filled up by the candidates sponsored by the Employment Exchanges of this area on a combined list on the basis of merit. Accordingly 4 girls from plains area were selected and posted at Dimapur as telegraphists. One of the leading workers who had connections with Congress (I) and who had already secured his promotion irregularly out of turn, Shri N. K. Sema, was reported to have made some obscene advances towards these girls. The girls with the hope that they would get justice and protection, lodged complaint about sexual harassment to higher authorities and also to the recognised union. One of the Union leaders visited Dimapur on June 2. Shri Sema then brought his political influence to bear upon the

situation. On June 3, Shri N. Ghosito Achumi, Joint Secretary, Nagaland Youth Congress (I)/General Secretary, N.S.T.W.A / General Secretary INTUC, Nagaland Branch Dimapur addressed a letter to the General Manager Telecom, N.E. Circle Shillong and demanded, "Withdraw the 4 (four) girls who had been recruited in the month of May, 84 under DTO Dimapur, on or before the end of June, 84 and appoint the local youths, otherwise if anything happens in your Department, by the local youths the Department will be the responsible for damage or loss of anything or the local youths will take their own course of action".

This letter sent in the pad of "Indian National Trade Union Congress" was an open declaration of mayhem and it naturally terrorised the poor girls, who immediately left Dimapur feeling insecure. It was clear as the daylight that with such political backing justice will be a far cry and there would be no protection to honour or life. Another employee from the plains area Shri I.K. Debnath who was considered by Shri Sema as a potential witness against him was also threatened for which he also had to leave Dimapur even though it disrupted the studies of his son.

The slogan of jobs for the 'sons of the soil' has its pernicious effect. Criminals can now invoke this slogan to protect themselves. And the cause of "National Integration" becomes a casualty along with the honour of women. They seek protection under Youth Congress (I) and INTUC. One would like to have the reaction of Smt. Indira Gandhi on this incident. Com. Samar Mukharjee M.P. has taken up the issue with the Government.

× × ×

Continued from page 5

before the Company's establishments at Patna and Ranchi. While at Ranchi the family members numbering 16 staged a day long dharna on April 30, paralysing the functioning of the Depot, at Patna. They continued the dharna for full six days from April 30 to May 5 in the scorching heat. They raised slogans, physically obstructed supply of goods to and from the depot and compelled the local management to make trunk call to Bombay to convey their protest. They participated in the gate meetings daily which were addressed by leaders of the various fraternal trade unions. Among those who participated in the programme were Sarama Roy, Ila Chatterjee, Rita Adhya, Mitul Chowdhury, Manju Tarafdar, Tapsi Chatterjee, Rita Roy, Meera Bannerjee, Chhaya Mukherjee, Kabita Chakrabarty, Aparna Chakrabarty, Suravi Ghosh, Bharati Majumdar, Mitali Sarkar, Reena Sahay, Ruma Bhattacharjee, Dipali Bhowmik, Latika Chatterjee, Mrs. Prasad Singh Roy, Sabitri Das, Ira Ganguly, Tapati Bishwas, Sanghamitra Ghosh, Kakoli Nag, Piu Guha Thakurta and Shanti Sharma.

Stop Withdrawing Concessions—Kerala

The working women all over India express deep concern at the unsympathetic and unhelpful attitude taken by the Administration in the Accountant General's Offices throughout the country towards the women employees. In the wake of the decision to bifurcate the Audit & Accounts, the Administration is trying to withdraw the concessions extended to the women employees of not undertaking tours in the remote areas in the state. They are being forced to go to remote interiors. Women employees are prepared to undertake tours to those places where train, travel and other facilities are available and from where they can return home on the same day. How the administration is compelling the women employees to undertake tours to far off places and re-

mote villages without taking into account the difficulties they have to face?

Letter to the Prime Minister, dated 5th June, 1984 by the All India Co-Ordination Committee Of Working Women

Dear Madam,

I am enclosing a copy of the letter received by me yesterday from the Circle Secretary, All India Telegraph Traffic Employees Union, Class-III Branch Gauhati for your information. It is stated that the four lady telegraphists recently posted at Departmental Telegraph Office Dimapur under Silchar Telegraph Traffic Division who were recruited from Cachar District and Agartala, seriously complained against two officials who are trying to molest them, and making their lives unbearable. The enclosed letter speaks for itself the horrible experiences these ladies are passing through, ultimately being driven to the extent that they might commit suicide.

An immediate intervention from your office is very much necessary to save these ladies from the criminal and threatening attitude of these officers by removing them to other posts if possible or to make them understand the responsibility they have towards the staff, especially the women.

I would therefore request for immediate action from your side.

Thanking you.

Vimal Ranadive

First Conference Of AIDWA In Khagaria Dist-Bihar

The first Conference of AIDWA, Khagaria district, was held on 27th May 1984, at Janata Vidyalaya Mansi with hoisting of the AIDWA flag and homage to martyrs. Ramadevi, Droupadidevi, and Savitridevi were elected on the presidium. Vimal Ranadive, Vice-President, AIDWA and Secretary of AICCWW inaugurated the conference. A big procession of about 700 women, mostly agricultural, paraded all over Mansi with slogans. While welcoming the delegates who had launched continuous struggles under Kisan Sabha, Vimal Ranadive explained the various movements launched by women under AIDWA in Bengal, Kerala and other places, against the injustice made by the Congress rulers, the reflection of which is seen in the increasing membership of AIDWA which stands at about 15 lakhs within such a short time. A report of the work in Khagaria Dist. was placed by Jayashri Devi outlining the various struggles, including the one when thousands of women courted arrest against the policies of the Bihar Govt. More than 10 women delegates spoke on their various problems. Ramadevi from Parvati area attacked the Mukhia and Sarpanch who belonged to the Congress, for stealing the money from the pension available for widows and old women. She said "we get only Rs. 30/- per month, as widow pension, out of which the Mukhia has Rs. 5/- as his share. If it is denied, no pension will be available for us". It was reported by a number of delegates that out of 1000 only 20 women under that 'Anchal' are entitled to get pension. Even to get the application form, and later on pension the bribe is to be given to Mukhias, Sarpanchs and so on. "We have to prove that we are widows! we have nobody to support! This is unbearable...". Recently they have stopped giving application forms for widow pension. The majority of the

delegates being agricultural women, complained about the unequal wage they receive for the same type of work. "We work as 'Khurapi', the same work as the men do, but we are paid Rs. 2/- to Rs. 4/- at the most when men are paid Rs. 8/- to Rs. 9/-". Rukmani from Malma Anchal, whose husband died in a Bagpat Bridge Railway accident in 1981, is still not receiving any pension. She said, "I have a grand daughter who is to get married soon. But where can I find Rs. 10,000/- as dowry". Pavitradevi complained charging the Mukhia who continues to illtreat her because she collects money for the Conference. Due to overflow of Ganga water about 200 families had taken shelter on the land of the landlord, who was trying to evict them. In spite of petitions Parvati Devi said "no help was received from the Government". Ramadevi said, "give us money for hutments and we will leave the place..."

The session continued till 10-30 in the night with the help of the patromax! After summing up the discussion by Vimal Ranadive, a new committee with 13 members was elected with Savitridevi as President and Jayashri Devi as Secretary. The resolutions on atrocities on women, equal wage, dowry deaths and on peace were adopted unanimously. Com. Sudha Bindu Mitra, the leader of Bihar Janawadi Mahila Samiti concluded while giving the future programme of action.

The open session was attended by 800 women and men where Com. Krishnakant Singh, President, Kishan Sabha, Com. Anandi Singh, Secretary, CPM, Com. Geeta Yadav, Kishan Sabha, Khagaria, Surendra Prasad, SFI and Hariram Choudhari, DYFI greeted the delegates besides Vimal Ranadive assuring full support to the cause of women's movement and their demands.

Women To Observe National Integration Week

The meeting of AIDWA, presided over by Manju Gupta, held on 21-22 June 1984 at Delhi heard the report made by Susheela Gopalan, General Secretary on the serious situation developing in the country especially with regard to Punjab, and Bhiwandi in Maharashtra. She said, "the independence of our country is in danger and women have to play a big role in keeping the unity of various nationalities and fighting against the divisive forces." Ahilya Rangnekar reported about the terrible communal developments in Bhiwandi and other places in Maharashtra when poor men, women and children of minorities were killed, their huts were burnt, the police machinery remaining a silent spectator. A serious note was taken of the disruptive activities of the Christian missionaries, foreign agents, and the so-called left and feminist groups etc., who try to approach various sections of women under the plea of taking up their economic demands, but weaning them away from the common democratic movement. The meeting felt that the AIDWA in the states and districts should try to counteract their propaganda ideologically.

Two important decisions were taken in the meeting in this connection. A deputation on behalf of AIDWA should visit Bhiwandi and other affected places, with a donation of Rs. 2000/- to be paid immediately, and Rs. 7000/- to be collected and sent later on. A delegation also should visit Punjab when the situation permits in consultation with the Punjab branch of AIDWA.

The committee congratulated the democratic people of Tripura, including women for the glorious victory in the Panchayat elections, defeating the authoritarian and divisive forces in a big way. It was noted, the victory of the Panchayat elections in

Tripura was particularly important in the present unhealthy happenings in Punjab, Maharashtra and Assam. The left front Govt. of Tripura and West Bengal could keep the unity of the people because of the tradition of the democratic movement despite attempts of disruption by Upajati Samity and Congress (I). The committee heard the reports of the activities from the states which included the signature campaigns on the introduction of Dowry Prohibition Act, price rise, observation of 8th March and Children's Day on 1st June and women's participation in peace rallies. At many places like Maharashtra, Delhi, Tamilnadu, Andhra, joint programmes by different organisations with AIDWA's initiative were taken up.

Important discussion on the question of employment of women and the 7th 5-year plan, on the state and central commission on women took place. After the discussion it was decided that the AIDWA should demand from the Government a meeting of the Planning Commission with women's organisations to discuss various ways and means to increase the employment of women and for training facilities.

The meeting adopted the following programme: 1. A week to be observed from 10-16th July as National Integration week. 2. Signatures on the Dowry Prohibition Act to be collected and submitted to the Government by 15th of August, 84. 3. A campaign for common civil code.

Following members were present from the states. Mythily Shivaraman (Tamilnadu), Damayanti Parikh, Niru Patel (Gujarat), Ahilya Rangnekar (Maharashtra), Sudha Bindu Maitra (Bihar), Rama Das (Assam), Kanak Mukherjee, Manju Gupta, Madhuri Dasgupta, Sarala Maheshwari (W. Bengal), Udayam (Andhra) and Susheela Gopalan and Vimal Ranadive.

"Constitute Women's Commissions"

The following reply dated 12th June 1984 was received by Com. Susheela Gopalan to the Memorandum, submitted to Prime Minister on various issues relating to welfare of women.

"I am directed to refer to a memorandum dated 12-4-1984 submitted to Prime Minister of the above subject and to give my comments, on the various points raised in the memorandum as under :-

1. **Immediate passing of the amendment to Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 as recommended by the Joint Parliamentary select committee.**

The bill to amend the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961 has been introduced in the last session of the Parliament.

2. **Constitute Women's Commission in State and Central level.**

There is already a national machinery, comprising a National Committee on Women and the Women Welfare and Development Bureau in the Ministry of Social Welfare. Therefore no useful purpose is likely to be served by constituting another statutory commission. It is felt that the problems concerning women are such that they can not be solved by merely constituting such a commission. The crucial need is to bring about social awareness and attitudinal changes about the situation of women for which prominent voluntary organisations like the All India Democratic Women's Association can render valuable assistance.

3. **Constitute Family Courts to deal with the cases of women and children.**

The Department of Justice of the Law Ministry is processing the case for introduction of a bill in the Parliament for constitution of Family Courts.

4. **Give immediate effect to the laws passed by the Parliament on rape and cruelty to women.**

The Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act, 1983 has been enacted to deal with situations in which women are subjected to harassment or cruelty for inability to meet the demands of their inlaws and it is often as a result of these harassments that women are driven to committing suicides. A new section 498-A has been inserted in the CPC to punish the husband or any relative of the husband of the woman who subjects her to cruelty, with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 3 years and fine. The offence has been classified as cognizable, if information relating to the commission of the offence is given to police by the victim or by any person related to her by blood, marriage or adoption or if there is no such relative, by any public servant authorised in this behalf by the State Government. The offence is also non-bailable. It also provides for compulsory inquest by an Executive Magistrate and post-mortem in all cases of suicide or death in suspicious circumstances of married women within 7 years of their marriage.

It also amends the law of evidence to provide that where a woman has committed suicide within a period of 7 years from the date of her marriage and it is shown that her husband or relative of her husband has subjected her to cruelty, the court may presume that such suicide has been abetted by her husband or such relatives of her husband.

The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 1983 has come into effect w.e.f. 25th December, 1983.

To combat the menace of dowry deaths instructions were issued on 22nd July, 1980 and 13-8-1982 to all the State Govts. and UT Administrations that through investigation should be conducted in all cases of attempted suicide or death in suspicious circumstances of young married women during

Continued on page 15

Women's Place is in the Battle-field

—Vimal Ranadive

"Now that you have touched the women you have struck a rock, you have dislodged a boulder, you will be crushed". Singing the song, more than 20,000 women, majority of Black in South Africa walked in the streets, of Pretoria, with hundreds of signatures on the petition forms, in spite of the ban on procession by the white regime minority Government against the pass laws. This was the women's day, 9th August 1956. The preparations for this went on for months. They collected money and signatures from towns and villages. Many walked miles to assure the success of the women's Day. The representatives of the Apartheid Govt. had no time to meet the delegation and the bunches of the signatures were kept in the office of the Prime Minister.

This memorable procession was a part of the anti-pass movement which began since 1955. The Government issued the instructions, that, "African women will be issued with the passes from January 1956". Men had already got them. Therefore women knew what pass laws meant, the night raids, stopping persons in the streets by police vans, searches, loosing the jobs, arrests, disappearance of black people any time, forced labour on the farms of white people, which means separation of the family. No pass books means no pension, dismissal of the nurses and teachers who do not have pass books! Why should the black person require to have the pass? It was an insult and women decided to fight against this blatant injustice. Pass books were burnt publicly, refused when offered and big movement was launched with the result the Government was compelled to withdraw the order. This was a victory for the women's movement.

Tortures under Apartheid

Is it not surprising that in the 20th century there should be a Government on racial basis, elected on the minority votes, when majority are blacks! But it is so. Nowhere we will find the "Bantustan", a segregation of the people huddled in thousands, deported and separated from their families for no fault of theirs. The leaders of the movement are jailed, murdered. Many women are the bread winners in their families. At present, 1000 children, aged between 11 to 12 are in jail under the so-called charges of political activities against the Government. 5,60,000 people are imprisoned between the period of June 1982, to June 1983, main reason being breach of pass laws. Over 200 women were brought to trail, 150 were banned, or under house arrest when they participated in the movement against the anti-terrorism legislation, which was introduced in 1960. They were not spared from the tortures and solitary confinement. Mrs. Ritta Ndzanga, one of the leaders narrated the horrible experience in the following words: "My first interrogation took place on 16th May. I was taken to a room.....Major Swanepoel called me by name.....I kept quiet. Other security officers continued to question me day and night. Then struck me when I fell on the floor. They said, "stand up" and kicked me when I lay on the floor.....they poured water on my face, told me I must stand up and speak.....". During her third interrogation they began hitting, then took her shoes off and asked her to stand on the bricks. One of the police officers climbed a chair and pulled her by hair. They did this again and again. "The man who pulled me by the hair had his hands full of my hair....." This is one of the hundreds of

instances as to how the women were tortured. Women were jailed because of the activities of their husbands. White women, supporters of the movement also were not spared. Pixie Benjamine had to go on hunger strike lasting for 48 days in protest against her arrest without trial. This continues till today.

A Massacre at Sharpsville : A turning point

A demonstration of women and children taken out on 21st March 1960 against the pass laws at Sharpsville was brutally fired upon by the police when 69 men and women were killed and 180 injured. Emergency was declared lasting for 5 months. Raids and detention were the order of the day. There were 20 white women who too participated and were detained. The African National Congress the organisation of the democratic people was banned, women had to shoulder the burden of this massacre by helping the people and children.

The General strike called for 29th May 1961 against this, brought army mobilisation, helicopters and tanks in the township with largest display of naked force to crush the demonstration against the Apartheid laws. This was the turning point in the political struggle in South Africa when the emergence of 'Umkhonto We Sizwe' a military wing of the new illegal African National Congress came into existence.

The Issues on which the Women's Movement in South Africa was built

Women are exploited and discriminated in all the capitalist countries without exception including the so called advanced countries like USA and Britain. But, in South Africa women are oppressed and insulted as "Black Women". They suffer sexual harassment from their white bosses. They have to be 'Ayas' to look after the children of white women while their own children are neglected with the result they

are snatched by whites and compelled to labour on their land without any wages. Any time, men and women are evicted from their homes and sent to the Transkei, the camps. It is a common thing in South Africa that men and women break away from the police while they are being put in the van. Women are demanding the right to stay with their families and refuge to go back to the camps where they are starved. Under this situation women in South Africa worked for many years organising themselves on various issues on economic, political, etc. under the Women's League attached to the African National Congress. After a few years the Women's League was banned.

In 1975, during International women's year, a new Black Women's Federation was established, with the object of linking black groups with others in practical activities. There were increasing activities on the economic front by ordinary women and also by working women. The Federation took the common problems like food, prices, housing, education, and the children. The special character of the Federation can be noted from the participation of white and coloured women side by side. The Federation adopted a charter of demands which includes, right to vote, right to full employment opportunities, equal rights with men in relation to property, marriage and children, and for removal of all laws and customs which deny women equal rights. They pledge to strengthen the national liberation movement and organise women in trade unions. By this time, women and their organisation had become a part of the underground resistance movement and the general preparation for armed struggle to end the Apartheid system.

1984 a year of the Women

African National Congress has fully recognised the militant role and power of women's movement which strengthened the ANC. "When women started playing a

significant role in the national liberation struggle, the ANC grew in volume and content, and one may add in militancy". This is how the leaders of the ANC view the important role of women in the present struggle of National liberation against the Boatha regime of Apartheid. Recently the ANC declared 1984, the year of the women. It was in fact, a great tribute for the militant struggles waged by women in South Africa, "the mighty detachment of our revolutionary struggle for national liberation and social emancipation". This is how the leaders have commented and praised the role the women have played.

Apartheid as the leaders say, can not be reformed. The only solution is total change in the present system, dismantling of the machinery and transfer of political and economic power to the democratic majority. The Boatha Government is well aware that they cannot rule the old way. The Government is alive because of the support from the Imperialist countries, the USA and Britain. Through the efforts of the ANC, the United Democratic Front was formed with broadest sections of the people against apartheid system. The ANC has given a call to mobilise the people in rural areas where the apartheid system had deep roots on the slogan of "Seize the land".

Boatha, an Unwelcome Visitor

The Prime Minister Peter Boatha when he recently visited the European countries was an unwelcome visitor. He faced massive demonstrations of people in England, was insulted and howled. The demand was raised in West Germany, and other countries to release Nelson Mandela and others, they protested against the violation of human rights. He knows very well that the days of Apartheid, the minority ruling over the majority are coming to end. The people of South Africa have united and are giving blows to the white regime. And women are playing a significant role in the overthrow of the Government.

ANC Honours Fighting Women

The President of ANC in a statement said, "It will be our special task this year to organise and mobilise our womenfolk into a powerful, united and active force for revolutionary change. The task falls on men and women alike, all of us together as comrades in struggle. We wish to stress the need of the present hour, for the

emergence on the political scene of a women's movement that is politically and organisationally united. Our struggle needs and demands this political mighty force". Further he stressed, "Our national and social emancipation can never be complete if we continue to treat women of our country as dependent, miners, and objects of one form of exploitation or another, certainly no longer should it be that a women's place is in the kitchen In our beleaguered country, the women's place is in battlefield of struggle". This is how the leaders of ANC, visualise the role of women in the present struggle against the white regime. And the ANC will be observing the year 1984, honouring these fighting women in South Africa. What a great advance, the women in South Africa have made.

The Federation Completes 30 Years

In April 1984, the Federation of South African women completed 30 years. During this period there were arrests, bannings, detentions of the women leaders. Lilian Ngoyi, the President, was continuously served with banning orders. Dava Tamana, acting Secretary General, Helan Joseph were under house arrest for years. The white regime tried to silence Albertina Sisulu. Dorthy Nyembe was released lately after 15 years in jail. Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, the undisputed leaders, and the symbols of resistance to white regime continue to be in prison for 20 years.

The year 1984 will be observed with befitting manner by all the democratic people in South Africa and supported by the women all over the world. The people as a whole have suffered a lot under the racial regime, lost hundreds of lives, including women. Women in the country are proud of the heroic sisters who are playing important role in the national liberation struggle, and for their own emancipation.

The immense sacrifice of men and women in the national liberation struggle in South Africa will not go in vain. The determination and the participation of majority women in the struggle confirms, the day is not far off when they will see the Boatha regime crumbled under the weight of the biggest movement. The Apartheid "has struck a rock, dislodged a boulder" and they are bound to get crushed under the weight.

We salute the heroic women and pledge full support to their cause.

Dwindling Employment Of Women In Maharashtra

—Subhasini Ali, Bombay.

The following paper on Woman and Employment was submitted at the Women's Conference, Aurangabad, Maharashtra by Com. Subhasini for discussion held on 12-13 Nov. 83.

1. The data on women and employment and on the economic condition of women in general suggests that unless their social status is changed and the structure of society itself is completely smashed and re-made, they will remain in a trapped situation where even progressive steps like protective legislation and technological innovations will deprive them of job opportunities; where every change in every sphere will be used by the vested interests, property owners, contractors and capitalists to increase their exploitation and their unemployment.

2. From 1901 to 1956, the Planning Commission has noted a trend of replacement of women workers, a disappearance or diminution in many traditional women's occupations. This trend was seen to continue till 1971. The reasons again were that (a) the secondary sector (industrialisations) rejected them, (b) the tertiary sector (services etc.) didn't expand much and (c) in the primary sector (agriculture) they started getting crowded out by population pressure.

3. In the industries that traditionally absorbed women, they were thrown out of employment because of the combination of protective legislation and technological expansion e.g. the textile industry which employed 35,000 women in 1950, employed only 6,000 in 1975 and now in post-strike 1983, the number has dwindled to 2,000.

4. This falling rate of women's employment can be illustrated by the following figures.

Maharashtra : Women Employed.

	1950	1975
Textile (Bombay)	35,000	6,000
Mines, Plantations, Forests and Fisheries	13,00,000	11,00,000
Household Industries	40,00,000	13,00,000
Trade	8,00,000	5,00,000
	1961	1971
Agriculture	3,30,00,000	97,00,000

Economically active females as proportion of total no. of females

1901	31.70%
1911	33.73%
1961	27.96%
1971	12.73%

5. The declining trend of women's employment would seem to find reflection in other indicators of the social and economic condition of women. Discrimination in the pre-entry situation in the organised sector leaves women to crowd the unorganised. Here the women work to maintain a minimum subsistence level which keeps the general wage level low and increase the work-load on women. The General discrimination against women and their being trapped into accepting any kind of work perpetuate the differentials in male and female wages.

Differential wage rates of 1975 in some industries in Maharashtra.

	<i>Male P. d.</i>	<i>Female P. d.</i>
Handlooms	6.06	4.76
Silk Weaving	4.84	2.35
Agriculture p. m.	44.05	29.50

6. From 1971 to 1981 the trend of declining employment has been *slightly* reversed mainly because of increased employment of women in the public sector. Here also it has been mainly in the categories of teaching, nursing, midwives and clerks, i. e. traditional women's work. The growth has been as below.

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Public Sector</i>	<i>Private Sector</i>
1971	10.73 (Millions)	6.76 (Millions)
1979	14.98 (Millions)	7.20 (Millions)

7. There is no room for complacency, how-

ever, as this slight increase is too slight for comfort, it is offset by the huge increase on new female entrants every year, by the growing number of unemployed women on the Unemployment Exchange rolls etc. The figures for industrial employment in Maharashtra also give ample scope for pessimism :

Factory Workers in Maharashtra

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Female workers' Percentage of total</i>
1966	7,55,706	69256	9.16
1967	7,41,024	65204	8.79
1968	7,56,578	63172	8.34
1969	7,91,662	66251	8.36
1970	8,06,141	66316	8.22
1975	8,63,105	59351	6.87

Continued from page 10

the first 10 years of their marriage. Such cases are required to be investigated by an officer not below the rank of Dy. Superintendent of Police and the post-mortem should be done by a team of two doctors. Disposal of the dead body without post-mortem should not be permitted except with a 'No Objection Certificate' by the Police and he should not give each certificate unless the dead body has been seen by the parents or guardians or other closed relatives of the bride's side of the family. The instruction is being monitored.

All the State Governments and the UT Administrations have been asked to set up District Advisory Committees having a fair representation of women for assisting investigation and prevention of crimes against the women. The State Government/UTs

are taking action to set up District Advisory Committees in the respective States/UTs.

In view of some allegations about misbehaviour with women arrested or kept for interrogation by the police, the Home Ministry has written to all the State Governments and UT Administrations bringing out clearly the legal provisions for effecting the arrest of women, their search etc. and advising the State Government to ensure that the instructions are followed in letter and in spirit by the State Police.

5. Set apart an adequate amount in the 7th Five Year Plan for Women's employment and training facilities.

A Working Group on Women and Development has been set up which is in the process of completing its report and this is one of the items under consideration by the Working Group.

Training Class For Working Women

West Bengal

On 30th March '84, the Nadia Branch of the women's sub-committee of the State Co-ordination Committee of State Govt. employees organised a seminar at ABT Hall, Krishnanagar. The subject of the seminar was, "Role of the Working Women in the Trade Union Movement. 50 women from various sectors of Krishnanagar Town and surrounding areas attended this seminar which was held on the occasion of the Training Class for Working Women. The Joint Secretary of the District Co-ordination Committee Com. Dilip Chakraborty initiated the discussion. The topics like development of social science, the beginning of T.U. movement in the international sphere, participation of working women in the movement and their future responsibilities were the points of discussion in the seminar.

AIDWA Formed At Karnal

Haryana

A meeting of women was held at Karnal on 29-4-84. Smt. Shanti Devi presided over the meeting which was attended by 35 women representing different sections like Nurses, Teachers, Students and Housewives. The meeting was attended by the General Secretary of the AIDWA, Susheela Gopalan and Vimal Ranadive. Prof. Indu Sharma welcomed the leaders.

Addressing the meeting Susheela Gopalan elaborately discussed about the evils of capitalist society where women are subjected to all sorts of exploitation and torture. She called upon the women to organise under AIDWA and launch a relentless struggle against their exploitation. Vimal Ranadive highlighted the exploitation and attacks on women under the Congress(I) rule and explained the present political and economic situation.

The meeting ended with formation of the district committee of AIDWA. A 7

member adhoc committee was formed with Shanti Devi as President and Pramila Abrol as Secretary.

First Conference of AIDWA held at Kota and Ganganagar

— Sumitra Swami, Rajasthan.

Janwadi Mahila Samity, Kota District held its first conference on March 22. Inaugurating the conference Sumitra Swami spoke about the aims and objectives of the organisation, appealed to the women to fight for peace and against war. Radhika Singh presented the report. The conference condemned the murderous attack on the Divisional Secretary of CITU. 156 women participated in the conference in which a 20 member-Working Committee was formed. Sarla Rani was elected President and B. P. Swami, the Secretary. A procession was taken out after the conference.

The First District Conference of Ganganagar was held on February 17. Com. Vimal Ranadive was the chief guest who spoke of the danger of war and of the imperialist war designs. She exhorted the women to struggle for peace. Sumitra Swami presented the report. The participants spoke of the growing atrocities on women, on rising prices and on the anti-people policies of the Government. 150 women attended the conference and a 21 member working committee was elected with Com. Gomti Sakya as President and Com. Durga Swami as secretary.

Suman Sood, Tulsi Devi, Krishnadevi and others also addressed the delegates. At the open session of the conference held at the main square area, Com. Hetram Benewal, Secretary of Dist. CPI(M), Com. Shivcharan Pande, CITU, Bhajan Singh, SFI and Vimal Ranadive addressed the gathering.

Working Women Should Take Up Their Seats Around The Negotiating Table

(From World Trade Union Movement)

Today, when speaking of workers, we often forget the existence of working women. In the last twenty years, women's participation in economic life has risen from 24.2% to 33.7% in North America, 22.7% to 28% in Oceania, 29.3% to 32.2% in Europe. Just because more women are now working does not mean that their financial situation has improved. Pay day is the best indication that the working world is still dominated by men. ILO studies in certain countries reveal that men earn twice as much as women who have the same qualifications and length of service. In the so-called low wage bracket, women are, on the whole, three or four times as numerous as men. The problems affecting women in the workplace and the causes and possible solutions were the subject of a recent ILO survey. Below are some of the principal conclusions of this report.

Segregation in Employment

Working women are usually to be found in a very narrow range of employment and professions, which normally require few skills, is very repetitive monotonous jobs offering minimum job security and career opportunities. Here are some examples:

—A survey carried out in France revealed that women make up half the work force on assembly lines, whilst they represent only 30% of the labour force in corresponding branches;

—according to a poll carried out by the Commission of European Communities 8 million out of 9.2 million part time workers are women. These workers are often the first to be sacked when a company is in financial trouble. Women usually have jobs with few career opportunities and little social insurance cover;

—many women have office jobs, and have mixed views on the advent of new technology. In actual fact, although the introduction of new office technology has made some jobs more interesting and stimulating it has also made many jobs more boring and meaningless. The problem is that, once again, the men usually reap all the advantages and women are shifted to more trying jobs needing lower qualifications.

Two Days Work for One

The number of married working women is constantly rising. The number of working women with children of less than three years old stands at 32% in the Federal Republic of Germany, 43% in France and 80% in the German Democratic Republic. After their day's work these women have to start another day's work at home. Even in Sweden, where the need for a revamp of the traditional family roles caught on fairly early, 51% of women and only 13% of men spend over 20 hours per week on housework and child care, says a poll.

A Vicious Circle

Over recent years many improvements have been made concerning women's employment matters and working conditions. There is still a long way to go, however, especially towards equal wages and promotion. Through membership of a trade union and participation in the democratic process and collective bargaining—fundamental mechanism to improve women's working conditions—women can be involved in decision making concerning new ways of reducing discrimination at work, stresses the report.

Take, for example, wage differences. The reasons advanced to justify these are

well known and many countries have adopted ILO recommendations on ways of eliminating this unfair practice. But women should demand that their employers take notice and apply these recommendations at factory or company level. One of the obstacles to this is that women are less involved in trade unions than men. Their trade union involvement is still "limited due to lack of time from looking after a home and a job; high staff turnover in monotonous and menial jobs, and a high proportion of women working part-time or at home", adds the report. Because of all this, specific women's demands such as equal wages, access to genuine training, promotion and the creation of creches are not adequately defended by trade union representatives during the collective bargaining procedure, which could put many women off joining a union or becoming more involved in union work. This is a vicious circle which must be broken with fresh efforts, both from unions and working women themselves who should take up their roles at the negotiating table to defend their legitimate interests.

**Greetings by TUI Commerce
to AICCWW on 8th March**

This year the International Women's Day will be commemorated in an extremely delicate atmosphere. The resumption of the armament race, sharpened by the development of new American missiles in Western Europe which threatens peace and the whole world with a nuclear disaster, the increased exploitation of working women by transnational corporations, the ever-growing unemployment of women, etc—due to all these, women who are increasingly coming to understand their role in the struggle through their militant participation, constitute an important social force alongside their brothers.

Our TUI and its affiliated and friendly organisations pay warm tributes to all women workers in commerce and assure them that they will do everything in their power to provide an adequate place for them in trade union organisations catering for our industry, in the daily struggle for social progress, for the defence of the common rights and interests of the working class and for the guarantee of the working women's specific interests.

× × ×

MORE THAN 6000 NURSES ON STRIKE

The largest strike of 6000 nurses in American history affected 15 hospitals of the 17 in Minneapolis which began in the first week of June, 1984. Doctors had to cancel the operations, transfer patients to suburban hospitals and some patients were sent home.

The managements of the Minneapolis hospitals argued that the growing competition in the health care field made it compulsory on their part to curtail expenses on the labour cost which means retrenchment, or lay off of the nurses. The negotiations failed and the strike began. The nurses state that during last two years already 20 percent full time nurses were curtailed. Now, reducing the working hours, which the managements wanted, means that women do not need full time employment. The strike is continuing very well. Negotiations were to resume shortly. Meanwhile, nurses in several other cities threaten to follow the lead of their Minneapolis sisters.

× × ×

Women Engineers—A Myth ?

Madras Correspondent

In Britain, "the engineering industry today (1980) affords only 7% of women's employment. And the 608,000 women in engineering firms fill the lowliest ranks. No less than 93% are employed in the low-skilled categories of clerical, operator and 'other employees', who are often canteen and cleaning workers. In these firms, while no less than 70% of clerical workers are women, only 2% of scientists/technologists are women. 2% is also the female proportion of technicians and for engineering craft occupations only around one third of 1% are women. (*Excerpt from the article 'Caught in the Wheels' by Cynthia Cookburn in 'Marxism Today', November, 1983*)

"Let's talk about the 'male occupations' that Soviet women have mastered. There are more women engineers in the Soviet Union than in the rest of the world combined. While in the USSR one in every three engineers is a women, in Bulgaria a larger proportion, 40% are women. In the German Democratic Republic, every third chief engineer, chief economist and enterprise director is a woman.

"Equal rights for women is not only one of the fundamental principles of democracy and respect for human rights, the actual implementation of this equality is also a fundamental condition for the overall progress of society as a whole, and for the development of each individual woman. The history of the Soviet Union and other Socialist countries, where discrimination against women no longer exists in any form, is concrete proof of this fact. Equal rights for women depend on many concrete economic and social conditions. But undoubtedly the most important factor is the implementation of Socialist changes in the country". (*Excerpts from N. Vishneva-Sarafanova's "Soviet*

Women—A Portrait", Progress Publishers, Moscow).

Equal Pay, But Also Equal Opportunities !

In UK, "The Equal Pay Act was the result of pressure from the growing number of women in the trade union movement, the demands of the developing women's movement and individual MPs. The Trade Union Congress was forced, by the end of the 1960's to put real pressure on the government for legislation that would make it unlawful to pay women less than men. When the Equal Pay Act was passed in 1970, manual full-time women's earnings were half of men's.

"But the Act was drafted so as to have a very limited effect. It deals only with situations where women and men are doing the same or similar jobs, or where there has been a job evaluation scheme that has valued them as the same (many of these schemes are themselves discriminatory). Reality is somewhat different. A study published by the Department of Employment in 1980 showed that 45% of women and 75% of men are in jobs that are totally segregated. The Equal Pay Act does not therefore deal with the real problems of women's low pay and job segregation. By 1982, manual full-time women's earnings were still only two thirds of men's." (*Excerpt from 'Focus' in "Marxism Today", October, 1983*) The point at issue is thus not only equal pay for women doing similar jobs as men, but to demand *equal opportunities* for entering higher paid professions currently monopolised by men. A major component of democracy is availability of equal opportunities to women to acquire professional and technical skills, which alone can put an end to the job segregation referred to above.

No Empty Promises—Give Us Our Due

This is the election year. Once again the ruling party is trying its best to create illusion among the masses. Every alternate day, women are promised employment, creches, increased number of ICDS schemes and so on and so forth by the Ruling Party in the 7th five year plan. Over two lakh children, including those of the weaker sections in the rural, tribal and slum areas will be covered under the "creche for the children of working and ailing mothers"—says the Central Social Welfare Board in 1984-85, a sum of Rs. 395 lakhs was provided under this programme as against Rs. 78.91 lakhs in the year 1979-80. The number of creche units in 1984-85 would exceed 8,000, benefitting more than 2 lakhs, the official press release in Delhi announced on 30th June 1984. The CSWB also announced programmes for rural women, training in public co-operation, implimentation of family welfare motivational camps, and family counselling centres. The Government has increased the number of ICDS projects to 1003 where the children and women will be benefited with food, health services for women, etc. As per the report, ICDS services were being provided by 46,034 women workers assisted by a helper each in Anganwadi centres, during 1983. As far as the facts of the creches, Anganwadi etc. go, the actual beneficiaries will tell as exactly as to how much they have been benefitted by the schemes. Our own sources viz. those who are working in Anganwadi and creches, convey a different story altogether. It is true that some of the projects under ICDS do work sincerely, such as the 79 projects under the West Bengal left front Govt. under the Ministry of Welfare, have done good work, trained women and employed them who are doing good work in rural areas. In Bhatpara in 24 Pargana Dist. for instance in 1981-83, 111 projects of ICDS were

sanctioned, 101 women were selected and all the 101 were trained. From the inception of the scheme, the projects were expanded from 2 areas to 800 areas. We do not have full information about the actual functioning of these schemes from other stages. Whatever little information that has reached, shows a different picture.

The teachers in Anganwadi under Delhi Administration once brought the chaotic conditions of the school and women teachers to the notice of the Co-ordination Committee. The women who have been trained have to singly conduct classes of 25 children ranging from 3 to 16 years from 9 A. M. to 1 P. M. for which they are paid only Rs. 150/- and again take adult literacy classes for 10-15 women from 1 to 3 in the afternoon for which they secure an additional Rs. 50/-. The teachers and helpers do not get the facilities accorded to other schools. The helpers who work for the same number of hours are just paid Rs. 50/- per month. They are sometimes made to sign blank papers under pressure and forced to leave their jobs. This is only one instance where the conditions of teachers and helpers are bad. The other schools are too not exceptions. All these boil down to a scheme of part time employment with a mere pittance as wages. Now let us examine what is the reality.

The Reality-Displacement Of Jobs

In a reply to a starred question, No. 242 in Loksabha on 13th March 1984, on women's employment, the Ministry paid emphasis to promote the additional employment of women under the scheme "such as public distribution system, rural godowns food dairy development and social forestry". It was also said that, "there was also emphasis on promotion of self-employment among women and modernisation of tradi-

tional occupations of women such as spinning and weaving, match making, coir, cashew, rural marketing, agriculture, animal husbandry, fishery, etc..." One is unable to understand from the statement what exactly the Government wishes to do with the self-employment in all these spheres. But the above statement makes one thing very clear that they would go for "modernisation of traditional occupation of women". Already the modernisation of departments in Textile and Jute, mechanised loading and unloading in coal mines, and tobacco, threw out a considerable number of women to starvation. There is going to be mechanisation in match making industry according to reliable sources. Women workers in Coir Industry in Kerala threatened to break the machines when the Board attempted to introduce them. All the items mentioned above are the ones, where majority of women workers are employed and therefore rightly they are apprehensive about their fate if the modernisation is introduced without any alternative employment.

The displacement of women workers started from 1850 due to technological changes, after the introduction of legislations like Equal Remuneration and Maternity Benefit Acts, which continues unabated. Between 1971-1981 cotton handlooms were replaced by power looms, the number displaced being 13.86 lakhs, the majority among whom were women. From the report of the Commerce Ministry 1980, this regularisation of power looms was against the Government policies. But it was done.

The number of women job seekers increased from 22 lakhs in 1981 to 30 lakhs in 1982. Though the Government may be pleased itself with the small growth in women's employment in organised sector which is 29.84 thousands in 1983 as against 27.02 thousands in the year 1980, in fact, the lakhs of women entering in the labour market will conclusively prove the worsening situation faced by working women in future.

The ruling Congress party is fully aware about the discontent among women who can not be employed on the skilled jobs because of lack of training facilities. There is a blatant discrimination while occupations are being chosen. Women are given training only in garment, electronics, needlework, embroidery and so on. That is how the question of training facilities for women acquires importance. The Govt. recently announced "New Vocational Training Programmes for women". (Statesman, 29th, February 1984.) The women's organisations and other interested organisation have raised their voice against this blatant discrimination which prevents women getting skilled jobs, and have to be satisfied with low paid, part time jobs of whatever nature they may be. Government knows this very well and accepts the fact. What is this "New vocational training programme" announced by the Government? "These include skill training in new areas, staff development and income-generation non formal programme". The explanation given further was "staff development programmes would help them in extension work, audio-visuals management evolution and report drafting, decision making and project monitoring". All these ideas, we are sure, will go over the heads of the ordinary women, unless explained in detail. It is beyond our capacity to understand as to how a woman, that too a woman worker can be trained for report drafting, decision making and so on. Even for educated women, it will take years to get trained for audio-visuals management evolution, etc. What about the stipend for that period and the guarantee of jobs. These are some of the relevant questions for those 30 lakh women job seekers on the employment register.

The explanation for Trainees' development programme was the following—"they would relate to home management, nutrition population, education and entrepreneurship".

The Government made it clear that the programmes of vocational training offer, "training courses at basic and advanced levels of skills in electronics, secretarial practices, embroidery and needle crafts, hair and skin care, dress making and the like..." Women are already employed on a large scale in electronics, assembling parts, needle crafts and embroideries. Are they going to be provided advanced skills in electronics, and what is that? Big words, and promises do not help to get an employment for the needy.

Another scheme for women's employment has been published. "The Khadi and Village Industries Commission trains women in Khadi Industry, processing of cereals, pulses, fibre, cane and bamboo work." A number of women SEWA and others are doing this sort of work. A few women are employed with low wages. The organisers are dependent on the market which is already shrunk. Women do this sort of work at home. If they expect some better skilled jobs which earn more, they will be happy.

Now as for the "Self-employment scheme" talked about time to time, as the only solution on the unemployment problem, the report which appeared in Patriot dated 20-5-84 under the heading "Job Scheme in Gujarat a Hoax", is revealing. The report states: "The needy have been left out and the greedy have lapped up all the cream with the active connivance of politicians and bankers!" What more criticism on the scheme is required? It further says: "the ambitious programme of the Prime Minister of giving loans to the educated unemployed did in fact achieve its targets. It educated the unscrupulous elements in the art of defrauding the banks". The directorate of cottage Industries, Mr. Y.M. Maru says that between September 1983 and March 1984 Rs. 15.42 crores were disbursed to 10,497 beneficiaries out of a total of one

lakh applicants. "According to reliable sources, only 6200 applicants actually received the loans, 63 percent of the applicants were bogus and received loans from more than one bank and at times for the same purpose". And there was so much pressure on the bankers from the "above" to achieve the target! The way the things are moving in Congress ruled states with regard to the welfare schemes, bank loans for self-employment, etc, the above report is not at all an exaggeration, but reveals what is happening.

Empty Promises

The 6th plan promised working women's hostels, housing, hospitals, medical services, etc. How many hostels have come up for working women who need them badly, when they are transferred from one place to other, and the security of women is involved?

The Congress rulers, especially the woman Prime Minister is appealing to the backward sections like Harijans and Tribals, and women in particular, in the coming General Elections. One of the main question debated is employment for women. While displacement of women workers from traditional sphere of employment is on the increase, the proposed scheme offers part-time employment with a pittance as wages evading the basic question of right to work and unemployment benefit. The women themselves must mobilise on this basic question and demand (1) total ban on retrenchment, (2) create more opportunities of employment for women, (3) training facilities with stipend in all occupations without exception and (4) unemployment benefit. □

Second Janwadi Mahila Samity Conference of Delhi

—Rita Karat

The Janwadi Mahila Samity, Delhi held its Second State Conference on June 29 and 30 at the Ashoklata Jain Hall named after its first President. The 214 delegates who attended the Conference deeply grieved Ashoklata's absence but at the end of the Conference they were no doubt consoled by the fact that the organisation of which she was a founder member had undoubtedly moved forward on the path chartered by her. For the organisation of and deliberations at the Conference showed a marked improvement in the discipline of the women attending the Conference with attention to the speeches made and also demonstrated the confidence with which they spoke.

The Conference was preceded by preparations by the units throughout Delhi and Faridabad. General Body Meetings were held in all the areas and delegates were elected. In some areas house to house collection was made, in others street plays by Jana Natya Manch were organised as part of the Conference campaign. For the first time, in many areas women themselves formed groups and pasted posters. It was perhaps because of the preparation that went on before the Conference that the delegate attendance was cent per cent. In fact when the State Committee had proposed a two day Conference some were sceptical as to how many delegates would attend the second day—in fact the attendance on the second day was only marginally less. Another first attempt made this time was the organisation of a creche. This also had a positive impact on the Conference deliberations because usually the children make such a din that it is difficult for the mothers to concentrate.

The Conference began with the hoisting of the flag by Com. Vimal Ranadive, Vice-

President of the AIDWA who along with Com. Kanak Mukherjee, also Vice-President of the AIDWA led the delegates in paying homage at the martyrs' column. This was followed by revolutionary songs by Parcham. The Presidium consisting of Ranjana Nirula, Kalindi Deshpande, Kamla, Lilavati and Kalavati was then elected. The Conference passed condolence resolutions and paid homage to the memory of Coms. Promod Dasgupta, Desraj Chaddha, AIDWA EC member Shipra Bhowmick and its own President, Ashoklata Jain. Com. Kanak Mukherjee then made the inaugural speech in which she laid stress on the organisation of a strong women's movement as part of the larger democratic movement of the workers and peasants and other toiling sections of the people. Her speech was punctuated with enthusiastic applause from the delegates and invitees. The inaugural session was concluded with a most moving ceremony in which two young girls from economically deprived families were handed scholarships for Class IX and X by the Ashoklata Jain Memorial Committee. On the occasion Dr. Moonis Raza, Ashoka's teacher in JNU and Dr. Veena Mazumdar who are both members of the Scholarship Committee, spoke.

The delegate session then started with the presentation of the report by Rita Karat. The report detailed the condition in Delhi and the issues which have come up in the last two years and the organisation's perspective on them. It included an issue-wise report of the struggles launched and noted that there was hardly a single month in the last two years when there was no programme. It also included a detailed report on organisation pointing out the positive developments and also the weaknesses.

On page 24

Women Fight Against Dowry Deaths

—Damayanti Parikh, Ahmedabad.

On the burning issues such as dowry deaths, rape and other atrocities on women, price rise, unemployment and against closures and lockouts, the state unit of All India Democratic Women's Association has been holding mohalla meetings in Ahmedabad. Chatur Bahen, Asha Bahen, Nurjhan Bahen, Draupadi Bahen, Rajkumari and Damayanti have been addressing these meetings and campaigning against these evils of the capitalist system of society. It is to be noted that through these meetings influence of AIDWA is increasing which is relevant from the increasing membership of the Association.

Yet another dowry victim

Rita, daughter of Purshottam Pal Karshan Bhai Chowhan of Ram Rajyanagar has been burnt to death on 4 May 1984 at Ambikanagar by her in-laws. Coming to know about this barbarous killing from Rita's parents, the Democratic Women's Association and DYFI organised a mass meeting on 20th May at Ambikanagar which was attended by thousands of people including women. The meeting was addressed by Damayanti, Chatur Bahen and Draupadi Bahen of AIDWA and B. Paneer and Lakshman Bhai Patanbaria of DYFI. Speakers criticised the Government for failure in preventing dowry deaths and punishing the culprits. A resolution was adopted against the Dowry Act, its inadequacies and copy was sent to the Chief Minister.

Another incident of dowry death was reported from Bapunagar, Morar Chowk. A delegation of the State AIDWA met the Home Minister of Gujarat on the issue and handed over a memorandum and demanded punishment of the culprits immediately. No step has yet been taken by the Government.

An attempt was made to rape a harijan woman at Padand Gaon. On being informed, the Joint Mahila Morcha met the Police Commissioner and the Home Minister who immediately made an enquiry and the culprit was arrested.

The Voice of the Working Woman

Continued From Page 23

Twenty four delegates spoke on the report.

The majority of these were women who only 4 years ago were confined to silent domestic drudgery—and here they were, one after another coming up to speak not only of their own experiences but to generalise on these experiences and reach certain conclusions, mainly connected with the role of the Congress (I) and the need for organisation and struggle.

The point to be noted is that in comparison with the previous Conference the level of discussion and interest of the delegates was much better. This should be seen in the background of the composition of the delegates. The Credentials Committee report presented by Babli Gupta showed that the overwhelming majority of the delegates were from the working class, were under 35 and married. Two-thirds were either completely deprived of formal education or had studied only upto Class IV and V. 40 were employed, although a large number said they required employment.

The Conference passed resolutions on peace, national integration, for more employment opportunities for women and demanding implementation of the Joint Select Committee's recommendations for amendment to the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961.

Greetings to the Conference were made by the CPI (M), Delhi Committee Secretary, Com. Prakash Karat, Chacha Shadiram, President of Delhi CITU; by Com. Subodh Verma, Secretary of Delhi SFI and Com. Pushpinder Singh, Secretary of Democratic Teachers' Front.

The concluding address was made by Com. Vimal Ranadive who inspired the delegates with the All India picture she gave of the struggles being fought by women under the banner of the AIDWA, the largest women's organisation in the country.

The Conference elected a 25 member State Committee with nine office-bearers with Indu Agnihotri as President and Rita Karat as General Secretary.

At the Conclusion of the Conference Jan Natya Manch staged a play for the delegates.