



# THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

## CHERISHED HERITAGE OF OCTOBER REVOLUTION WILL REMAIN FOR EVER!

**W**hen the working class all over the world will observe on 7th November the seventysixth anniversary of the great October Revolution, they will pay their homage to the hundreds of martyrs who laid down their lives fighting bullets and shells of the dictator Yeltsin. The valiant heroes who shed their blood in defence of democracy and socialism did not die in vain, because the brutalities resorted to by the gangster army has exposed the naked dictatorship of Yeltsin who dissolved Parliament, judiciary and promulgated several decrees attacking all aspects of democratic values.

The Western press and the imperialist rulers shamelessly supported the suppression of democracy in former Soviet Union. Their talk about human rights proved to be a smokescreen when they fully endorsed total suppression of all human rights by the Yeltsin and his cohorts. The arbitrary dissolution of all elected institutions by the Russian President threw overboard all cannons of the rule of law. It is ridiculous to expect free and fair Parliamentary elections in December as announced by Yeltsin.

Despite drowning of popular resistance in blood the people's struggle has not ended. Throughout one sixth of the globe the opposition to the Yeltsin dictatorship is surfacing from time to time and the 76th anniversary of the great October Revolution will see the demonstration of the people upholding its revolutionary traditions.

The working class and the people of former Soviet Union have learnt from their experience what dismantling of socialism had led them to. The prices of essential commodities which were stable for so many years in USSR have skyrocketed during the Yeltsin regime with the process of dismantling socialism and embarking on the path to the so-called market economy.

Roubles were sold at throw away prices for one dollar. One rouble was fetching \$1.50 earlier but now

more than 1200 roubles are to be paid per US dollar.

The real wages of the workers have declined considerably during the last 3 years reducing the standard of life drastically.

Industrial production declined drastically after the introduction of market economy and many state owned undertakings have been privatised. Multinational companies have become owners of the key economic undertakings. Several undertakings have been closed down and the domestic market is flooded with foreign goods.

The socialist economy gave a guarantee of right to work and the unemployment was totally abolished. Now according to an estimate the unemployment has reached 20 million mark while as per one ILO study it is likely to exceed 30 million.

The free medical facilities, educational opportunities provided in the socialist economy have been given up and the workers have to pay for these benefits. The programme of house building for the workers has been given up creating scarcity of housing for the industrial workers.

They disillusioned about the market economy, the workers have started opposing the policies of the new capitalist rulers who failed to honour the commitment given to the trade unions. An agreement signed with Confederation of Independent Trade Unions by the Yeltsin Government was not honoured and trade unions had to launch a countrywide agitation including strikes to protest against violation of the agreement.

Militant trade unions started emerging all over Russia. In Ukraian alone 1.2 million coal miners formed a union to fight for their demands.

Under these circumstances the suppression of the resistance of the people through armed might backed by imperialist powers cannot obliterate the accumulated discontent among the people of Russia. The volcano of discontent is bound to erupt once again in not too distant a future.

The working class and the people of Eastern European countries have learnt similar lesson through their bitter experience. The defeat of pro-solidarity government in Poland is only a beginning of the reassertion of faith in socialist values among the working people in these countries. The TU movement in other Eastern European countries has started asserting though gradually and it is bound to increase from strength to strength.

The working class in capitalist countries is facing acute unemployment with closure of several industrial units. Lay-offs and retrenchment have become the order of the day while curtailment of the existing facilities and benefits is becoming a major agenda of most of the Government in advanced capitalist countries. Despite singing of capitalist virtues by the spokesmen of the official media the economic crisis is deepening day by day and the productive forces growingly remain unutilised despite substantial induction of new technology.

The working class and the people in the third world countries are facing the brunt of World Bank and the IMF dictates and their struggles against these policies is assuming serious proportions in all the third world countries. Larger and larger sections of people are coming i the forefront of struggle. They advocate socialist values and cannot forget the great contribution made by the October Revolution.

The revolutionary masses led by African National Congress, the Communist Party of South Africa and COSATU in the struggle against apartheid have always received inspiration from the ideals of great October Revolution. The success that they are achieving in the struggle is a matter of rejoice for the entire masses cherishing the heritage of October Revolution.

The socialist countries in China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam have been upholding the banner of socialism and despite imperialist pressure and blackmail, have been asserting their faith in the doctrine of socialism.

Despite severe set back to the socialist system due to dismantling of socialism in former USSR and Eastern European countries, the worldwide struggle of the working people against the imperialist designs to dominate the globe is bound to increase with each passing day. The path heralded by the October Revolution is fully alive and serving as the beacon light in all the continents.

Let us draw lessons from the mistakes committed in building socialism in USSR and East European countries. The need to strengthen socialist democracy and to increase socialist consciousness among the masses should be properly understood by all who cherish the ideals of October Revolution.

The great people of the former USSR who paid a heavy price in their blood to defeat fascism will not tolerate Yeltsin's dictatorship any longer. They will no doubt once again rise up to throw out this dictatorial regime and open up the path of socialist democracy and world peace. The anti-imperialist forces all over the world will take the pledge on the anniversary of October Revolution to carry forward its immortal heritage with more firmness and determination. □

## **CITU CONDEMNS MILITARY OFFENSIVE BY YELTSIN REGIME**

The Secretariat of the CITU met on 8 October evening under the Presidentship of Com. E. Balanandan, President, CITU.

The Secretariat discussed the situation in Russia and also a letter received from the President of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia regarding the offensive on the working class by the present Govt in Russia.

The Secretariat condemned the military offensive launched by the Yeltsin regime on the Russian Parliament. It was awful to note that atleast 500 people were killed by the armed forces under orders from Boris Yeltsin. It is further condemnable that in his craze to have dictatorial powers Yeltsin suppressed all democratic norms and institutions. It is reprehensible that apart from arrests of the leaders of the democratic forces, even the Apex Constitutional Court and a number of Regional Councils have been disbanded and their Chairmen dismissed. A number of press media and the Russian Communist party has also been banned. The CITU further condemned the Narasimha Rao Government for supporting the dictatorial drive by Yeltsin riding roughshod over the democratic institutions.

In the light of the above developments the Secretariat discussed the letter received from the President of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia which has elaborately described the offensive launched by the present regime on the working class and the trade union movement also. The Govt has violated trade union agreements and withheld even normal remunerations and social security payments. Massive demonstrations and strikes are taking place in Russia involving over 570,000 of workers in the coal industry, machine building industries, textile industry, automobiles, by the health workers, ect. Responding to the letter of the Russian Trade Unions, the CITU condemned the anti-working class policy of present Russian Govt and expressed full solidarity with the valiant struggle of the workers. □

## Mass Platform to carry forward fight against Economic Policies Demonstration and burning effigy of Dunkel Proposals

The platform of Mass Organisations reviewed the success of the Bharat Bandh on 9th September 1993 and noted that the working class and also other sections of the society including peasants, agricultural workers, youths, students, women etc participated magnificently in the bandh. While congratulating the people for the success of the Bandh, the Platform appealed for further strengthening the unity of the democratic and secular forces for a decisive battle against the anti-national policies of the Government.

The meeting of the Platform was held at New Delhi on 14th October 1993 and was presided over by Com.D D Shastri, President, TUCC and attended by the representatives of the constituent trade unions and mass organisations of peasantry, agricultural workers, youths, women, student etc.

The platform has appreciated the necessity to spread the message of unity down to the grass root level and also decided to include other mass organisations who are opposing the economic policies of the government but are yet to join the united platform.

The meeting noted that the Sponsoring Committee of trade unions has decided to organise all India dharnas in all the State capitals and in Delhi on 7th December 1993 in protest against the

proposed Industrial Relations Bill which seeks to introduce exit policy as dictated by the IMF and imposes several curbs on TU rights and extended its full support for the same.

It has further been reported in the meeting that the industrial federations and other mass organisations have already drawn their own programmes of agitation. The Platform has extended its support towards these programmes and expressed that these should culminate into an all India united action programme.

It has also been decided that programmes should be chalked out specifically on issues like Dunkel proposals, unemployment, closure and sickness of industries, commercialisation of education and role of black money in it etc.

The meeting has decided that a separate all India Day would be observed with demonstrations and burning the effigy of "Dunkel Proposals"(DP) some time in the month of December 1993. The organisations outside the platform and opposing the DP would also be invited to join this programme. A preparatory meeting for the purpose would be called in the 3rd week of November 1993 to finalise the programme. The next meeting of the platform would also be held on the same day. □

## TUs to organise Dharnas against New Labour Law on 7th December

### The Sponsoring Committee of Indian Trade Unions has issued the following statement:

The Sponsoring Committee of Indian Trade Unions in its meeting held on 13th October evening decided to organise all India dharnas in all the state capitals and in Delhi on 7th December 1993 in protest against the proposed Industrial Relations Bill. The Bill seeks to introduce exit policy as dictated by the IMF and imposes several curbs on TU rights of the workers to please the multinationals.

Comrade M S Krishnan, President AITUC presided over the meeting.

The meeting expressed its heartfelt condolences at the passing away of Nani Bhattacharya, Gopal Haldar and V Suibhaiah veteran trade union leaders. It expressed its deep sense of sorrow at the national tragedy in Killari earthquake (Maharashtra) and appealed to the working class of India to contribute liberally to the relief of the earthquake victims.

The meeting congratulated the working class all over the country for the magnificent response it gave

on 9th September 1993 Industrial strike and Bharat Bandh. It called upon the working class to prepare for a bigger struggle so that the policies of the Government are effectively resisted all over India.

The Sponsoring Committee decided to prepare an alternate approach to the new economic policies so that further movements can be carried forward to implement the alternate approach.

The meeting reiterated its proposal to organise an all India convention on industrial sickness in public and private sectors so that a countrywide movement is unleashed to save the sick units. They appealed to organisations outside the Sponsoring Committee to join such an effort.

The meeting condemned the victimisation measures in postal services, coal mines and other industries against workers for participating in the 9th September industrial strike.

The Sponsoring Committee will again meet by the end of November to chalk out further programme of action. □

# CITU Endorsed Mass Action Plan against Dunkel Proposals

The full Secretariat meeting of the CITU was held at Delhi on 19th October 1993 under the presidentship of E Balanandan MP.

At the outset the meeting observed condolence on the death of Bhag Singh Sajjan, Achintya Bhattacharya, Sukumar Sen Gupta, Haralal Chanda, Prabhat Ghosal, T N Siddhanta, Nani Bhattacharya, P Subbaiya, Gopal Haldar, Utpal Dutta, K Venketaratnam, V G Gopal, and S K Bishoy.

## Relief for Earth Quake Victims

The meeting condoled the death of thousands of people due to the recent devastating earth quake in Maharashtra. The meeting noted that as per the earlier decision, the CITU workers were contributing liberally including one day's wage to the earth quake relief fund. The meeting also noted with satisfaction that the Maharashtra State Committee of CITU has drawn up a plan of construction of a School and Hospital for the children of the earth quake victims. The meeting directed all its State Committees and unions to send their contributions to the Maharashtra State Committee of CITU now on.

## Action Programme against the Economic Policies:

The meeting reviewed the success of the Industrial strike and Bharat Bandh on 9th Sept. As per detailed reports sent by the State Committees, the Bandh was highly successful not only in Bengal, Kerala, Tripura and Bihar as was projected by the press but was also nearly total in Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Punjab. The industrial strike was better than on 29th November 1991 and 16th June 1992. New sections of workers from various industrial units in several states both from public and private sectors joined the strike this time. Nearly 60 lakhs of state govt employees participated in the strike which surpassed the earlier ones. Larger sections of different departments of Central Government employees like P&T, Telecom, RMS, MMS etc joined this strike. The defence employees joined the strike all over the country. The participation of workers of the various sections of the unorganised industry was also much better this time. Even the workers of INTUC and BMS joined the strike in several public sector unions. The united strike including INTUC and BMS in steel industry against the privatisation of IISCO gave a new direction of the struggle of workers against IMF dictated economic and industrial policies.

The meeting further noted that the members of other mass organisations like peasantry, agricultural workers, students, young women etc participated and gave their maximum contribution to the success of the bandh on 9th September. They all joined in various rural and urban areas with the workers all over the country in making the Rastha Roko and Rail Rako a success to the best of the possibilities. The meeting however made self-critical analysis of the strike and bharat bandh and decided to work assiduously to overcome the weak areas like railway, transport and port & dock etc.

## Action Programme:

The meeting endorsed the action programme taken by the Sponsoring Committee and trade unions to launch country wide demonstrations, dharnas, rallies etc by all the trade unions on December 7, 1993 against the proposed retrograde Industrial Relations Bill, which sought to curb the right to strike and other elementary forms of trade union activities by the workers under the demand of the World Bank/IMF. The Secretariat called upon of its State Committees and unions to mobilise all sections of the workers in maximum for the success of the demonstration.

At Delhi efforts should be made to launch massive demonstration before the Parliament on the day.

## Action Against Dunkel Proposals;

The meeting further endorsed the programmes taken by the platform of mass organisations to mobilise peasantry, agricultural workers, students, youth women and trade unions against the Dunkel proposals, which included demonstration, rallies, burning of effigies of Dunkel proposals etc all over the country. The meeting also endorsed the proposal of the mass organisations of mobilisation support of all other forces in the country who are opposed the Dunkel proposals in united action. The meeting warned the Govt against signing the proposals, which would subvert the national and economic sovereignty of the country and called upon all workers and other mass organisations to launch resistance movement against the Government's surrender.

## Fight against the Communal Forces:

The meeting congratulated the workers and all other mass organisations for their participation in the programme made by the Rashtriya Ekata Abhiyan against the communal forces represented by the

RSS, BJP, VHP and Shiv Sena. The meeting called upon the workers to carry forward their united action and mass mobilisation against these forces to safeguard the unity and integrity of the country and its secular character.

### **8th Conference of CITU**

The meeting decided to hold the 8th all India conference of the CITU at Patna from March 8-12, 1994. The meeting finalised all details relevant to the conference which will be attended by 2500 delegates. The conference will be preceded by an all India convention of working women. The meeting also decided to invite several foreign trade union delegates in the conference.

### **Working Committee Meeting:**

The meeting decided to hold the next Working Committee meeting of the CITU at Guwahati from 13th to 15th Dec 1993.

### **Abolition of Bonus Ceiling**

The meeting condemned the government for not taking any decision to remove the ceilings on

bonus. It demanded immediate announcement by the govt before the Poojas for removal of both the ceilings on bonus, failing which all trade unions will launch united action against the govt.

### **Indefinite strike by Financial Institutions**

The meeting extended support to the demand for pension as third benefit and revision of wages made by the joint action committee of the employees of banks, insurance and other financial institutions and their decision to launch indefinite strike from November 2. In view of the serious situation which may arise, the meeting demanded of the govt to start immediate negotiation with the Joint Action Committee with a view to resolving their genuine demands immediately.

### **Bihar Electricity Employees Strike:**

The meeting extended support to the indefinite strike launched by Bihar Electricity Employees and demanded of the State Govt to resolve the issue through negotiated settlement without further delay.

## **CITU CALLS FOR URGENT RELIEF TO EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS**

The Secretariat of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions expresses deep grief and shock at the devastating earth quake which took the lives of thousands and destroyed property in Southern Maharashtra, Karnataka and other places. This is the worst natural calamity which has befallen us in the recent memory.

The Secretariat expresses its deep sympathy to all the people affected by this natural calamity. The CITU calls upon all the workers and trade unions and its State Committees to express sympathy with those who have suffered and send relief on most urgent basis. The CITU also appeals to all the trade unions and mass organisations to form relief committees and start relief work in all the regions immediately on war footing.

It is regrettable, as appeared in the press, the Govt paid no heed to earlier warning and appeal by the people last year about the imminent danger.

## **ILO APPRECIATES CITU'S REPORT ON ORGANIZATION**

On request from ILO, the CITU had sent a copy of its report on organization to it. The CITU has received the following reply from ILO:

Dear Dr.Pandhe,

I had sent a copy of the recent CITU "Report on organization" to the workers' Education Branch of ILO in Geneva.

You may be interested to know that Mr.Querenghi, Chief of the Workers' Education Branch has written to me praising "candid self appraisal" of the report. He expressed the hope that CITU will be able to address the difficulties identified in the report, which he found most informative.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely  
sd/-  
Stirling Smith  
Chief Technical Adviser

# NATIONWIDE INDEFINITE STRIKE BY POSTAL EMPLOYEES FROM 7th DECEMBER.

The three All-India Federations, the National Federation of Postal Employees (NFPE), The Federation of National Postal Organisations (FNPO) affiliated to the INTUC and the Bharatiya Postal Employees Federation (BPEF) affiliated to the BMS have jointly served a strike notice to Chairman, Postal Services Board on 20th October 93. Two non-federated Unions representing the Postal Inspectors and Asst. Superintendents and the Inspectors and Asst. Superintendents of R.M.S. as well as the Association of Postal Accounts employees have also signed the joint Strike notice.

The indefinite strike is to commence from 7th December 93. The demands in the 10 point charter submitted with the strike notice relates to long pending issues concerning various sections of the employees in the Postal Services numbering over six lakhs. out of this, three lakhs are the lowest paid extra departmental (E.D.) staff who are paid a paltry allowance. They have no "pay-scale" or annual increments. They are not entitled for any leave with wages or pension or statutory gratuity.

The unions have been raising their voice to end this naked exploitation of 3 lakhs employees by the govt. The Supreme Court of India had given verdict that the E.D. staff are holders of civil posts under the Govt. But the Govt of India is not inclined to accept this verdict in true spirit.

In the charter of demands top priority has been given to the problem of extra departmental staff. The charter includes important issues concerning other

sections of staff of the department like Class III, Postman, Class IV and Casual and part time employees.

The efficiency of the postal service is deteriorating day by day as a result of the wrong policies of the Govt. Required number of staff is not sanctioned. Facilities hitherto enjoyed by the public like door-to-door delivery of post, has been restricted especially in the case of Regd articles and money orders. The number of deliveries have been curtailed. The effective and efficient system of sorting by RMS has been jeopardized. The system of sorting in running train sections have been abandoned causing unlimited delay in the transit of mails. Of late the Govt have also started privatisation of this sector and indiscriminate computerisation rendering large number of staff surplus.

Though the charter of demands was originally submitted as early as on 12th April 1993, the postal board did not take any effective step to settle the issues through negotiations with the unions. This has compelled the unions to resort to industrial action. The strike will paralyse the entire postal system throughout the country. On the 19th of August 93 members of all the unions conducted dharna jointly in front of the local authorities and Dak Bhavan in Delhi. Lakhs of employees participated in it throughout the country and declared their determination to make the strike total success. The Unions in the telocöm sector have declared full support for the strike. participated. □

## A HISTORIC JUDGMENT

Hon'ble Justice Susanta Chatterjee of Calcutta High Court in his judgment delivered on 28th September, 1993, has been pleased to declare that Moni Bose is the duly elected General Secretary of the All India Telocöm Employees Union Class-III and has directed the Department of Telecommunication to extend all facilities of a recognised trade union to him. Moni Bose was elected as General Secretary of the union having a membership of 55,000 Telecom workers at the All India conference held at Bhopal from 25th to 29th October, 1991 defeating O O P Gupta, who held the post continuously over the last 37 years. The defeat could not be gracefully accepted by the out-going General Secretary and his accomplices, who, joining hands with the Government tried utmost to deny recognition to Moni Bose on the plea that he was an outsider.

Moni Bose was a temporary employee when his services were terminated in the year 1949 in connection with a proposed strike without showing

any reason. The court observed that by such termination it cannot be said that Moni Bose incurred any disqualification and by such termination per se there is no dishonour, nor any disqualification. The Hon'ble judge has been pleased to pronounce that the Court was convinced that the steps taken by the Government in not recognising Moni Bose as the General Secretary of the union are unfair, unjust and uncalled for. Moni Bose was accepted by the Department of telecommunication as the Vice-President of the same union over the past 15 years since 1976, but amazingly he was denied recognition the moment he was elected to the office of the General Secretary. O P Gupta, the out-going General Secretary, who is an ex-employee of the Defence Department, removed from service in the year 1942, was given recognition and the Government took the plea that this was done as a special case. The writ petition highlighted this clear case of discrimination.

*Contd on page 9*

# ONGC WORKERS TO OBSERVE A DAY'S STRIKE ON 23RD NOVEMBER THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY

To protest against the entry of the foreign multinational companies in the oil sector of the country and particularly the handing over of the discovered oil field to the international oil cartels and also the dangerous steps of contracting out various important jobs by the authority of ONGC the workers of the industry have decided to observe a day's strike on 23rd November '93 throughout the country. Further, as a step towards preparation of the strike action the workers would go for mass casual leave on 17th November '93.

The above noted programmes of action have been unanimously decided in a meeting of the representatives of all the recognised unions of ONGC including the INTUC, AITUC and CITU held on 16th October '93 at Delhi. Shri Raja Kulkarni, president, National Federation of Petroleum Workers (INTUC).

It may be recalled here that the Central Government has converted the ONGC into a Corporation by repealing an Act of the Parliament during the last session of the house. This has been done admittedly to go for privatisation of the ONGC by disinvesting equity shares and allowing the foreign multinational companies to purchase the shares.

It would be relevant to note that a national seminar on Self-Reliance on Oil and Natural Gas was organised by all the central trade unions functioning in the industry on 1st and 2nd September '93. The seminar while strongly opposing the anti-national oil

policy of the Central Government had given a call for united movement against the policy of the Government.

The resolution unanimously adopted in the said meeting has inter alia noted "ONGC should get back under its own departmental administration all functions, activities, jobs, equipments, which it was regularly utilising... but which have been, since recent past, ONGC is contracting out, sub-contracting, leasing equipments, chartering rigs to third parties through unjust, unfair and illegitimate method and manner.

ONGC should immediately discontinue its policy of handing over for management and other purposes the oil blocks/oil fields which have been declared as proved oil fields by ONGC itself. All exploratory, development and production activities of such oil fields must be carried out and developed through the ONGC'S own staff as its departmental activity.

Meeting also decided on the programme for the action on the above set of demands. Strike notice to be given by each union on 1st November, 1993.

Mobilisation campaign during the 14 days strike notice. The campaign will include holding of meetings, demonstrations, rallies, etc. and a mass casual leave day to be observed on 17th November, 1993.

One day complete strike action in ONGC throughout India in all oil fields, establishments, work places and offices on 23rd November '93." □

## NFPE PROTEST AGAINST REDUCTION OF INTEREST RATES OF POST OFFICE SAVINGS SCHEMES

**The National Federation of Postal Employees has issued the following statement:**

The Government of India's recent decision to reduce the interest rates of various savings schemes run by post office will adversely affect not only the investors but also the developmental projects. It may be recalled that the rate of interest in the various savings schemes of post office was higher from the date of introduction and continued as such till 1.9.93. This is because that the depositors and investors in these small savings schemes are common people and their savings habit be developed for obvious reasons. Reduction of interest rates will be a discouraging factor for them and they will be attracted by private and public financial institutions risking the security of the investments. Such financial institutions are offering higher interest rates and also other incentives like bonus. The funds so collected are used by them for making high profits by

reinvesting in share/stock markets.

The reduction of interest rates for post office savings schemes will also result in gradual winding up of the post office savings bank and the national savings organization rendering huge surplus of staff and substantial decrease in the generation of new job opportunities in these sectors. The most important aspect is that 75% of the funds collected through these schemes are given as loan to the State governments for developmental projects. Reduction of interest rate and the consequential fall in the inflow will hit the State Governments hard.

The National Federation of Postal Employees have strongly protested against the Govt's decision and have written to the Finance Minister demanding restoration of the rates existed prior to 2nd September 1993. The Federation have also appealed to the Chief Minister of various states to take up this issue seriously and do the needful. □

# THE PUBLIC SECTOR: STILL SCALING GREAT HEIGHTS

□ SAROJ CHOWDHARY

As the government throws open more and more sectors of economy to foreign multinationals and Indian private capital and the glib talk on the so-long wasted opportunities of globalisation and the magnificent benefits that would flow from more and more liberalisation continues, the newspapers carry reports about still greater heights being scaled by public undertakings in the central sphere. More production, targets surpassed, more exports, more dividends to the government, more profits and more taxes apaid are the common refrain of such reports. Despite all these, the tirade against the public sector continues unabated. Laws are being amended, regulatory controls are being pulled down and most restrictions have been done away with. Nationalisation of Banks has been successfully scuttled and Insurance, both Life and General, are on the immediate hit list. This, however, is the result of the albatros of Fund-Bank dictation on the government.

The following are a few examples of excellent performance reports of public undertakings which may be useful in the on-going campaign. These figures have been culled out from newspaper reports:

## **SAIL DIVIDEND:**

Despite sluggish market conditions and distinctly recessionary conditions in several industrial sectors, the public sector Steel Authority of India (SAIL) made a highest-ever pre-tax profit of Rs.423.40 crore in 1992-93, a rise of 15 per cent over 1991-92.

SAIL paid Rs.71.38 crore as dividend to the government on the shares held by it. The SAIL is confident of raising its profits further in the current year.

## **OIL'S SALES AND PROFITS:**

Public Sector Oil India Ltd.(OIL) exceeded its operational targets in most fields, earned a post-tax profit of rs.37.78 crore and declared 16 per cent dividend for the year 1992-93.

## **SCI PROFITS RS. 143 CORRE.**

The public sector shipping corporation of india registered a profit of Rs.143 Crore in 1992-93. The Corporation in a statement has stoutly refuted the World Bank claim that it was going into bankruptcy. It paid Rs.65 Crore as dividend.

## **GIC housing subsidiary**

The housing finance company promoted by General Insurance Corporation, GIC Griha Vitta Ltd. logged excellent working results for 1992-93 and earned a net profit of Rs.257.49 lakh as against Rs.104.92 lakh in the previous year.

## **GIC Profits UP by Rs.80 crores**

The public sector General Insurance Corporation(GIC) has posted a net profit of Rs.503 crore fro 1992-93 as against Rs.423 Crore last year. Investment income was Rs.106 crore more than in 1991-92. Premium income increased by 16 per cent. The GIC paid Rs.276 Crore to government as dividend.

## **IRCON's Profits:**

The Public Sector Indian Railway Construction Company Ltd.(IRCON)reported profit of Rs.29.37 crore, 16th successive profit out of 17 years of operation, in 1992-93. The undertaking's total turnover for the year amounted to Rs.424.8 crore of which Rs.272.32 crore were earned from projects executed in foreign countries.

## **IPCL Profits Show 140 per cent increase:**

The Indian Petro-Chemicals Corporation Ltd. posted a nett profit of Rs.132 Crore during 1992-93 registering a 140 per cent rise over 1991-92. It has declared a dividend of 20 per cent. IPCL'S sales rose to Rs. 2,247 crore, up by Rs.312 crore(16 per cent) over the previous year. This performance has to be seen in the context of adverse business conditions, lowering of import tariffs, extremely low international prices owing to global recession with dumping at sub-marginal costs in some cases, tight money market conditions and steep rise in feed-stock costs.

## **Hindusthan Zinc Profits:**

The Public sector Hindusthan Zinc Ltd.(HZL) earned a net profit of Rs.62.86 crore and declared a dividend of 6.5 per cent for 1992-93. The profits are 13.6 per cent more than last year. The undertaking earned profit of Rs.3.8 crore from exports.

## **BHEL's Record:**

The premier public sector engineering enterprise Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd(BHEL) recorded in 1992-93 the highest ever turn-over of Rs.3,508 crore, an increase of 5.3 per cent over the previous year. BHEL earned a pre-tax profit of Rs.309 crore and maintained a dividend of 15 per cent on paid-up capital. Exports rose to 22.4 per cent of total turnover. Contribution to the national exchequer by way of taxes, duties and dividends totalled Rs.814 crore.

## **Lubrizol's profits Rs.15 crore**

The public sector Lubrizol India Ltd. recorded increases in both production and profits during 1992-93. Production increased by 9.55 per cent, sales went up by 19.4 per cent and profits by 20 per cent. It earned foreign exchange of Rs.3.36 crore. It also paid Rs. 2.65 crore as dividend to government.

# SEMINAR ON ALTERNATIVE AGRICULTURAL POLICY

□ N K Shukla

All India Kisan Sabha and Agricultural Workers Union jointly organized a Seminar on Alternative Agricultural Policy on 25th and 26th September in New Delhi. All India Council Members of both the organisations alongwith some other leading comrades and experts specially in agriculture economy discussed for two days the impact of the New Economic Policy on Agriculture, and specially the Draft New Agriculture Policy of the Central Government. On concluding day of the Seminar the outline on alternate agricultural policy presented by SRamchandran Pillai (AIKS Secretary Finance) was thoroughly discussed and was forwarded to be finalised by all India council meetings of All India Kisan Sabha and All India Agricultural Workers Union.

Several papers dealing with different issues and implications of the New Policies of Indian Agriculture were presented and discussed.

HS Surjeet, Vice President of AIKS while inaugurating the seminar called upon the cadres working on peasant and agricultural workers front to study in detail the impact of government policies on agriculture and the consequent burning problems of the peasantry and agricultural workers and to chalk out proper slogans and plan of movements to lead the masses against pro-big landlords policies of the Indian GOVERNMENT which is succumbing to the pressure of IMF/World Bank and MNCs and is ready to accept Dunkel Proposals. He traced the history of the peasant movement, the commitments of the freedom struggle and pointed out how the successive CONgress governments and other non-left governments diluted or gave up the task of land reforms, neglected the issue of irrigation and power. He also pointed out how due to all these wrong policies regional and sectional disparities have increased, how the pauperisation of the peasantry, the percentage of agricultural workers among the total rural population and the number of unemployed are increasing day by day. He concluded his speech by exhorting the cadres to take up all these issues concerning the Indian peasantry, study the situation prevailing in different regions and chalk out proper slogans accordingly. He also called upon the cadres to continue their fight and vigilance against communalism, casteism and other socially regressive forces, he stressed to give special attention to the problems of women, SC and ST and other weaker sections.

**Following papers were presented and discussed in the seminar:**

Paper on Land Reforms : Some Conceptual Issues in the Present Context of Liberalisation and Structural Adjustment by Utsa Patnaik.

A critique of the New Agricultural Policy - by P K

Tandon, Joint Secretary of AIKS.

The New Economic Policy and the Indian Peasants : by Dr. Biplab Dasgupta.

Irrigation and Associated Environmental Problems : The issues, by Abhijit Sen.

Some Issues Relating to the Role of "Prices and Subsidies" in the AGRarian Sector in Context of Current Economic Policies" - by Saumyajit Bhattacharjee and others.

Draft Approach Paper on the Demands of Agricultural Workers - by AIAWU.

On 25th September the seminar was presided over by AIKS President N Sankariah and AIAWU President R Ramaiah. On 26th September R N Goswami, General Secretary of AIKS and Hannan Mollah, Joint Secretary of AIAWU presided.

The seminar was followed by joint meeting of the All India Council Members of both organisations to discuss mainly the outline for alternative agricultural policy. Then All India Councils of the both the organisations met separately and formulated their future tasks.

## FUTURE CAMPAIGN AND STRUGGLES

The AIKC has decided to observe 1994 as the "Year of Struggle for Implementation of Land Reforms, Irrigation and Other Pressing Issues" like regular supply of power and agricultural inputs at reasonable rates, for proper marketing facilities with adequate fund to various government purchasing agencies, for strengthening and expanding the PDS covering all the areas.

Reviewing the successful Bharat Bandh and "Jail Bhara" at the call of Platform of Mass ORganisations, against New Economic Policy, Dunkel Proposals etc the Council decided to continue joint struggles against adverse impact of New Economic Policy, Dunkel Proposals and or proper alternative agricultural policies and on other pressing problems of the peasantry. □

*Contd from page 6*

The court has directed the union of India and others to release and or render all facilities of a recognised trade union to Moni Bose as duly elected General Secretary of the All India Telecom Employees Union Class-III and ensure that such facilities are made available to him so long he remains the General Secretary of the union.

This historic judgement has enthused the workers all over the country as it upholds the fundamental right of the employees to elect the leaders of their choice.

Somnath Chatterjee MP, bar at law and Pranab Chattopadhyaya Advocate appeared on behalf of the union. □

# AGRICULTURAL WORKERS UNION CALLS FOR ACTION

The All India Agricultural Workers' Union (AIAWU) General Council met at New Delhi on 27, 28 September, 1993. 49 members from all over the country attended the meeting which condemned the Government's Draft Agricultural Policy which has totally ignored the crucial question of the livelihood of the most oppressed and down-trodden citizens of India, the agricultural labourers. They have been crudely lumped together with factors of production, no doubt at the command of the IMF and other financial agencies.

The question of the wages and livelihood of agricultural labour is not one of economic inputs but of human rights. And it is significant that though the Government of India has passed an Ordinance on Human Rights it has significantly failed to pass a central Legislation to protect agricultural workers and ensure their human rights, although the draft legislation has been ready for at least a decade and Kerala passed such legislation in 1974. Agricultural labour, a large percentage of whom are from the scheduled castes and tribes, suffer the largest number of human rights violations as their conditions of work and residence are completely unregulated and left at the will of their employers. So, if the Government was at all serious about human rights, such a legislation should have preceded the ordinance.

Seeing the outline of the new agrarian policy of the Government, with its stress on reducing food production, agricultural subsidies and labour intensive agriculture, and its support of export oriented cash and plantation crops, is bound to decrease the number of days of work of agricultural labour as well as raise the cost of subsistence, eroding the human rights of nearly 20 million people even further.

Moreover, the possibility of the Government being forced to give in to the strong-arm tactics of recession-hit Western economies and sign the Dunkel Draft, will create a situation in the country the like of which we have not seen since the colonial period, a situation that led to a constant state of insurgency and uprisings of peasants and tribals.

To ensure that our lines are not engulfed in growing violence, the General Council has called for determined wage struggles, to implement minimum wages and to secure a living wage which is higher than the statutory minimum wage; for the peaceful identification of all kinds of surplus land and its peaceful takeover in the face of the failure of the Government to implement land reforms; and to struggle for the human rights of the oppressed and down-trodden by ensuring Central Legislation for agricultural labour and punishment for those

committing atrocities on scheduled castes and tribes.

In keeping with our militant tradition, we have called on all our units to observe 1 to 7th November as days of active campaign and militant actions in support of our just demands and aspirations. □

## ANGANWADI DELEGATION MEETS DIRECTOR PLANNING COMMISSION

A delegation of different trade unions under the Samyukta Sangharsh Samithi of Anganwadi Women met Director of the Planning Commission on 20-10-93 to discuss the reported move of handing over the Anganwadi projects to NGOs. The delegation tried to impress upon the Planning Commission the harm it might do if the projects are handed over from the central or the State Govt of privatised by giving them to the NGOs. Already the ICDS projects are suffering with corrupt practices of CDPOs, lack of nutritious food items, arrears of honorarium not being paid for months together. The delegation expressed their fear, if they are privatised these factors would add to the miseries of the Anganwadi workers.

The director listened to the arguments of the delegation patiently and assured that they would take care of these things. And if Anganwadi workers themselves take the projects into their hands at the local level, things would improve after 10-15 years. After hearing the arguments from the director, the members of the delegation insisted that the projects should remain in the hands of the government with drastic improvement in their functioning.

The delegation included K L Mahendra (AITUC), Mrs Kiran Arora and Kamala Sharma (HMS); B K Prasad and Rajkumari (NFTU) and Vimal Ranadive and Pramila Pandhe (CITU). □

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# MASS STRUGGLES IN TAMILNADU

The Tamilnadu State Committee of CITU in its meeting at Pondicherry from 20th to 22nd September, reviewed the work done in the State after the last State Conference in April '93.

R.Umanath, President of the State Committee was in the chair. In his presidential address, Umanath explained the developments at the National and International level.

A report on activities in the state was presented by the General Secretary. Written reviews on the CITU State Conference, 9th September Bharat bandh and its preparatory campaigns and the struggle of Municipal and Commune Panchayat workers of Pondicherry was also presented.

Report on activities of the Railway union and its conference, the state level strike of the State Transport of Workers on 5th June and the activities of the Transport Federation, struggle of the Electricity workers for wage increase and Regularisation of COntact workers and on the state level struggle of textile workers for wage increase was also presented. D.Janakiraman, presented the accounts of the State Committee and its journal from January to August 1993.

More than 1.5 lakhs of unorganised workers had participated in the nationwide strike on 14th July. On 13th July, hundreds of working women had participated in the state wide dharna in support of a charter of demands of working women and against the new economic policies. Various sections of unorganised workers including beedi, construction, tannery, handlooms had conducted many local struggles and also campaigned for the national strike on 14th July.

This campaign had helped to mobilise a good section of non- unionised workers to participate in the strike.

State Transport workers strike on 5th June, against privatisations, was an important struggle in which nearly 40,000 workers out of 80,000 from the worker categories had participated.

State Electricity Board workers, led by CITU and alongwith other unions had been conducting struggles and campaigns in support of this wage increase demand.

Workers from the tanneries all over the state are on struggle demanding wage increase and had been conducting mass demonstrations and rallies.

Employees and workers in Municipalities and other local bodies had gone on a 3 day strike from

24th to 26th August in support of a charter of demands. In Pondicherry more than 1000 Municipal and Commune Panchayat workers had gone on strike for more than a week in May and then continued the struggle in June. CITU had conducted this successful struggle, despite the repressive policies of the COngress Government in the union territory.

Hosiery workers in Tirupur numbering more than 50,000 had conducted successful struggle including a day's strike for their wage increase. Textile workers in the State are continuing their struggle for wage increase. The Mill owners with the tacit approval of the Government has been trying to break the unity of workers for an industrial settlement instead by insisting millwise settlement. Management of Madurai Coats, succeeded in this effort and entered into a settlement, which all the unions except CITU and AITUC have accepted. All workers of the coats unit in Tuticorn numbering about 2000 went on strike against this treacherous settlement from 5th July and continued it upto 15th September. CITU had stood with the workers in this heroic struggle and conducted many solidarity actions in the district and in various textile mills in the State.

State level conference of the sugar workers was held in AUGust which has finalised the new charter of demands. Efforts are being made for a joint struggle in the industry for wage increase.

The 27th Conference of Dakshina Railway Employees Union was held in Madras, from 29th to 31st July. This successful conference was conducted in the background of various struggle by this CITU affiliated union in the railways, when the recognised unions have not been prepared to take up any of the major policy issues confronting the workers. This conference while deciding to conduct powerful united movements, have also decided to conduct many campaigns including those on unemployment issue, contract workers and for working women's demand.

As part of the nation wide struggle, employees of Bank, Insurance and other Financial institutions are on struggle and the strike on 2nd September was very successful.

Nearly 2 lakhs of Primary Teachers have formed a joint action committee and are on strike from 9th September. Other sections of employers including College Teachers are also on struggle in the state.

The meeting also reviewed the organisational functions of the district committees and of the State

Committee. It was noted that further efforts are necessary at all levels to improve the functioning of the district committees.

36 Comrades participated in the discussion, on the reports. The discussion on the review of September 9th showed that in the General strike by Industrial Workers and employees, more sections had participated than the previous General Strikes. In major parts of the state., Bandh was also successful. Treaders had co-operated with the call on their own and made the Bndh successful.

After detailed discussions, the committee has finalised its programme of struggles for the coming days.

#### **On Bonus:**

CITU alongwith AITUC, LDF, and other organisational will conduct state wide struggles including General strike demanding amendments to Bonus Act to ensure Bonus for all according to their wages.

The demand is that the Minimum Bonus should be raised to 12% and the Ceiling of 20% should be removed. On 5th October, massive joint demonstrations are to be organised all over the state.

#### **Electricity Workers Struggle**

State Committee endorsed the decision of the Central Organisation Tamilnadu Electricity workers to organised an indefinite strike of Contract workers in the State Electricity Board from 11th October and a days's strike of permanent workers on 14th October on demands including regularisation of Contract Workers, immediate settlement of wage increase demand,s filling up of vacancies etc. Massive Solidarity demonstrations will be organised by CITU Unions on 14th October.

The Committee called upon its affiliates in 'Textile Industry to continue thenunited movements and strugles so that the demands on wage increase is settledat the earliest.

The Committee also endorsed decisions taken by various industrial Federations and Co-ordination Committees for struggles on sectoral demands.

The meeting decided to hold regional level classes so that the organisational report finalised by CITU is taken down to all the leading cadets in the state. A State level workshop on structural readjustments and its impact on labour is to be organised in the first week of October.

On the Pension issue, 1000 copies of posters with a

lot of details on proposed scheme were broughtout. A new pamphlet will be brought out with in the next few weeks. The meeting also discussed about increasing the circulation of CITU journals and called upon the district committees to taken necessary steps.

## **Attack on Choibari Tea Garden Workers by INTUC and Management**

**T**he Nikhil Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha launched a movement in the Goalpara District for the implementation of statutory rights like maternity benefit, supply of drinking water, full attendance to adult workers, supply of subsidized cereals,etc.

But regarding the maternity question the management threatened the leaders to withdraw the maternity benefit demand or face retrenchment of all working women. When the union refused to accede to this, the management declared an illegal lockout on 14.7.93 without any permission from the appropriate authority. The ground was criminal activities by the workers against which the management did not even register a police complaint.

On 15th July the management withheld the payment of wages to the workers and demanded an undertaking from the workers through the INTUC union who roamed around the labour lines and the adjoining villages. On 23.7.93 the management reached an understanding with some INTUC gangsters and th ALC, Dhubri signed as a witness to this agreement. These INTUC men has no locus standi among the 300 workers of this tea garden. The management also started harassing the CITU leaders who are working in the plantation. A number of them has been transferred to the gardens from the factory to harass them.

On 19.9.93 an attempt on the life of Mr Baisakhu Saima, PResident of the Garden unit of the union.Com.Saima escaped in the darkness and an attempt was made to assault his family members.

The management is now trying to spread hatred among the different sections of workers including the Bodos and others.

The union has called upon the Government to intervene in the matter so that the management is not allowed to vitiate the atmosphere in the tea garden to serve its selfish ends.

# CITU/CTUC Workshop On 'New Technology and its Impact'

An All India Trade Union Workshop was held during 27th September to 1st October '93 at Haldia Port town in West Bengal on the 'Impact of New technology on industry and the working class'. The workshop was jointly organised by CITU and Commonwealth Trade Union Council and was participated by 22 representatives to trade union from different industrial centers of the country.

As many as Seventeen well prepared study papers were presented in the workshop by the trade unions representing all vital sectors of Indian Industry detailing the evolution of technology application in those industries and its impact on the Industry and the working class. The study papers include industries like coal Mining, Iron Ore Mining, Steel, Fertilizer, Pharmaceuticals, Electronics, Railways, Airtransport, Power, Oil, Machine Manufacturings, Engineering, Defence, Telecom, Textile, Port & Dock, construction etc. Among the participants were Com. A. Dakshi(Steel), P. R bannerjee (Coal), Nirmal Mukherjee (Railways) K.V.A. Iyer(Port & Dock), John V. Daniel (Machine Mfg.) Anitava Guha (Pharmaceuticals) Saila Bhattacharya(Defence), V.A.N. Namboodri(Telecom), Debaiyan Chakraborty (Construction), Hemant Kumar(Air lines), S. Karmarkar(Electronics), Ajit Chowdhury(Engineering), Nishith Chowdhary (Fertilizer), Kedar Mukherjee(Power), Swapanesh Mitra(Oil), B. Chakraborty (Iron Ore) were there. Besides above Com. Jibon Roy, Secretary CITU Com. Chittabrata Mazumdar, Genl. Secretary, W.B. State Committee of CITU, Tapan sen and Com. Dipankar Mukherjee also took part in the workshop deliberations.

The workshop was Co-ordinated by Mr. Arthur Johnston, of Commonwealth Trade Union Council.

The workshop was inaugurated by Com. M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary CITU. In his inaugural speech, Com. Pandhe stressed the need for developing deeper and comprehensive understanding of the issues relating to introduction of new technology in Indian Industries through out the organisation both at unit and national level in order to enable the same to address the attendant problems effectively and in the interest of the organisation and the working class. Working class movement must bring forward the issue of appropriate technology suitable to Indian condition and campaign for strengthening and promoting the development of Indigenous technology through central and Industry based R & D set up. Com. Pandhe explained the real face of the new Industrial Policy which indulges in reckless import of technology without meaningful technology-transfer provisions. Which would ultimately make the Indian Industry totally dependent on foreign countries at every step of its production process, against which trade union

movement must mount its opposition. While thanking the Commonwealth Trade Union Council for the Co-operation extended by them for this workshop on new technology Com. Pandhe mentioned that the deliberations and inter action in the 5 day workshop is expected to develop and deepen the understanding the burning issues relating to technology in Indian situation and would help the organisation in developing its approach and strategies to address and tackle the problems emanating out of it.

Arthur Johnston, Co-ordinator, Commonwealth Trade Union Council has explained CTUC's policy of jointly working with National Trade Union Centre in promoting Trade-Union-Education activities, as a part of which this workshop is taking place.

Fast changes are taking place in the field of technology all over the World and exchange of informations and experience and interaction there on between the unions within the country and outside is of vital importance in addressing the attendant problems and CTUC would definitely extend all Co-operation in facilitating this process- Com. Johnston asserted.

During the 5 day workshop the participants from different industries presented and explained the papers detailing therein the evolution of technology application at different levels in the concerned industries, its impact on production, quality of product, input cost and employment alongwith other problems arising out of same and the steps taken by the unions to address the same. There were hours long group discussion also on the particular problems like job-potential and Redundancy, de-skilling, work-organisation, working hours, Redeployment and training, women workers, foreign investment, technology transfer, indigenous R & D effort, information and control, pay and incentives etc., which were also deliberated in the plenary session. The problems of sickness of Industries vis-a-vis the factor of technology upgradation in case of sickness also figures the discussion.

The deliberation in the workshop identified the key issues and problems relating to introduction of new technology and technology upgradation in Indian situation, for further detailed discussion at organisational level, which have to be taken care of in formulating the policy approach and the strategies.

It was also decided that a review workshop on the same subject would be held in April '93 to deal in the matter in further details.

While concluding the session Comrade Chitrabrata Mazumdar thanked CTUC for its assistance in organising the workshop and also the Haldia CITU for making all necessary arrangement for stay and the meeting to make the workshop a success. □

# THE STRIKE THAT WAS NOT

□ Kanai Banerjee

Indefinite strike to press the 5-point demands of 34 lakh railway and central employees, was to commence from 12 October as per decision of the National Joint Council of Action (NJCA) as declared on 8 September, one day before the date scheduled for another round of talks with the govt. From 13 September itself rumour started spreading-actually through the instrumentality of the activists of one of the constituents of the NJCA-that agreement had practically been reached and the strike was not to take place. On 18 September two days before the scheduled date for serving strike notice, the NJCA felt satisfied with the concession granted during the course of negotiation and decided not to go ahead with the decision to serve strike notice on 20 Sept, as well as not to go on strike from 12 October.

### All round Dissatisfaction

The workers, however, whether on the railways or in other central govt departments, did not feel as satisfied with the concessions as their leaders in the NJCA and therefore they resented the agreement reached with the govt by the leaders, which led to the withdrawal of the strike decision. Resentment was as usual expressed in different ways by different sections of workers. Quite a number of workers reacted rather sharply, others were not so sharp, and a large section of the workers, who are less articulate in this expression presented a picture of despair. Now were really satisfied, everyone thought they should have got more. But the desire to have more is not the most import aspect of the development in the present context, every one has a desire to get more in all circumstances. What is really important from the point of view of trade union movement is that, quite a large section of the workers do not just feel but consciously thanks that more might have been extracted if the leadership were not in hurry to anyhow reach a compromise. Some are more articulate, according to them, had the leadership been really prepared to go on strike, in case it was necessary for getting a fair deal for the workers, then they might have extracted much more concession. The leadership according to them were unduly eager

to keep at a "safe destinace" from the least possibility of a real strike.

Resentment, again, was not confined to general workers alone, even many units of organisations which constituted the NJCA, operating at different levels from national to the grass roots, gave expression to their dissatisfaction mostly within the frame work of respective organization, but in some cases they even came out publicly to voice their protest. True such protest by leadership of organisations was not universal. Many who had been harbouring resentment chose to keep silent for various reasons. It will be a grave mistake if one concludes that those in the organisations whose voice of protest was not heard are, all of them, sastified with the matter and manner of the agreement.

Thus, if one cares to listen to the voice of the workers, he will find that dissatisfaction is almost all pervading. Now, all this

dissatisfaction among workers justified? Have they not got any thing? Let us make an assessment of what the workers have gained from this deal.

### What have workers gained

It is nobody's point that workers have not got anything, can there ever be any deal between trade unions and employers(Public or private) through which workers get absolutely nothing? It is therefore pointless to ask such question. Such questions are some times deliberately thrown before the workers to divert their mind from the real question, to confuse their mind. The real question in the present and similar context is: what was the demand of the workers? Were the demands justified? If so, how much out of those demands were achieved? To judge the justifiability or otherwise of the deal we need considering the gains from the deal against these questions. Now let us therefore examine the deal in terms of the above criterion.

A 5-point charter of demand was drawn up by the NJCA, which was released to the press on 19 July. On the basis of the declaration of the 12 July convention of all central employees the press release

warned the government that unless it took positive steps for expeditious and satisfactory settlement of those demands the central employees would be left with no alternative other than resorting to strike against their wishes.....It may be recalled that till 8 Sept. no satisfactory offer came from the govt and the NJCA took decision to commence indefinite strike from 12 Oct. some of the five demands were now made more specific. The demands were-

- i) Merger of a portion of 51% of DA with basic pay.
- ii) Setting up of permanent wage Review Committee for central govt employees.
- iii) 20% increase of wages as Interim Relief.
- iv) Implementation of Arbitration awards in respect of transport subsidy and encashment of earned leave while in service.
- v) Removal of PL Bonus ceiling limit for all nongazetted employees.

Questions have been legitimately raised in trade union circles whether in the context of the many pronged attack launched by the govt on the working class and all toiling people these five demands cover all the most burning problems of the Central Government employees, whether the question of wage parity and job security, of trade union rights and against privatisation etc are of no importance for the central employees. For the present, however, let us postpone the consideration of these question to concentrate on the question how far the demands putforward have been fulfilled. The following offer of the govt was considered by the NJCA satisfactory enough for acceptance and withdrawal of strike.

a) A new pay commission will be set up to review the pay structure of the central employees, its terms of reference and composition will be discussed with staff leaders.

- b) i) Interim relief at the rate of Rs.100/- per month.
- ii) Merger of DA with pay to the extent of 20% for DCRG alone
- iii) PLB eligibility limit will be raised from Rs.3500/- to Rs. 4500/-for railways and from Rs. 2500/- to Rs.3500/- for other departments. Staff side demand for equally raising ceiling limit for those who are getting adhoc bonus was rejected.

--- First thing that immediately comes to one's

notice is that in the list of items offered by the govt the fourth item of the charter of demand that is implementation of Arbitration Award is missing: the demand has been rejected.

--- As for the demand for merger of 51% of DA in pay, merger of only 20% has been agreed to by the Govt and that too for the purpose of DCRG alone. Was the demand for merger of DA made for this extremely limited purpose? Is it not inexplicable that 20% merger against the demand for 51%, and that too only for the purpose of DCRG which is nothing but a mockery of merger could satisfy the leaders?

In connection with this demand one thing that would inevitably come to one's mind is that the 4th Pay Commission had recommended, when DA crosses 50%, the same should be merged with basic pay for all purposes. Every Govt employee knows what benefit accrues from such merger. Then all allowances including future DA would have been calculated on the basis of the enhanced pay. The merger was due from 1.1.91 as the DA then exceeded 50%. In spite of its being backed by Pay Commission recommendation the leaders practically gave up the demand instead of insisting for it.

--- Had the demand for 20% of pay as interim relief been accepted, the lowest paid staff, i.e. the group D staff on appointment drawing Rs 7500 would have get Rs 1500/- Instead he will now get just Rs 1000/- which is only 13.33%, that is less than two thirds (2/3) of what was demanded. In case of the lowest paid group C staff the percentage comes down to 8.33%. In the case of the lowest paid chief supervisor it comes further down to 5% and this also satisfied our leaders. ---As regards the demand for removal of PL bonus ceiling limit, not only it has discriminated against central employees other than railways, it has refused to raise the existing ceiling limit of Rs 2,500/- for those who were getting adhoc bonus in non- railway departments depriving 7.5 lakhs employees. Even the Rs 4,500/- ceiling today does not cover all the employees who get leaves a lot of railway employees out of perview of productivity linked bonus. Is it not time to demand bonus for all without any ceiling?

The four items of the five point charter of demand which we have examined above along with the

concessions secured in respect there of, all involve direct financial benefit to workers and we have seen that the benefit that the agreement has secured for the workers is shamefully poor. We may now briefly examine the fate of the remaining items of demand, a permanent Wage Review Committee.

### Another Pay Commission

The demand for permanent wage review body has been clearly rejected and the NJCS has accepted the offer of setting upon a new Pay Commission. One cannot help looking back across the past decade and recall the developments of 1983 when the 4th Pay Commission was set up. In view of the experience of earlier Pay Commissions broadly the earlier two pay commissions acted virtually as a device to delay wage increase and to legitimise a much lower-than-legitimate wage for central employees---the JCM staff side had been persistently demanding bipartite settlement in the form of JCM National Council itself, the wage norms for central employees on the basis of the principle of parity with public sector undertakings. If the govt had been ready to accept the principle, the staff side would have agreed to setting up a committee to work out some minor details. Already the earlier Pay Commissions had developed some job structure and though that is not entirely satisfactory, yet, at that moment adoption of parity principle was more important to central employees than any radical change in existing job structure. Fitting of new scale based on parity in the existing job structure had, if the staff demand been accepted, might well have been done by a committee in a very short time, if necessary with minor adjustment in the structure. The JCM staff side was therefore opposed to setting up of another pay commission and held a convention of JCM staff side to press the demand for bipartite settlement in JCM forum on the basis of the principle of parity.

The govt however rejected the demand and announced appointment of a Pay Commission. No observer could help taking note of the fact that the JCM leaders had been making thunderous speeches against Pay Commission before it was announced, but there was hardly any serious protest when it was actually imposed. Opposition to the idea of setting up Pay Commission was entirely legitimate in 1983. Has it lost that legitimacy today? Has it become really necessary to review the whole job structure vis-a-vis wage structure over again? The reality is that a

Pay Commission is as unnecessary for the workers today as it was in 1983, and it is as necessary for the govt today as it was at that time--as in 1993 the govt again wants to delay the wage increase take time for the fighting spirit of the govt employees to die out, and to produce voluminous justification for keeping the wages at a low level.

And the NJCA has accepted the pay commission as the first item of the agreement.

Did the 4th Pay Commission recommend wage parity? What is the position of central employees wage as compared to public sector wage? The following table will show the comparative position.

### Comparative Wages on Indian Railway vis-a-vis Public Sector Wages for the month of March 1992

(In cosmopolitan areas for unskilled workers and LDCs)

Sl.No.	Name of the companies /industries	Unskilled LDC	
		Total	Total
1.	Damodar Valley Corporation	2845	2922
2.	Indian Airlines	2459	2680
3.	Air India	2453	2680
4.	Goa Shipyard Ltd	2377	2513
5.	Hindusthan Machine Tools Ltd	2363	2391
6.	Electronics Corporation of India Ltd	2363	2404
7.	Bharat Electronics Ltd	2363	2404
8.	Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd	2363	NA
9.	National Thermal Power Corpon.	2362	2416
10.	Hindustan Copper Ltd	2362	2411
11.	Central Electronics Ltd	2361	2402
12.	Neyveli Lignite Corporation	2357	2416
13.	Hindusthan Cables Ltd	2354	2403
14.	Oil & Natural Gas Commission	2321	2355
15.	Port and Docks	2319	2534
16.	Fertilizer and Chemicals (Travancore)	2317	2378
17.	Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd	2307	2439
18.	Indian Oil Corporation	2302	2399
19.	Fertilizer Industry	2274	2390
20.	Steel Industry	2179	2271
21.	Coal Industry	2172	2291
22.	Bombay Municipal Corporation	2157	2494
23.	Indian Railways & Other CGEs	2157	2494

Source: June, 1992 issue of AIRF's monthly Organ "Indian Railwaymen" Page-7.

This is the position in which the 4th Pay Commission has put us. Can anyone in his senses believe that the fifth pay commission will be different and will undo the damage done by their predecessors by recommending parity of wage with the public sector?

### **Parity demand absent**

It is intriguing that when all the JCM organisations including those affiliated to INTUC or under their influence came together to put up fight for realisation of the burning demands of central employees, the major demand for which the central employees had been agitating for decades, the demand for which the railway employees were on strike for twenty days braving inhuman repression, the demand for wage parity-- did not at all figure in the charter of demand. How can one explain that 34 lakhs central employees were called upon to go on indefinite strike not for its basic economic demand for wage parity but for merger of some percentage of DA and some interim relief which together do not come any where near public sector wage? What is remarkable is that the central employees leaders made only interim demands but had no demand for final wage settlement except that they demanded a permanent wage review body. Apparently they have a bit too much faith in such committees and from the way the Pay Commission has been accepted one can assume, not too little faith in Pay Commissions. Confidence is lacking only in the organised strength of 34 lakh central government employees.

### **On Railways**

As far as the railways are concerned the situation is worse. The major federation of railwaymen which had actually initiated the process with its decision to take strike ballot and which finally found its conclusion in the 18 Sept agreement, started with a 21 point character of demand which included almost all the vital demands of railwaymen. Some of the major demands which were put forward by the federation are in fact demands of all central employees. But when other central employees organisations came together, sixteen of their demands were simply dropped. These dropped demands included most vital demands related to job security of the railwaymen, as well as other central employees and demand against privatisation etc. This pruning of demands itself led to some disappointment among large stratum of railwaymen. It is only natural that the disappointment turned into resentment when the NJCA entered into agreement accepting another Pay Commission and meagre financial concession.

### **Broad Unity and Workers Mobilisation**

The one redeeming feature in the whole development is that the major organisations of

central employees which are participants in the JCM including INTUC affiliates and associates came together to pursue the demands of employees. However, even this cannot be called all in unity. One important constituent of the erstwhile NCCRS, which played a prominent role during the 1974 strike was left out on the plea that they are not a participant in the JCM. In any case, the government took an adamant attitude and it is the wide response of the workers and employees of central govt and railways, vast mobilisations that took place throughout the length and breadth of country - without all this even the meagre concession might not come. And the broad unity certainly has some contribution in creating confidence in the minds of the widest section of central employees.

### **The question remains**

Any experienced trade unionist know a broad based unity of trade unions in any sector is capable of releasing tremendous energy of the working class that enables it to overcome any obstacle in its way. We had a glimpse of this force during 1974 railway strike. In the present case also 35 lakh central employees galvanised by unity might have emerged as vast energised mass crushing anything that dared to cross its way. Why then the organisations of the central Govt employees left out the major demands of central employees, specially wage parity and job security, and why did they fail to pressurise the govt for more substantial concession even against the limited demands they had put forward. Why did they withdraw the strike decision in such undue haste? Why the unity which might have secured for the worker some major legitimate demands has not been used for the purpose and instead it has been mislead in getting meagre concessions?

There is no convincing reply to these questions and hence the wide spread resentment among the workers and employees on railways and in central services. How can one say that their resentment is unjustified?

However resentment does not lead the working class any where. They have to assert themselves, that is the only way for the working class to advance. There is no doubt they will do their best to preserve the unity and do everything to ensure that the unity is put into use for struggle to win all the legitimate demand that have remained unattended, and not for undue compromise sacrificing workers' interest. □

## FWFI Working Committee decides to launch nationwide phased agitation

The National Working Committee of the Fertilizer Workers Federation of India (FWFI) in its meeting held on 3rd and 4th October 1993 at Bombay noted with grave concern that as a result of the Fund Bank dictated new economic policy (NEP) pursued by the central government, the crisis in the indigenous fertilizer industry has further deepened.

The worst affected have been the units manufacturing phosphatic fertilizers, because of sudden departure from the decades old result oriented established pricing policy. The red carpet welcome extended to the multinational companies by withdrawing all restrictions on import including decanalisation and virtual waiver of import duties has pushed the indigenous phosphatic units to near extinction. The disastrous policy has already started showing its ominous effect. Many phosphatic units which have been operating very efficiently are incurring huge losses. Phosphatic fertilizer worth more than 1000 crores are lying unsold in the godown.

The pioneer public sector fertilizer units of the country under Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation (HFC) and Fertilizer Corporation of India (FCI) have become victims of the suicidal policy of the government to denigrate the public sector at the dictate of the IMF and World Bank. It is the Government which had established these plants in the late sixties and in early seventies with unproven technology due to the compulsion of the then prevailing foreign exchange crunch.

The long overdue technological upgradation of these plants has been neglected by the govt. It is sitting rather idle for last about a decade on the various revamping schemes submitted by the different expert committees appointed by the govt itself and also those submitted by the managements of FCI and HFC and the one submitted jointly by the employees. In the absence of a positive decision on the said schemes, the situation in the plants has been deteriorating continuously and reached to the climax when the govt stopped working capital from 1st September 1993 for the HFC resulting in stoppage of operation at Namrup (Assam), Barauni (Bihar), and Durgapur (West Bengal) by the management.

The two prestigious urea manufacturing companies viz., Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilizers (RCF) and National Fertilisers Ltd (NFL) who have been earning high profit ever since their going into commercial production have been engulfed by the black cloud of NEP. The RCF has incurred a loss of Rs 23 crores and Panipet and Batinda units of NFL have also gone into red last year.

The Working Committee has unanimously

concluded that unless a sustained vigorous movement is launched without any loss of time the situation may go out of control and may spell doom for the entire indigenous fertilizer industry. Thus the FWFI has decided to observe the following programmes of agitation.

Telegram and letter in protest to the Prime Minister with copy to the concerned Chief Ministers. Massive postering and leafletting demanding restoration of operation of HFC plants, implementation of the revamping plans for FCI and HFC, full restoration of subsidy for phosphatic fertilizers anti-dumping duty/law on imported fertilizers. Demonstrations, slogan shouting, demand badge wearing, gate meetings, group meetings etc. These programmes are to be implemented by 9th November.

10th to 12th November 1993 Relay dharna/ relay hunger strike before factory/office gate by the workers along with family members.

Campaign amongst farmers, students, youth, women etc organisations to be followed by the united conventions at Unit/district level along with other fraternal trade unions to be over by 21st November 1993.

Dharna and submission of memorandum to the Governors of the respective state and state level joint convention at the state capital to be over by 1st week of December 1993.

Road blockade by the employees of the respective factory/unit at the nearest point of High way/main road for at least two hours on 22nd November 1993.

March to Delhi during the winter session of the Parliament. Workers of the fertilizer units from all over the country would join a national convention during the Delhi march and also court arrest. □

### Kerala CITU donates one day's wages for Earth Quake Victims

The Kerala State CITU has decided to contribute one day's wages to help the earth quake victims. There are 6 lakh CITU members in Kerala.

General Secretary of the Kerala State CITU, Com K N Ravindranath has informed this to the Maharashtra Chief Minister, Shri Sharad Pawar by telegram on October 3.

Com. Ravindranath has requested all CITU workers to take initiative in sending urgent relief to the earth quake victims. He requested that the contributions should be sent to the CITU district committees.

# IN THE WONDERLAND OF CAPITALISM

## **JOB SLAUGHTER IN AIR FRANCE**

Air France, Europe's largest airline, has announced plan to cut 4000 jobs from now on until the end of 1994. Air France has already shed manpower to the extent of 5000 since 1991. This time for the first time the airline's pilots will be touched. Other members of the staff will account for 1000 reduction in compliment. This is part of the restructuring the company has undertaken.

## **PEUGEOT'S UNRELENTING SLASHING:**

Peugeot, the famous auto makers announced in the first week of September this year that it will cut 1476 jobs by the end of 1994 while Citron, associate auto makers, will shed 1000 job by 1994. The Bull Company has also announced that it will cut 2850 jobs by 1994 as an economy measure. More job cuts and layoffs are apprehended in several other allied units.

## **DU PONT CUTS MORE JOBS:**

World's biggest nylon supplier, DU Pont announced in the last week of September that it was shedding 1160 jobs in its European factories immediately and that more job losses will follow early next year.

## **FRENCH UNIONS FIGHT BACK**

The five leading french trade union centers in France gave a call for stalling air, rail, subway and postal services in a national protest day on 12th October. Paris public transport was ground to a near halt, the railways services were disrupted and postal services held up.

The strike was to protest the economic policy of the centre-right government of the Prime Minister, Edouard Balladur. The french unemployment rate is causing serious concern as it passes the 3.2 million mark and heads towards 3.5 million before the end of the year. This is a 10 per cent increase since the installation of the Government led by Edouard Balladur. They were also protesting against public sector wage freeze and cuts in health spending and higher taxes.

The Balladur Govt has been pressing for privatising key state-owned units. There is increasing concern among French Workers over dismissals in the state sector and new productivity schemes, particularly in the postal services. There is

talk of privatising the French telecommunication industry and the railway workers may only be offered productivity related increments.

The French authorities last month announced plans to make 4000 workers of Air France redundant. Similarly, other public sector units have also been asked to reduce staff to more realistic levels claiming to raise productivity and profitability.

With 17 million jobless in Western Europe and the recession still dragging on European Governments are worried of social and political consequences of high unemployment which is now averaging 9.9 per cent in the European Community. In Eastern Europe nearly a fifth or quarter of the workforce may be unemployed or underemployed. The French DGP growth forecast for the year has been lowered to minus 0.8 per cent. One in five under the age of 25 is unemployed in France and hence France's allies are beginning to worry about its economic health.

## **11,000 MANAGERIAL JOBS GONE:**

In the wake of the announcement last August that it would shed 30,000 workers in stages by early 1996, the telecommunications giant of Japan, Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation has begun offering voluntary retirement scheme to 1,000 managerial posts as part of economy drive, called restructuring.

## **MORE JOB CUTS IN USA**

Martin Marietta Corp announced recently that as a result of the restructuring plan undertaken 11,000 jobs will be eliminated. US Air Group Inc announced that it would eliminate 2,500 airport and mechanic jobs. Martin Marrietta's workers shedding this year will total to 9,000. Of these 7,000 jobs have already been eliminated.

The Company statement shows that a total of 46,000 jobs have disappeared since it took over General Electric Co's aerospace and information systems.

## **WAGE COUNCILS ABOLISHED**

Britain abolished on AUGUST 30 Wage Councils that removed the protection to more than 2 million workers against payment of guaranteed minimum wages. Two-thirds of the workers covered are women, majority of whom are engaged in retail trade and hotels. The Tory government of John Major

takes the plea that people should be left to bargain freely with their employers.

## GERMANY

"He who fights can lose, but he who does not fight has already lost". This motto has compelled men and women to take to the streets against the threatened mass close down of steel plants in the Ruhr Valley - Germany's industrial heartland. Germany's worst steel crisis since the war is being watched with bated breath with the unions intimating that upto 100,000 jobs are in danger.

The crisis in the steel industry is followed by the alarming development with the release of unemployment figure in Germany - a record of 3.5 million - "the highest since the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany. The major industries suffering from unemployment are steel, automobiles, chemicals, electro-technical goods, engineering and textiles.

The situation in E East Germany following the so-called market economy, is volatile and more and more dramatic as was seen in the crippling strike by

the control workers. Unemployment in East Germany is 15.3 per cent, compared to 7.5 per cent in West Germany.

## SCHOOL CRIMES IN NEWYORK

School crimes have registered a sharp rise in New York, USA's largest city, sending shockwaves to authorities and parents alike. During the last few years, there has been a steady rise in serious crimes, assaults, robberies, sex offences, drugs and weapons possession and violence in and around schools. In 1992, there was a rise of more than 16 per cent (5,761 cases) in violent incidents which equals to one incident for every 173 public school students. In all, reports of crimes in the schools have risen by 61 per cent since June 1989.

The authorities have decided to depute additional teams to randomly visit schools once a week and pupils even as young as 11 years old will be screened. Use of metal detectors will be increased to more schools and extended to middle schools. Parents have been asked to be more watchful. □

# HOMELESSNESS : GROWING PROBLEM IN WEST EUROPE

(We are publishing hereunder an article by William Pomeroy Published in People's Weekly World, New York on 16.10.93 - Ed.)

London - As western corporations and financial groups mobilize funds for takeovers and investment in the former socialist countries, their claims of the superiority of their own economic system are difficult to sustain. Deepening recession, mass unemployment, spreading poverty and conditions of misery are piling up around them.

One aspect of life in western Europe was revealed in a survey released Sept. 24 by the European Federation of National Organizations Working with the Homeless. Feantsa, as it is called, is a federation of housing action groups with central offices in Brussels.

Brian Harvey, Feantsa president, said, "Homelessness in Europe is running at a much higher level than any of us ever imagined. The figures which our national correspondents have filed to us are truly frightening".

The partial survey showed that at least 2.5 million people in the European Community are homeless.

Feantsa estimated the true number is really 5 million.

The greatest number of homeless are in the European Community's (EC) leading countries: Germany, 1,030,000; Britain, 688,000; France, 627,000. Harvey stressed that the figures showed "the sorry consequences" of government decisions "to reduce investment in social housing and housing for low-income and single people in 1980s".

In western Europe's major cities it is common to see large numbers of the homeless living and sleeping in the streets. London has its "cardboard city" of those who huddle at night in boxes along the central Thames embankment. An estimated 60,000 live in makeshift fashion in central Paris.

Young people make up a large part of those on the streets, reflecting the high youth unemployment. The recession is undoubtedly the major factor in the rising homelessness; in thousands of cases unemployed workers have been unable to maintain mortgage payments and have lost their homes. Formerly, the elderly and unemployable accounted for many of the homeless, but now, according to

Feantsa, about 70 per cent are under 40.

Squatting, in vacant or derelict premises, is another common consequence, leading at times to violent clashes with police or other evicting agencies. Hostels provide many with a bed for the night, but the voluntary organizations that run them are usually over extended.

Around one-fifth of the homeless are immigrants from outside Europe, many of whom became jobless after being encouraged to migrate to previously prospering European countries. Unemployment and lack of housing are seized upon by the racist neo-fascist organisations trying to arouse antagonism against immigrant workers. These are accused of competing for housing and of being favoured by local governments seeking to alleviate homelessness.

Homelessness is inseparable from the housing question in general that has been a built-in feature of capitalism. In its vicious maligning of socialism, the western media hides socialism's enormous program of housing construction, with extremely low rents that literally rehoused the entire population of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. In the capitalist countries, however, homelessness and lack of housing by local governments which supplanted the private landlord. Thatcher promoted the selling-off of "council houses" to their tenants, in the name of "owner-occupancy". But in many cases this led to loss of homes due to inability to maintain payments. This contributed to homelessness and to former council houses being thrown onto the rising-rent market.

Britain's housing problem also affects those who have homes. A Sept 9 survey by the Department of the Environment admitted that 1.5 million homes in England are unfit for human habitation.

Two-fifths of these are in a state of "serious disrepair". About 50,000 homes are reported as being in such bad condition that they should be demolished. Another 278,000 homes, chiefly in

British cities, do not have an inside toilet. Nearly 40 per cent of those unfit to live in have inadequate kitchen facilities.

The deplorable fact is that, for many people living in the street, a roof that leaks is a condition of envy. □

**Magnificent LRSA Victory:**

## **Supreme Court Orders Reinstatement of Victimised Locomen**

**T**he Supreme Court has in a recent judgement issued direction to restore to their respective post within a period of three months from the date of the judgement the employees who were dismissed under rule 14(2) for having participated in the Loco Staff strike of 1981. The judgement was delivered on August 5 by the Supreme Court bench consisting of Justice S C Agrawal and Justice R M Sahai. This judgement was followed by another judgement on August 12 which was also delivered on the same line and the two judgements 113 employees victimised under 14(2). A third judgement delivered on Nov 11 restored to service 25 more employees who were dismissed through disciplinary proceedings. As a result of this and earlier judgements of Central Administrative Tribunal or courts in all 547 victimised employees have either been already taken back or are under process of being taken back. 116 people are involved in cases which are still pending at Administrative Tribunals or Supreme Court. Effort is being made by the LRSA so that there may not be any delay in formally settling their cases in the line of August 5 judgement. □

## **ICDS threatened with Privatisation**

**A**t the forces workshop held in New between 21-23 July 1993 Ms Gopalan, Member Planning Commission, stated that the govt was ready to hand over the ICDS projects to the NGO sector. Already over 600 projects in Rajasthan and Gujarat have been taken over by NGO's linked to religious foundations and foreign funds. CITU strongly fought this move and pointed out the dangers of such a policy for the workers and helpers engaged in the ICDS projects. All Anganwadi unions must prepare to fight such onslaughts on their jobs and on the quality of work they are doing under ICDS. □

*Read*

### **THE WORKING CLASS**

*(English)*

&

### **CITU Mazdoor**

*(Hindi)*

**A Monthly Journal of C.I.T.U**

# STRENGTHENING OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OF TRADE UNIONS AROUND THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION

□ Chittabrata Majumdar

The first meeting of the Indian Ocean Region Trade Union Coordinating Committee, which was formed from the second Indian Ocean Region Trade Union Conference was held at Port Dickson, Malaysia on 14th September 1993.

Five countries, viz, Australia, Philippines, Malaysia, India and South Africa are the members of the Coordinating Committee. Due to certain developments in their countries, Philippines and South Africa could not attend this meeting. So representatives from Australia, Malaysia and India were present in the meeting.

Review of the developments of last eight months in the respective countries indicate that everywhere the policy of globalisation of economy and the policy of deregulation of Industries and labour market as dictated by the imperialists are being implemented by the respective govts. and the working class also according to the conditions in the respective countries are fighting against the offensives.

In Western Australia, the new Conservative Govt. have withdraw the right of the trade union to sign agreement on behalf of the workmen which previously they were enjoying. According to the new legislation, agreement will be made between the management and the individual workmen. This is nothing but denial of the right of the workers to form association. The working class organised a big demonstration in Perth against this act on 19th August, 1993.

In Malaysia though according to the law of the land, the management is bound to recognise a trade union where more than 50% of workers are members, the multinational companies particularly in the electronic industries are refusing to recognise any such trade unions. Over and above, to suppress the right of the workers to form union, they are dismissing the workers from service. There are instances that to avoid trade union the multinational companies even change the names of the companies overnight.

In the Free Trade Zones and Export Processing Zones the trade union activities are next to impossible. It is very difficult to reach the workers in the zones, which are surrounded by high fences and

gates. Security guards usually prevent the distribution of handbills to the workers on company buses carrying workers to and from work.

The trade union movement in Malaysia is weak. The Govt. is also not playing its role in bringing the multinational companies to abide by the law of the land. Even then the working class are fighting against such offensives and are trying to organise themselves in trade unions. To avoid offensives from the employees, the workers normally meet the trade union leaders secretly. Wildcat strikes are also being held even in such multinational companies. Where there is no trade union.

The report on the struggles of the Indian working class against the World Bank and IMF dictated policies of the Govt. of India and the Mass Mobilisation and Jail Bharo programme on 19th August and magnificent general strike on 9th September were highly appreciated in the meeting. The meeting congratulated the Indian working class in general for their heroic struggles against the imperialist design and the CITU in particular for its positive role in developing consistent struggles in home and coordinating activities with trade unions of other countries against the imperialist move for globalisation of economy.

It has been decided that after collecting reports on the developments in other countries in the region, a newsletter has to be published immediately.

The meeting discussed the preparation for the 3rd Indian Ocean Region Trade Union Conference going to be held in Perth, Western Australia on 18-26 November, 1994. In the 3rd Conference country reports as updates of 1992 reports, detailing developments since the 1992 Conference will be discussed. The reports will include, vosal material, videos and other relevant documentary material, where possible particularly when reporting on rallies, campaigns and conflict.

The conference will review the implementation of 1992 Conference REcommendations with specific attention to the Exchange Programme and the Social Code of Conduct and will also review the current global and regional economic trends and consider the development of common action such as

organising a common theme for May Day 1995 and 1996 on an issue like trade union rights.

The Conference will discuss reports from organisers in factories on issues arising from their day to day organising activity, including reference to a significant industrial dispute and the problems they are facing and will consider developing means of assistance for organisers in dealing with the problems.

The Conference will also discuss updated Reports on women's issues like problems and difficulties in organising at factory and workplace level and after drawing out similarities among countries, industries and free trade zones, will consider developing practical assistance and strategies at grass root level to overcome these difficulties. The participating countries will be requested to include women delegates at least in proportion to their membership

of unions.

There will be a Cultural Conference to consider how to utilise cultural activities to highlight industrial issues. The meeting felt that the participants should be requested to prepare songs, visual materials and other means of expression relating to industrial issues for presentation at the conference. Seminar on specific issues like skill training legislation, occupational health and safety legislation etc, will also be held.

The meeting decided to explore the possibility of holding future conferences in countries other than Australia. The meeting also requested the CITU to take the responsibility to involve the trade unions in south Asian countries in the regional network.

Next meeting of the coordinating committee will be held in May 1994 in Malaysia. □

## Get back to where you once belonged.

This is what working women in Russia are being told in the wake of economic recession

□ FRED WEIR

Seventy-five years after the Revolution decreed equality between the sexes, Russian women find themselves being ruthlessly prodded toward a giant leap backwards.

Women, who until recently comprised 51 per cent of the workforce- and 60 per cent of all Soviet workers with higher education-are today being urged, brainwashed and soon, very probably, legislated back to their pre-modern status as homemakers and mothers,

The rationale is familiar. In a declining labour market, available jobs are needed by men. The state can no longer afford the massive outlays it once invested in a universal network of day-care centers, generous maternity leaves, child nutrition programs and other infrastructure designed to support a population of working mothers.

In any other country cabinet ministers might wring their hands, deplore the circumstances and propose palliatives. But this is Russia.

Asked recently about the alarming growth of joblessness among women, Russia's Labour Minister Gennady Melikyan achieved the rare feat of shocking a roomful of hard-boiled foreign journalists into stunned silence.

"Why should we employ women when men are unemployed?" Mr Melikyan demanded. "It's better that men work and women take care of children and do the housework.

"I don't want women to be offended," he went on, "but I seriously don't think women should work while men are doing nothing. Russia is the only country that has so many working women."

According to Mr Melikyan, Russian women were regrettably "forced" to become workers during Soviet times as part of "an extensive strategy to develop the economy. We needed more people to fill new jobs." "But for what do we need it now?" he concluded.

The Women's Union of Russia, successor to the old official Soviet Women's Committee, appears to be the only body concerning itself these days with retraining women for work in the new market economy. Without state support, and under threat of eviction from its government owned premises, the Union offers weekly courses in "survival skills" for unemployed women.

"What we are seeing is highly educated women, typically engineers, academic researchers and administrators, coming to us in desperate straits," says Vera Sobolva, the Union's coordinator of international projects. "They have been laid-off from their jobs by managers who tell them it is no longer 'rational' to keep them on.

"What we offer them are courses in areas where there is still demand for women workers: computer operators, hairdressing, child care and domestic services. Home labour, such as taking in laundry and sewing, is a good prospect.

"Of course, most of these women find this a big letdown. They are usually university educated professionals, who want to work in their own fields. We tell them we hope it's only a temporary problem," she says.

For many women work outside the home is becoming increasingly difficult in any case, thanks to the implosion of the once-universal child care network.

"In our old system 80 per cent of the day-care facilities were owned and operated by enterprises. Only 20 per cent of them were run by municipalities," notes Ms Soboleva. "In the new atmosphere, with business being privatised and restructured for competition in the market economy, the first thing to go is child care."

"Even municipal facilities are being privatised and becoming too expensive for many families. Despite a Presidential decree ordering privatised day-care centres not to change their function, many are being converted into commercial shops or office space."

According to the Women's Union, the majority of Russians immediately facing the axe of unemployment are women between 35 and 50.

For younger women, a somewhat different set of hurdles has appeared.

"There is work in new commercial structures for secretaries, clerks and sales people," says Ms Novikova. "But women who want those jobs often encounter intense and open sexual harassment."

"Employers demand young and attractive women. Often they are urged to appear for the interview wearing sexy clothing."

Want ads frequently stipulate that "B.K. girls only" need apply, a code for "Bez Kompleksov" (without inhibitions).

"The maximum age for a secretary on the market today is 25," says Ms Novikova. "An accountant must be under 45. For women over that, it's catastrophe".

There are old, Soviet-era laws against this sort of thing, but none of them are observed or enforced in today's freewheeling exuberantly male-dominated marketplace.

"Even the official Moscow Employment Bureau routinely lists placements with age and gender requirements," says Ms Soboleva. "Sometimes they even accept something like 'blondes only' as a job qualification.

"We try to tell them: 'You can't do that.' It's no use."

The Russian media, which is capable of being progressive on other human rights issues, appears to have enthusiastically embraced the campaign to drive women back into traditional, subservient and

dependent roles.

Elvira Novikova, who often works with Russian's only feminist think-tank, the Institute of Gender Studies, cites her own recent survey of media attitudes toward women.

"I find three predominate situations in which women are presented in what you could call a positive light," she says.

"Overwhelmingly, the most common image is of women as sex object. The heroines of these stories are winners of beauty contests, brides of rich men, sometimes even prostitutes. The emphasis is on the rewards of this lifestyle—furs, jewellery, fine cars, foreign travel, etc."

"Second most common are articles about women who have made it in business. But these are not usually tales of hard work and initiative rewarded with success. Rather, they tend to be puff pieces about how she limes to dress, where she goes for their vacation, how her house is furnished, and so on."

"Third—don't ask me to explain this—there is an extraordinary number of stories about women who choose to become nuns. Dozens of new convents are opening around the country, and women of all ages and backgrounds are entering them. This is of enormous interest to our press."

"What is utterly lacking are positive images of working women. There are virtually no articles about how she is surviving in the new conditions, not even any of the self-help pieces that are typical in the Western press."

"In our media we find only negative images of the working woman. She is presented as public enemy number one. When she left home to work, all our social problems began. Because of her our children aren't properly educated, families break up, men drink, crime goes up, boys become homosexuals, the Russian nation is dying out, and every other sin you can imagine." □

BOOK POST