



THE WORKING CLASS

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BHOPAL GAS TRAGEDY

Fallouts of the Holocaust

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THE nightmare of December 3 at Bhopal is still continuing. The fallouts of the Chemical holocaust created by the U.S. multinational Union Carbide are gradually laying bare their various facades. Press reports are in galore. Apprehensions of the long term effects of MIC maiming thousands of people are coming true, falsifying the misleading pronouncements of the Government spokesmen and the management of Union Carbide.

Effect on Pregnant Women

As per reports, according to sources in hospitals, 25 per cent of the babies born during the last two months in old Bhopal died soon after their birth. This was apart from a number of still births and miscarriages. Traces of MIC poisoning have been found in the autopsy of dead babies. As much as 30 per cent—an unusually high rate—of the new borns still living are of low birth weights (LBW), which are causing anxiety not only to the parents, but also to the Gynaecologists in Hamidia and other hospitals in the city. In a number of cases the mothers have complained of lack of lactation. Pregnant women are sacred of teratogenic (deformed) babies and as per press reports, medical experts have advised them to undergo medical termination of pregnancy.

Cases of Blindness

Contrary to what the Government had claimed earlier that there was no cause of blindness, more than 1000 cases of blindness have now been reported. Sponsored by the Government itself, a team of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences conducted a door-to-door survey of 25,294 families with an estimated population of 1.5 lakhs in the severely and moderately severe gas affected localities and reported 1064 cases of blindness including some cases of partial impairment of vision. The official spokesmen of the Government however have refuted this report, but not challenged it, although they admit that there have been cases of opacity and also other impairment

of vision caused by the poisoning effect of MIC. The chemical damage as opined by a number of doctors would have a permanent effect on the cornea. Even if the wound heals up opacity would remain causing partial blindness. A preliminary investigation by the researchers of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has also reported about corneal damage.

Effect on Other Organs

ICMR has also reported about significant scarring of the lungs and striking changes in the respiratory tract. The lungs were two to three times heavier and reddish in colour with marked congestion and thickening of the air sacs which were totally destroyed in parts. ICMR's study of the postmortems indicated cherry-red colour of the blood in all the organs of the afflicted persons. This indicates Cyanide poisoning. The report says that the researchers are baffled as they do not know "what to look for in the MIC exposed blood". There were evidences of changes in the kidneys of the affected persons. Similar observations have been made of the liver. As per reports, the livers of the victims had become so fragile that during an autopsy it broke into pieces on being touched. Out of the twenty postmortem studies conducted by ICMR, four persons showed oedema of the brain which causes loss of mental faculty and consciousness. Paralysis of one side of the body as well as neurological abnormalities in the form of tremors and peripheral neuritis were also reported. Apart from this, in large number of old patients as well as new patients who are reporting to the hospitals daily, loss of appetite, severe cases of jaundice, chest pain, depression, damage of intestinal tract, continuing breathlessness, etc. are being observed.

What is of serious concern is that the doctors have reported that "the oxygen carrying capacity of the blood cells has been destroyed in many cases. This makes the patients prone to all kinds of infections and would lead to mutogenesis and carcino-

genesis, causing a high incidence leukaemia and cancer in subsequent years”.

Government Suppressing Facts

It is intriguing to note that despite this worst disaster that has befallen on the people of India by the profit lusty multinational, both the Governments of India and Madhya Pradesh are suppressing facts from the people. All the above facts have come to light through on-the-spot reports gathered from the affected poor people by the various teams and reporters that have visited Bhopal. Since the beginning of the disaster the Government has been holding back the vital informations from the people and giving misleading and irresponsible statements. Similarly, the Union Carbide authorities have also been indulging in misleading statements not only regarding the safety systems and environmental matters, but also with regard to the toxicities of the lethal gases and the possible line of treatment. While the notorious multinational is guided by its motive force of profit, being criminally callous about the condition of the people of the country, the Government of India is standing as a watch dog to protect its interests and safeguard the secrecies. The policy of the Government to make compromise with the multinationals has cost thousands of lives of its own people with a bleak future for the survivors and their future generations. The Govt. is suppressing, distorting and minimising all the facts, be they on the question of granting license to the multinational to manufacture and store the poisonous gas in the heart of the city with sub-standard and obsolete safety systems, or regarding the number of killed and maimed, the probable toxic effects of the gas or the toxic effects seen now. It has also not divulged to the people the result of the analysis of the food materials and water and the effects of the gas on the flora and fauna of the region. It has still not taken any action with regard to “poison ponds” spread over 22 acres and connected with the plant for dumping lethal liquids which have killed several cattle and affected the soil fertility and the sub-soil water in the area, forcing the people to abandon the tubewells.

Furthermore, the Government did not utter a word about the whatabouts of the so called research going on at the Union Carbide’s research centre at Bhopal and it preferred to keep mum over the reported visit of a large number of chemical war experts from USA, W. Germany, U.K. and Canada. It also deliberately remained callous when the horde of U.S. lawyers came down to Bhopal to dupe the illiterate poor. On the contrary, the Attorney General flew to America to consult the same brand of lawyers, and its intension to sue the Union Carbide has still remained in the air although three months have elapsed since the disaster. The one man commission of enquiry has also not yet started to work. The total role of the Government has been not only to shield the multinational but also to allow it to make hay at the cost of the people.

Pressure of U.S. Imperialism

The pressure of the U.S. imperialism on the

Government is clearly evident from the Bhopal gas episode. It is a shame on the part of the Government to submit to such pressure and allow the mass killer multinational to go scotfree with its crime. The press reports have pointed out a variety of corruptions on the part of the Government authorities allowing the multinational a smooth sailing over the corpses of the poor victims. Even the Chief Minister has not been free. He has been sued in the State High Court for having accepted a bribe of Rs. 10 lakhs for granting license to the Union Carbide to manufacture the killer gases in the heart of the city. It is no wonder that the ruling party in the state has not mentioned a word in its election manifesto about this worst chemical disaster in the world and the Government’s responsibilities to the people, although it has made tall promises in galore. This is typical of the bourgeois-landlord Government with its policies being anti-people and pro-monopolist and pro-multinational. And, the monopolists have come promptly in support of the Government’s policy and for the multinational. In a seminar inaugurated by V.N. Gadgil, the Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting at Bombay on February 19, M.S. Patwardhan, President of the Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASSOCHAM) pleaded for the Union Carbide. Delivering the keynote address he said that if a pesticide plant was shut down on the ground of safety, it would result in reduced food production. He further said that the issue of compensation to the victims should not be decided in hasty, but in a practical manner considering the income of the company in India and its ability to pay. He was pleading for the poverty of Union Carbide which is the third U.S. chemical giant and 17th among 200 top multinationals of the world. Its assets stood at 10,300 million dollars at the end of 1983 and total sales at 10,168 million dollars and exports 926 million dollars in 1981 and net profit at 649 million dollars. In India its sale amounted to over Rs. 112 crores in 1978 and it took away Rs. 8.21 crores to U.S. as dividends, royalty and know how fees. Now the sale is over Rs. 300 crores.

Mockery on Safety

The notorious World Bank which dictates its economic terms to the third world countries like India, has come out with a magnanimous appeal to the industrialists and the Governments of the developing countries giving a guideline for industrial safety in producing hazardous substances. But interestingly the guideline does not apply to hazardous waste disposal sites, nor to nuclear operations, nor to mining and extraction operations. The guideline also does not provide details specifying the preventive steps to be taken against accidents like in Bhopal. It thus makes the multinationals and the monopolists free to adopt any standard of safety system as they deem fit to mint their profits only.

World Bank’s guideline has only added one more feather to the cap of the organisers of safety seminars. While the number of national and international

seminars on safety has been increasing, the number of fatalities in industrial accidents are also increasing in the developing countries. According to ILO, while the job related fatalities in the advanced capitalist countries have reduced by 30 to 50 per cent in the last 20 years, it has increased by several times in the third world countries, where 33,000 deaths and 8 million injuries occur every year. The so-called chemical revolution by the multi-nationals which is introducing over 1000 new substances annually into the environment has produced a gruesome legacy of death and disease in the third world. India's record was noted at the Asian Congress of Pharmacology held recently in Delhi. In India 10,000 chemicals are in common use. But the protective measures are as poor as to expose 50 per cent of the labour force to their adverse long term effects — the Congress noted. This is the result of the double standards of safety maintained by the multinationals and accepted by the monopoly-subservient Governments like India. The voluntary and officially sponsored safety organisations are more interested to make rituals of safety seminars and teach the workers lessons on safety while the employers go scot free violating them. Leave aside the multinationals and the private sector, even the public sector managements are criminally responsible for indifference to safety and hazards. The Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilizers have come to headlines of the papers twice in last two months for breach in the elementary safety norms in both of its plants at Chembur and Thal Vaishet. But the Government is least worried about developing and maintaining the safety systems in the industries. It is introducing computerisation in industries to make the workforce redundant and damage the employment potential. But it will not go in for computerisation of the safety system because it will tell upon the profits. While inaugurating a workshop at Gurgaon on February 19 under the Pesticide Development Programme of India, B. Singh, Secretary in the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers attributed the record production of foodgrains to the development of the pesticide industry in India by the Government. It is a pity that despite the cry of Bhopal victims reverberating the world, he never mentioned about developing a fool proof safety system by the Government, nor did he condemn the multinational for installing sub-standard safety systems for production of the so called modern pesticide.

At the entrance of the Bhopal plant read a poster, "Safety is everybody's business", and this is the place where the world's worst disaster happened. The poster depicts the sheer mockery on safety and human lives — a downright cynicism like the maxim which adorned the gates to the concentration camp in Buchewald—"To each his own".

Continuous Movement Necessary

What the Bhopal holocaust has thoroughly laid bare is the arrogant pursuit of the multinationals which regard the third world countries as the bridge-head for their economic offensives, the territories that need to be colonised and where they can utilise the cheap manpower and resources without any

regard to the state sovereignty and international safety laws. And, the Government of India has surrendered its policies to such arrogant pursuit of the multinationals. It has also unfolded a dangerous possibility — a research and experimentation on chemical warfare materials by the U.S. imperialism which has stockpiled a million Hiroshimas and Nagasaki's for dominance, nay, extermination of the world. It has placed before the people the genuine social questions of the day — the question of containing the thrust of the multinationals, the question of an alternative policy by the Government of India, the question of fool proof safety in industries, the question of adequate relief, rehabilitation and absorption of the affected people and the workers and of course the question of war and peace. These social questions, to doubt, have to be put to the government of India, but the responsibility of shouldering them has to be taken by the working class. All the trade unions must unite to carry forward this responsibility and develop united movements in pursuance of it. Worldwide movements have already started. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in a meeting held at Nairobi on February 16 has already given a call to observe Bhopal Day all over the world on March 12, the 100th day of the disaster. CITU and AITUC called upon their unions to observe Bhopal Day on February 4 and 1 respectively. The names of the CITU unions which observed the day and adopted resolutions have been published herewith. In several states like Tripura, Delhi and Andhra Pradesh demonstrations and processions were held and leaflets distributed. The CITU has further called upon the unions and federations to contribute towards the relief of the affected people. As per paper reports, the employees of the US Union Carbide have donated one lakh dollars to the Bhopal victims. Several Members of the Parliament, viz, Saradish Roy, Renupada Das, Sukomal Sen (CPI-M), Geeta Mukherjee (CPI), Madhu Dandavata (Janata) and others have raised the question in the Parliament. CITU has further taken initiative for a seminar in conjunction with other Central Trade Unions and various scientific organisations. The Madhya Pradesh State CPI (M) and CITU have demanded a white paper on all the relevant matters concerning the Bhopal tragedy. All CITU unions have to mobilise the members and initiate joint movements with other trade unions to campaign and focus the attention of the people on the burning question and raise demands to the Government on the connected issues.

CITU Nomination

CITU has nominated the following comrades in the Coal Advisory Council. The first meeting of the council was held on February 15. The name of the third representative will be decided later on.

1. M.K. Pandhe, Secretary, CITU and President, AICWF.
2. Sunil Basu Ray, W.C. Member, CITU and General Secretary, AICWF.

Unions Which Adopted Resolution on Bhopal

THANJAVUR District. Private Bus Transport Workers Union, H.O. Mayuram; Jagalakshmi Chemical Enterprises Ambathoor Industrial Estate Madras-58; Central Organisation of Tamilnadu Electricity Employees Union Udumalpet Branch, Kovai District; Southern Press Tools Ltd. Coimbatore; Madras Mechanical Manufacturing Ltd., CITU Branch, Singanellur Coimbatore; Prakash Engineering Company (CITU) M.T.P. Road, Coimbatore; Modern Mills Ltd., Sundatta Workers Union Karwar Road, Habli; Plywood Workers Union Dandeli; South Kanara Tile Workers Union, Mangalore; Tamilaga Arasu Pokkuvarathu Thozhilalar Sangam, Nagercoil; Haltsons Karmikara Sangha, Bangalore; Trichy District Textiles Workers Union, Karu Mills Branch; Shri Meenakshi Foundry, Singallur, Coimbatore; Everest Engineering Works No. 2, Coimbatore; Asiatic Oxygen Ltd., Madras; K.G.F. Municipal Workers Union, Andersonpet; Nagapattinam Steel Rolling Mills Workers Union, Nagapattinam; Karnataka Provincial Plantation Workers Union, Chigmagalur; Perambalur Sugar Mills employees Union, Perambalur; Nellai Dist, Transport Workers Union, Tirunelveli; Taxi Drivers & Labour Union, Coimbatore; B.S.A. (P) Ltd. Patel Road Coimbatore; Sankari Cement Alai Thozhilalar Munnetra Sangam, Salem; Bharat Gold Mines Employees Union Marikuppam; Kolar Dist. General Workers; Union; The Thirubuvanam Co-Op. Silk Society Employees Association, Tanjore; Sri Devi Pulverising Mill, Industrial Estate, Ambattur; F-18 Pressmac Industries, Ambattur Industrial Estate, Madras; Kothari Sugar Factory Workers Union, Trichy Dist.; Building & Quarry Workers Union, Gandhipuram; Employees Union Rallis India Ltd., Industrial Estate, Ambattur; T.N.E.B. Workers Union (CITU) Trichy System; Kovai Jilla Sumai Thookkum Pothu Thozhilalar Sangam, Coimbatore; General Workers Union, Coimbatore; Nellai District Textiles Workers Union, Tirunelveli Dist.; Kovai Mavatta Tempo Thozhilalar Sangam; K.L.K. Electrical Industries Private Limited, Madras; Central Organisation of Tamil Nadu Electricity Workers, Chengalpatu; Cheran Transport Employees Union (CITU), Coimbatore; Ahura Welding Electrole. Manufacturers Ltd., Ambattur; Sivananda Steels Employees Union, Madras; Textool Company Ltd. Ganapathy, Coimbatore; Kumari District Mill Labourers Union, Nagercoil; Coimbatore and Nilgiris District Cinema Employees Association, Coimbatore; The Coimbatore Tea & Coffee Workers Union, Coimbatore; Chettinad Cement Corporation Contract Labour Union, Trichy; Hindustan Motor Workers Union, Chengal Dist.; Tamilnadu Beedi Workers Federation and North Arcot District Beedi Workers Union (CITU) Vellore; Tamilnadu Electricity Workers Union Erode; Tansi & General Workers Union, Erode; Jeeva Pokkuvarathu Thozhilalar Sangam, Erode; Periyar District Beedi & Suruttu Thozhilalar Sangam, Erode; Periyar District Maram Erum Thozhilalar Sangam, Erode; Periyar District, Building & Quarry Workers Union, Erode; Tamilnadu Water Supply and Drainage Workers Union, Erode; M.A.K. Industrial Equipment (Pvt.) Ltd., Ambattur; Bharat Electronics Employees Union, Ghaziabad; ABT Parcel Service Workers & Staff Union, Coimbatore; Dharmapuri Dist. Textile Mill Workers Union, Hosur; The Synthetic Insecticides Co. Branch Pothu Thozhilalar Sangam, Trichy; Hindustan Photo Film Workers Welfare Centre Indunagar Ooty; Hosur Electronics & Engineering General Employees Union, Hosur; Nellai District General Workers Union, Tirunelveli; Cement & Quarry Workers Union, Sangarnagar; Bharath Heavy Electricals Workers Union, Tiruchirappally; Mettur General Workers Union, Metturdam; P. Jona Jayarak Karthikeya Foundry, Coimbatore; D.S. & A. Co. Workers Union, Trichy; Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage Board Workers Union, Coimbatore; P.V.R. Industries, Ganapathy, Coimbatore; Mettur Taluk CITU affiliated Unions, Mettur Dam; Lukshmi Textiles Engineering Works, Coimbatore; Mangalore Beedi Kelasagarara Sangha, Mangalore; Mysore Feeds Karmikara Sangha, Bangalore; Madurai Corporation Workers Union, Madurai; District Beedi Workers Union, Alangulam; Periyar Dist. Textiles Labour Union, Dharampuram; Kovai Periyar

Mavatta Motor Thozhilalar Sangam; Seshasayee Paper Mill Labour Union, Erode; Manju Electrical Industries Ltd, Coimbatore; Trichy Dist. Textile Workers Union, Trichy; CITU Workers, Thalaiyth Sub-Station Tirunelveli; N. Natarajan, CITU Office, Kumbakonam; Bangalore Jilla Karmikara Sangha; N.M.R. (P.W.D.) Karmikara Sangha, Bangalore; Associated Drug Karmikara Sangha, Bangalore; Bangalore Soft Drinks Employees Union, Bangalore; Krishna Flour Mills Karmikara Sangha, Bangalore; Hans Steel Karmikara Sangha, Bangalore; Vita Biscuit Company & Vita Food Products Karmikara Sangha, Bangalore; Mysore Asnests Cement Products Employees Union, Bangalore; Featherlite Corporation Employees Union, Bangalore; Annapoorna Paper Mills Karmikara Sangha, Bangalore; Ashok Leyland Employees Union, Hosur; Industrial Estates and General Workers Union, Madras; Coimbatore District General Engg. Mechanical Workers Union, Coimbatore; Kunigal Beedi Workers Union, Karnataka; Madurai Elecy, System Board Workers Union, Madurai; Electricity Board Contract Workers Union, Madurai; Madurai Mavatta Poddupana Private Peruvalli Thurai Thozhilalar Sangam, Madurai; KRISP Biscuit Co. Karmikara Sangha, Bangalore; Electronics Private Limited Karmikara Sangha, Bangalore; D.K. Jilla Autoriksha Chalakara Sangha, Mangalore; Kalas Thozhilalar Sangam, CITU, Tirupur; Banian & Pothu Thozhilalar Sangam, Tirupur; The Indian Plywood Karmika Sangam, Darwad; Karur Taluk Podhu Thozhilalar Sangam, Karur; Madras Ehinglepet Dt. Handloom Weavers Association, Kanchipuram, Vatta Pothu Thozhilalar Sangam, Allinagaram; Madurai Mavatta Thotta Thozhilalar Sangam, Madurai; Tamil Nadu Electricity Board Allingaram, Them; Kalas Thozhilalar Sangam, Tirupur; Tamil Nadu Electricity Board Workers Union, Madras; N.A. Dist. Textile Mill Workers Union, Gudiyattam; All Trade Union Council, Gobichettipalayam; S.K. Weavers Union, Mangalore; Kovai Jilla Engineering Staff Association, Coimbatore; Coffee Curing Mathu Ithara Karmikara Sangha, Chikmagalur; Thanjavur District Municipal and Panchayat Board Workers Union, Thanjavur; Tamil Nadu Electricity Employees, South Arcot, Villupuram; Kanyakumari District Estate Workers Union, Kulasekaram; Salem District Panchalai Thozhilalar Sangam, Salem; MCIC Limestone Mines Chemical Labour Union; Madurai Textile Workers Union, Madurai; Tiruchengode Sankari General Workers Union, CITU Vijaikumar Forgings, Coimbatore; Salem Dist., Magnesite Labour Union, Salem; G.E.M. Company, Ganapathy; Ariyallur Alai Ulappar Sangam, Trichy; Workers of CITU Devon Machines II, Madras; Tamil Nadu Elecy. Workers Union, Chinnamanur; Steel Plant Employees Union, Salem; Ellen Industries, Coimbatore; DEWX Foundry, Coimbatore; Factory Committee Universal Heat Exchanges Ltd, Coimbatore; Factory Committee (CITU) Vigneswara Industries (P) Ltd, Palayam; Jaya Kumar Engineering Works, Coimbatore; K. Veerakumar Dual C.B.E.; Devon Machines Employees Union Plant I Madras; R. Balasubramanian, Textool Branch CITU C.B.B.; Selvakumar Industries, Coimbatore; South India Viscose Company Workers Union, Sirumugai; Coimbatore Pressings Mulumacham Patty. P.O. C.B.E. 21; Texmaco Pump (Division) CITU Dommittee, Coimbatore; Tamil Nadu Electricity Board Employees Union, Tirunelveli; Pudukkottai Thita Minsara Thozhilalar Sangam, Pudukkottai; Apex Rubber Pvt. Ltd. Chengalpetha; Blacksmith Construction Company Factory No. 2, Coimbatore; Swiss Welded Mesh Co. Pvt. Ambathur Madras; M.S.K. Mills Workers Union, Gulbarga; Kanyaspin Thozhilalar Sangam, Kanyakumari Dist.; Tamil Nadu Electricity Workers Union, CITU, (General Circle) Madurai; Tamil Nadu Elecy. Workers Union, CITU, Pasumtalai Division, Madurai; Tirupur Pothu Thozhilalar Sangam, Tirupur; Minsara Anai-kattu Thozhilalar Sangam, Coimbatore; Madras Elastomers Ltd, Madurai; Bantwal Taluk Beedi Kelasagarara Sangha, Bantwal; Madurai District Ikkiya Handloom Workers Union, Madurai; Workers of CITU, Metallic Componets Industrial Estate, Madras; Velumani Engineering Industry, Coimbatore; CITU M/S Autosmith Industries Madukkai Road Coimbatore; Coimbatore Machine Tools Pvt. Ltd, Coimbatore; General Wokers Union, Nagercoil; Tamil Nadu Electricity Project Workers Union; Workers of CITU, Ashoke Pressure Castings (P) Ltd, Madras.

International Symposium on Environment and Industrial Safety

THE International Symposium on Environment and Industrial Safety organised by the National Safety Council on 2-5 February highlighted the total inadequacy of the measures for protecting environment and ensuring industrial safety.

The Symposium was held at time when the after effects of the shocking Bhopal tragedy were still fresh in the minds of the people of India and abroad. Naturally most of the speakers referred to the disaster and advocated stringent action against violation of safety standards. Even the President of India Shri Zail Singh who inaugurated the symposium had to mention this biggest industrial accident and call upon the delegates to ensure that such ghastly tragedy would not be repeated in future.

The Union Labour Minister Shri T. Anjaiah went to the extent of stating, "The industrial accident at Bhopal once again poses the greatest question to the country's administrators, professionals and experts that how adequate the safety laws and practices evolved are and how sincerely these are enforced and practised. It is also a matter of concern that, inspite of laws evolved on the safety, health and welfare of the working class, accidents continue to occur due to gross negligence and carelessness displayed in following safety and health measures". Quoting from ILO reports he noted that the average annual rate of fatal injuries in developing countries in the manufacturing and construction industry 1976-80 was higher than 1971-75.

Referring to the tragedy of Bhopal Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer observed in the inaugural session, "The environmental poisoning flowing from the callous neglect of industrial safety measures brings into lucid light the gravity of the potential calamity when modern technology used in the manufacture of pesticides and herbicides results in massive homicide because safeguards become dys-functional and Third World conditions induce multinationals to make huge profits indifferent to the extraordinary care that vigilant law enjoins. No seminar, national or international can be held anywhere in the world now without treating the Bhopal tragedy as a starting point". In his speech he observed that every year 16,000 million tons of oxygen are burnt up and 24,000 million tons of carbon dioxide are discharged into the atmosphere". The pollution of rivers, lakes, seas and oceans had reached a dangerous level, with about 50 per cent of all the pollution of the biosphere being caused by the United States, which had less than six per cent of the world's population, he said.

Nearly 600 delegates participated in the seminar including several experts from foreign countries such as U.K., U.S.A., Austria, Sweden, West Germany,

France, Italy, Australia, Japan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tanzania, etc. Com. Valentin Goshchisky, Secretary, Trade Union International of Metal Workers (WFTU) and a three member delegation from All China Federation of Trade Unions consisting of Comrades Cai Shixiong, Zhang Cunen and Qu Lin participated in the deliberations of the symposium. Com. Luigi Nicosia represented the CGIL Italy in the symposium. On behalf of the ILO Mr. Wenji Fu (Chiha) Regional Adviser, Bangkok delivered a key note address in a technical session.

After the inaugural function the symposium had 4 technical sessions on (1) Industrial safety, (2) Environmental safety, (3) Nuclear safety and (4) Contribution of Trade Union Movement in tackling the Industrial Environment and Accident problems.

The speakers in the Technical session on Industrial Safety expressed concern at the immensity of the increasing problem. An estimated 1,80,000 workers die as a result of employment accidents and occupational diseases every year throughout the world and some 110 million suffer non-fatal employment injuries. Though the ILO launched International Programme on Improvement of Working Conditions and Environment (PLACT) conditions have not improved much. The ILO Convention No. 155 and the recommendation No. 164 on occupational safety provides for formulation, implementation and periodic review of coherent national policy on occupational safety, occupational health and the working environment in consultation with workers and employers organisations. The govt. of India has not yet acted on it.

As Mr. Wenji Fu noted, "At the international level, it has been recognised that existing practices for identification of harmful chemical substances used in industry, particularly due to use of trade means, have been a major obstacle to those concerned in the protection of workers health in effecting adequate preventive measures".

Speakers also pointed out that rapid technological changes — computerisation and robotisation in industries and mechanisation in agriculture can have added impacts on the people at work.

A point was raised by western experts about the permissible risk to be taken in the industrial undertakings. Another ILO representative however pointed out the concept militates at the basic approach of safety and environment in industry.

On the question of environmental pollution speakers expressed great concern at the disposal of industrial waste in the reckless manner. "Many of our industrial wastes are far more dangerous to man

and the environment than the raw materials we carefully conserve". It was startling to know that nearly 70 per cent of India's available water is polluted. "The Ganga which drains a quarter of country's land area, is our most polluted river and the same is true of Yamuna which flows by Delhi, while other rivers big or small are also not less polluted. Waste matter and effluents from industrial plants of all types are being dumped into the waters used for drinking, pushing the country towards ecological disaster".

Studies have pointed out that the environmental impact is dangerously affecting the existing as well as new plant. The impact of Petro-chemical industry is directly felt on rivers, ponds, etc regarding water quality and biological systems, on the subsoil water, vegetation crops, on the flora and fauna and on the properties due to gaseous emissions. One of the speakers noted, "It is a known fact that urban population have been exposed to rising levels of air pollution in addition to inadequate housing, sanitation, poor water supply and malnutrition. All this leads to deterioration of health". What is more serious is sufficient awareness is lacking in the country to tackle this problem seriously and attempts are being made to justify this on the plea of high cost involved. As a matter, it is only the desire to earn a high rate of profit that is coming in the way of providing proper safe conditions.

The third technical session on Nuclear Safety and Radiological Protection high-lighted the dangerous effects of Radiations. Shri G. Subramanian of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre while pointing out the biological effects of radiation noted. "All living creatures and organisms are made up of tiny structures known as cells. A nucleus surrounded by cytoplasm. The nucleus contains the genetic character material known as genes. Cytoplasm is mainly made up of proteins, enzymes, etc. which are utilised in metabolism. If the cells are impaired by any means, the normal functioning of the body will be subsequently affected."

It was also noted that while handling radioactive materials such as powder, liquid may escape into the air and contaminate the working surface, water, hands, etc. These radioactive materials can enter the body and get deposited in specific organs, which may cause continuous irritation of the body. "It is therefore very essential to observe strict radiation surveillance procedures in order to achieve adequate protection against radiation. In case of pregnant women the embryo is also affected and special precautions should be taken so that they do not work in area where exposure is likely to exceed permissible limit. In India there are 398 industrial radiography installations and 763 radiography cameras are in use, which only underlines the importance of safety in industrial radiography.

The Fourth Technical Session on contribution of TU movement in Tackling the Industrial Environment and Accident Problem was most lively and pro-

minent trade union leaders participated in it. Shri G. Ramanujam, General Secretary INTUC who presided over the session pointed out that there can be bargaining on the question of safety. He appreciated the unity prevalent among the trade unions on the question of safety. He expressed surprise at the failure to even supply the list the occupational diseases prevalent in several of our industries.

Com. S.R. Kulkarni, President, HMS admitted that the TU movement has not taken sufficient interest in safe working conditions and exhaustively quoted from the ILO documents to point out how multinational companies violate safety rules in developing countries. Dealing at length the question of safety in port and docks he noted that without vigilance of TUs the safety rules cannot be fully enforced.

Com. Samar Mukherjee, General Secretary CITU submitted a written paper to the symposium. Highlighting the gross violation of safety rules by the Union Carbide, the U.S. Multinational company, Com Mukherjee observed, "What is unfortunate in to-day's situation is that the lessons of Bhopal tragedy are not being learnt and proper safety arrangements are not being ensured in our working establishments. In several of our industrial units lethal gas is widely used but the administration has failed to take effective measures to protect the life of the workers and the people around".

Criticising the inadequate factory inspection machinery Com Samar Mukherjee stated that there should be provision of workers' safety inspector who should be elected by the workers. He also demanded that TUs should have right to prosecute the management for violation of safety rules. Pointing out that observation of safety weeks every year in a ritualistic manner would not help, he castigated the government of India for giving a paltry grant to the National Safety Council. He also wanted expansion of the activities of the council and demanded pro-worker orientation in its activities.

The utter neglect of treatment to workers who are victims of occupational hazards was mentioned by Com Mukherjee who demanded full rehabilitation of all victims and giving them lighter duties. He called upon for ratification of the ILO convention concerning occupational safety irrespective of the cost involved. He appealed for a comprehensive national safety regulation providing adequate safeguards in all workplaces.

The CITU representative advocated preparation of a national programme of safety and formation of National Safety Commission with wide powers to take action against violation of safety norms.

Shri Gopeshwar, Secretary INTUC criticised the management and the government for not showing sufficient awareness on safety. He demanded that the workers should have right to refuse any job
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CITU Demands Basic Changes in Motor Vehicles Laws

THE CITU in a memorandum to the Government of India, has demanded that changes must be made in both the Motor Vehicles Act as well as the Motor Transport Workers Act in order to ensure betterment in occupational Safety and Health in Road Transport industry. This subject is going to be discussed in the 11th Session of the Inland Transport Committee (ILO) in January '85.

The memorandum pointed out that the number of registered motor vehicles has increased from 3.06 lakh in 1950-51 to 32.36 lakh in 1977-78. During the same period the share of passenger and freight traffic carried by road transport has increased from 26 per cent to 59 per cent and from 11 per cent to 32 per cent respectively compared with the railways. It was also shown that while the public sector is acquiring strength in respect of ownership of buses (from 31.6 per cent in 1960-61 to 49.5 per cent in 1977-78), the private sector holds almost a monopoly grip on trucks (from 99.3 per cent to 99.5 per cent in the same period). The number of accidents has also increased from 55.5 thousands in 1960 to 121.8 thousands in 1976 while the total casualty increased from 38.8 thousands to 105.3 thousands in the same period.

The Government data analysing the primary causes for accident has ascribed the lion's share viz 67 per cent to 70 per cent as fault of human element. The memorandum points out that such an analysis might not present the correct picture, because the Acts do not contain any chapter for occupational safety and health, beyond providing for first-aid boxes in the vehicles without any penalty clause. As a result, a box is provided without any material for the same.

Besides the memorandum points out that such fault of the human element may be the end result of excessive duty hours. Though the Motor Transport Workers' Act provides almost the same duties as in the Factories Act, the provisions of the Act are only observed in its breaches. For example though half-an-hour's rest between 4th and 5th hour of duty is provided in the Act, the provision of the rest room is only made for night halts but not for such rest. Hence rest is a misnomer without a rest room. On the other hand it increases duty hours. Besides in the carrier transport i.e. hauling of freight, there is virtually no control on duty hours as it is done by private sector. The memorandum points out that in absence of crew changing station for trucks running more than 250 Kms, the system of One Driver only operation should be brought to an end and the design of the trucks should be changed. With two sets of crew and accommodation behind the driver's cab for sleeping of the Driver, the number of accidents could be reduced.

The memorandum also points out that the condition of roads and the density of traffic are also contributory factors for increase in the accidents. The total road length has increased from 397.62 in 1950-51 to 1393.93 in 1975-76. The motor vehicle density per lakh of human population has increased

from 85 in 1950-51 to 510 in 1977-78 while the number of motor vehicles per 100 Km of surfaced roads has increased from 196 to 593 at the same period. The system of renewal of license for motor vehicles is faulty and there is no system of workers' inspection of road worthiness of the vehicles between two renewals.

Similarly a lot has to be done about the service conditions of the workmen particularly who work in private sector under individual entrepreneurs. They are not given appointment letters, there is no job security and the annual leave and other provisions of the Act are not observed.

Driving has not been taken up under university curricula or ITI training courses and the memorandum demanded that in future such training courses are to be opened so that the drivers get proper training. System of within industry training should also be introduced.

The memorandum pointed out that containerisation is growing in transport and as such the condition of roads must be kept under constant vigil from safety point of view.

The question of design of vehicles (ergonomic arrangement) is generally ignored in our country. Certain arrangement for controls, the design of Drivers' Cab, the seat and control panel, as drawn up in the ILO report should be incorporated in the Act after the report is finalised so that the driver can work free of heat and fumes, the memorandum points out.

The memorandum has forcefully demanded that a tripartite meeting for the road transport industry should be held to determine the service conditions of the workmen in this industry which are to be incorporated in the Acts and other amendments. It is worthwhile to note, the memorandum said, that the National Transport Policy Committee has also recommended that Motor Vehicles Act should be reviewed.

It is understood that All India Road Transport Workers' Federation had already decided for developing a powerful movement for improvement of the service conditions of workmen engaged in this industry from the Second all-India conference held in August, 1984 last.

Erratum

In the January, 1985 issue on page 21 under heading "Maharashtra", it has been by mistake reported that P. Sanzgiri attended the seminar on Systems Safety in Manufacturing industry held at Bombay on November 19 to 21. The Seminar was attended by P.R. Krishnan, Secretary Maharashtra State Committee of CITU. The mistake is regretted. — Editor.

Trade Unions Meet on Verification

THE meeting convened by the Chief Labour Commissioner (Central) on 11th February 1985 to consider the suggestions by the Central trade union organisations for modification in the procedure for verification of membership of trade unions could not come to any final conclusion because the INTUC wanted time upto 15th April 1985 to give its suggestions.

The National Campaign Committee submitted a memorandum in August last year but the Government of India did not hold any meeting to discuss the matter. Several meetings were called but were postponed without any valid reason. At certain stage the Government went to the extent of taking the stand that any basic improvement in the procedure would require approval of the Indian Labour Conference.

The trade unions pointed out that the verification of membership need not be finalised in a tripartite meeting and a discussion at the trade union level cannot be stopped on that count. The constituents of the National Campaign Committee proposed that if a claim of membership of unions was about 500 then it should be decided by holding secret ballot.

There was a discussion at length on the suggestions given by the trade unions though no definite conclusion could be reached in the meeting.

The UTUC(LS) and others raised a point that the Government was not giving effect to the verification conducted earlier and they demanded that it should be implemented in full. The CITU representative M.K. Pandhe pointed out that the meeting was called only to discuss the modification of the verification procedure and not to consider the results of the earlier verification. He further noted that since CITU did not participate in the earlier verification it cannot be a party to any discussion on the question. The representative of the AITUC took a similar stand in the meeting.

The question of conducting verification for the year 1984 or for the year 1983 was instead raised by some unions. However the CITU representative pointed out that this question could be finalised alongwith the finalisation of the modified procedure. It was agreed that after the INTUC's proposals were received a meeting of central trade unions should be called to consider the entire issue.

An informal meeting of the Central Trade Union Organisations was held on 13th February 1985 which considered some of the proposals made by the non-INTUC unions.

The UTUC(LS) gave a disruptive suggestion of acceptance of the claims of central trade unions on the plea on non-co-operation of the State Govt., "instead of depending upon all such State Govern-

ments who may want to delay the verification with political motive to foil the efforts for making a speedy verification of membership of central trade union organisations contemplated by the Government of India in the greater interest of those interested in developing sound industrial relations in the country". The CITU stoutly opposed this comment which was an indirect attack on the Government of West Bengal for its criticism of UTUC(LS) forming fictitious unions.

The central trade unions agreed to continue informal dialogue with a view to coming to a common understanding on as many issues as possible. The next meeting to discuss the issues informally among the central trade unions may be held around 20th March 1985 so that maximum understanding could be reached on the issues. The unresolved issues can then be considered in a broader meeting.

(from page 6)

which is unsafe. He emphasised the need for training of workers and officers on the safety matters.

Comrad S.K. Sanyal, Secretary AITUC stated that direct T.U. Action on safety are the only solutions to ensure safe working conditions. He gave examples of prosecution of TU functionaries demanding enforcement of safety regulations.

Shri H N Biswas Vice President BMS advocated formation of separate industrywise safety committees. If man is given more importance over machine then the employers will see the importance of industrial safety.

Com. Valentin Goshchinsky Secretary, T.U.I. Metal strongly criticised multinationals for their callousness towards safety and demanded control over the activities of the multinationals. He observed that all collective agreements should provide a clause concerning safety.

Com. M.K. Pandhe secretary CITU acted as Rapporteur of the session. In the valedictory session the reports of the technical sessions were placed. The speakers demanded follow up action on the symposium without which its purpose would not be fulfilled.

The T.U. movement in India has to be more vigilant in the matter of labour protection so that the growing risks generated due to technological advance on the one hand and the neglect of safety by the employers on the other will be effectively overcome. Unless the trade unions make safety work as a part of their day to day activities no legislative measure will force the employers to ensure safe working conditions and environment.

Round Table Conference on Steel Industry

M.K. Pandhe

DESPITE tall claims made by the planners in India, our steel industry stands 16th among major steel producers of the world. While India has about 20 per cent of world population her steel output is only around 1.5 per cent of total world steel production. Per capita consumption of steel in India is only 18 Kg-lower than many of the developing countries. The average per capita consumption in developing countries is estimated to be 43 Kg, while in developed countries it is as high as 494 Kg.

The crisis in Indian steel industry became so acute in eighties that the target of production in 1983-84, was fixed at considerably lower level than in 1980-81. This enabled the SAIL management to claim a higher percentage of the fulfilment of the target. The complacent attitude in development of steel industry is causing serious impediment in further growth of the industry in our country.

The National Council of Applied Economic Research has made an estimate that the demand for steel in India by the end of the century would be around 22 million tons, which is resulting in projecting a low rate of growth of this strategic sector in the next 3 Five Year Plans. The investment costs are stupendously increasing. It is estimated that an investment of Rs. 1000 crores would be necessary to increase per capita production of steel in the country by merely 1 Kg.

These and several other problems faced by the steel industry in India were discussed at length by the Round Table on Steel Industry For the Next Decade on 18th and 19th February at Vigyan Bhawan New Delhi convened by the Union Minister of State for Steel Shri Natwar Singh. About 300 persons representing managements in public and private sector steel plants, technical experts, past and present senior officials of the Steel Ministry, suppliers of raw materials to the steel industry and management experts attended the Conference. The trade unions were represented by only 2 persons. Shri Natwar Singh was present throughout the round table while Shri Vasant Sathe was present till lunch break on both the days.

Shri Hiten Bhaya, Member of Planning Commission mentioned about the low purchasing power of the people of India which was keeping the demand for steel less. He raised a question whether we can have a bigger plan for steel so that pace of industrialisation could be quicker. He referred to the perpetual bickering and leg pulling between the Railway, Coal and Steel sectors and said it must come to an end. "If we cannot improve the present, we have no future", he said. In the end he pointed that without co-operation of T.U.s it was not possible to advance the industry.

Shri Natwar Singh, Minister of State for steel

suggested that we should be self critical about our performance so that we could take steps to improve it in the interest of making the country self-reliant.

Shri Vasant Sathe while inaugurating the Round Table said that when we talk of market of steel we consider only the 5 crores of people and not the entire population. He advocated that steel industry should not plan its growth on the basis of existing market but should try to further develop economy by providing instruments for gainful employment to rural people. He gave the example of China where the production of steel was less than India but it went up to 44 million tons in 1984. Emphasising the need for accountability in public sector he said the tenure of chief executives should be 5 years with the provision that if they do not perform well they should leave the assignment. He advocated establishment of Industrial Democracy in the country but argued that it would come through giving shares to the workers. He also wanted statutory provisions to establish one union in the industry.

The Round Table had six business sessions and technical papers were prepared by several experts in the field.

On the question of New Technologies for steel industry some of the experts advocated full scale modernisation and computerisation. They also asked for co-operation of trade unions in deployment of surplus manpower. Dr. N. Seshagiri, Additional Secretary Department of Electronics advocated Japanese type of sophisticated technology in Indian steel plants. Participating in the discussion, Com. M.K. Pandhe pointed out that Technology Policy in India declared by the Govt. of India noted as one of its objective to "provide the maximum gainful and satisfying employment to all strata of society". He observed that all the papers are ignoring this aspect of technological development. He criticised the Government for not providing funds for modernisation and expansion of Durgapur and Alloy Steel Plants as well as for modernisation of Burnpur Steel Plants.

Several speakers pressed for import of coking coal since Indian coal was having a large quantity of ash content. One of the paper stated, "Import of coking coal in systematic and planned manner is essential for techno-economic survival of our industry". However Shri R.N. Sharma former Chairman, Coal India Ltd pointed out that India can supply coke with 17 per cent ash content, as required by the steel plants. It was pointed out by some speakers that right type of coal was not supplied to coal washeries.

Shri K.T. Chandy former Chairman Hindusthan Steel Ltd. in his paper asserted, "The steel plants in the public sector never had any control over coal-

mines, and whatever control they had over the washeries has also been taken away. This is an unfortunate development, more so as coking coal is meant only for the steel industry”.

Shri K.R. Sangameshwaran, Managing Director, Bhilai Steel Plant noted that 70 per cent of the Steel was in the Government sector. “Consequently, their off-take has been governed by the funds made available to them rather than the demands projections putting considerable strains on main producers in framing a realistic production market plan”. He further pointed out that steel was imported at prices cheaper than the domestic prices during the recession which led to a build up of huge unsold stock to the tune of 1.45 million tons in 1983.

During the course of discussion several cases of misuse of open General License (OGL) and import through canalising agency were brought to light. Malpractices in supply of steel to bogus Re-rolling mills or mini steel plants were also noted. It was also noted by some speakers that SAIL management in its anxiety to achieve target of production ignored the aspect of marketability of the produced items.

Speaking on the industrial relations in steel industry Com. M.K. Pandhe mentioned that the bipartite functioning in the industry was 15 years old and the time had come to review its performance and making it more meaningful. He further criticised the non-implementation of several clauses of the recent national agreement and noted that discontent was growing among the steel workers. The reckless use of contract labour by the steel management also came up for criticism. The question of bonus payment to the workers is evoking strong resentment due to ceiling of Rs. 1600 for entitlement of payment of bonus. Com. Pandhe demanded change in the industrial relations policies of the managements so that the grievances of the workers are settled without any delay. The productivity in industry was lower due to shortage of power, bad quality of coal and managerial inefficiency. However an attempt was being made to blame the workers for low producti-

vity. He pointed out that the so called participating forum at plant level were not functioning properly and a genuine worker's participation in management should be introduced in the steel industry. Disagreeing with the suggestion of Shri M.R.R. Nair, Director (Personnel) SAIL that a wage commission for all Public Sector should be constituted, Com. M.K. Pandhe stated that characteristics of negotiations in different plants were different and present system of industrywise wage negotiations should continue.

The Government of India is giving less emphasis on the development of Steel industry. With reduction in construction activity which consumes 43 per cent of the steel production, the demand for steel is not growing. The Round Table noted that the general development in the country would be affected if the steel industry failed to develop at a faster rate.

Jute Workers on Struggle

THE jute workers are on struggle again. Apart from non-implementation of the last year's tripartite agreement in full, the jute barons have resorted to lockouts, closures and lay offs and demanding cut in production by one day on the plea of shortage of raw jute or fibre.

In a statement issued to the press on February 18, Niren Ghosh, President and Md. Amin, the General Secretary of Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union (CITU) totally rejected the false plea of shortage of raw jute by the managements. They pointed out that for the maximum productions in all the mills, 72 lakh bales of raw jute are required. Another 3 lakh bales are required for village and sundry purposes. Against this as the maximum requirement, the production of raw jute in the year under review was 75 lakh bales and there was a carry over stock of 10 lakh bales. In addition to this, the government have imported 5 lakh bales. Thus, instead of shortage, there has been a surplus stock of 15 lakh bales of raw jute. The shortage has been artificially created by the few monopolists who have cornered the stock of raw jute to garner huge unaccounted profits. To sustain their plea, the managements have declared lockouts in several mills like Agarpara mills, Delta jute mill and kept others like Premchand, Naskapara, Northbrooke, Sri Gouri Shankar, Waverly, etc closed since long.

The BCMU has demanded of the Union Government to reject the plea of the barons to cut down one day's production; declare raw jute as essential commodity and dehoard the stock; monopoly procurement of raw jute by the govt. of India directly from the growers and opening of all the closed and locked out jute mills or take over of them pending nationalisation. In pursuance of these demands thousands of jute workers all over West Bengal launched huge demonstrations before the mill gates on February 7. BCMU in its meeting of the Central Executive Committee held on February 16, decided to step up the agitations till the demands are conceded.

Submission of Annual Returns for 1984

* All CITU unions are requested to submit their Annual Returns for 1984 to the Registrar of Trade Unions by April 30.

* Copies of the Annual Returns alongwith the affiliation fees and subscription for The Working Class should be sent to the CITU Centre. A copy of the Annual Returns should also be sent to the respective State Committees.

* Those unions which have not yet submitted Annual Returns for 1983 should submit the same immediately with copies to the CITU Centre and State Committees.

* These unions which have not yet paid their affiliation fees for 1983, should remit the same without delay.

* All unions must specifically mention their affiliation to CITU and their full address in the Annual Returns.

Working Women must be Protected

NRISINGHA CHAKRABARTY, Secretary, CITU, has issued the following Statement on February 20:

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions is shocked by the report in the press that two drunk businessmen of Bhubaneswar trespassed into the Working Women's Hostel, and misbehaved with the residents on 17th February, 1985. It is even more shocking that some officials of the State Social Welfare Board and the Hostel authorities are trying to hush up the matter, in collusion with the police. Previously also, an MLA trespassed into the Hostel several times but no action was taken against him by the authorities or police. If true, the incident coming at the end of the "Women's Decade" would put the whole country to shame.

The CITU strongly condemns this attitude of the authorities, who while ostensibly being committed to provide safe shelter for working women, in fact expose them to the nefarious designs of influential unscrupulous men.

The CITU demands an immediate enquiry into the incident and the security set up of the hostel. Sternest action must be taken against the trespassing industrialists, erring officials of the state Social Welfare Board and hostel authorities, and the police.

Furthermore, the residents of the hostel must be given full protection so that they may not be subjected to any such harassment in future.

St. Stephen's College Incident Condemned

VIMAL RANADIVE, Vice-President of All India Democratic Women's Association and Secretary of the All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women has issued the following statement on February 2, on the ugly incident which occurred at St. Stephen's College, Delhi:

The All India Democratic Women's Association and the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women strongly condemn the recent ugly and indecent incident that took place in the St. Stephen's College. No words are enough to condemn such unruly behaviour, outraging the modesty of the girl students in the college. It seems, such incidents were taking place since many days without a check from the education authorities, even from the Principal of college, who encouraged those students to indulge in such anti-social acts as per the press reports. Those brave girls who came forward in protest of

this were also threatened by the very students and were not given hearing from the Principal. The press reporters were also threatened and physically prevented to enter the premises by the rowdies. The students' unions of the colleges have to play a big role in checking such dirty incidents which lower the dignity of men and women in our country. It is unfortunate that such incidents should take place in the women's decade when the position of a woman should be morally, economically and socially held higher.

We demand of the Government that the guilty students should be brought to book by the authorities and they apologise to the girl students. We also demand that such sad episodes should be stopped forthwith by the Education authorities.

Medical Representatives to go on Strike

IN an emergent meeting of the working committee held at New Delhi on February 6 and 7, the Federation of Medical and Sales Representatives Associations of India (FMRAI) reiterated its earlier decision taken at Trivandrum in January to go on one day's strike on March 25. In a resolution unanimously adopted, the meeting noted with grave concern the attitude of the employers in the drug industry as well as of the Govt. of India towards the trade union rights of the medical and sales representatives and the rampant victimisations inflicted on them. As a policy to curb down the trade union activities of the medical representatives, the employers' associations headed by the multinationals' organisation, viz, Organisation of the Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI) are resorting to victimisations on them without observing the principles of natural justice. Large number of the employees have been victimised during the recent past for pursuing their legitimate trade union activities. The most notorious actions have been taken in this respect by M/s Raptakos Brett which dismissed 134 medical representatives who were pursuing the demand for a negotiated settlement of their charter of demands submitted by FMRAI. Not content with it, the management formed a scab union to break their solidarity under FMRAI. Similarly, M/s Indo Pharma closed down their marketing division without any valid reason and dismissed all the 154 medical representatives of the company. Similar actions have been taken by M/s Anglo French Drug Company, where the workers have launched an indefinite strike.

Repeated representations made to the government as well as continuous struggles including strike actions by the employees failed to evoke any response from the Union Ministry of Labour. In this background, FMRAI was left with no other alternative than to call for the countrywide strike action on March 25. The All India Chemical and Pharmaceutical Employees Federation has supported the strikers and called for solidarity actions on the day.

Public Sector D.A. Question remains Unresolved

ONCE again the tripartite meeting on DA for public sector undertakings held on 6th February, 1985 failed to take any decision due to the dilatory tactics adopted by the Government of India. Though the new Minister of Finance, V.P. Singh agreed to meet the trade union representatives the meeting could not materialise since he was literally gheraoed by the Assembly ticket seekers from U.P. just in front of his own office. Meanwhile, the Chairman of the Committee had been changed due to the change of the Labour Minister. T. Anjaiah the new Labour Minister who presided over the meeting stated that the issue could be resolved only after the Assembly elections. The Director General of the BPE clarified that the earlier offer of payment of Rs. 1.50 as DA per point of rise in index cannot be changed unless it is agreed to by the Union Finance Minister.

M.K. Pandhe pointed out that since the formation of the committee the price index went up by about 100 points which only showed the seriousness of the problem. The workers were getting agitated over the delay and further delay on the plea of elections would only evoke movement of the public sector workers, he observed. The workers' representatives demanded that the issue should be resolved on the basis of their proposal of payment at the rate of Rs. 1.75 per point of increase in price index. The Labour Minister expressed regret at the delay and stated that the next meeting would be convened in the month of March after the elections so that the issues could be resolved finally in that meeting.

FORM IV

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I, M.K. Pandhe, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Sd/-

Dated: February 28, 1985. M.K. Pandhe, Publisher.

Foreign T.U. Delegates Visit CITU Office

Cai Shixiong, Member of Presidium of All China Federation of Trade Unions; Zhang Cunen, Deputy Director, Labour Protection Deptt., ACFTU and Qulin, interpreter visited the Central Office of CITU on February 4.

Paul Gergele, Secretary, TUI of Oils, Chemicals and Allied Industries (ICPS) visited CITU Office on February 2.

Mohd. Habibur Rahman, General Secretary, Jatio Shramik League, Bangladesh Visited CITU office on February 8.

A delegation of Korean Trade Unions (DPRK) visited CITU office on February 6.

The delegates had hearty exchange of views with the leadership of CITU to strengthen their fraternal bonds with CITU.

ACFTU Greets CITU

ACFTU has sent the following telegramme to CITU on return after attending the International Symposium on Safety at Delhi:

February 19, 1985

Centre of Indian Trade Unions
New Delhi

After attending International Symposium and visiting your country the Chinese Trade Union Delegation returned to Beijing safely. Sincerely thank your union and Indian workers for their warm and friendly reception accorded to the delegation. Wish further development of the friendly relation between Chinese Trade Unions and Centre of Indian Trade Unions.

All China Federation of Trade Unions.

Reply by CITU

20th February, 1985

The Secretary
All China Federation of Trade Unions, Beijing

Dear Comrade,

We are happy to learn from your telegram dated 19th Feb '85 about the safe return of the Chinese Trade Union delegation. Our organisation, in extending reception to the delegation, has merely discharged its duty of international Working Class brother hood and has demonstrated the friendly feelings of the Working Class and people of India.

We firmly believe that the bonds of friendship between our two organisations would be strengthened every passing day.

With greetings, yours fraternally,

Nrisingha Chakrabarty
Secretary

TU's Pre-Budget Discussions with Finance Minister

THE Finance Minister called a meeting of the Central Trade Union leaders on February 13 for a pre-budget discussion as since the past 2-3-years. Nrisingha Chakrabarty attended the meeting on behalf of CITU. Speaking on behalf of AITUC, Indrajit Gupta covered various problems concerning labour. One of the points mentioned by him was that D.A. should not be subjected to income tax. G. Ramanujam of INTUC stated that in many undertakings D.A. has been fully merged. Hence, either the limit should be raised or wage and salary earners should be exempted from income tax. The latter suggestion was supported by all others. S.R. Kulkarni of H.M.S. suggested that there should be no income tax on the wages earned on piece rate. Nrisingha Chakrabarty participating in the discussions raised several points which were later on the day submitted to the Finance Minister in a note on behalf of CITU as follows:

Note Submitted by CITU

1. In keeping with the aspirations of the poor people the first attempt which has to be made through this budget is to reduce the indirect taxes and deficit financing, so that working people could get some relief as this would contribute to stabilisation if not reduction of the price and containing inflation provided the Government does not resort to increasing the administered prices.

2. For the past few years the balance of payment position being bad, there had been a drive towards export through various concessions in respect of taxes etc. and even by granting subsidies. Such steps virtually result in either devaluation of Indian currency or purchase of U.S. dollars at more than black market prices. This should be stopped immediately. In order to facilitate more export, attempts are being made to make the goods competitive by reducing the wages and increasing workload on the workers, particularly in free trade zones. The authorities resorted to repression whenever the workers expressed their resentment. For example a teen aged worker was shot down in the Kandla free trade zone. There should not be any recurrence of repression of this nature.

3. Today the question of job security of the workers has become a burning concern for all workers due to growing incidence of industrial sickness. The data compiled by Reserve Bank shows that 98 per cent of the sickness is due to factors over which the labour had not control. Even in 2 per cent of cases in which industrial disputes are the main cause, the recalcitrant attitude of the managements and their refusal to concede the just demands of the workers was more to blame. Hence, the policy of not taking over and de-notification which was started in the last two years have to be revised.

4. The question of exempting all wage earners i.e. workmen and the salaried employees from payment of income tax should be considered. They are

at a disadvantage because, their income tax is realised at the source by compulsory deduction by the management whereas the non-wage earners are pampered by asking them to declare their income, thereby giving them opportunity to evade taxes and create black money.

5. The Bureau of Public Enterprises which is creating tension in the public sector undertakings through interference, must go. Equally the ceiling on D.A. or wage must also be taken out. The rise in the quantum in the D.A. in Public Sector Undertakings which is hanging fire for over two years must be decided immediately.

6. There are 67 public Sector Undertakings in which the workers though on Central rates of D.A. and Pay Scales are being denied Interim Relief and the D.A. increases when they are being granted by the Central Government to its employees. On the other hand when these are switched over to Industrial DA, the workers are being denied Minimum Industrial Wage as applicable to their contemporary Public Sector Undertakings. Thus a hiatus in wages is being created in the Public Sector Industries. It is therefore desired that the wages in the Public Sector Undertakings should be more or less uniform. We are opposed to lesser wages for the workers of sick units, management of which has been taken over as they add same value as in the other units. The Relief Undertaking Act should therefore be reviewed. The principle of cent per cent neutralisation of the rise in prices by grant of adequate D.A. should be considered.

7. A meeting for consideration of ills of the Public Sector Undertakings which was proposed by the trade unions as far back as in 1983 has not been held so far. It must be done early so that the ills of the Public Sector Undertakings can be tackled properly.

8. The worker's participation in management is now a must if the industry has to prosper by increasing productivity and competing with others. Unless the workers are treated as equal partners in the scheme of management this cannot happen. Suitable changes should be made in the present scheme.

9. The Bonus Act should be amended making it applicable for all wage earners, leaving the ceiling of Rs. 1600/- and the notional amount of 750/-. Full bonus should be granted to all wage and salary earners. The 20 per cent limit on bonus should also go.

10. The public distribution system should be strengthened and items of daily necessity must be made available at fixed price throughout the country.

11. The working of MRTP Act has to be reviewed. This has already been raised by CITU in its memorandum to the Committee on Controls.

12. A scheme of employment generation and granting relief to the unemployed of the country should be introduced.

13. Housing Scheme should be tackled on war footing.

delegates to build up impregnable unity among the workers and fight the vacillations of the government and build up unremitting struggles against imperialism. Among others who greeted the conference were R.N. Manazhi, President, Kerala Govt. Teachers Association and S.S. Potty, Vice President of AIIEA.

The Conference adopted resolutions condemning the government's move for computerisation and decided to observe a protest day in the third week of February. Resolutions were also adopted condemning the government's decision to ban recruitment; demanding immediate submission of report by the 4th Pay Commission; grant of second instalment of interim relief; minimum statutory bonus; regularisation of ED, casual and RTP employees; on the special demands of the women employees, etc. The conference also demanded resolution of the demands of the State Government Employees and reinstatement of the union leaders of the State Electricity Board. The Conference re-elected P. Balakrishnan as the General Secretary. In the evening a big procession was taken out which culminated in a public meeting addressed among others by Mathew Kurien.

ASSAM

Conference of Dibrugarh District CITU

The first conference of Dibrugarh District CITU was held at Tinsukia on February 16 and 17. The Conference was addressed by Santi Ghatak, Minister of State for Labour, Govt. of West Bengal. 150 delegates representing about 6,500 members attended the Conference. The unions represented were from plantations, oil, fertilizer plywood and other industries. Majority of the delegates were young cadres. The delegates participating in the discussion narrated their experience of struggle and organising the CITU unions in the face of unprecedented attacks by the secessionist forces as also the government machinery. Their militancy and determination to unify the trade union movement demonstrated the development of CITU in the district. A mass meeting was held on 17th. Such a mass meeting could be organised at length after several years of intense struggle against the disrupting forces. Quite a good number of women also attended the mass meeting. Among those who addressed the meeting were Santi Ghatak and Amal Ghosh Dastidar, General Secretary of the State CITU.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Convention on National Integrity

The J & K Trade Union Council in conjunction with the Central and State Government employees and the Employees Union of the Public Sector Undertakings organised a successful convention on National Integrity and Communal Harmony at Abhinab Theatre, Jammu, on February 10. The convention was addressed by B.T. Ranadive, President CITU. Others who addressed the convention were N.K. Jalali of AITUC, Sampat Prakash of Low Paid Employee's Federation, S.D. Sharma of

the Bank Employees, Habibullah of LPEF, K.K. Bakshi of the Insurance Employees, etc. Parminder Singh presided over the convention.

Addressing the convention, B.T. Ranadive said that in the background of the Assam and Punjab problem and the imperialist conspiracies, the issue of national unity and integrity have become serious, which the bourgeois-landlord government was unable to solve because of its policies. He asserted that the alienation of the sikh masses could have been averted had the government accepted the proposals of the opposition parties. He pointed out that the murder of the Prime Minister was an act of imperialist conspiracies, but the manifestoes of the bourgeois opposition parties were blind to this fact. He urged upon the trade unions to unite and hold the reins of responsibility to fight all sorts of divisive forces — secessionism, communalism, casteism, and mobilise public opinion to expose the role of imperialism and fight against the government policies to consolidate the unity and integrity of the country and carry forward their struggles against unemployment, price rise and attack on trade union and democratic rights.

The convention unanimously adopted a resolution on the issue warning the workers of Jammu and Kashmir that without an unrelenting struggle against the divisive forces they would neither be able to defend the unity and integrity of the country, nor would be able to realise their immediate and long term demands.

PUNJAB

Meetings, Conventions

A meeting of the working Committee of Sanhati Mazdoor Union (CITU) was held at Amritsar on February 14, presided over by Jagat Ram Dutt. The meeting discussed about the frequent power cuts which prompted the employers to resort to indiscriminate closures and retrenchments. It adopted resolution against the power cuts and decided to launch movements uniting all the trade unions against closures, retrenchments and lay-offs. Resolutions were also adopted on the retrograde amendments of the ESI Act and against the unilateral action of the monopolists to increase the prices of cotton yarn. The meeting also took several organizational decisions like taking initiative to broaden trade union unity against the divisive forces, formation of a united trade union council, holding frequent area meetings and increasing the circulation of the CITU Journals.

The Ajanta unit of Punjab Bhatta Mazdoor Union (CITU) organised a convention at Amritsar on February 15, which was presided over by Joginder Singh. The Convention stressed the urgent need to unite the working class, peasantry, the agricultural workers, the unorganised workers and all other sections of employees to fight the divisive forces and to maintain the unity and integrity of the country. It also discussed the demands of the Kiln workers, 500 of whom attended the convention and extended support to their struggle.

Modernisers of Violence, Exploiters of Progress

(We are printing below an article by L. Yelin published in New Times, January 1985 issue which lays bare the conspiracy hatched against the militant trade union movement in Great Britain. The Coal miners who are on struggle for about a year are not only fighting for their jobs but virtually fighting for survival of the trade union movement. —Ed.)

“THE great scholar and revolutionary of modern times. V.I. Lenin foretold that no development of the productive forces under imperialism could guarantee the working class a better future without a struggle for it. Of particular interest today, when the united forces of imperialism have launched an offensive against the position of the international working class, is Lenin’s warning to all workers that capital devours you, will devour everyone and go on devouring’ if it meets no opposition.” Just as topical is his appeal to the proletarian vanguard: “The job of the Marxists is to expose (it) to the workers. If it devours, say the Marxists, if it strangles, fight back”.

“War Cabinet” Against Miners

“As the miners’ strike drags on, Britain’s mood darkens”, writes the American weekly magazine Time. To be more precise, the mood of the Tories. The confrontation between Margaret Thatcher’s Cabinet and the National Coal Board (NCB) on the one hand and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) on the other, has now been dragging on for over ten months. Power stations, railways and other fuel consumers have received 77 million tons of coal less than normal. “The Thatcher government should understand”, says the Financial Times, “that there can be no sudden collapse of this strike”. Neither does the resident of 10 Downing Street intend to throw in the towel. However, memories of 1974, when a strike cost Edward Heath, the then leader of the Conservative, his job as Prime Minister, are still fresh.

“If we have to, we’ll eat grass.”—A Yorkshire miner.

Skeleton in the Cupboard

According to an English saying, a “skeleton,” i.e., a closely kept secret, should be kept in a cupboard. The Tories have had bad luck. Their “skeleton” couldn’t keep on sitting in its cupboard, and in 1978, when the Conservatives were getting ready for the elections, it found its way on to the page of the Economist, in the form of the text of the final report by a working group of the Conservative Party. The group had been instructed to draw up Tory policy on nationalized industry. The authors of the report

deliberated on how best to bring to their knees the trade unions, which as the Tories knew well, would either demand higher pay or protest over mass layoffs. Experts, headed by a Rightwing member of the party, Nicholas Ridley, recommended a decisive battle, ...on a battlefield of the Conservatives’ own choice; they even remembering 1974, named the most probable Waterloo: the coal-mining industry. To ensure victory, said the report, it would be necessary to build up coal stocks to a maximum to provide for the possibility of additional coal imports as well as for its replacement (by all), to isolate the strikers from all financial sources; to have ready large mobile police detachments.

In 1978 the exposure of this report brought the Conservatives no end of unpleasantness. So in 1984, when the “skeleton” again appeared before the public this time through the Financial Times the rattling of its bones threw the Tory camp into a panic. A most inopportune occurrence, at the height of the strike. The entire anatomy of the government’s conspiracy against the trade union movement was bared. It became clear that the miners’ strike, on which the Cabinet had taken — as it declared — a “neutral” position, was provoked by Whitehall itself. One purpose was to curtail the coalmining industry, leaving merely the most profitable collieries, and then, presumably, to turn them over to private business. But the primary aim was to bring the most militant part of the British working class to its knees, to weaken and break up the workers’ movement.

The time and “battlefield” were chosen and prepared precisely in accordance with the 1978 plan. Two anti-union laws were pushed through Parliament before the decisive attack. The Tories succeeded in defeating the printworkers’ union (1984), and in imposing a ban of trade union membership for employees of the Government Communications Headquarters in Cheltenham (1984). The miners, who in 1981 and 1982 had succeeded in thwarting plans to cut production, were also compelled to retreat, and in 1983 the government even sacked several thousands of them.

So you can see that the Tories had the strategic initiative on their side. And the economic situation as well. The government took care not only to create a fuel reserve, but also to ensure the presence of a Tory representative in the conflict. Ian MacGregor, an American businessman of Scottish origin, was appointed NCB Chairman. This was an extremely clear signal: preparations were under way for a British version of the American air-traffic controllers’ incident. MacGregor began his career in the U.S. by suppressing a strike at a

mine belonging to the Amax company. In Britain, within three years, he cut the number of jobs in the steel industry by half. Therefore, as the Economist quite justifiably noted, when Mrs. Thatcher "appointed Mr. Ian MacGregor to be Coal Board Chairman a year ago, it was with a mandate to close pits... "Mac the Knife", as the American was dubbed by the workers, immediately announced his intention of closing 20 collieries (out of 174) and sacking 20,000 miners. This was in contravention of the Plan for Coal signed in 1974 by the miners' union, the NCB and the government, and confirmed in 1981. Furthermore, the NUM leadership learned that the Conservatives intended to retain only 100 mines and to discharge not 20,000, but 70,000 to 80,000 people. In this situation a retreat by the miners would mean placing their heads on the chopping block of "rationalization." Conflict was inevitable and Whitehall, the director of NCB activities, was fully aware of this.

The first to go on strike were the miners of Yorkshire and Scotland, the chief coal mining areas of the country. They were followed by Durham and Rent. On March 12 (the day considered to be the official date of the beginning of the strike) over 1,000,000 people were out on strike. By the end of the month of 90 per cent of all pits were not operating, and had pickets at their gates.

"Real Merits" and Crude Brutalities

London's City had no doubts as to who would win. The economist, looking ahead to the post-victory future, didactically admonished: the miners union, as well as the entire trade union movement, must understand "the real merits buried inside what both (the trade union movement and the Labour Party) see as the crude brutalities of Thatcherism." Meanwhile large police detachments from 43 districts were swiftly and deftly (the 1978 plan) transferred to the strike areas, while Scotland Yard founded, on a "volunteer" basis, a national centre for coordinating police action.

The clashes with the miners soon became fierce. Some time was still to pass before Margaret Thatcher would compare her fight against the strikers with the Falklands war. But the order to "draw swords" had already been given.

"A senior police officer later said that some of the Policemen behaved like Nazi stormtroopers"—From an article by a correspondent for Le Matin (France)

May: The small town of Orgreava, near Sheffield: Seven thousand miners tried to stop a lorry transporting coking coal for the iron and steel works in Scunthorpe. The Guardian said that the events resembled in 18th century painting depicting a battlefield just before the battle. Mounted police were drawn up on one side, while foot police blocked the main highway. "Police dogs tugged at their leashes on the other side", says the Observer: "...Mounted police charged the pickets at a gallop, hunting them

through the fields of corn...the police...used a pincer movement mounted men... The miners caught by the charge could escape only by risking the challenge of police dogs...." Sixty four miners were hurt, 82 were arrested, including Arthur Scargill, the miners' leader. The next day he said that what took place in Orgreave was similar to events that occur in Chile.

Again in May the police broke up a miners' rally in Mansfield (Nottinghamshire). One of the miners later told how a truncheon was slipped under his chin and then slowly twisted to press against his nose and eyebrows and then used as a lever to bend his head backward and sideways. After that his head was pressed to the ground with the truncheon and the policemen began to jump up and down on his back. He was in such pain that he understood nothing. Later he could only remember that he had kept on thinking: how carefully all this had been worked out!

June: "Skeletons" went on falling out of Tory cupboard. If the clubs cudgelling the heads of the miners had not yet made it clear to the man in the street who was responsible for these savage reprisals, it was done by the scandalous, revelations in the Daily Mirror, which published several confidential instructions issued by the Prime Minister's office. It became clear that the Government was taking active steps to isolate the miners. For example, the Secretary of State for Transport was instructed to make concessions to the National Union of Railwaymen, so that the latter would not join the miners. David Steel, leader of the Liberal Party, stated that Mrs. Thatcher had personally misled the House of Commons. He meant the Prime Minister's assurances that the government would not interfere in the conflict.

The railwaymen, however, did come out in support of the strikers refusing to deliver fuel to two leading steel works in the North of Scotland and in South Wales.

A new Orgreave flared up at the walls of Westminster when mounted police attacked a miners' protest march. The wounded demonstrators were taken to hospital directly from the "cradle of democracy".

The negotiations, begun on May 31 between the NCB and the miners, were broken off on June 13 when the Board, which at first had seemed ready for a compromise, retreated to its initial position that 20 pits were to be closed down and 20,000 people laid off. It is this decision that the miners' union is insisting must be withdrawn.

The Economist reported that during the last weekend of June a "propaganda blitz" was launched against the miners. Thousands of strikers received letters of the "Return and all shall be forgotten", type, signed by Mac the Knife.

To Fight Means to Fight

July: Whitehall suddenly started to develop an acute feeling that the Tories "begun and win" system was fraught with severe material sacrifices. Against the background of the miner's strike the dockers came out, too. By the middle of the month 50 British ports were paralyzed. A 24 hour strike was declared by the railwaymen of Manchester. On July 15 Reuters reported: "Last Week brought a deluge of problems for Thatcher, as the docks closed, sterling fell, the stock market trembled and rumours flourished of a growing party rebellion against her." The Observer cautiously noted that there was "undoubtedly a growing sense of unease at the government's power either to control or respond to events."

"There comes a time when you have no alternative but to fight." — Arthur Scargill, President of the National Union of Mine Workers.

Such talk was last heard when the British destroyer Sheffield was stuck by an Argentine missile. Well, so it's to be another Falklands. To fight means to fight. To find "a way out" Thatcher formed a special committee made up of all her senior Cabinet Ministers. Analogies suggested themselves and the newspapermen announced, as one man, the formation of a new Thatcher "War Cabinet. The Secretary of State for Defence, Micheal Heseltine took part in the discussions. The Prime Minister threatened to declare martial law.

August: When the signal for a new attack was given by Whitehall the British moneybags were all ready. Threats against the leaders of the miners began to be made. They were attacked and beaten up in dark side streets. In the mining villages the families of the strikers were more and more frequently assaulted. A bomb exploded at the door of the home of a Labour M.P. who had repeatedly made public statements in support of the miners. Who was responsible for this? Hoodlums, gangsters? Not at all — they were "true patriots." The services of these thugs, reported the Financial Times, were paid for from the safes of Big Business.

The miners did not have enough food, but the strike went on. By now more than 140,000 people had joined it.

The dockers came out on strike again. By August 31 four fifths of the workers in 35 British ports were refusing to unload imported coal. Meanwhile, at one of the mines in the country of Durham, hundreds of policemen tried to cut a path through the picket lines for one sole scab.

But August was not just a month of clashes at mine entrances and blows in the back. August became the month of "white wigs." In the wake of the police dogs, British justice was unleashed against the strikers. "It took a long time, but the British miners' strike this week moved into an arena where

it surely cannot just drag endlessly on—the 'courts'," rejected the Economist: Invoking the anti-union laws, the owners of two transport agencies in South Wales brought a case against the strikers. The strikers you see, do not let the agency lorries through (these lorries had run down the picketlines at full speed). The court rules that the picketing must stop. The miners did not submit to this ruling. A £ 50,000 fine was imposed on them for "contempt of court." The refusal to pay the fine led to a court decision to sequestrate the funds of the local trade union. "...The drip of contempt judgments could drain the miners' funds more quickly than they may now appreciate," gloated the Economist.

"Still, Whitehall thought ever more frequently about a carrot", for, said the paper the Miner, "General Winter" is ahead. On August 19th Observer wrote of a new government campaign for reconciliation.

September: Margaret Thatcher cancelled her trip to Southeast Asia — too much to do at home. The whole situation, complained the Prime Minister to a correspondent of the Financial Times, was "like treading on eggshells." She was still convinced at least so she assured the British people — that the conflict would "be resolved in the end by more and more people returning voluntarily to work", meaning that the scabs would outnumber the strikers.

At a mine in North Yorkshire police carved a path for two scabs. Ten pickets ended up in hospital.

Mrs. Tatcher denied the possibility of concessions: the longer the strike went on, the more layoffs there would be. She threatened other working class groups who supported the miners. Two weeks before this the yearly conference of the British Trade Union Congress, on behalf of its 10 million members, expressed complete solidarity with the strikers.

The Tories Hit Below the Belt

October: Having considered the action brought by two strike breakers, the High Court in London declared the strike in the Yorkshire and Derbyshire coal fields to be "unlawful", although it was organised in full agreement with the trade union statutes. On October 10 the NUM was fined £ 2000,00 and Arthur Scargill £ 1,000 personally.

While the judges dealt with the miners in the courts, the Tories were reading out the sentence in Brighton, where they were holding their conference. The Home Secretary Leon Brittan announced a new package of anti-labour measures.

The verdicts of the court and the conference were immediately accepted by the police, the Coal Board and Big Business as a guide to action. Miners in Derbyshire were beaten up by Bobbies. Twenty were hurt. The NCB broke up the second round of

talks with the NUM, demanding unconditional capitulation.

Big Business-financed thugs set fire to a miners' canteen in the small town of Creswell. The customs authorities joined the "Miners' Falklands" fight and decided to sink their Belgrano by blocking the way for the delivery of 30 tons of condensed milk and baby food sent to the strikers by their colleagues from the USSR., Czechoslovakia, the GDR., Bulgaria, Denmark and Sweden.

November: London announced a cut in benefits to strikers' families. At the same time the Coal Board spread a "Magic Tablecloth" before long-suffering workers: those who returned to their jobs before November 19 would receive up to £1,400 compensation and a wage rise. As Arthur Scargill commented, "the government intended to slip the miners a bribe from the funds that were rightly theirs any way."

Margaret Thatcher publicly called the strikers "internal enemies of democracy." As November drew to a close a court decision deprived the NUM of the right to control its own funds.

December: At the beginning of the month an emergency conference of delegates from the local organizations of the miners' union was held. The question on the agenda was whether or not to continue the strike now that the trade union cash-box had been confiscated. The decision of the conference: "there shall be no retreat." Practically all the British trade unions gave the miners financial aid.

The Tories delivered another blow under the belt: all donations must go through a law firm. The significance of this act is clear: to install a valve into a pipe to shut off the flow.

Notwithstanding pressure, lavish promises and the propaganda campaign launched by London and the NCB only 16,000 miners returned to the pits in November and December of 1984.

The strikers live from hand to mouth. "One miner," said Time, "has prepared his children for a bleak holiday ahead by telling them Father Christmas is dead." So they shouldn't expect any gifts.

Not long before Christmas two school boys, Durrell (14) and Paul Holmes (15) were killed picking up coal in an old dump (the NCB had abolished the age-old tradition of permitting miners to take home coal directly from the coal-face). Holmes brothers were not the first victims. On the picket line a miner had been run down and crushed by a strike breakers' lorry and another one had

been killed in "uncertain circumstances." There are ample grounds for assuming that several deaths could be attributed to the NCB hirelings.

January: The miners have held out for almost ten months now. On January 6 Ian Mac Gregor went on television to say that he hoped that the strike would end before its first anniversary in March. The words of the NCB Chairman convey a slightly hysterical undertone. He is aware that many in the City are in doubt whether Mac the knife is sharp enough for the British miners.

Under pressure from London the NCB still refuses to enter into a new round of negotiations, as has been proposed by the NUM. The authorities continue their threats: if the strike continues until the end of 1985 then 50,000 people may be without jobs.

Let us Summarize

Since the conflict in the coal-mining industry started over 7,000 people have been arrested (an average 30 people per day), 400 people have been imprisoned. "No statistics on the wounded are kept any longer," said a spokesman for the British national centre for the co-ordination of police actions, since "there are too many of them." According to the National Union of Mineworkers, the overwhelming majority of miners are still on strike. In South Wales only 1 per cent of the miners have returned to the pits.

The desire to crush the trade union has cost London almost £5,000 million, which is two and a half times more than the cost of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) war. Big Business and the government it chooses are ready to make even greater sacrifices in order to defeat their chief "internal" enemy—the working class. However, the authorities have not succeeded in swiftly crushing the miner's union. A split has appeared in the National Coal Board, which acts under the direction of Whitehall. Friction has developed in the Tory Cabinet itself, too. It would seem that the "Miner's Falklands" has hit back at those who planned the "battle".

Editorial Board

P. Ramamurti (*Chairman*)

Manoranjan Roy, Niren Ghosh,
M.M. Lawrence, P.K. Ganguly

M.K. Pandhe

Solidarity with the British Coal Miners

(We are printing below the Circular No. 6/85 of February 13, issued by B.T. Ranadive, President, CITU to all State Committees and Federations to demonstrate solidarity and raise contributions for the British coalminers' struggle.)

Dear Comrades,

On March 12 next the British Coal Miners would complete the first year of their struggle. We have been watching with admiration the heroic struggle that was being conducted by them under the leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers for the past one year against the closing down of several mines by British Coal Board which would take away jobs of 20,000 workers. The struggle is all the more heroic in that despite serious privations the workers have refused to accept the offer of 1400 pounds sterling for giving up the struggle and joining duties. It is understood that the Thatcher Govt. is also refusing to allow the British Coal Board to negotiate a settlement. Hence a situation has so arisen when this authoritarian measure of the

Thatcher Govt. should be condemned and all workers should express their solidarity with the struggling coal-miners.

So long there had been spontaneous solidarity support from various unions of our country. A time has come when we must organise a solidarity campaign among the workers and raise some contributions for sending the same immediately to the fighting coalminers.

I therefore appeal to all affiliated unions to send their contributions to the CITU Central Office for sending the same to the NUM. Considering the fact that the struggle is now one year old, the Unions should send their contributions as early as possible. I request the State Committees of CITU and all Federations to organise remittance.

With Greetings,

Yours fraternally,
B.T. Ranadive
President

Consumer Price Index Numbers

Base 1960

State/Centre	Sept. 1984	Oct. 1984	Nov. 1984								
				Bangalore	647	650	649	Coonoor	638	648	650
				Chikamagalur	587	594	598	Madurai	612	625	639
				Kolar G.F.	604	601	604	U.P.			
Andhra Pradesh				Kerala				Kanpur	559	569	574
Gudur	520	525	540	Alleppey	679	665	676	Saharanpur	579	582	587
Guntur	647	653	648	Alwaye	640	633	638	Varanasi	667	672	677
Hyderabad	604	614	612	Mundakayam	595	582	589	West Bengal			
Assam				Madhya Pradesh				Asansol	580	583	590
Digboi	595	594	588	Balaghat	601	612	615	Calcutta	592	602	599
Doom Dooma	481	490	485	Bhopal	630	624	629	Darjeeling	484	487	501
Labac	473	457	447	Gwalior	597	594	593	Howrah	542	555	549
Mariani	510	511	517	Indore	608	605	609	Jalpaiguri	486	489	498
Rangapara	525	536	535	Maharashtra				Raniganj	523	521	530
Bihar				Bombay	609	615	618	Delhi Territory	608	608	605
Jamshedpur	538	538	542	Nagpur	605	606	614	Other Centres			
Jharia	523	525	536	Sholapur	620	622	623	Berhampur ('49)	825	823	901
Kodarma	597	598	595	Orissa				Cuttack ('49)	758	769	765
Monghyr	604	587	593	Barbil	542	553	552	Jabalpur ('49)	764	773	781
Noamundi	543	542	528	Sambalpur	622	606	608	Beawar ('51-52)	676	671	670
Gujarat				Punjab				Tripura ('61)	531	534	521
Ahmedabad	575	579	580	Amritsar	578	591	588	H.P. ('65)	422	425	425
Bhavanagar	588	590	588	Rajasthan				Goa ('66)	432	431	436
Haryana				Ajmer	577	586	584	Bhilai ('66)	394	394	399
Yamunanagar	581	584	585	Jaipur	608	608	607	Bhilwara ('66)	339	339	340
J. & K.				Tamil Nadu				Chhindwara ('66)	308	306	309
Srinagar	640	643	638	Madras	573	584	592	Kothagudem ('66)	378	383	395
Karnataka				Coimbatore	612	615	626	Rourkela ('66)	387	393	394
Ammathi	590	598	619					All India ('60)	589	592	595

(Figure in bracket indicate base year)

The Coal Advisory Committee Meets After Four Years

THE meeting of the Coal Advisory Council held in New Delhi on 15th February 1985 underlined the need for changing the policies of Coal India if India has to achieve self-reliance during the Seventh Plan period.

S.B. Lall, Secretary, Department Coal while reviewing the coal production in India in comparison with the revised target of 152 million tons of coal, said that the actual production during 1984-85 was likely to be only 147.5 million tons. Admitting that the quality of coal production has been deteriorating he noted that while increase in coal production during 1980-85 was 29.8 per cent higher, the calorific value energy produced in CIL mines was only 19 per cent higher.

The target of production at the end of the Seventh Plan is likely to be around 240 million tons with a total investment of Rs. 11,000 crores during this period.

Vasant Sathe, Union Minister of Steel, Mines and Coal admitted that several complaints had been received about bad quality of coal which included stone, shale and other extraneous materials. He called upon the Coal India that in no case the coal should be supplied to consumers with extraneous materials. Admitting that the meeting of the Coal Advisory Council was being held after a lapse of four years, he promised that in future the meetings would be held once in six months.

S. Das Gupta of the INTUC noted that the Coal India failed to fulfil even the reduced targets. Referring to the claim of the CIL Management that the mine level committees had been functioning, he said that one did not find much participation anywhere in the Coal Industry. He criticised the managements for violation of safety rules and non-implementation of the welfare provisions. He strongly objected to the CIL management engaging contract labour in prohibitory categories.

M.K. Pandhe pointed out that the CIL was deliberately supplying bad coal to consumers without removing extraneous matter as a matter of policy. He referred to the circular issued by Chairman CIL asking on coal mines to inflate production figures by 2.5 per cent. Criticising emphasis on mechanisation in the Seventh Plan he pointed out that it would lead to large scale retrenchment. He pointed out, the existing machinery remained unutilised, its maintenance was very bad and it failed to increase production sufficiently. He gave the example of China where a balance had been struck between modern technique and employment aspect.

He criticised the Government for its failure to stop the operation of mafla gangs who get patronage from the CIL management. The report of Kumar-

mangalam Committee on BCCL had not been implemented by the Government.

Castigating the CIL management for non-implementation of the NCWA III, Pandhe noted that the workers would submit Charter of Demands for a new settlement in 10 months. Housing, education, medical facilities, sanitation, provision of drinking water are by and large neglected in Coal mines. The anti-working class policies of CIL management and its Chairman was causing strong resentment among the coal workers.

S.K. Sanyal (AITUC), Jayanta Poddar (HMS) and T.S. Jumde (BMS) also criticised the policies pursued by the CIL management and called for a new orientation in their policies.

The representatives of industry criticised the bad quality of coal supplied to them and demanded that even if coal production was shown lower, we should maintain quality of coal. A suggestion was made that the price of coal should be linked with its Calorific Value.

Some speakers criticised the ecological balance disturbed by coal companies after starting of open cast coal mines. Thousands of trees were uprooted without planting new ones while the river water was polluted due the discharge of effluents of coal washeries.

Several speakers could not speak for want of time. The Minister agreed that in future the meeting would be held for two days so that sufficient discussion would take place on the issues involved.

In his concluding remarks the Minister assured that a small group would be constituted to go into several suggestions made in the meeting. He also agreed to meet the workers' representatives separately to discuss with them the present issues agitating in the minds of coal workers. He suggested that a meeting of the JBCCI should be convened at an early date to review the implementation of the agreement.

AUCCTU Accepts CITU's Invitation

In reply to CITU's invitation on January 9, AUCCTU has sent the following cable:

February 25, 1985

B.T. Ranadive
President, CITU
New Delhi

Dear Comrade Ranadive, we accept with thanks your kind invitation for Soviet Trade Union Delegation to visit India. Two member delegation intends to arrive Delhi second half of March. Delegates' names and positions advise in due course. Fraternally,

K. Matskyavichus AUCCTU Secretary

International Struggles

Argentina

In protest against the continuing deterioration in the economic situation, the trade unions in the country jointly organised a 14-hour strike and mass demonstration in the industrial city of Cordoba recently. The unions considered the IMF led by the USA as the root cause of the deepening crises and charged the Argentinian Government for failing to form an united front against the diktats of USA.

EL Salvador

Rising joint struggles by the trade unions in conjunction with the democratic forces have been the marked feature in El Salvador in 1984. 112 strikes were launched by the Salvadorean workers last year in pursuance of trade union and democratic demands and to improve their living and working conditions. Out of these 112 strikes, 72 occurred in public sector and 40 in private sector. The strikes in the banking and public highway sectors were particularly impressive. All these strikes were launched braving bloody repression by the armed forces, police and the death squadrons of the regime amounting to murder, torture, imprisonment and exile of leaders, union activists and workers.

Bangladesh

Braving ruthless repression by the military regime of Ershad the 15 and 7 party opposition alliance led by Sheikh Hasina and Khalida Zia are carrying forward the agitations demanding end to the military rule. Having compelled the military ruler to postpone the elections thrice, the opposition alliance being supported by the trade unions have decided to boycott the elections, now scheduled for April 6, unless the Martial Law is completely withdrawn and the election is conducted by a Care Taker Government. Simultaneously, 16 large trade union organisations in the country have formed a Solidarity Committee and demanded of the military government to halt the process of handing over the state enterprises to the private sector. Since 1982, when the present military Government took over, dozens of textile mills in the state sector have been given away to private hands. This has caused a sharp increase in the number of unemployed and fall in the workers' living standards. The Committee has warned the government of mass strike actions if the retrograde process is not halted.

France

1984 concluded in France with the growing attacks by the employers and rising struggles by the workers to protect their jobs and their living standards. The 1985 however dawned with the employers more organised to slash the living standards of the workers. The multinational, Ericsson has proposed a new wage system split in two categories: one part will be "guaranteed", but substantially less than that

required to keep pace with inflation and the other part will be granted according to merit. The CGT and CFDT have jointly called for industrial actions against this attempt demanding for guaranteed purchasing power. In the French coal mines also like in Britain, pit closures are in the air and redundancies are mounting up. The French National Coal Board has sought the help of an American Company, viz Metal Prudfout Engineering to "streamline and reorganise" production of coal in France. The notorious dealings of this company to enforce job cuts were successfully halted by the united actions of the workers of Alstom Atlantique. The CGT has called upon the coalminers to prevent the so-called experts of this U.S. Company from entering the pits as they are bent upon to dismantle the productions and resort to job cuts to the sole advantage of the U.S. industry.

Japan

The council for "Common Spring Struggles" comprising of the largest trade union centres in Japan has called upon the workers to step up actions to defend their trade union rights and interests, for peace and against the Government's anti-people economic policies. The first meeting of the council held this year reiterated its decision to carry forward the united trade union struggles to obtain wage and pension rises, tax cuts and shorter working week.

South Africa

The agitations in South Africa against the apartheid regime is reaching its peak. The present upsurge has to be viewed in the context of the decades of struggle by the blacks since 1910 when the minority white regime was formed against the black majority in collusion with British imperialism. Faced by the growing upsurge, P.W. Botha imposed the tri-racial Parliament to divide the coloured, Indian and the African majority and installed himself as the executive President only to mount up the barbaric repression on the black workers, the people and the black students. More than hundred people have been killed since September. Blacks still have no right of vote nor have any representation in the Parliament. Millions have been driven out from the "white lands" and forced to stay in "Bantustans"—their "home lands"—the tracts of barren lands, having lost the citizenship of South Africa. The number of unemployed, mainly blacks, has reached the staggering figure of 3 millions. The school students are up in arms against racial segregation in the education system braving tear gas, rubber bullets and arrests. 30,000 black students have been boycotting classes pledging solidarity to the boycott of the tri-racial Parliament and demanding unconditional reinstatement of the banned students representative council and end to the racial discrimination in education.

The Trade Unions likewise have mounted up strike actions demanding democratic and trade union rights for the black workers and for equal opportunities of employment. 176 strikes involving 50,000 workers were reported between January and June, 1984, surpassing all previous records. The urge to carry forward the united struggles has paved the way for the formation of a national federation of black trade unions. 24 trade unions representing 3,00,000 workers recently met at Cape Town to chalk out the blue print for the national federation. They have further developed a liaison between the trade unions, community organisations and students' bodies to intensify the movements against the apartheid regime.

of the State enterprises to private owners and to limited financial state participation in other enterprises. This is the typical capitalist way to avert crisis, "improve" the state budgetary balance and reduce public debt. The objective is to condemn the state enterprises to bankruptcy, increase the profitability of the private big business and throw the burden of the capitalist crisis on the workers and the people. Among the plants and enterprises being offered to private capital are the Volkswagen car manufacturing plant and the Lufthansa Airlines. The move of the Government has met with waves of protests not only from the W. German workers and public opinion, but also from the high ups in the ruling party who are in lucrative positions in the

Rising Jobless in Capitalist Countries

(In percentage of workforce: 1985 — Estimate)

	OECD	Great Britain	France	Italy	FRG
1983	10.4	11.5	8.2	9.9	8.2
1984	11.1	11.6	9.3	10.3	8.3
1985	11.5	11.8	10.6	10.6	8.3

(Source: *Prometeia* — *Flashes*, January 11, 1985)

United States

Unemployment in USA jumped again in December, 1984. 7.2 per cent of the active population were unemployed in December. The number of jobless who gave up job hunting in December rose from 1.2 millions to 1.3 millions. The managements also screwed up their anti-labour policies forcing the union officials to sign bad agreements to increase the profitability of the monopolists at the detriment of the workers and causing division among the ranks. At the General Motors' Packard Electric plant in Warren, Ohio, the International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers — AFL-CIO (IUE) signed an agreement under which new workers will be hired at 55 per cent of the regular rate and will take 10 years to reach the same rate as other workers. This two-tier-division agreement separated the workers between the low paid and the higher paid and damaged the union solidarity. The management similarly divided the 3,90,000 workers in the main plants of the General Motors. The low paid production workers which constitute most of the workforce got a 1.25 per cent wage rise, while the high paid skilled workers got a 3.50 per cent rise. The 1,20,000 Canadian workers of G.M. however demonstrated the tenacity of solidarity amongst them and defeated the management's game of disruption by a successful continuous strike. The strike of the Canadian workers emboldened a large section of the U.S. workers, 43 per cent of whom voted against the retrograde agreement.

FRG

The Government of FRG has resorted to selling

state enterprises and are afraid to loose them should the enterprises fall into private hands.

Israel

The economy of Israel is imbedded in deep crisis. With 7 per cent of the active workforce out of employment, the forecast of the number of jobless has indicated to reach record levels in the coming months as a result of the "austerity policy" announced by the Government. Private consumption fell by 7.5 per cent from 1983 to 1984 and is expected to continue to fall due to wage freeze. Purchasing power of the people had already dropped by over 20 per cent during November and December, 1984. The so-called price freeze did not prevent inflation increasing by 20 percent per month since November. Investment fell by 14 percent last year leaving little hope for recovery. To meet the situation "effectively", the Government is adopting ruthless measures to suppress the massive protest actions by workers and Government employees.

40th Anniversary of Victory Over Fascism

DGB, the largest trade union federation in W. Germany has appealed to all workers to join the action programmes to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the victory over fascism which has opened a new era in the history of Europe. Among the various activities, the DGB is preparing to organise a huge demonstration and a conference in Aachen on May 8 in which they will invite trade unionists from around the world.