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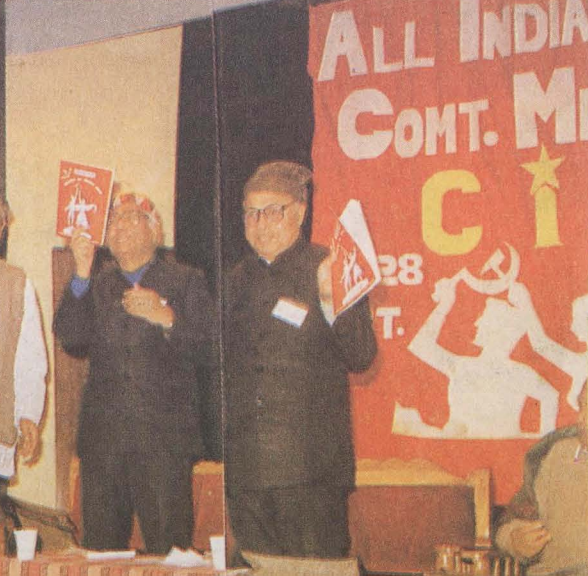
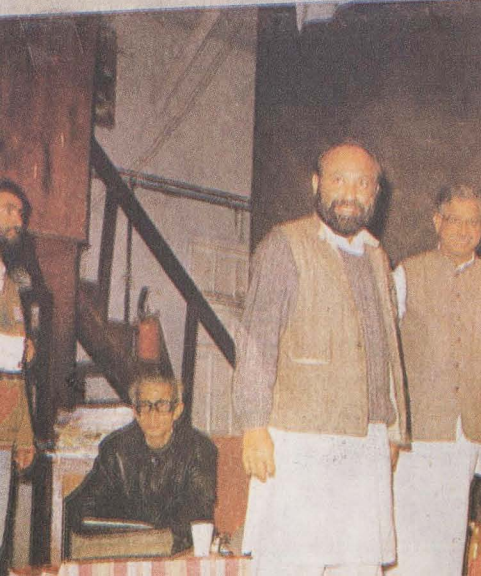
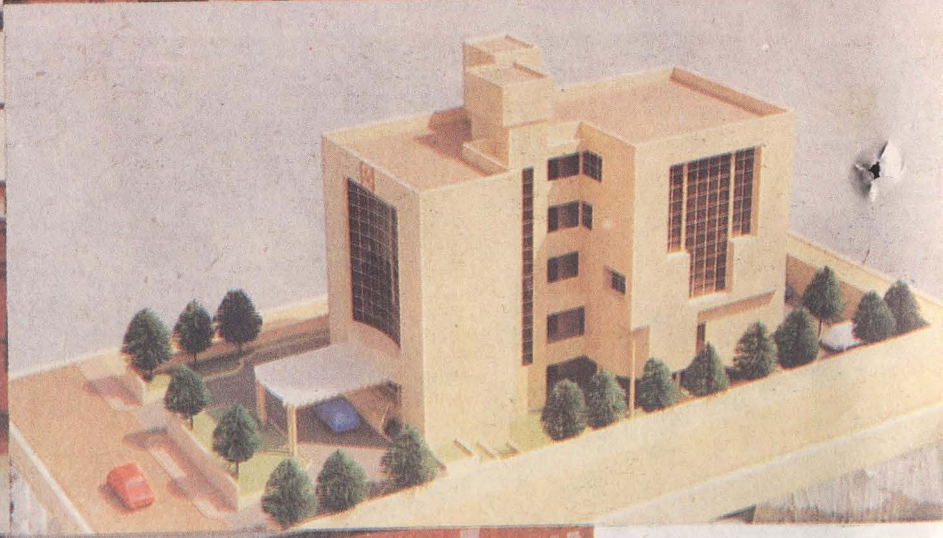
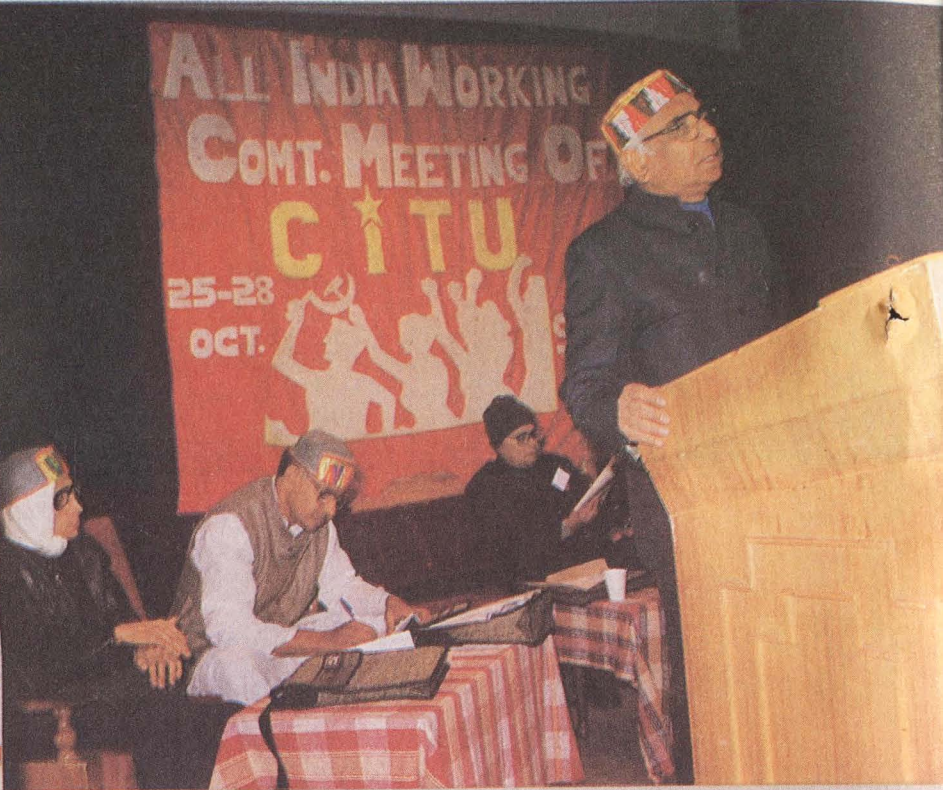


# THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

A Section of Mass Rally  
At Shimla





*CITU President E. Balanandan Hoisting the Flag with him is Rakesh Singha, President H.P. CITU General Secretary, M.K. Pandhe Presenting his Report Proposed B.T. Ranadive Bhavan, A View. Release of Souvenir*

# FORWARD TO 7TH DECEMBER STRIKE FOR A GENUINE PENSION SCHEME

The retrograde Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995 is in operation for 2 years now. It exposes beyond doubt that it cannot meet the demand of the workers for a genuine pension scheme.

The commitment of the Government for annual review and other improvements proved to be mere hoax. The demand for linking pension with price index is not on the agenda even.

Workers at the grass-root level irrespective of affiliations vociferously opposed this scheme of unprecedented loot of their provident fund.

Working class cannot accept such deprivation lying down. It is definitely possible to have an alternative and better pension scheme for the workers, without encroaching upon their provident fund. The working class must act unitedly to achieve the same.

Let the countrywide strike on 17th December, 1997 be the expression of firm resolve of the working class to cry halt to the design of loot and to achieve a genuine pension scheme.

Let us make it a massive success. Let the powerful voice of the united working class raise the following demands:

- \* Work out a new and genuine pension scheme without touching the existing P.F Contributions.
- \* Raise the rate of interest on all pension funds, including the corpus of family pension fund, on par with term-deposit interest paid by public sector financial institutions.
- \* Link pension payment to price index, to protect real value of pension.
- \* Calculate pension on the average (full pay) salary of last 3 months.
- \* Cover all units employing 10 or more workers.

\* Constitute a separate trust for administering pension scheme, with 50% members representing workers.

\* Make pension scheme optional to workers.

\* Grant exemption to alternative pension schemes finalised bilaterally.

\* Pay proportionate share of family pension fund corpus in full and extend government contribution of its share to alternative schemes seeking exemption.

\* Remove restrictions on investments for alternative schemes.

REMEMBER, ONE DAY NATION WIDE STRIKE IS THE CLARION CALL OF SEPTEMBER 2ND MASSIVE RALLY BEFORE PARLIAMENT! IT IS A UNITED CALL BY CITU, UTUC, UTUC(LS) AND AICCTU!

## PUBLIC SECTOR MORE INVESTOR FRIENDLY!

"The Financial Express" daily has published the findings of a study conducted on India's most investor friendly companies covering a total of 533 companies operating in the country.

The companies were ranked on the basis of the internal rate of return (IRR) for the shareholders.

The study poses the question; So who were the host companies?

The answer: the multinationals with a positive 4.02% IRR. Joint sector companies had a positive IRR of 2.58%.

The study exclaims:

"The worst performers (surprisingly) were not the public sector companies. Indian private sector companies collectively reported negative IRR of - 6.12% per annum; the public sector companies managed to do only half as bad with a negative IRR of - 3.75%".

Here is an instance, where a financial journal had to admit that the public sector fared better than the private sector!

**FARCIAL REVIEW, PALTRY RELIEF, INDEXATION DENIED**

One of the important points on which the CITU faulted the Government Pension Scheme was the absence of any provision to link the pension amount to the cost of living index.

With every increase in the consumer price index, the dearness allowance goes up. So also, the contribution to the pension fund goes up. Thus inflow to pension fund is linked to price index. But the government says,

payments out of pension fund will not be linked to index. This is one of the several drawbacks of the govt. scheme.

But the government scheme had its own ardent supporters in AITUC, INTUC, BMS and HMS. They also said they would "continue to press and agitate in favour of incorporation (in the scheme) of a number of amendments, eg. indexation" ...etc.

The government hoodwinked even

the supporting TUs by promising that this can be taken up during the annual review of the scheme.

The first of such annual review was done in November, 1996. The second one is also due by now.

What is the fate of first annual review?

The Central Board of Trustees of the EPF, meeting on 22.10.1997, was presented with a report of the review. What did it convey?

An Actuary was engaged. He

**FRADULENT PENSION SCHEME -WHO ABETTED IMPOSITION?**

The fraudulent pension scheme was first introduced by way of an ordinance. The erstwhile Narasimha Rao Government at the centre could not get the Bill on pension scheme passed in the Parliament. But the scheme was kept alive through promulgation of yet another ordinance.

When the United Front Government came to power at the Centre, the CITU took up in right earnest the basic changes to be brought in the scheme with the new ministers for labour, Shri Ramoowalia and Shri M Arunachalam. If the Government were not willing to accept substantive changes in the scheme, the CITU pleaded that the scheme may at least be made optional for the workers. Both the Ministers were not averse to consider this proposal. But the EPF Commissioner expressed the opinion that the scheme, if made optional, would not be workable.

At this stage, unfortunately, four central trade unions, viz, INTUC, HMS, BMS and AITUC stepped in to pressurise the Government to get through the pension legislation. In a joint letter dated 22nd July 1996, the four organisations, claiming to "represent among themselves over 75% of the total unionised labour force in the country," urged Shri Arunachalam, Labour Minister, "to ensure that legislation on the Employees' Provident Fund-linked Pension Scheme for workes is adopted in the current session of the Parliament." They said: "we do not at all want the legislation on the scheme, including the enabling clause in the EPF Act, to be stalled or scuttled." They emphasised that the Government should "in no case allow the current Ordinance on pension to lapse, as that will spell clamity for lakhs of poor workers."

Emboldened by the stand of these four central trade unions, the UF Government, went ahead to get the Bill on pension scheme passed in the Parliament in post-haste.

Thus the scheme has been imposed on the working class.

The four central trade unions had, however, reserved their "right to continue to press and agitate in favour of incorporation therein (i.e. in the scheme) of a number of important amendments, eg., indexation, substantial increase in pensionary benefits by enhancing the rate of interest on the deposits, removal of ceiling to benefit employees in higher wage brackets, etc." They bravely asserted that "we would continue to press them (i.e. many other major amendments proposed by trade uninos) prior to or during the annual review due in November, 1996."

But, alas, neither the Government made any basic improvement in the pension scheme, during the last two years, nor the four central trade unions bothered to "press and agitate" therefor!

desired details in respect of 10% of members. He was given data only for 9 lakh members against 17 lakh required.

The Actuary himself lamented: "the target (of data collection) has not been met. Further many regions have not contributed at all. From our experience of EPFO data, we are aware of great many regional imbalances. Consequently reliance on the data can only be upto limited extent".

The Actuary concluded: "a full scale valuation is not feasible at the present stage". He carried out an interim valuation and made an interim recommendation allowing a 4% relief. That too only for member/widow pensioners.

The Actuary's recommendation was considered by the pension implementation committee CITU is not represented in this committee. AITUC, INTUC and BMS, who bravely asserted that

they will press and agitate for indexation, were represented in this committee. Of the three, only the AITUC representative murmured that the quantum of increase recommended by the Actuary is on lower side. But he also acquiesced to recommend this 4% relief as an interim measure. The member, who has been commended for "excellent work in the field of social security", did not raise even the issue of indexation in the committee. These three organisations are in the executive committee of the CBT as well. At least a dozen meetings have been hold over the last two years. Never the trio raised the question of linking pension to price index!

Strangely, an employer representative in the committee said it will not be proper to limit the benefit to member and widow pensioners alone leaving the others out. The committee in its

collective 'wisdom' ignored this as well.

In the wider Central Board of Trustees, it was the lone voice of the CITU member, W.R. Varada Rajan, that raised the question of indexation of pension benefits.

The talk allowing rise in the quantum of benefits payable, is only a pseudo talk, when the government refuses to link the pensionary benefit to price index, a minimum measure to protect the real value of pension.

Interim review and adhoc relief. That is all, when final review and real and full relief will come, nobody knows.

Contribution from workers to pension fund will be index-related.

But pension to workers, cannot be index-linked strange logic!

This underlines the necessity of more vigorous struggle for a genuine pension scheme.

### **A CRUEL SLAP ON DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS**

The Supreme Court order upholding the Kerala High Court judgement banning bandhs is a cruel slap on democratic rights of the people.

The Kerala High Court had assumed that every call for a bandh is accompanied by coercion, intimidation, damage to properties, public and private, and what not. Elighted trade unions, political parties and other organisations, while calling for protest against the executive for its acts of commissions and omissions, only appeal to the goodwill and conscience of all sections of the public to join the aggrieved in protest. The executive

has the responsibility to ensure that any such protest is staged peacefully and according to law and to exercise the right to take action as per law where it goes otherwise. The judiciary can and should step in only to ensure and direct the executive to discharge its responsibility and exercise its right. The Kerala High Court while stepping in to hand over a directive to the Government, on complaints by the litigants, went to the extent of imposing a total ban on any call for bandh.

The judgement of the Supreme Court, as reported, endorses the complaints and apprehensions upheld by the Kerala High Court,

which could have been taken care of by other appropriate directives, rather than infringing upon the democratic right of protest by way of ban on bandh or hartals. The Supreme Court has upheld an illegitimate and undemocratic order against legitimate and democratic activity.

The CITU holds that the Supreme Court verdict is a severe blow to the democratic rights of the workers and people. The trade unions and the workers will continue to exercise their right to protest and not agree to any encroachment on their rights. The Supreme Court can do well to review their stance.

## 93RD BIRTHDAY OF COM. B T RANADIVE

(Sri B.N. Datar interviewed Com. B.T. Ranadive as a part of his effort to build a 'Trade Union Archives' by recording the oral history of senior trade union leaders. We publish here a few excerpts from the interview, in which Com. BTR gives an account of his trade union activity from early thirties. Editor).

### Com. B.T.R. on His Early Days in T.U.

*B.N. Datar: How did you get interested in trade unionism as a starting point?*

B.T. Ranadive : My entry in trade union movement came through politics. It has certain history; it is a long history. I actually became a Communist first and then entered T.U. movement. Joining the Communist Party itself has a history. I was a school student during the days of the first non-cooperation movement.

My entire secondary education was completed in Pune in the school known as the Nutan Marathi Vidyalaya, a school with nationlaist traditions. All my fellow students were politically oriented. Matriculation examination was approaching and that was a period of political activity with demonstrations and meetings all the year around. We attended meetings and participated in demonstrations.

Then I went to college. The subsequent collapse of the non-cooperation movement left us dejected life many others. Then while going through college education, we temporarily lost interest in politics. But when I was studying in Junior BA news, came that Gandhiji was seriously ill and that he was taken out for an appendix operation. That revived out interest in politics.

After this revival all of us, students with like mind, engaged ourselves in understanding what was happening. We could not reconcile ourselves with the things as they were.

At this stage one of my cousins, younger brother of Dr, Adhikari was close to me in my thinking. Both of us had progressive ideas about social reforms. We had similar views on religion and several other problems of the country. We could not wholly agree with Gandhiji. There were differences in Congress leadership. We had some sympathy with the swarajist approach of Pandit Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das and others who believed in parliamentary activities in addition to mass contact.

*B.N.D. What attracted you to Communist ideology?*

B.T.R: This was also a period of Hindu-Muslim riots, some of them engineered. This was around 1926-1927. Those were bad days. Those riots shattered the dream of Hindu-Muslim unity built up in 1920-21, through the Khilafat movement of Gandhiji and Ali brothers. Then we thought that a more radical approach was needed about national problem; some ingenuity in thinking was necessary too. We were drifting away from Gandhian ideology which with all its short-comings was keeping our interest in politics alive. We could not find anything convincing. At that time Dr. Adhikari (Senior) was in Germany. He regularly sent to us news letters on Communism. Added to this was mass agitation in India. This convinced us that common people can come together irrespective of their religious beliefs, caste rivalries and language barriers. That will be a step in the solution of country's problems, especially Hindu-Muslim divergences. A radical political slogan seemed extremely appropriate.

On the labour front, in Bombay a bitter strike was going on where Hindu and Muslim workers were coming together and that turned us towards the working class movement. Then, when by 1928, I passed out of the university after my M.A., there were persons like Dange and Adhikari who had already started working for labour. They convened Maharashtra Youth Conference in which I participated.

By the end of 1928, the senior Adhikari had also returned from Germany and had become a member of the Communist Party. Soon thereafter, all top leaders in the party were arrested on conspiracy charges. There was a void in trade union leadership. And we filled the void and started taking greater interest in trade union movement. Our senior colleague at this time was com. S.V. Deshpande (he

died subsequently). He had links with workers. He was a man of integrity and had good following among workers because of his fighting spirit. He worked part time with the trade union and was working as a journalist for 'Navkal'. That is how we joined together and started work in the trade unions. In the process we activated the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union (GKU). To weaken the movement the authorities saw to it that on some trumped up charges we were put behind the bars. a Hindu-Muslim riot too was organised to weaken the GKU following.

*BND: Tell us about some striking features of that work stoppage particularly of the communal angle.*

*BTR: What happened at that time was broadly this.*

This riot was sought to be organised in a working class area and the acid test for riot organisers was one section of rioters did not join in the work stoppage (to connote division in working class). The riot was in a mixed working class area in an oil installation where there were Pathans as watchmen and workers belonged to both communities, Hindus and Muslims.

An ugly incident was engineered. Some Pathans were stabbed allegedly by Hindu Workers and that created an explosion. Perhaps, what happened

was, stabbing may have other reasons - irrespective of community. Most probably for economic reasons. In those days Pathans were the main money lenders for workers and scuffles on this account could be natural. A retaliatory hunt for a Pathan may have started and to clever instigators this was a good opportunity to spread communal passions in the working class. None the less, taking advantage of this ugly situation guns were placed around the office of the GKU to spread terror along workers. Some more arrests took place and simultaneously this kind of 'Bandobast' was established to coerce workers to go to work. And yet a protest strike took place; it

did not subside for some time. All this was a deliberate game of the Government of India perhaps on the urging of employer interest to smash the trade union movement, particularly the GKU.

*BND: Can you recall any other struggle of workers in these days?*

I was also the Secretary of Railway Workers Union. I had written an article in their journal on Hindu-Muslim riots and charging Government in promoting them. It is after that I was in jail for some time. During that period GIP railwaymen had gone on strike. It was one day strike initially but got extended from time to time.

Coincidingly, it was on the eve of the second non-cooperation movement

and was instrumental in creating all kinds of complications in the sense that workers' genuine demands got mixed up with politics of the day. Workers became despondent because the strike was not properly organised when it started and it ended in a disorganised manner.

*BND: Tell us something about the developments at the all India level, differences within the AITUC, between 'moderates' and 'radicals' etc.*



*BTR: To start with let me talk about the GKU-the Bombay affiliate of the AITUC. With its leadership engaged in a major political court battle, the Meerut conspiracy case, new persons took over: V.B. Kartik, Kandalgonkar and others. At the middle level of the organisation, opportunism was rampant. Some Congressman also wanted to fish in troubled waters. Agreements were arrived at but there was hardly any implementation on either side.*

All this meant that the working class movement in Bombay was going through a difficult phase. Employers were distracted because of a world wide depression. The general public was witnessing a

resurgence of nationalist movement. Gate meetings or even bigger ones were poorly attended. Loyalty to organisation of any description was weakening. But protests against the Simon Commission and Whitley Commission were voiced as appropriate. In the midst of all this, came the Jharia session of the AITUC. This session was attended by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as an interested outsider. Communist and moderate (non-Communist) groups in the organisation fought on every issue and the former used to score. The moderates sensing this proposed the name of Pandit Nehru as President. The communist nominee was com. D.J. Kulkarni, an actual worker. In spite of the halo Panditji carried, he was elected by a narrow margin only.

And yet when the Congress gave a call for demonstration or boycott, as it happened in the case of the two commissions, workers showed their solidarity for the national cause. We organised protest strikes. The tremendous response to protest meetings in working class areas in Bombay, Calcutta and other industrial centres, forced Government to review its stance for labour. To create an impression that British authorities cared for the working class, they appointed the Royal Commission on Labour. In a further effort to please labour the British appointed some Indians on the Commission.

But this itself started a controversy in the 1929 AITUC session. One group led by N.M. Joshi, who incidentally was a member of the Commission along with Chaman Lal, favoured cooperation with the Commission. These were moderates; supported the British For the British, support for Whitley Commission among labour groups as in the AITUC was important, to be in line with the sentiments at home i.e. the British trade union sentiments.

It is because of this a big tussle in the AITUC between the moderate and radical groups became inevitable. Because of the dominance of the radicals in the AITUC, nothing much could be done through the AITUC. It is in the midst of this that Pandit Nehru left. He did not, however, leave a deep impression of his personality on the AITUC. Then came Subhash Bose as AITUC President but matters did not improve. However the radical group within the organisation had a somewhat better rapport with him during his presidency.

Irrespective of who was the President, Nehru or Bose, the internal bickerings in the organisation continued. Basically it was a struggle between a few in the leadership who wanted to conduct the trade union affairs in the old style confining themselves to some major demands, mostly of 'bread-butter' character and seeking some minor concessions for labour. On the political plane their stand was favourable to the British, in particular, the initiatives taken by the British Government for opening a debate with Indian leadership about the country's political future. The other group aimed at supporting working class aspirations both economic and industrial. The trouble, however, was that the former had leadership but no powerful rank and file following. In a way, therefore, to call the then prevailing situation a split seemed to be a misnomer. However, with the the success and disappointments in the national struggle, the working class also had its ups and downs.

*(These excerpts from Com. BTR's interview covers the period from early 20s upto 1932. For full reading of the interview, please refer to Volume III of CITU publication, B.T. Ranadive on Trade Union Movement." Editor)*

## **Electricity Employees & Engineers to strike on 17.12.1997**

Pursuant to the convention held in September last a National Joint Action Committee of Electricity Employees and Engineers, has been formed at a joint meeting of the unions held at New Delhi on 21.10.97. K Ashok Rao is the convenor of the committee.

The Committee has chalked out the following action programme:

Local Level actions from 10.12.97

Dharna at State/District level on 15.12.97

All India One Day Strike on 17.12.1987

The struggle is against the pro-private sector and pro-MNCs power policy of the Government. The Committee has appealed to all organisations engaged in electricity industry to join the struggle.

# CENTRAL TUs OPPOSE GOVT. MOVE ON PRICE INDEX

“The Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour, Government of India, has announced its intentions to conduct a Working Class Family Income and Expenditure Survey 1998-98 and a pilot study is already in progress. This decision has been taken by the Labour Bureau without any prior consultations with the trade unions.

The Index Review Committee appointed by the Government of India in the year 1977 recommended that before the new family budget studies are conducted, trade unions should be consulted at every stage. Yet, the Labour Bureau has chosen to do it unilaterally and therefore does not honour the observations made by the Rath Committee as mentioned above. The selection of the centres also has been done and some new centres added by the Government without any prior consultation with the trade unions.

The ILO directive on labour statistics has also emphasised the need for consultation with trade unions in order to gain the confidence of the workers on the index collection machinery.

After the submission of the report of the Rath Committee, some of the recommendations have been ignored by the Labour Bureau while collecting price-data for the 1981-82 series. There is a need to review several maladies which have occurred in the collection of price-data and compilation of index. Without properly correcting the 1981-82 series, the introduction of the new series is likely to depress the index. It will also affect the conversion factor of the new series with the old series.

The monograph of Consumer Price Index Number is not properly followed by the Labour Bureau with the result that the price collection machinery has been faulty and there is an urgent need to make necessary rectification in this regard.

Through a communication from the Labour Bureau to the Central Trade Unions, the Labour Bureau merely seeks information about “concentration of working class population, markets catering to their needs, etc, at each of the 78 selected.” In certain States, the State Committees of Central Trade Unions have directly been approached by the Bureau. Mere

consultation with Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and compilation of statistics of prices and cost of living consisting of only through the Government officials and Research organisations will not suffice. This is grossly unfair and we feel that there is a need to have proper consultations with the trade unions before undertaking the new survey.”

The CITU, jointly with AITUC, INTUC, BMS and HMS has opposed the Government move to conduct a working class family income and expenditure survey for 1998-99 and objected to the pilot study thereon already launched without prior consultations with the trade unions.

The CTUs have addressed a joint letter to Shri M P Veerendra Kumar, Labour Minister, in this regard. The joint letter signed by K L Mahendra (AITUC) R Venugopal (BMS), M K Pandhe (CITU), R A Mittal (HMS) and Chandidas Sinha (INTUC) has asked the Labour Minister to call a meeting of CTUs to discuss the issue.

## CITU GENERAL COUNCIL

The Shimla meeting of the CITU Working Committee decided to hold the next meeting of the CITU General Council in Tamil Nadu during April 1998.

The Tamil Nadu state committee of CITU has since informed that arrangements have been finalised for holding the meeting of the General Council at Chennai from the 22nd to 26th April, 1998. The venue will be Vijay Rani Mahal, Vadapalani, Chennai 600 026. The mass rally and public meeting will be held in the evening of 25.4.1998.

All members of the General Council of CITU are requested to note these dates and plan their other work without clashing with these dates.

**M.K. PANDHE**  
General Secretary

[Asian Women Workers Centre (AWWC), a network organisation of Committee for Asian Women (CAW), Japan invited a representation from CITU to address a symposium on 25-10-97. M Rajeswari, a member of the General Council member of CITU participated in the above programme and delivered a speech on Problems of Women in Organised Sector - Impact of New Economic Policy - The role of CITU." The symposium was preceded by interactions with visits to different industries. The AWWC sponsored this eight day visit between October 19-26, 1997. Rajeswari narrates her visit and experiences here. Editor]

## IN JAPAN INTERACTING WITH WORKING WOMEN...

**M Rajeswari**

Delivering the orientation of DAWWC/CAW in the symposium, Ms. Miyoko Shiazowa, Director, CAW, explained about the labour movement in Japan. She said, "seeking cheap, docile women workers, many western companies and Japanese companies have started establishing their companies in various Asian countries including India since 1970s. Most of the women workers in the textile, garment and electronics industries were exploited for paltry wages (from one-tenth to one-third of Japan's minimum wage and under worst working conditions) long working hours and mid-night shift). To deepen mutual understanding with Asian Women's Organisations and strengthen solidarity with Asian Working Class, the AWWC was formed, she mentioned.

### YOKOHAMA FORUM

In the first day of exchange programme, we met the leader of "Yokohama Women's Association for Communication and Networking, Ms. Masoko Inone. Yokohama is a very important industrial area and this forum was mainly established for the welfare

of women workers and housewives of male workers. This forum concentrates on health care, training programmes for workers to attain skills and also extends legal assistance. Commenting on incidence of divorce among Japanese women she gave the following as reasons for divorce.



In the Shadow  
of Affluence - stories of  
Japanese women workers

- (i) Relationship between in-laws and daughter-in-law
- (ii) Alcoholism
- (iii) Polygamy

The local Government is giving all financial assistance to this Forum. This Yokohama Forum has set up a separate forum for part-time women workers 6 months ago, to take up the problem of part-time

women workers. Both the leaders explained about the conditions of women workers/part-time workers and the steps taken to tackle the increasing problems of part-time workers in Tokyo.

On 22.10.97, we visited a garment factory by name Tochigi, 120 kms away from Tokyo. Out of 240 workers in that factory. 220 are women. During the interaction, the President of the Union, Ms. Masoko Ajiki Sung explained serious problems facing the garment industry in Japan. Many big business companies have started importing from Asian countries. As a consequence of this, for the past 2 years, there is no recruitment of full time workers: only part-timers are appointed. She explained about the struggle launched by their union in early 60's for better service conditions. Now despite some problems, the workers are getting good salaries and compensation for health hazards and injuries in the work spots, because of strong trade union movement. The important aspect to note is that the President, Vice President and other executive committee members of this union are all women.

## DAY CARE CENTRES

Next day, we visited a day care centre (creche) and old age home. The name of this centre is Himavari, situated in Inthokorojzawa, a suburb of Tokyo. This centre was established in 1973 by Mrs. Nagasava. The total strength of the day care centre is 85. They are admitting children of 0-3 months to 6 years. Salient features of these centres:

- \* Local Government is fully giving subsidy to all day care centres in Tokyo.

- \* According to the strength of children, day care centres are established areawise by local governments.

- \* Healthy food is supplied.

- \* Fee collected from the parents depends on their income.

- \* Special teachers are appointed to train the children for special courses like Origami (making toys with paper), painting and athletics. Average age group of the members of the old age home is 83. The maximum age 112. The local Government is giving subsidy to these centres to the tune of 60 million yens per annum (100 yen = Rs.30/- approximately). There are free transport facilities available to pick up senior citizens from their residences.

Till 1996, no membership fee/visiting fee were collected and the home was fully subsidised by the government. But, due to the policy decision of local government, they have to pay a meagre amount per

visit i.e. 600 yens.

Though 70% of them are living with their elder son/daughter, they are coming here thrice in a week. They are spending their day time by singing songs/drawing and painting pictures making some



handicrafts, etc.

Because both child care centre and old age home exist in one place, the children visit this old age home once in a week and play with them. This helps to build up a bridge between younger and older generations.

Same day, we visited a Thermostat manufacturing company-ISUSOO. There are 132 workers in this factory. Fifty of them are members of the union called "Japan Metal Work & Information Workers Union", affiliated to the Japan's national TU, ZENROREN. (Rest of the workers are with the yellow union, i.e., pro-management union). Though they are little in number, because of their unity and militancy, ZENROREN affiliated union is in the decision making level. The President of the Union, Ms Miskabatha told that the union was started 2 years ago. Last year

20 part-time workers and 20 full time workers were dismissed, but after the intervention of the union, they were taken back. Again, last month, the management planned to transfer the factory to some other place (because, the company is situated in the place where the Winter Olympics is going to be held). But, after strong protest by the Union, the decision was dropped.

- \* They are availing three and a half months maternity leave (as per labour laws).

- \* Menstruation leave, 1 day per month.

At the same time, they are also demanding 30 hours free time per month for the Office bearers for union work.

## WORKERS' COLLECTIVE

On the last day, i.e. on 24.10.97, we visited a WORKERS' COLLECTIVE. In this workers' collective some 6 to 10 house-wives assemble together, invest a certain amount as capital and form small establishments like lunchbox making, bakery and confectioneries.

There are 6 clubs in Tokyo-which were formed to give assistance like training skills and financial assistance to the house-wives who are willing to establish workers collectives. One such club is SEIKATSU CLUB. The President of the club gave the following information:

- \* Their total membership in Tokyo is 50,000

- \* There are 150 WORKERS'

COLLECTIVES established so far.

\* Each woman is working for about 120-130 hrs p m i.e. 3 days a week. They are getting 1 million yen per month on an average.

\* Of the total income, the material cost is wages 40% and maintenance 20%.

\* They are also covered under Group Insurance & Pension Scheme of the Government.

\* The main motto of these clubs are to produce high quality and environment-friendly products.

\* Another important aspect is that they are getting 4.5 million yen loan at 7.5% interest.

During this visit, we went to a lunch box making unit and a confectionery shop. This system of WORKERS' COLLECTIVE empowers house-wives with economic independence. And it also enables them to concentrate on some voluntary services like environmental programmes.

### **DISCRIMINATION CONTINUES**

In garment industry, we could find sophisticated and advanced

technology in full swing. Lot of women workers are employed.

Despite the advance in science & technology, discrimination against women workers continues there. Skilled jobs are performed by men only and the discrimination exists

**“.....In conclusion, it is men's sacrificial labour for the companies and women's service for men that have reinforced the high economic growth of Japanese capitalism...”**

**Michiko Hiroki**

**(From In the shadow of Affluence - stories of Japanese Women Workers)**

in wages also.

A common feature observed as also recorded by a paper given by AWWC is that women take a break after child birth and return after some years. Preference for part-time job is there. There is virtually no difference between a regular timer and a part-timer with regard to productivity and other parameters.

On 25.10.97, a symposium was organised by AWWC. About 60 women including professors, university students and teachers attended. After I presented my paper the participants asked

various questions about the caste system and bonded labour in India.

The exchange programme and symposium enabled us to explain about the exploitative conditions of labour in India and the need for a united movement and also observe a lot about their working conditions/advanced technology besides knowing a little about their labour as well as women's movement.

We could also see the reality that the laws specially enacted for women workers

like maternity leave and related benefits and other such rights have been recently abolished by the present government, despite struggles launched by ZENROREN, AWWC & CAW. But the majority DENGU union did not support this struggle. In the DIET(Japanese Parliament) also, only Japanese Communist Party supported the workers movement. Unfortunately, they are small in number. And now, negotiations are going on with the DENO union to privatise the Postal system.

(Railways and Telecom already privatised in late eighties)

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[Com.M Rajeswari, Convenor, Working Women's Coordination Committee, Tamilnadu, talked to Ms HIRAKANE ETSUKO in Tokyo, Japan, on subjects dealing with Japanese women. Ms Hirakane Etsuko is the Deputy Chief of Women & Children of the Central Committee of Japanese Communist Party. Here are some excerpts from the interview. Editor]

## **STATUS OF JAPANESE WOMEN TODAY**

*Q: Japan is an advanced country. Is social role of women increased?*

Yes, 50 years after World War II, Japan has advanced both technologically and culturally.

Half of the Japanese population is women. Now women are increasingly concentrating in special areas like sports and in science. In these circumstances, the social role of women is expanding

- but compared with men, the actual position of women is still low.

*Q.How about the position of working women? Are they getting equal wages for equal work?*

Though we are technologically several times advanced than India, here also the discrimination in wages is still continuing. A UN agency said, in terms of economical power, Japan is number two in the world. But the position of women is number 14 in the world. The average wage of Japanese women worker is only half of that of men, whereas in France, average wage of women is 80% of men's.

*Q. Do women's organisations and unions take up this issue?*

Yes. We are jointly doing some programmes with unions like ZENROREN. And we are trying to evolve general consciousness in this matter among women workers. TUs like ZENROREN are fighting at all levels against this wage discrimination. Struggle against sexual discrimination is a fight for better life for human being. It is the struggle, which could be said as the struggle of the whole nation.

*Q. Will the managements accept this demand?*

In some companies, where TUs are militant, they can make the management accept. But majority of the managements say that women workers have family responsibility, because of that they cannot do OT/Night shift work. So the discrimination in wages is an unavoidable one. This deep rooted discrimination is one of the major contributors of the economic development of Japan.

*Q. How about the traditional thinking of women's employment?*

Men should work and women should be at home; taking care of children and in-laws is her duties. This is the traditional thinking.

Semi-feudalistic family system has its influence now also. Because of this, Japanese men were forced into very long hours of working, which resulted in Karoshi - death from over working.

But Japanese women are contributing 15 times more for family matters than men. Because of this, women are not in a position to contribute much for the society directly.

*Q. Have you launched any movement to improve the status of women in society?*

Yes. We are having a strong belief that support to the family is a social matter and it should be given by the government. Improving the status of women is closely linked with Japanese economy. Having this in mind several struggles took in place in the 70s to establish day care centres and old age homes. Resultant of this mass movement, now we are having enough number of child care centres and old age homes fully subsidised by local government.

*Q. How about the educational system?*

Compulsory free education facility is available upto Junior High school level. Free text books also given upto this level. Government attempted to abolish free text book system some months ago. Because of protest struggles, it had to withdraw the decision.

*Q. Do you have child labour? Do children dropout from school?*

No. We have no child labour now. And there is no single case of dropout.

*Q. Do you have special laws to protect the interest of women workers?*

The special laws were enacted in the past two decades through strong women/labour movement for enforcement of equal employment opportunity and protective provisions for women workers on overtime/holiday work and night work. These have been abolished recently in the DIET (Japanese Parliament) which will take effect from April 1999. Though the women's organisations and TUs like ZENROREN protested against this move of the government, it was passed in the DIET. The only political party which supported workers agitation in this regard was JCP.

*Q. How far you have been able to create political awareness among women?*

Over a period we have taken several measures/campaign to create political awareness among women. We have encouraged them to involve themselves in political movements. Lot of young women have also become political activists and leaders.

*Q. Do you have special reservation system for women in elections?*

No, we don't have, but we are giving priority to women in elections. In the Tokyo local assembly elections, JCP fielded 860 women candidates out of 4050. And in the recently published list of general election candidates also, we have given 45% to women. (ZENROREN is the National Confederation of Trade Unions, Japan)

# The Class Bias Of The Bourgeois Press

E. Balanandan

The recent period have witnessed growing and widening unity of the trade unions in joint agitations and actions which could wrest considerable gains. This invoked intolerance and denunciations from the bourgeois Press and many editorials brought in to focus their class bias.

The united struggle of the insurance employees could muster wider support against the Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill (which was prelude to privatisation). It could not be passed in the Parliament. The bill for privatising the coal mining sector had to be deferred in the wake of the united strike decision of the trade unions. The latest example to be cited is the unity achieved in the struggle against the Fifth Pay Commission recommendations by the Central Government employees numbering nearly 5 million. The government had to agree with many of the proposals put forth by the trade unions jointly and give additional 7,000 crores rupees more by way of increase in emoluments. The reduction of staff strength by 30% in ten years and the abolition of 3.5 lakh vacant posts also had to be dropped.

## BIG FURORE

This agreement has created big furore not only among the Indian bourgeois Press but also from international Press too. Almost all the national dailies came out with editorial comments saying that the government of India had surrendered before the collective pressure of the trade unions. Some criticised the Committee of Ministers, who negotiated and struck the deal as "only doing clerical work to put down what is being stated by the leaders of the joint council of trade unions."

To cite a few example: The Pioneer, a leading English daily, dated September 12, 1997, titled its editorial column as "Abject Surrender" and stated among other things that: "It now appears that the CoM was doing little more than going through the motions of bargaining, while actually begging the unions with folded hands to dilute their demands." The same day, The Times of India editorial headlined "Wages of Indecision" said: "Since the Indian reform programme was less ideology-driven and undertaken more as a

bankruptcy avoidance measure, no attempt has been made to persuade workers here to accept the symbiotic linkage between increases in real wages and efficiency. The present settlement and developments leading up to it do little credit to the national decision-making process." The Hindu of September 13, had also in their editorial comment criticised the government for giving up the suggestions of the Pay Commission recommendation for the reduction of three and a half lakh posts lying vacant and the proposal for 30% reduction of the number of employees in 10 years. The Indian Express gave the heading for their editorial "Financial harakiri" and were making theories about the new burden which is going to fall upon the people by surrendering to the workers' demands.

## VERNACULAR PRESS ALSO

The Vernacular Press in the country too did not lag behind, except a few, in criticising the government saying that the settlement was against the nation. A typical example can be seen in the editorial of Mathrubhumi, a Malayalam daily, of 18th September. It stated that those who are having permanent employment and income are getting more money while the total people are paying for the same. For this there is no justification.

The British Economist of September 20 has also commented in their report about this agreement saying that this was the reason which led to the decision of the government to the increase of customs duty etc. A comment which needs be noted is that it says among other things: "This means there is now no hope of the government embarking on the reforms that are so badly needed to change India's rigid labour laws, which make it virtually impossible to sack workers or close uneconomic factories".

Thus, the bourgeois Press of the country is very much worried about the new "burden" which may fall on the people for granting the increase and for modifying the Pay Commission proposals. Their worry was also about the fate of the policy of liberalisation which is sought to be implemented in the country. Dr. Manmohan Singh, former finance minister, was also

among others who came out in the open against the settlement and criticised the government.

In sum, the above reactions of the bourgeois Press of the country theorised in many ways that the government 'surrendered' to the workers' pressure, which will create price rise and will force the government to go for new taxation. The proposals brought forth by the Finance Minister for mobilising Rs.6,880 crores by way of additional taxation and increased sales of the public sector shares is a consequential step.

### ON A CLOSER LOOK

Let us have a closer look. In the last year's budget, the government have earmarked Rs.11,250 crores for meeting the expected expenditure on the Pay Commission recommendations. Also the railways were asked to mobilise Rs.3,000 crores and the Ministry of Telecommunications Rs.1,000 crores. Altogether it comes to Rs.15,250 crores. The expected total expenditure on this score is Rs.18,500 crores. Therefore, the additional requirement comes only to Rs.3,250 crore. The government can earn Rs.3,500 crores as duty from the increased price of petroleum goods. This shows that there was no need for the additional fund mobilisation to meet this expenditure. The reason for the same lies elsewhere, which we can see later. However, for this the trade unions and the working class cannot be made a 'scape

goat'.

In the last budget, Mr. Chidambaram was lavish in granting direct tax concession to the capitalists amounting to about Rs.15,000 crores. All the bourgeois Press enthusiastically applauded the same. While they were all very much critical about the 'concession' (it is not concession) given to the workers. Their class bias comes to fore here above truth and logic. The government failed to collect the budgeted amount of tax during this period and to make up this, the new proposals are made. This fact is kept under carpet and the casualty again is the truth.

### CLASS ESSENCE

The trade unions fighting unitedly for safeguarding the various interests of the working class can easily see the class essence of this bourgeois criticism and can be legitimately proud of that they are on the right tract. The British Economist was blunt in stating that "India's rigid labour laws which make it virtually impossible to sack workers or close uneconomic units" and, therefore, they want unrestricted right for sending out workers and closing down of factories and to curtail the hard earned rights and privileges of the working class. This, no trade union can agree. Also they want privatisation of the public sector and unrestricted entry of the foreign giant multinational monopolists in all sectors of economy which, in short, curtail our economic freedom and above all our sovereignty. Mr. Chidambaram & Co. were frantically on this wrong track. Of late, many employers who feel the pinch have also started expressing their reservation.

Therefore, it is the duty of the trade unions to further strengthen the unity and cohesion of the trade unions which is only formal today in many areas. This is the urgent task to be addressed by us.

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(The CITU Secretariat decided to nominate W R Varada Rajan, Secretary, CITU as our representative on the Central Board of Trustees (CBT) of the Employees' Provident Fund in place of Com.V B Chierian. The 146th meeting of the CBT, held on 22nd October 1997 in New Delhi was attended by Varada Rajan. A number of issues concerning the interests of the PF subscribers and the functioning of the EPF Organisation has since been taken up by him with the Minister of Labour. Here is a report. Editor)

## EXPEDITE ACTION ON PF RELATED ISSUES

The Central Board of Trustees, Employees Provident Fund, was presented with the annual accounts in respect of the EPF Scheme, Pension Scheme etc for the year 1995-96, at the meeting held in October, 1997. The EPF Organisation had also circulated at the meeting the status report on the pension scheme, action taken statement on decisions/recommendations of the CBT, etc. On a study of the information circulated, it was found that several important matters required urgent steps. The Minister of State for Labour, Shri M P Veerendra Kumar has been urged to expedite action on such matters.

### Arrears of Provident Fund

The total members of the Employees' Provident Fund in 2,71,705 establishments (both exempted and unexempted) had crossed 20 million and stood at 2,03,74,470 as on 31.03.1997.

But it is a matter of concern that arrears of PF are mounting, totalling to Rs 466.56 crores as on 31.3.1997. The functioning of the revenue recovery machinery leaves much to be desired.

The amount of arrears recovered during 1996-97 is only 24.97% of the balance as on 1.4.96 whereas the arrears added amount to 35.69%.

The total arrears of Rs 466.56

crores is classified as:

Realisable Rs 185.15 crores

Unrealisable Rs 281.46 crores

With over 60% of the arrears not realisable, if action is not speeded up to recover the realisable arrears of around 40%, there is the danger of this being added on to the unrealisable category. The Minister of Labour has been urged to initiate steps to tune up the revenue recovery machinery and expedite realisation of the arrears. Fixing up of individual responsibility on the officials concerned, as in the case of settlement of claims is suggested.

### Cases referred to BIFR

Out of the arrears classified as unrealisable, amounting to Rs 281.41 crores, a sum of Rs 121.62 crores is due from 1432 establishments (both unexempted and exempted) which are registered under the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR). It appears that the revenue recovery machinery is equating these cases referred to BIFR with those where stay orders have been granted by High Courts. This is not a correct assumption. Mere registration with the BIFR does not grant the concerned establishments, immunity from payment of statutory dues. Evidently, all the establishments before the BIFR

have not ceased operations. Efforts can and should be made to recover the arrears of PF from those establishments registered with the BIFR, unless, of course there are express directions to the contrary from the BIFR authorities.

### Amendment to SICA

In view of the enormous difficulties faced for recovering the PF arrears from the sick industrial establishments, the Central Board of Trustees had suggested that action should be taken to ensure primacy for PF dues while the provisions of the Sick Industrial Companies Act are amended.

No action appears to have been taken in this regard.

The Government of India introduced the Bill for amending the SICA, in the Parliament on 16.05.97. There is no provision in that SICA Bill to accord primacy for PF dues. The Bill is now before the Standing Committee on Finance.

The Minister for Labour has been urged to take up this subject now for incorporating an official amendment in the Bill for according primacy to PF and other statutory dues to the employees.

### Secure help from FIs

The establishments defaulting in

PF etc dues, do continue to get financial assistance from Banks and Financial Institutions.

Appropriate directions can be issued to all the Banks, Financial Institutions and even Non-Banking Financial Companies coming under the purview of the Reserve Bank of India, that a "no arrears due" certificate from PF authorities must be insisted before extending any financial assistance or loan or increasing the present credit exposure to any establishment. This can help the process of revenue recovery, a great deal. The Labour Minister has been requested to take up the matter with Ministry of Finance.

### **Amendment to EPF Scheme**

The Central Board of Trustees had suggested, far back in March 1996, that para 2 (f) (ii) of the EPF Scheme be amended to remove the ceiling on wages for employees to become members of the Fund. Consequential amendments to paras 26(6), 26-A(2) proviso of EPF Scheme were also suggested. It was resolved that the Chairman will decide the matter after consultations with Actuary on the capacity of the Fund to bear the additional cost.

As this is a matter pending with the Ministry of Labour, he was requested to take an early positive decision and amend the scheme as suggested.

### **Setting up of Appellate Tribunals**

The Central Board of Trustees had decided in 1988 itself to set up four Appellate Tribunals. The Finance Ministry gave clearance

to the proposal and names had been called for from various High Courts for appointment of retired Judges as Presiding Officers. This was in 1996.

But now, only one Appellate Tribunal had been set up at New Delhi alone, which has started functioning from 01.07.1997. It is not known why three other Tribunals have not been set up.

Immediate setting up of three more Appellate Tribunals, in compliance with a decision almost a decade old, has been emphasised.

### **Housing Scheme for Provident Fund Members**

The demand for introduction of a housing scheme for the subscribers to the Employees' Provident Fund had been voiced for several years now.

By end 1996, the Central Board of Trustees decided that a comprehensive paper should be prepared and presented to the Board for discussions. The matter is still stated to be under process. The Minister of Labour has been requested to direct to the EPF Organisation to prepare the discussion paper to be placed before the CBT at its next meeting. Needless to add, that the paper should focus on possibilities of introducing a scheme, rather than merely listing the constraints.

### **Amendments to Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995**

Two minor but beneficial amendments had been recommended by the Standing Committee of Parliament. The

amendments are for incorporation of undernoted provisions:

1. Allowing pension to dependent parents in case of death of member unmarried or having no family member and where no valid nomination exists under the pension scheme; and
2. Allowing pension to disabled children for life irrespective of their age and number of children. The Central Board of Trustees has approved the same and a formal notification is to be issued by the Government of India.

Without prejudice to the demand of CITU for basic changes in the pension scheme, the Minister has been urged to expedite notification of the above amendments.

### **Pension Case before the Supreme Court**

The status report on Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995, refers to the cases pending in various High Courts. It also states that action has been taken to expedite disposal of such cases. There is also a reference to filing of a Special Leave Petition before the Supreme Court in May 1997.

The Supreme Court has, during arguments on the SLP, suggested transfer of all cases pending in various High Courts, for hearing and disposal by the apex court itself. Status report is silent on this.

The Labour Minister has been requested to ensure compliance of the apex court suggestion by the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation.

## UNIQUE SYMBOL OF WORKING CLASS DEDICATION

Com. BTR, an outstanding leader of the working class and one of the leading architects of the Indian trade union movement, made immense contribution in shaping the working class movement in the country and setting a definite direction to the same. Com. BTR was in truest sense the leader of the entire working class of the country. He used to keep himself totally abreast with the developments ranging the entire length and breadth of the trade union movement and with deepest understanding. His writings on trade union has left no important issue and no branch of the working class movement uncovered.

The entire trade union movement of our country representing the industrial workers, workers and employees of the State and Central Governments, departmental undertakings, Bank, Insurance and other service sectors-irrespective of affiliations - all have immensely benefited from the teachings of Com.BTR and by his personal guidance in formulating the strategy and tactics of the struggles, in shaping the outlook and approach on various issues concerning the movement.

### **A Dream Becomes a Reality**

The hallmark of Com. BTR's contribution to the Indian trade union movement was his utmost

emphasis on trade union education to equip the working class ideologically and organisationally for preparing them to play the historic role of vanguard in realising the ultimate goal of the working class. At the same time, he shall always be remembered as the greatest champion for the cause of unity of the trade union movement in our country. His historic call for formation of a Confederation of Indian Trade Unions is the best yardstick even in today's context to understand the deep farsightedness of Com.BTR in shaping the direction of the trade union movement in the country.

With the objective to carry forward the teachings of Com. BTR, B.T. Ranadive Memorial Trust has decided to build a permanent Trade Union Education and Research Centre fully equipped in all respects as a living memory of Com. BTR. We are happy to announce that as a result of protracted efforts, the Trust has ultimately succeeded in securing a plot of land from the Central Government measuring 1248 square yards located within 2 Kms. of Connaught Place, New Delhi.

### **Ambitious Project - New Hopes, New Aspirations**

It is obvious that such a historic, important and ambitious project

cannot be successfully accomplished without the moral and material support from all sections of our people. The BTR Memorial Trust sincerely believes it their historic compulsion and bounden duty to earnestly appeal to each and every organisation, each and every individual, to come forward with the best possible moral and material help for quick completion of the project so that the same can be dedicated for the cause of working class at the earliest possible time.

The CITU has already been receiving encouraging response to their call for contribution of one day's wage to BTR Memorial fund. We earnestly appeal to you and your organisation that in appreciation of the fact that Com. BTR was the tallest leader and teacher of the entire trade union movement of the period, to please contribute your best to the BTR Memorial Fund commensurate with your capacity and befitting the noble cause. The contribution may be sent favouring "BTR Memorial Trust Fund, New Delhi."

Your contribution in effect, is your participation in building up a fitting memorial - an institute for labour studies- in memory of one of the outstanding leader of the Indian Working Class Movement

M.K. PANDHE  
Managing Trustee

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO BTR MEMORIAL

Com. Laxmi Sahgal, Kanpur	5,000.00	Mineral Workrs Union, Kiribum, Bihar	1,070.00
Com. Gurudas Chatterjee, Bihar	500.00	Dharmanath Ram, Bihar	170.00
Varanasi Metal & Eng. Mazdoor Sabha	5,100.00	Goa stae committee	50,000.00
Dukan Adhistan Karmchari Union, Varanasi	1,500.00	G. Janardan Rao	200.00
Vikrant Ture Emp. Union, Karnataka	50,000.00	Bihar S/C of CITU	3,660.00
Orissa State Committee of CITU	5,000.00	Fire Bricks & Ceramics Kamgar Union Ranchi	1,000.00
Kerala State Committee of CITU	1,50,000.00	Bokaro Steel Mazdoor union, Bihar	3,520.00
Assam State Committee of CITU	5,000.00	A Well Wisher, through Com. Chandi Pd.	501.00
J.K. Ture Karmachari Union (Rajasthan)	50,000.00	H.P. State Committee of CITU	5,000.00
Theri Dam Workers Union (Punjab)	1,00,000.00	W.B. State Committee of CITU	50,000.00
P.S.T.C (Punjab)	20,000.00	Delhi State Committee of CITU	4,500.00
Punjab Roadways	5,000.00	<b>Total</b>	<b>7,99,728.00</b>
CITU Chandigarh (Punjab)	3,000.00	Contributions upto Kochi Conference.	72,52,176.00
BGMI Empl. Union, Karnataka	2,000.00	<b>Total Contributions till date...</b>	<b>80,51,904.00</b>
A.P. State Committee	1,00,000.00	<p>Construction work of the B.T. Ranadive Bhavan will commence shortly. The project will house a 200 capacity auditorium, well equipped modern library, training centre and also the headquarters of CITU. Collection of fund, therefore, assumes great significance. Contributions received will be announced in 'The Working Class' every month.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">RANJIT BASU Treasurer CITU</p>	
U.P. State Committee	3,000.00		
Mahrashtra State Committee/CITU	69,655.00		
Bhilai Steel Emp. Union (MP)	5,000.00		
U.P. State Committee of CITU	12,500.00		
Com. Gargi Mukherjee	10,000.00		
CEL Emp. Union, Sahibabad (Delhi S/C)	41,000.00		
BEFI, Calcutta	5,000.00		
CITU Dist. Committe, Ludhiana(Punjab)	3,000.00		
Syndicate Bank Staff Union, Madras	10,001.00		
Bank of India Emp. Union, Calcutta	2,001.00	<p><i>(Continued from page 24)</i></p> <p>The deterioration in the working and living conditions of the working class is a major problem faced by the trade union movement. Trade Unions at times look on as helpless spectators when the BIFR (Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction) issues orders of closure and sells off one unit after another. Unemployment is growing at a fast rate and trade unions are unable to take up the issue of the right to work as a fundamental right in an effective way. The task of new job creation is sidelined and the overall development of economy is seriously affected.</p>	
Com. Harcharan Singh, Punjab	200.00		
Varanasi Metal & Eng. Mazdoor Sabha	1,100.00		
Dukan Adhistan Karmachari Union	1,900.00		
CITU Dist. Committee, Meerut	350.00		
CITU, Tadepallugudan Town Com./ A.P.	10,000.00		
Chembroln Rice Mill Workers Union. A.P.	1,000.00		
NCOEA Katham Coal Washery, Bokaro	600.00		
Ramanathan/Air Corpn. Emp. Union	1,700.00		

## SUCCESSFUL COUNTRYWIDE STRIKE BY BPCL WORKERS

The Bharat Petroleum workers observed a very successful strike all over the country on 12.11.97 in protest against the move of the management to disintegrate the company as per recommendations of an American consultant firm - ADL appointed by the company at a fee of Rs.22 crores.

The strike, called jointly by the trade unions affiliated with CITU, AITUC & INTUC, paralysed all the Depots, installations, LPG bottling plants and other offices situated at different locations in different states in all the three regions eg., north, south and east.

At Delhi, the striking workers from the different locations of the entire state and neighbouring areas assembled at the Connaught Place office premises of BPCL and marched in a colourful procession

to the Parliament street. The workers were addressed by among others M.K.Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU Chittabrata Majumdar, S Dev Roye secretaries, CITU, Depankar Mukherjee, M.P and R S P Singh, General Secretary of the BP Technicians' Union (CITU).

The memorandum submitted to the Oil & Petroleum Minister noted; "employees are strongly opposed to the ADL prescribed move of the management to divide the company into six separate 'Strategic Business Units' (SUB) on the basis of different products and services of BPCL. The point is that though the SBUs shall not form separate companies formally, for all practical purposes they are proposed to be treated as independent companies. Therefore, under commercial consideration, all the SBUs shall

not be on equal footing in the post restructured scenario. In the process some SBUs might become financially weak, may even suffer loss and become sick.. The service conditions of the employees are proposed to be regulated on the basis of the respective commercial situation of the SBUs."

The memorandum concluded; "we are of the considered opinion that if the ADL prescribed steps are implemented, then there is a real danger that a profitably run public sector company may turn red. At the same time the job security and service conditions of the employees are bound to affect seriously."

In the meantime the unions have already planned a meeting at Delhi to review the post strike situation and decide future course of programmes.

## FERTILIZER WORKERS OBSERVED COUNTRYWIDE STRIKE ON 11.11. 1997

More than 10,000 workers of public sector fertilizer industry located in all the major states of the country, at the joint call of two federations of all the functioning trade unions affiliated with AITUC, CITU, INTUC and also independent observed a day's token strike on 11.11.1997 demanding immediate revival of the sick units under Fertilizer Corporation of India and Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation. On the day of the strike the trade unions from all other fertilizer

units in the country observed solidarity programme by wearing badge and staging demonstration. Moreover, as per decision of CPSTU public sector trade unions from all over the country sent telegram to the Prime Minister supporting the demand.

The striking unions have deplored that the private sector in collaboration with MNCs have already established dominant position in the fertilizer industry at the cost of the public sector fertilizer units of the country. They

expressed serious concern that the government under the NEP is increasing dependence on import and offering concessions to private sector out of way at the cost of self-reliance on fertilizer which is most vital input for increasing agricultural production.

The significance of the strike is that this is the first action programme launched by the joint forum of trade unions in FCI and HFC called **United Platform for revival of FCI-HFC**. The successful strike has further

consolidated the unity of the workers and has provided opportunity to carry forward the

movement for reviving the sick fertilizer units.

The trade unions are scheduled to

meet at Delhi on 6.12.97 to take stock of the situation and work out next course of action.

## NOVEMBER REVOLUTION DAY OBSERVED IN DURGAPUR

A well attended hall meeting was held in Netaji Bhavan, Durgapur on 7.11.1997 to observe the 80th Anniversary of the November revolution. Dilip Mazumdar, President of Hindustan Steel Employees Union, presided over the meeting. M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, while speaking on the

occasion emphasised the contribution made by the November revolution in the world revolutionary movement. He further explained the causes of dismantling of socialism and stressed that the working class in former USSR and other socialist countries would rise again to overthrow the capitalist system.

Pointing out the relevance of November revolution in present day situation Pandhe explained the world is rising against globalisation & neoliberalisation. He elaborated the need for the Indian working class to play its role in establishing a socialist society on the soil of India.

## BIHAR : TU CLASS

Two days trade union class was organised by the Bihar state committee of CITU in Patna on 1-2, Nov. 1998. 175 comrades including some from fraternal TUs and other mass organisations attended. M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, addressed the

participants on two subjects; (i) 150th anniversary of the Communist Manifesto and its relevance to working class movement today and (ii) The present situation and the tasks of the Trade Unions. Chandi Prasad, President, Yogendar Prasad

Singh, Vice-President, Bihar CITU also addressed the participants.

Similar T.U. classes have been planned by the Bihar CITU, to be held at Jamshedpur, Ranchi, Dhanbad, Bhagalpur.

(Report from Arun Kumar Mishra)

## INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON HEALTH SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT IN IRON AND STEEL INDUSTRY

The International Symposium on Health, Safety and Environment was held in Barcelona (Spain) from 20 to 22 October 1997. Nearly 400 representatives from steel producing countries participated in the symposium. From India on behalf of SAIL, M.K. Pandhe, Vice-Chairman, Joint Committee on Safety in Steel Industry

(JCSSI) and Dr. V.G. Mathur, CMO, Durgapur Steel Plant attended.

The symposium discussed at length and considered various aspects of health and safety in steel industry and several papers detailing the experience in different countries were presented. M.K. Pandhe, intervening during the discussion, noted that the

MNCs while supplying new technology do so not supply necessary information about the hazards involved in the operation of the equipments in industry. He also explained the activities carried out in steel industry through tripartite machinery which has helped in improving the health and safety in the industry.

## 36TH CONFERENCE OF AITUC

The 36th Conference of AITUC was held at Amritsar from 16th to 20th Oct., 1997. The Prime Minister Shri Inder Kumar Gujral Inaugurated the conference which was addressed by several other

union ministers, and the Punjab Chief Minister Shri Prakash Singh Badal. The conference was attended by over 2 thousand delegates and observers. Fraternal delegates from several countries

and the General Secretary of WFTU also attended the conference. The conference was greeted by the leaders of the Central Trade Unions including M. K. Pandhe, General Secretary,

CITU. The mass rally held in the afternoon of 16th was addressed by the Union Home Minister Indrajit Gupta, among others.

M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU greeting the conference criticised the policy of globalisation and appealed for unity of all trade unions to fight its dangerous consequences. He emphasised the need to strengthen the struggle against the World Bank-IMF offensive so that the developing countries can chalkout the path of self-reliant development of their economy. Pandhe welcome the coming

together of five major TUs in India and called for strengthening this unity in the interest of working class.

The report of the general secretary which dealt with the international and national situation laid special emphasis on the need for organising the unorganised, among other things.

The conference was divided into five commissions for detailed discussions on economic policy, organisation, unorganised sector, social security and working women and child labour.

The conference while demanding

that the ILO should supervise the implementation of social standards, opposed the linkage of the question with trade which is a protectionist measure by the developed countries.

The conference adopted resolution on matters of current interest to the working class.

The outgoing President B.D. Joshi, while addressing the inaugural session, called for genuine unity of TU movement. The conference elected J Chittaranjan MP, as President and re-elected K L Mahendra as General Secretary.

### **WFTU Asian Regional Seminar**

In cooperation with the AITUC and the ILO the WFTU Asia Pacific Regional Bureau, organised a seminar at Amritsar on 17-18 Nov., '97. The theme of the seminar was Poverty Alleviation, Unemployment and Rural Development. Apart from the representatives of the organisations affiliated to WFTU, nominees of CITU, All India Agricultural Workers Union, BMS, General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions and All China Federation of Trade Unions participated in the Seminar on invitation. The Seminar was inaugurated by Indrajit Gupta, Vice President WFTU and AITUC. The President and the General Secretary of WFTU also participated in the seminar. Papers

dealing with different aspects of the theme were presented by Debkumar Ganguli, Secretary, WFTU, Kanai Banerjee, Secretary, CITU, Sukomal Sen, General Secretary, TUI Public service and All India State Govt. Employees Federation. A paper by P.K. Kodiyan, General Secretary, BKMU was circulated.

The seminar noted the ever rising unemployment, under employment and extreme poverty which are the direct results of the capitalist path of development; the devastating effect of the economic policies of liberalisation and globalisation pursued by the govts of many developing countries under pressure from the US dominated IMF and World Bank; the unfettered entry of transnational

corporations leading to liquidation of indigenous industry; dismantling the public sector and so on. The seminar viewed radical land reform as a must for eradication of rural unemployment and poverty. It stated that replacement of the policies of so-called liberalisation and globalisation by people-oriented democratic policies of development. It rejected the proposal for "social clause" in trade agreements. The participants emphasised the importance of strong link between urban workers and rural toilers. International cooperation at regional and world level among trade unions in the common struggle against the offensive of the exploiting classes was emphasised.

### **GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING OF WFTU ASIA PACIFIC REGION**

Meeting of the Asia Pacific Regional General Council of the WFTU was held at Amritsar on 18-10-1997, in which members

from a number of countries of the region participated. The meeting was presided over by Gnuven van Tu, the President of WFTU who

is also the President of the Vietnam General Conference of Labour. Alexander Zharikov, the General Secretary of WFTU was

also present. CITU, All China federation of Trade Unions and General Federation of Nepalese Trade unions participated as invitees.

The meeting mainly discussed the problems of organisation. The affiliates promised to make financial and other contributions for revitalising the organisation

and its activities in the region. Kanai Banerjee, Secretary, CITU attended the meeting as an invitee. He assured the WFTU of continued cooperation, which, he hoped, would bring the two organisations more closer. He pointed out that a trend of trade unions coming together for a common cause cutting across

ideological and organisational barriers was discernible. This holds out a promise for the possibility of development of a most broadbased international trade union unity in future. He appealed to WFTU leadership to take note of this trend while formulating its policies.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Recently, the CITU headquarters at New Delhi had the privilege to receive a number of fraternal TU leaders from Vietnam DPRK, Korea, Bangladesh and the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU).

WFTU General Secretary, Alexander Zharikov called on the CITU on 10-10-1997 and met General Secretary M.K. Pandhe and other secretariat members. The two sides held cordial discussions on issues concerning mutual relations and ways and means to strengthen international working class solidarity.

A four-member delegation of Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) led by President, Nguyen Van Tu, who has also assumed the Presidentship of WFTU recently, made a courtesy call on CITU on 21-10-1997. The VGCL delegation was received by CITU President E. Balanandan and other secretariat members. Both sides discussed issues of mutual interest and bilateral relations between the two organisations. President Nguyen

Van Tu extended an invitation to CITU to send a trade union delegation to visit Vietnam before the end of 1997.

A two-member delegation from the General Federation of Trade Unions of Korea (GFTUK) led by its Vice President Ri Jin Su, visited the CITU headquarters on 22.10.97. The delegation was received by Kanai Banerjee and other Secretariat members. The Vice President Ri extended an invitation to CITU for sending a TU delegation to DPRK at a convenient time and assured that the GFTUK would reciprocate the visit some time next year.

Nurul Islam, President of Bangladesh Trade Union Kendra, visited on 23.10.1997. He was received by Kanai Banerjee and other Secretariat members. Leaders of both sides exchanged views on issues concerning bilateral relations. During the discussions, the CITU proposed a goodwill visit of CITU delegation to Bangladesh some time early next year in order to strengthen fraternal relations with Bangladesh TU organisations.

Nurul Islam appreciated the idea and soon after his return, has extended a formal invitation.

All these trade union leaders from fraternal overseas organisations had come to India to participate in the 36th AITUC conference at Amritsar.

On 26.10.97, Sohan Singh Sandhu and Jonal, leaders of the Indian Womens' Association, London visited the CITU headquarters. They were received by Com. Vimal Ranadive and Com. P K Ganguly. The visitors had a mutual exchange of views on the present situation and struggles of the working class, with the CITU.

## CFTU CONFERENCE

The Ceylon Federation of Trade Unions extended an invitation to the CITU for attending their 23rd Delegates' Conference at Colombo on 29.11.1997.

A K Padmanabhan, Secretary, CITU attended the conference as per decision of the CITU Secretariat.

## MEETING OF HINDI SPEAKING STATES

A meeting of the Hindi Speaking state Committees will be held on Wednesday the 10th December 1997, at the CITU headquarters in New Delhi.

The Agenda:

1. Review of organisational work in Hindi speaking states.
2. Central Trade Union school - Date and venue.
3. Editorial Board for CITU MAZDOOR and improving its circulation.
4. Publication of TU literature in Hindi.
5. Any other matter.

The President, General Secretary and one more representative (to be decided by the state committees) are requested to attend the meeting.

The state committees invited for the meeting are Bihar, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu-Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan and U.P.

The CITU working committee meeting at Shimla decided to constitute a separate editorial board for 'CITU Mazdoor', comprising leaders from Hindi speaking states. The state committees are requested to discuss this and come to the meeting with names of competent comrades from their states who can take this responsibility, State committees should also take up their respective quota for increasing the circulation.

M.K. PANDHE  
General Secretary

### ATTENTION ALL CONCERNED, PLEASE!

The working committee of CITU meeting at Shimla during October 1997, discussed matters relating to our journals.

The working committee reconstituted the Editorial Board of 'The Working Class'.

It was also decided to constitute a separate Editorial Board for 'CITU MAZDOOR', including in it comrades from Hindi speaking states. This will be done after discussions in the forthcoming meeting of the Hindi speaking states.

The working committee discussed the steps to improve the quality of our journals. It was decided to increase the number of pages from 24 to 28, with a 4 page cover in a good quality paper.

The meeting reviewed the increasing cost of the journals because of which the CITU centre is now incurring huge subsidies to cover up the losses. After detailed discussions, it was decided to

increase the price per copy and the subscription rates of our journals. The revised rates will be effective from January 1998 issues.

The Working Class	Rs.4
per copy	
Annual Subscription	Rs.40
CITU Mazdoor	Rs.4
per copy	
Annual Subscription	Rs.40
Voice of the Working Women	Rs.4
per copy	
Annual Subscription	Rs.20

The working committee also called upon all state committees and affiliates to make concerted efforts for improving the circulation of our journals.

We seek the cooperation of all concerned in this regard,

M.K. PANDHE  
General Secretary

*(Continued from page 26)*

delegation. Several other developing countries, however, included trade union representatives in their delegations.

In the name of globalisation, despite opposition by all the major central trade unions, the Government of India is nonchalantly going ahead with measures that harm the interests of the nation and the people. The movement to oppose the new economic policies has no doubt resulted in slowing down the process, but the trade union movement has not been able to persuade the Government to reverse those policies. There is, therefore, an urgent need to strengthen the trade unions so that the Government is forced to retrace the steps taken at the dictates of the IMF and the World Bank.

*(continued on page 19)*

# Consumer price Index Numbers for Industrial Workers

(Base 1982=100)

State	Sr.No.	Centre	Aug'97	Sep'97	State	Sr. No.	Centre	Aug'97	Sep'97
AP	1	Gudur	357	359	PB	45	Amritsar	314	318
	2	Guntur	356	358		46	Ludhiana	319	323
	3	Hyderabad	330	332	RAJ	47	Ajmer	360	361
	4	Visakhapatnam	338	348		48	Jaipur	343	348
	5	Warangal	340	341	TN	49	Chennai	378	382
ASM	6	D D Tinsukia	320	315		50	Coimbatore	346	350
	7	Guwahati	367	365		51	Coonoor	367	369
	8	Labac-Silchar	316	314		52	Madurai	354	360
	9	Mariani Jorhat	340	340		53	Salem	356	352
	10	Rangapara-Tezpur	341	343		54	Tiruchirapally	395	400
BHR	11	Jamshedpur	341	343	UP	55	Agra	340	337
	12	Jharia	305	306		56	Ghaziabad	349	350
	13	Kodarma	318	313		57	Kanpur	355	354
	14	Monghyr	329	330		58	Sharanpur	323	325
	15	Noamundi	340	337		59	varanasi	369	371
	16	Ranchi-Hatia	347	349	WB	60	Asansol	327	330
GUJ	17	Ahmedabad	362	363		61	Calcutta	366	368
	18	Bhavnagar	379	377		62	Darjeeling	301	307
	19	Rajkot	358	352		63	Durgapur	376	380
	20	Surat	375	373		64	Haldia	391	395
	21	Vadodra	363	360		65	Howrah	368	370
HRY	22	Faridabad	358	367		66	Jalpaiguri	320	323
	23	Yamuunanagar	334	336		67	Raniganj	315	317
J&K	24	Srinagar	343	354	CHD	68	Chandigarh	356	358
KAR	25	Bangalore	359	364	DEL	69	Delhi	386	387
	26	Belgaum	382	384	PON	70	Pondicherry	425	429
	27	Hubli-Dharwar	363	364					
	28	Mercara	373	378			<b>ALL INDIA</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>361</b>
KER	29	Alwaye	374	373			<b>Additional Series of Labour Bureau</b>		
	30	Mundakayam	386	382					
	31	Quilon	397	387					
	32	Thiruvananthapuram	399	400	AP	1	Kothagudem	366	363
M P	33	Balaghat	348	352	HP	2	Himachal Pradesh	341	346
	34	Bhillai	323	327	RAJ	3	Bhilwara	352	353
	35	Bhopal	375	379	MP	4	Chhindwara	361	365
	36	Indore	358	359	TRI	5	Tripura	345	340
	37	Jabalpur	356	356	GOA	6	Goa	424	427
MHR	38	Mumbai	403	407			Government of India Ministry of Labour Labour Bureau Shimla		
	39	Nagpur	371	370					
	40	Nasik	384	383					
	41	Pune	387	390					
	42	Solapur	371	370					
ORI	43	Barbil	351	347					
	44	Rourkela	349	350					

(Frontline, a fortnightly magazine published from Chennai, in its issue dated 28th November, 1997, published an interview with M.K. Pandhe. We reproduce the same here as it covers an important issue concerning trade union unity. Editor)

## FOR UNITED ACTION

Dr. M.K. Pandhe, general secretary of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), is known for his role in building unity among trade unions. On his return to Delhi from Shimla, where the CITU held its working committee meeting from October 25 to 28, Pandhe spoke to S.K. Pande on the CITU's campaign for a confederation of central trade unions, a concept first mooted by the late B.T. Ranadive, the first president of the CITU. Excerpts from the interview:

*Frontline: The CITU has put forward the idea of a confederation of central trade unions?*

M.K. Pandhe: We put forward the idea and spoke about even in our Shimla working committee meeting. The idea has been mooted earlier, but there are two views. We are for confederation; some others talk of merger of unions. The AITUC and the HMS are for merger (of unions) cannot come about till we sort out some of the problems before us. Merger of central trade unions before sorting out problems would be shortlived because elements of division would continue to operate. Even a confederation of central trade unions will not materialise until all agree to the proposal. In the past, the then general secretary of the AITUC, A.B. Bardhan, had welcomed the idea of a confederation. We feel that the proposal for merger

without creating pre-exquisite organisational unity would be somewhat premature. We want a stable and lasting form of unity.

*FL: Has the confederation idea been tried anywhere?*

MKP: Central government employees have a confederation. Pakistan has a confederation of six major trade unions and Italy has experienced success in confederation. The Latin American countries have combined on trade union issues.

*FL: What are the differences among the unions?*

MKP: The differences are narrowing down. One view is that all trade unions should merge and form a single trade union centre. We feel that while this a noble and well-motivated idea, it requires the removal of shortcomings which hamper unity in order to fructify.

*FL: What are the impediments to unity?*

MKP: Individual self-interest in some cases; bossism, which has strengthened bureaucratisation and reduced the role of workers; undemocratic functioning, which has resulted in several splits. There are prominent trade unions that ignore the workers' interests and harm the cause of trade union unity. Then there is also the question of fighting corruption within organisations and the entry in some cases of mafia and anti-social elements - all these act as impediments to unity. Another factor is the inflow of foreign

funding and the entry of foreign agencies with vested interest in keeping the divisions. Several NGOs are entering the trade union movement with ulterior motives to keep unions divided. The trade union leadership all over the country should tackle these problems in the interests of wider unity.

*FL: What are the positive signs?*

MKP: The struggle by Central government employees on the question of the Fifth Pay Commission shows that if the working class unites and is determined in its resolve to fight, success can be achieved. In the case of banks too, when officers joined (the struggle), it was a success.

On the negative side the multiplicity of trade unions has reduced their bargaining power. In the present national political scenario, the importance of trade unions is getting eroded day by day. The Government is ignoring the trade union movement in taking decisions relating to the livelihood of the working class. Trade unions have not been included in several important consultative committees. At the ministerial level meeting of the WTO (World Trade Organisation), which considered the question of linkage of social clause with trade, no trade union representative was included in India's official

(Continued on page 24)



Two views of  
the Procession,  
Shimla  
CITU Working  
Committee in  
Session at  
Shimla



*Above: Indian Delegation at CUBA Below: International Convention Against Globalisation, Cuba*