

# Speech made at the 6th Conference of CITU

By Vimal Ranadive

**W**HILE placing the report. I am glad that a special session on the problems of working Women and their participation is being discussed in the full session of the conference, thus getting an opportunity to place our views before all the delegates. I am sure this will hasten the progress of the work among the working women to bring them in the mainstream of the common struggle of the working class against the present social system, Congress Rule.

The problems of working women are being discussed widely today in our country by various organisations, CITU taking up the lead to organise them by formation of All India Co-ordination Committee in 1979. During last 7 years the work among the working women has increased, the specific problems of working women such as their retrenchment, discrimination in wages, unequal remuneration, provision of creche have been taken up in different States by the State Co-Ordination Committee, as well as by the women's wings formed under the different Federation and Associations working in the middle class employees. It is true, though we have not been able to bring the complete solutions to the above mentioned problems of working women to our satisfaction, the AICCW has come to be known to the working women as a Committee for fighting for the cause of working women. Because of the role of CITU, the Central Govt had to pay attention to our Co-Ordination Committees, by writing and replying to our representation made on various question. The report submitted here will show, we have been able to tackle a few problems like creche, maternity benefit, irregular transfers, transport, etc., While highlighting the issue of drastic retrenchment of women workers by the introduction of mechanisation, and unequal wages. The intervention of the AICCW and CITU compelled the Government to take steps in solving some of the problems to a certain extent.

## Women, the first victim of unemployment

It is acknowledged that women workers are

the first victims whenever the question of retrenchment arise under capitalism. In India, the number of women employed in the organised sector has not increased much.

The women job seekers on the live register as per the figures increased from 3138000 in 1982 to 50,98000 in 1986, the increase in percentage being 15.9 in 1982 to 16.9 to total number of job seekers on the live-register. On the other hand, the placement of women is very much less as the report points out. The retrenchment is noticeable wherever women constituted in a large number such as Jute and Textile, Mines and Tobacco. Only one instance is enough to show the attitude of the Government towards the question of jobs for women. The Baveja Committee appointed by the Central Government has permitted the Coal Industry to retrench 50,000 women wagon loaders in Mines. Most of the women working here are out. The small Green threshing plant machine introduced in the Tobacco by Multinational Company I.L.T.D. retrenched thousands of women from Labour intensive industries.

The introduction of mechanisation processes in Coir, Agriculture etc. will affect thousands of women who are traditionally employed in these sector.

As the report has pointed out in detail, the striking feature affecting the employment of women, is the rapid growth of the unorganised sector and homebased industries who have been displaced from the industries due to closures, retrenchments, mechanisation etc. The home based industries and part time work for women has become a profit making business of the Multinationals in the Capitalist world. The percentage of such industries, in India, Malaysia, in South Asia and other places has increased considerably according to the ILO statistics. In almost all the cities in India, one finds small scale homebased work done mostly by women and children spending hours of work to earn just a meagre salary. Important point to be noted here is the com-

plete denial of any legislation and welfare benefit. There is no security of jobs and no employer-employee-relations, the work is given by middlemen and contractors. The report has dealt in detail about this section and their working conditions. The women in Agriculture are a part of his huge unemployment in our Country.

The recent announcements of the Central Government to import the hi-technique computers and so on will affect the middle-class women employees in the offices in thousands who are employed as clerks, typists, stenos, etc. There is no guarantee given by the Government for alternative jobs to those who would be victimised.

The CITU and All India Co-ordination Committee have taken up the question of job security, regularisation of thousands of women working in unskilled jobs. Major section in Construction is of women. Women in Integrated Child Development Schemes (ICDS), called Anganawadis, Balwadis, Women Health employees, have no regular work, their wages are very poor and no statutory legislation applied to them.

### **Right to work as a Fundamental Right**

Under such circumstances, the right to work assumes a great importance for the working women in our country. The CITU has already called upon the State Co-ordination Committees to pay more attention to the women in the unorganised sector and to those who are unemployed while demanding the right to work as a fundamental right to be incorporated in the constitution and in the absence of this the workers should get unemployment relief. The question of jobs for men and women has become very serious and unless drastic measures like generating employment through industrialisation and land reforms in the countryside are taken up by the Government this question will assume serious proportion.

### **Maternity Benefit as a Right to motherhood**

We demanded maternity benefit as a right to motherhood, a social necessity under the present social system where women have to work at home and in the factory or any other

place. The role of a mother necessitates her to demand a minimum four months leave and maternity benefit according to her choice. The statistical data provided in the report will speak as to how payment of maternity benefit is avoided under various pleas and how thousands of women in the unorganised sector and women contract workers are deprived of the benefit. The temporary and casual women workers are not covered under the Maternity Benefit Act 1961. The medical Bonus of Rs. 25/- is just a hoax for a mother with a child. If a women employee has a miscarriage, she is denied the maternity leave and payment despite the rules under the Act.

The recent announcement of 4th Pay Commission has restricted the right to Maternity benefit upto two children. The Congress rulers at the centre and the state level have already started implementing, the recommendations as in case of Orissa Govt. This is done in the name of "population Control" and the "objective of a small family". The Commission has not explained whether one year maternity leave as sanctioned is to be paid leave as it is under the socialist government.

The quantum of the maternity benefit is so small, that the recuperation of a mother is not possible with that amount with the existing high level of prices of medicines and essential commodities.

The working women demand, therefore, the right to maternity Benefit as a social necessity, when congress rulers claim "motherhood as a sacred right" in the directive principle, it is the duty of the Government that every woman employee gets the 4 months leave according to her choice and those who are not covered under the Act should be entitled to get the leave and benefit. Unmarried should not be insulted and deprived of benefit under the charge of "moral tergitude" as it was done in case of Bhuj telephone operator in Gujarat. She won the case in the Supreme Court and got her benefit in the end.

### **Provision of Creche**

A working mother has a right to the provision of creche at the working place. They are entitled to get this under the Factory Act or Mines, and Plantation Act. In the absence of

the creche, a working mother can not concentrate on her work and the children suffer physically and mentally. The figures given in the report, the remarks made by various committees, and journals, show that in almost all the industries, the provision of creche is negligent, the facilities are rare. Secondly, this provision is not yet extended to the women employees in the offices and establishments despite the repeated demands made by the AICCWW. This issue has been left to the whims of the managements to the availability of proper place for the creche, and to the voluntary organisations. One cannot understand the policies of the Government which has double standard, one for women workers in the industries and the other for women employees, mothers. The difference in the attitudes of the capitalist and Socialist Governments to this question is so obvious here. Working mothers under any Socialist country are looked after very well, leave is granted for 6 months or even more if necessary with full pay, and the children in the creches very well cared for.

The CITU and State Co-ordination Committee have to take this question very seriously and see the implementation of the provision of creche while demanding its extension to the women employees in offices etc.

#### **Wages of women — very poor and unequal**

Women workers in general get poor wages. considering the existing high prices in the market it is not possible for the family to live. Women in the organised industries are paid Rs. 8-9 on an average in plantations or in Mines. Over and above that they get unequal wages for "the same nature of work" for men and women. In Construction and Railway under the Public Sector, women get Rs. 2-3 less wages than the men. In Beedi, garment, electronics etc. also, women get the poor wages since they are mainly working in "women preferred industries", as per the Government reports. The working conditions of women in homebased industries are already dealt with in the report highlighting the cruel exploitation of their cheap labour, by paying them just meagre wages, while the middlemen and the employers get huge profits.

Despite the ILO convention on Equal

Remuneration and the Equal Remuneration Act passed in 1976, the unequal wage continues in various industries with no proper enforcement machinery to implement the legislations concerning women.

The discrimination in wages, promotion, and in employment continues at various places while the Government expresses helplessness to implement the legislations.

The representation by the CITU and the AICCWW, as well as the intervention by the ILO and other international bodies, perhaps, the Government was now thinking in terms of amendment of the Equal Remuneration Act, to make the Act more stringent.

#### **Training Facilities**

Women are generally employed in "women preferred" industries and in unskilled jobs. The Ministry of Labour has announced a number of schemes for training women. Vocational training facilities, colleges, courses, etc. are granted by the schemes. The charts given in the reports along with the chapter in training facilities will convey, what type of training is supposed to be given for women. They are given training mainly for "Hair and Skin Care", garment, Secretarial Practices, Electronics, Dress making" and so on. The training in Engineering industries in skill jobs are preserved for men only. The total number of women and men trained, given in the table will no doubt prove the attitude of the organisers and the congress rulers as to what they would prefer for women, and which skills.

There is no doubt that unless women are trained in skilled jobs, they will not be promoted with high salaries. Because of their not being skilled they were retrenched from Jute and Textile etc. But the argument forwarded by the management to deny these facilities to women are "they do not stick to the jobs" or "after some years they leave the job after their marriage" which is not true. In today's conditions, women would like to stick to the jobs with whatever social burdens they had to go through. The Government in fact is not serious about the employment, training facilities, creche and so on for women.

There are night shifts for women at some places like in fisheries despite the ban on night shifts. Women are suffering due to health hazards due to working in Mines, fisheries and Cashew. There is no protection against these hazards given by the management with the result women workers get lung diseases. The fingers become useless after working for 5 years in fisheries.

### **Discrimination Against Women All Round**

Working Women in Pharmaceutical industries are discharged as soon as the management comes to know they are marked. Many girls continue to work with their maiden name afraid of losing their job. The significant case of Air hostesses in Air India and Indian Airlines is well known. The age bar for retirement for them was 40, if she is unmarried while a man steward can continue to work upto 55. The arguments forwarded by the management in the court for early retirement were their 'looks'. They are not able to please the customers after they get elderly. These unashamed arguments of the management were also supported by the late woman Prime Minister and the Parliament members of the Congress party. Only the progressive judgement given by the Supreme Court gave limited justice to the Air hostesses.

### **What about the Legislations?**

The Government itself expresses its inability to enforce their laws concerning women. Then, can anybody expect the laws to be abided by the employers? CITU and AICCWW wrote to the Government and the concerned authorities about the non-implementation of equal Remuneration Act, Retrenchment of women, Discrimination in regularisation of workers, Maternity Benefit and so on. The reply always was "it is a state subject" or "enforcement machinery is weak". AICCWW suggested drastic changes, in the legislations, as well as the association of trade unions, women's organisations and co-ordination committees with the enforcement machinery. But the Government which recognises the "voluntary bodies", is not willing to invite the co-operation of trade unions or AICCWW, which would have surely helped the implementation of the legislations. The trade unions committees of women in Socialist countries

are doing a marvellous work in case of working women's conditions, their legislations, difficulties, etc. in factories and other places.

### **Specific Problems of Working Women**

Specific problems of transfer, transport for nurses, night duty for telephone operators, etc. are dealt in the report. A question of transfer of working women at far off places dealt by CITU and AICCWW in a few cases resulted in getting some justice to women arbitrarily transferred. Because of our pursuing the case, some decisions taken by the Govt. in 1979 on this question of transfer should help the working women. Many women working in offices will benefit from these decision. Because of security reasons, the nurses and telephone operators do need transport, hostels for working women. The Govt though it promised that in the course of 7th five year plan, 300 hostels for working women will be built, nothing much has yet been done.

### **Economic Policies of the Central Government Towards Working Women**

Women are entering the Labour market on a large scale, due to the economic conditions existing in our country. But they are the worst sufferers, unable to find even any petty job just to survive from the acute economic crises. Various plans and schemes offered by the Central Govt in the 6th and 7th five year plans, under such circumstances make a mockery of the slogans raised by the Congress rulers for the development of our women in every sphere during the women's Decade. The Planning Commission set up a commission "on employment of women" in 1979, the findings were published in 1985. Before the General election in 1984, a National Committee on women met again with the Union Minister in chair to discuss the "discrimination against women". The Government was fully aware of the 30.70 lakh of women unemployed in 1982. Many were employed as part timers like EDP. The wages were only Rs. 250-300 P.M. without any other benefits. What did the Govt take steps to increase the employment among women, to increase their wages, to abolish the discrimination in wages, etc.?

The Congress rulers have found a new

panacea for the present situation of unemployment, and that is "self-employment" and "part-time jobs". A Committee has recently been formed under the chairmanship of Mrs. Ila Bhatt, to study the question of home based industries and employment. The committee recommended as per the report "to consider the time rate system for employment in all sphere and activities".

If the time rate system is introduced, it will surely help women who are the piece rated workers. But who will believe, the above statements when, unemployment continue to increase day by day, factories are being closed, mechanisation is being introduced?

Then came the 20 point programme on 15th of August 1986. So far the programme goes nothing is wrong. Any Government can announce these welfare steps for women. We have been hearing them since the women's decade and also earlier. Whatever was done with regard to Dowry Amendment Act, it was due to joint pressure of the women's movement.

The attitude of the bourgeois Government could be very well noted by the progressive people when the Muslim women's protection bill was passed to appease the Muslim Fundamentalists. Therefore, with so many promises, 20 point programmes announcements in the women's Decade etc. at Nairobi Conference on the development of women, equality and equal status not much has come out. Perhaps some few women will get employment under the "self employment scheme" a few working women's hostels will come up in a few years time, ICDS schemes in rural areas will come up when a few women will get jobs with Rs. 150-200 as wage. These are the programmes announced by the Welfare Ministry.

The results of these economic policies is seen in women from all classes coming out daily in demonstrations, rallies, Dharnas, hunger strikes and strikes. Working women have become more conscious about their rights, of the right to work and the policies that are responsible for keeping their status low. This also shows that no bourgeois government can grant an equal status for women "howsoever advanced capitalist country" it may be. Working women have to launch

struggles for their rights along with their men-folk to wrench them from the Government.

### Left Front Governments

In the light of the above performance of the Congress rule the performance of the Left Front Governments, with regard to women's employment, and welfare benefits, equal remuneration is to be noted. The Welfare Ministry in West Bengal could provide jobs to 19,000 women in ICDS Scheme, giving nutrition food for children. Under Congress rule there were only 2 projects, now there are 800. Tripura Left Front Govt. was the first Govt to apply the Equal Remuneration Act. Under Nayanar Govt in Kerala 236 creches were established which were discontinued as soon as the Congress Govt. returned to power. Minimum wages Act was implemented for men and women under these Government.

### Participation of women workers in Trade Unions

If we review our work during last 7 years with regard to the participation of women workers in Trade Unions, we have to admit the situation has not changed considerably. Yes, changes are there to a certain extent. CITU unions pay more attention to the problems of working women, Conferences have been organised on their problems under CITU and under their Federations, Co-ordination Committees have been formed, at some states, women's wings have come up in the offices, and composition of the executive committees of unions where women membership is preponderate, is also changing a bit. They are being taken on the committees. But it is also a fact that the centre, the leadership of CITU has to remind repeatedly about this to the states and district committees. Complaints from the State Co-ordination committees towards the CITU continue to come and many times intervention had to be made. That shows the old outlook among the comrades and leaders still persists and this struggle in CITU must continue so that the total movement of the working class can move forward.

In many states, the women's wings and the co-ordination committees have not yet been formed despite the great possibilities of mobilising women workers. Committees formed are

not functioning properly, many comrades as yet do not know the purpose of starting these wings. They think it is an organisation of women employees, and membership is to be done.

In the report submitted, the relevant portions from the State CITU's reports on the working women have been quoted. Many committees have criticised themselves for not paying sufficient attention to the problems and their promotion on the committee. Also some committees have done important work on this question despite the fact the co-ordination committee or women's wings were not functioning. On the whole, much more progress should have been there during so many years.

The State-Co-ordination Committees too are not functioning as they should. There is no discussion among CITU and co-ordination committee as to how the work can be improved.

### Membership of Women in Trade Unions

As is mentioned in the report, the membership of women in Trade Unions is very poor except in three states, Kerala, West Bengal and Karnataka. Our comrades in the co-ordination committees too have not paid sufficient attention to this issue, from the centre, AICCWW also not much guidance on this was given. In the chart prepared by our Central office of the membership of the unions the membership of women in 1985 is 1,70,700 out of 15,50,839, i.e. it is above 10 per cent of the total. But major sections consist of 3 States in the main. The other aspect in the table shows, the poor participation of women on the executive bodies, where women constitute a major force. In one of the unions in Kerala, where women's membership is 10,695 in 1985 only one office-bearer is a woman. There are so many instances like this. Women are not yet promoted to higher position. The report had spoken in detail about this weakness in CITU. Our progress towards this is not satisfactory. We have to make serious efforts to enrol women in their unions and bring them on the committees. Conscious efforts have to be made by our women comrades also in this respect since the question of education too is involved.

Women workers and their committees have rightly criticised the Feudal outlook of our comrades. Some leaders have said "women have to look after the children" so they cannot attend the conferences. The number of women delegates will be much less compare to men where the conference is of plantations workers. Women are the major force here. Due to their double work, it is difficult for them to attend also. This difficulty is to be removed by the male comrades, and they must help them to educate, politically.

### International Trade Union Movement Takes up the question of Working Women

It was WFTU which organised the first Conference of World Working women in 1979. It pointed out the weaknesses in Trade Union Movement with regard to the problems of working women and appealed them to promote them on the higher committees. In other countries too, these questions are dealt seriously. In the latest issue of World working class movement (WFTU) again WFTU warned about the shortcomings of the trade unions in this field. They have given a call for another conference of working women.

Comrades,

Women in all capitalist countries are launching struggles for their demands, for equal status and equal wages. They are also fighting for peace, with big mobilisations against Reagan's efforts to start Star War and Nuclear wars. In our country, we note a tremendous awakening among all sections of women on their problems. They are launching big struggle about which many instances have been given in the report. They are fighting for the right to establish their union, despite, the heavy odds, repression, arrests, sexual harassments and so on. During these struggles, they are becoming class conscious, and come to know who are their enemies and who are their friends. Instances have been given how wisely they protect the leadership, while fighting for their unions. Unless these sections are brought into the mainstream of the struggle, the total movement of the working class and democratic movement is bound to remain weak. The success of this movement depends upon how quickly we overcome the feudal tendencies in the trade union movement and

bring working women in the mainstream of the struggle against the congress rule.

With the serious attacks on the workers and working women, the responsibility of State Committees of CITU and Co-ordination Committees have increased many fold. The important point to be noted is the increasing struggles of working women. The economic crisis, the reactionary policies pursued by the Government towards the working women

compel all of them to launch struggles. Therefore, CITU and Co-ordination Committees must organise them on their rising problems, mobilise them in their unions and bring them in the forefront of the union. Without this, the task of changing the present exploitative social system will be unreal and total emancipation of women will remain a far cry. I hope, the delegates assembled here will give a thought to this and move ahead with confidence to take up the cause of working women.

## Special Session on Working Women

For the first time in the history of trade union movement in our country one full session of CITU Conference was dedicated to the issue "Problems of Working women and their participation in trade unions". The discussion on this question which took place among men and women delegates helped them to understand the weaknesses of the trade union movement. It is to be noted that there were 134 women delegates out of 2446 which is not very good. In 4th Conference held at Kanpur in 1982, there were only 50 women delegates and observers. CITU centre has asked state units to fix some quota for women delegates and hence, the number was a little more this time, but nevertheless, it was less than the quota fixed.

Com. Vimal Ranadive, Secretary, All India Co-ordination Committee of Working women placed the report before the delegates. (the speech is given elsewhere).

In all, 19 total women delegates and one male delegate spoke. Many women delegates raised some important points in their speeches which are given below.

Com. Ramanika Gupta from Bihar said, women can certainly take part in the meetings. But difficulty is, they have to take their small children along with them. When women in Mica mines work, their children sleep under the railway wagons because there are no creches. There is no maternity benefit for agricultural women and not even toilets where they work in coal mines. It is to be noted that where men and women have fought together wages are the same...."

Com. Punnavathy from Andhra said, "After the Kanpur Conference 8 women are taken on the State Committee. There are feudal tendencies in our unions and they are

to be fought. The women in agricultural are getting only Rs. 120/- per month. We have not yet gone to this section to organise them. The Co-ordination Committee in Andhra Pradesh is not properly functioning and we must see it functions."

Com. Chandra from Tamilnadu said, "Job security is the main problem for working women. Just because they are women they never get permanent job. Women workers are not getting maternity benefit and some time they had to work facing health hazards. Despite the ban on night shifts, women are asked to work in night shifts without providing them transport. The safety of women workers also is involved in the night work. Beedi women workers are deprived of provident fund. Women activists are victimised and CITU activists are the first among them. In Kanyakumari district, the missionaries are playing disruptive role in the unions. Women workers in Umapumash fought against the unbearable workload."

Com. Gargi from West Bengal said, "We tried our level best to organise women in CITU, and also try to organise unorganised women in CITU. Wherever modernisation is taking place women are the first victims..."

Com. Indumati from Orissa said, "women tribal workers are the most exploited section of the working class. But they are also most militant. There is no proper legislation for working women."

Com. Madhu Sethia from Rajasthan said, "the welfare Bill on working women moved by Com. Susheela Gopalan in Parliament is not being taken up by us. It should be

popularised. We are also not taking pain to involve working women in the organisation. If a worker retires or dies, a man is replaced. but if woman dies she is not replaced by a woman. This is discrimination. In Rajasthan, in many small scale factories women are not getting minimum wages..."

Com. T.K. Rangarajan from Tamilnadu said, "it is true, the question of organising working women is not given sufficient attention, we fail to put a woman comrade to organise working women's front. But in many industrial unions in Tamilnadu women office-bearers are now appointed with special attention. We held a special convention of working women in the unorganised industries when 350 delegates from a number of industries were present."

Com. Laxmi Saighal from U.P. said, "the committee formed in Kanpur is not functioning but we are going to reorganise it. At many places, the name of CITU itself rightens the women. We have to take some time to convince them about the cause..."

Com. Shibani Jamatiya from Tripura said, "Since British days, tribal women are fighting against the slavery system. Many women were killed in firing when in struggle. The TUIS in Tripura try to break the unity between Bengali and Tribals. They set fire to our houses. They treat Bengalis as foreigners. But our unity is intact ..."

Com. Seema from Assam, who works in Tea plantation said, "we are deprived of all facilities including the rights which are sanctioned by legislations. We do not get equal wage, medicines. We do work hard and launch struggles to keep the red flag high. Even police and management were not successful to suppress us..."

Com. Ahilya Rangnekar from Maharashtra welcomed the decision of formation of working women co-ordination committee and said, "it proved correct. In Maharashtra out of 65 lakhs agriculture workers, 38 lakhs are women. These women will have to be organised, otherwise some reactionary forces will mislead them. These women get job only for 3-4 months in a year. The Central Government appointed a committee recently to study the self-employment

among women. The condition of these women is very bad, with no legislation. The number of women in Textiles in Bombay had decreased considerably and it is only 5000 now. The question of transfer for a woman to far off places creates problems for her, besides she gets lower designation. Woman in Anganwadi are paid very little, and after working for 10 years they are still temporary, in Pharmaceutical industry, women were not allowed to marry earlier, on the question of promotion, there is discrimination.

Com. Nazzimunissa from Kerala, while welcoming the step taken by CITU to hold the special session on working women, said the Kerala delegation this time is included 25 working women because of centre's instructions. At the State level we have to do a lot for working women's participation in trade unions. We have to fight against the feudal tendencies in CITU. In many struggles women participate in large number such as in coir, cashew. All these women must be organised and promoted to higher positions ..."

Com. Rajamma from Karnataka said "with a large number of women we are not yet able to function our co-ordination committee. In Beedi Conference recently held 10,000 women participated in a rally. With a large number of working women in Karnataka, we have to try to function the co-ordination committee with the help of CITU comrades."

Com. Sandhya from Madhya Pradesh said, "we started organising working women under CITU. But it is the view of some comrades that it is the duty of women activists only. Most of the comrades treat women as women. It is necessary to have a woman wholtime to work on trade union fronts. Next time we come to the CITU session we will build the movement, we promise."

Com. Sumati Rainee from Darjeeling West Bengal said, "Darjeeling district has a glorious history of women's participation in struggles. Today our women are fighting against the divisive forces of Gurkhaland."

Com. Nirupama Chatterjee from West Bengal gave, examples of closed mills in Bengal due to capitalist crisis. Women are denied jobs. They are not given facilities, and proper

legislation. In coal industry, women are being retrenched on a large scale....”

Com. Ranjana from Delhi appreciated holding a special session of the conference on the problems of working women. Delhi CITU has not many unions where women are employed in large number. Some unions are dominated by reactionary leadership. The homebased industries on a wage of Rs. 1-2 are increasing. There is no creche and maternity benefit is curtailed by the Government. There is no unionisation among women workers. We need cadres to work among women....”

Com. Saroja from Andhra Pradesh said, “it is only CITU which is making efforts to mobilise industries women, even in State Govt. industries women are not getting equal remuneration. Major section comes from unorganised sector where conditions of women are very bad. In Vijayawada, in one of the factories, a condition for employment was women should not marry first two years of her employment. In one instance a worker marrying another woman worker the factory owner removed both from services. Six months strike took place under the banner of CITU, AITUC etc. In Hyderabad, there are 20,000 women Beedi workers and we succeeded in getting minimum wages for them. In the recent strike of nurses we played an important role....”

Com. Padmavati from Karnataka congratulated CITU for taking up the case of working women. More than 80 per cent of Beedi workers are women. Main problem of beedi workers is contract system. This system should be banned once for all, and beedi workers should be provided with all the benefits. There are health hazards like TB etc., in working in Beedi. The CITU has taken up the question of working women, and it should continue to guide us.”

The whole session was devoted to the question of working women. Com. BTR while summing up the debate said,

“19 women spoke and this itself is a record for CITU. Only one male comrade from Tamilnadu dared to face the task. The problems faced by women workers are reflected in the speeches of each of the participants. I

know, that now you will take the case more seriously. Tomorrow, it will be reflected in the resolution which will be placed before you.

“One thing before you leave, between you and me. The debate was not as hot as I expected. I think that women got a little cowed down, knowing you, as you are they did not want to provoke you too much. Anyway, the situation is clear now.

## Resolution on Working Women

The Sixth Conference of CITU condemns the Government for its failure to take any determined measure for women, to improve their employment position, and to stop discrimination against them.

That the worsening economic situation is forcing more and more women to seek for jobs can be seen from the colossal increase in the registered number of women job seekers, which have gone up from 23.45 lakhs at the end of 1980 to 50.98 lakhs at the end of 1986. The claim of the Government to have generated increased employment to women is falsified by its own data which has revealed that women's employment from 1980-81 to 1984-85 has remained almost static at around 12 per cent to the total employment, taking public and private sectors together.

Apart from their growing unemployment, women are the first victims of retrenchment due to modernisation, computerisation, etc. Discrimination of women continues despite the enactment of the Equal Remuneration Act, which is not being implemented by the employers. Their specific demands are ignored. Maternity benefit is discontinued after the

### 6th Conference of CITU

The Number of women delegates	: 134 out of 2446
The number of women on the General Council	: 20 out of 376
The number of women members on the working Committee	: 5 out of 107
The number of women office bearers	: 3 out of 26

birth of two children in the name of controlling population. Contract and casual women workers have no legal protection.

The conference warmly greets the working women who are waging valiant struggles to defend their rights and interests. It draws the attention of the unions to the fact that working women constitute an important part of working class and are its most exploited section. But the unions have been neglecting, their case. It expresses concern that while in several states the Co-ordination Committees of Working Women have not been formed at all, even those where it has been formed are not functioning properly. The Conference directs all the State Committees and the unions to form such committees and secure their active participation in union activities at all levels. They must demand for associating the Working Women's Coordination Committees in the committees for enforcement of labour laws and for formulating policies at all levels.

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proclaiming the equality of women's rights with those of men. But it is one thing to make declarations and quite another to put them into effect. The young society exerted considerable efforts to make the equality of women a reality. Today, after completing a trade school, a college or a university, young women receive diplomas and are assigned jobs. Older women also always find work. The law is on their side. The constitution specifies that women have the right to work on a par with them. Equal pay for equal work is also guaranteed by law. Should a manager decide to pay a female employee less than a male employee only because she is a woman, he would simply be taken to court.

State care for children freed any women from doing many household duties and gave them more time for studies, among other things. This had a noticeable effect on their education. Today working women are almost as well educated as men and women employees with special training outnumber the males by almost one third. Women constitute one-third of the deputies to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. They number about 30 among ministers of union republics. At the 27th CPSU Congress Alexander Biryahava was elected Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee and this is an important party post. Recently the all-union

### Names of the Women Members in the General Council

1. S. Punyawathi	: Andhra Pradesh
2. Ramnika Gupta	: Bihar
3. Padmavati	: Karnataka
4. M.M. Rajamma	: Karnataka
5. A. Nazimuniza	: Kerala
6. M.K. Kamamma	: Kerala
7. P. Rethamma	: Kerala
8. Krishnabai	: Tamilnadu
9. Laxmi Sahgal	: Uttar Pradesh
10. Arati Dasgupta	: West Bengal
11. Shibani Sengupta	: -Do-
12. P. Gangamma	: -Do-
13. Nisha Roy	: -Do-
14. Nirupama Chatterjee	: -Do-
15. Radhika Sinha	: -Do-
16. Kala Tamang	: -Do-
17. Jethimaya Raini	: -Do-
18. Lila Das	: -Do-
19. Dipali Bose	: -Do-
20. Gargi Mukherjee	: -Do-

Central Council of Trade Unions took a decision to make it obligatory for administrators to promote women to jobs in proportion to the percentage of working women in the industry.

Each 5-year plan has a section dealing with the women's working and living conditions. Paid maternity leave till the child is one year old, with the mother's job kept open for her for 18 months, leave to care for such a child, allowances for mothers with many children beginning with the birth of a third child, pensions five year earlier than for men, at 55.

Hero mothers, teachers, airhostress, working in Chemical factories (Poisonous) Balley Dancers, etc. retire even earlier.

The struggle against war is therefore a struggle for the security of the present and future generations. Women can identify with this goal more than anyone else. Aware of the gravity of the threat to peace they join the anti-war movement and swell the ranks of peace marches.

Soviet women are in the front ranks of the peace champions. We extend a hand of friendship to all who oppose the arms race unleashed by the militarists. I appeal to all women sitting in this hall to consolidate their efforts in the struggle for peace, for future of our children.