

**CENTRE OF INDIAN TRADE  
UNIONS**

**Fifth Conference**

**PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**

**B.T. RANADIVE**

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Comrades,

On your behalf I pay homage to the memory of our leaders and comrades who are no more with us.

You will join me in mourning the loss of Com. Promode Das Gupta, the outstanding leader, member of the Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and Secretary of the West Bengal Committee of the CPI(M). We also mourn the loss of another outstanding and distinguished leader of ours, Com. A. Balasubramaniam, member of the Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), Secretary of the Tamil Nadu State Committee of the Party and a foremost leader of the CITU.

With equal sense of grief we mourn the passing away of Com. L. Brezhnev, who was President of the USSR and was the Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and occupied the most responsible position in the world Communist movement. His incessant struggle for peace will be always remembered by people of all countries. During his stewardship the USSR registered new strides in economic advance. Indo-Soviet Friendship also continued to develop and was finally embodied in the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship which strengthened our country in the fight against imperialist manoeuvres, pressures and conspiracies.

Since the last eventful Conference of our organisation we have lost a number of our members and leaders of the CITU; many of whom fell victims to police bullets and died martyrs' death; we remember their sacrifice and pay our homage to their memory.

### Welcome

Comrades, on behalf of you I warmly welcome and greet our fraternal delegates from abroad. We have in our midst the representatives of the trade unions of the Soviet Union, of People's China, of the World Federation of Trade Unions and Yugoslavia.

We have always urged the Government of India to develop friendly relations with all Socialist countries. Unfortunately India-China relations got soured for a time. We are now

happy that steps for normalisation of relationship are being taken.

Comrades, we would have very much liked to have amongst us a representative of the trade union movement of Pakistan. It is neither their fault nor ours that none from Pakistan is attending our conference. You know the situation. Gen. Zia can attend the Summit in India and discuss problems of the Third World. But the trade unions of Pakistan are not permitted to attend workers' Conference in India. But that is what is non-aligned amended by Martial Law.

I warmly welcome fraternal delegates from our sister organisations in India.

### **Crisis of the Capitalist World**

Comrades we are meeting in the midst of an unprecedented crisis of the capitalist system. It has been the most-prolonged and protracted crisis and every few months the spokesmen of the capitalist world announce that something is turning up. But the crisis continues. More than 30 million people are unemployed in advanced capitalist countries who are making every effort to transfer part of their difficulties to the Third World including India. Above all the imperialists expose the predatory and barbaric character of their system when they spend billions of dollars on genocidal weapons to ease the crisis situation. The imperialists can find no other way of getting out of the crisis except spending huge resources of lethal weapons.

### **Marx's Analysis**

In the centenary year of Karl Marx's death what Marx wrote about capitalist society is being fully borne out. Concentration and centralisation of production, constant crisis, destruction of productive forces of society, constant growth of the reserve army, intensification of the contradiction between the social process of production and private method of appropriation leading to social burst up and class battles — all intensified by the existence of the socialist world — are all there to assert the soundness of Marx's analysis and conclusions.

The great progress of the socialist world, its economic advance, planned economy again corroborate what Marx said about the socialist society and human progress under it.

A century has passed since the death of Karl Marx, the great founder of the Communist doctrine. His teachings have

been tested on the anvil of history and have proved their triumphant transformatory character. All the socialist revolutions of the world acknowledge that their success is due to the revolutionary teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

Marx, analysing the laws of capitalist society in the monumental work *Capital*, saw the inevitable collapse of capitalism and the necessity for society to make a transition to socialism. He taught the working class that their exploitation and misery, the misery of all toiling humanity will not end without ending private property in all means of production and socialising them. That is how socialism has succeeded in one-third of the world, freeing the people from the scourge of poverty and unemployment while the capitalist world continues to suffer from recession, closures and unemployment.

Marx taught the working class that the objective of socialism cannot be achieved without a social revolution, without deposing the capitalists and other possessing classes from political power, without the working class taking political power in its hands — the dictatorship of proletariat. The working class must always act in alliance with other toilers to ensure success. To organise the working class to wage its battle for emancipation, he declared that it was necessary to form a distinct political party of the working class. A resolution of the International Workingmen's Association passed at the instance of Marx says, "In its struggle against the collective power of the possessing classes the proletariat can act as a class only by constituting itself a distinct political party, opposed to all the old political parties formed by the possessing classes".

### **The Danger of War**

It was Karl Mark who gave the working class the inspiring call to unite its international strength, raise the banner of proletarian internationalism and fight the unjust offensive war waged by the capitalist ruling classes.

The heritage of proletarian internationalism gets added significance today when the world is facing the danger of a nuclear war by US against the USSR, against the peoples of the world. To prepare for war the imperialists are spending billions of dollars on production of weapons of mass destruction. They intend to place these weapons in space so that death and destruction can rain on any country which dares contradict the dictates of the USA. They seek to place new destructive missiles in Europe so that the soil of USSR can be directly reached. They have only developed weapons

which can destroy in a few minutes cities inhabited by millions of people.

The pentagon's projected budget of 1.6 trillion dollars over the next five years amounts to one billion dollars a day during the period. Its most recent battle call is "come and do business with us". We must denounce the Reagan administration's war thrust and raise our voice of protest against this drive.

### **Peace efforts by USSR**

The forces of peace have been tremendously helped by the concrete proposals made by the USSR to stop the armament race and gradually eliminate the production of nuclear weapons. The unilateral declaration by the USSR that it will not be the first to use the nuclear weapon has been hailed by the international working class and all the peace loving forces. Comrades, we must fully endorse the appeal of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the Central Committee of the CPSU, which says "We call for a quick and fruitful completion of Soviet-U.S. talks on limiting and reducing strategic arms and on limiting nuclear armaments in Europe and the earliest conclusion of an agreement on armed forces and armaments reduction in Central Europe; we propose coming to an agreement without delay on a complete and a general nuclear test ban so that no more new kinds and types of nuclear weapons may be developed. We call for the prohibition and destruction of chemical weapons".

But the imperialists are in no mood to listen. They refuse to reciprocate and are bent on plunging the world into a nuclear holocaust.

### **Struggle for Peace**

The peoples of Europe, the people of the USA, fighting for peace all over the world are fighting the war danger. The popular pressure increases every day and is capable of turning the tide of war.

Comrades, proletarian internationalism, responsibility to our people, and to the people of the world demand that the entire trade union movement should actively intervene and expose and isolate the war mongers and join their voice with the working class and the people of the world to prevent a nuclear war.

We observed 1st September as anti-war day and later on participated in the mammoth peace demonstration on 4th October last year in Delhi organised by the CPI(M) CPI,

RSP, Forward Block, D.S.P and Peasants' and Workers' Party. In Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura there were huge mobilisations. All this was good but only the beginning.

But it has to be recognised that the trade union movement of our country under the influence of diverse ideologies is hardly playing its part in this gigantic struggle against human genocide. We ourselves have been somewhat lagging behind. But situation is still worse with some of our partners in the trade union movement. All the constituents of the National Campaign Committee are not agreed on the war danger and its sources. Some act as if imperialism does not exist. In the anti-war propaganda our partners are at best the AITUC and the UTUC. In short the consciousness about internationalism and war danger is extremely weak. It is our duty to activate all our unions and the workers behind them. But they are only a part of the working class. It is our responsibility to draw in the working masses of other Central Organisations acting as the spearhead of the anti-war movement. We must warn the workers that an outburst of war will not leave Indian hearths and homes unaffected and that indifference may lead to annihilation or enslavement.

Comrades, you will join me in wishing success to the fighting people of Palestine, in condemning the Israeli aggression against Lebanon and denouncing U.S. imperialism for lending support to Israel. We all support the struggles of the people of Latin America against dictatorship and U.S. intervention and the struggle of the African people for freedom against apartheid. Our sympathies are with the people of Namibia, repeatedly cheated by Western imperialist powers.

### **Non Aligned Conference**

Comrades, the non-aligned Conference which met in our country, last month was an important international event. Every meet of the non-aligned nations becomes an occasion for pressure and counter pressure by opposing forces, forces for progress and forces of reaction. There were forces in our country like the BJP who in the name of genuine non-alignment wanted a tilt in the reactionary direction. There were forces from outside the country who would have liked to promote dissensions and differences and undermine the unity of this powerful force. But the growing conflict between interests of imperialism and Third World countries, economic situation, the war danger, the common indebtedness of the Third World countries, the inability of the imperialist powers to bribe some and play them off against others and finally the rising crescendo

of popular anger in a large number of countries against the imperialists, brought the nations together and dissidents had to express themselves in a low key.

There was no doubt some unrealistic talks about two super powers, failure to distinguish between the imperialist aggressors and the Socialist countries. Nonetheless, all progressive forces should endorse the call of the summit against war and armament, its call for peace and disarmament. All must equally endorse its call for immediate steps to succour the debt ridden countries and for a new economic order. All also should endorse the call for closure economic relations among the Third World countries.

### **Role of the Government of India**

The Government of India did well to maintain its position on Afghanistan, Kampuchea, and Diego Garcia and the Indian Ocean. This did reflect the anti-imperialist national interests of the country. At the same time it has to be realised that the three decades of Congress rule have deadened the anti-imperialist consciousness and the resolution and results of the committed world hardly produce a ripple among our people. The major part of the working class itself will be very little affected by it. Unless anti-imperialism is made the property of the masses, the common people, the real strength of non-aligned movement will not be felt. How many heads can afford to do it? We have seen that while the Indian Government is free to talk about Diego Garcia, it is silent on the imperialist conspiracies inside the country. It is clear that unless our country's growing economic dependence on the West is stopped and the heritage of pre-capitalist relations in the rural areas is done away with, the country will be unable to realise the full fruits following from the policy of non-alignment.

Nonetheless the Summit marked an important stage in the progress of the non-aligned movement. It emphasised the need of the inner unity and gave a rebuff to the disruptors. It at the same time is a warning to the imperialists that the world is rapidly awakening to their manipulations and the days when situation could be easily manipulated through pliant rulers are coming to an end.

### **Struggle Against Multinationals**

In the advanced capitalist countries the fight against the multinationals is getting intensified and there have been strikes embracing the workers of the multinationals in different

countries. The struggle against the multi-nationals has added to the urge for unity and international solidarity. The trade union movement in our country is not yet conscious of the pernicious role of the multinationals. F.M.R.A.I. the organisation of the pharmaceutical field workers have made some strides in the struggle against the multinationals in the drug industry. We should take steps to educate our ranks so that the struggle against the multinationals can be carried forward properly.

### **The Election Results**

Comrades, in the midst of a worsened economic situation, the attack of divisive forces in Assam, in Punjab and communal and other forces in the rest of the country, the mass of people though often victims of diversionary politics continue to press forward in the struggle against the anti-people policies of the Congress (I) Government. An outstanding event of the beginning of the year is the decisive defeat of Congress (I) party in the States of Tripura, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. On behalf of CITU I warmly greet the victory of Tripura Left-Front headed by the CPI(M) against the Congress (I) and its secessionist ally. The Congress (I) allied not only with the secessionist tribal wing but also with the reactionary organisations like Anand Margies and Amra Bengalies. But the electorate inflicted a decisive defeat on it. The Left-front in Tripura has shown how to protect the unity of country, advance the democratic rights of the people and keep the different constituents of our people together on a democratic and secular basis. The Left-front is given a decisive mandate despite the campaign of murder by the secessionists and unleashing of goonda gangs by the Congress (I) Party. This is the second time within an year that the Congress (I) Party has been defeated decisively in an open electoral battle by the left-forces headed by CPI(M).

The people's discontent against the corrupt rule of Congress (I), against its anti-people policies and against the distress caused by the economic exploitation reached such a stage in Andhra Pradesh that it resulted in an unprecedented and humiliating defeat of the ruling party at the hands of a new party Telugu Desam. The people of Andhra Pradesh, the rural masses have expressed their strong disapproval of the Congress (I) rule and they expect that the new administration will remain watchful of their interests. While we welcome this rejection of the Congress (I) at the hands of the people of Andhra Pradesh we cannot but express our concern at the way the working class centres of the State have voted. Despite the many united

campaigns and the joint strikes and demonstrations on several issues the working class failed to elect trade union leaders with left and democratic outlook and was carried away by the general wave of Telugu Desam. The trade union movement, therefore, must continue its vigilance and while offering its readiness to help the new administration to solve the problems of the people, it should move unitedly wherever the interests of the people are not protected.

Equally startling have been the developments in the Karnataka elections where the Congress (I) has lost its majority and a new Ministry headed by the Janata Party has taken over the administration. Once more the people of Karnataka who had experienced corruption, repression, attacks on democratic rights and economic distress under the Congress (I) regime have repudiated that party.

These election results are of great political importance for our country and they are likely to set in motion a chain of events leading to further erosion of Congress (I) influence among the people and the disintegration of that party, because it is quite clear that the illusions about the Congress (I) which brought it back to power in 1980 are wearing out. Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka which for 30 years stood by the Congress Party have now repudiated it. The bastion in the south has collapsed, Kerala Ministry living only on the mercy of the communal and casteist organisations. It is seen that with her growing isolation from the people Indira Gandhi stoops to ally herself with any reactionary secessionist force as in Tripura or Kerala.

This is the time for the trade union movement to take common counsel and pull its full weight against the Congress (I) and help the Left and Democratic forces to advance further and consolidate themselves. The experience of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka shows that if the Trade Union movement and the working class is not active and conscious in the democratic struggle the discontent of the people centres round parties other than left parties. The initiative of the United Trade Union movement is necessary to ensure that in the coming critical days when the masses will be leaving the Congress (I) and searching for a new leadership, their discontent should be channelised towards the Left. Without this the masses will be oscillating between parties whose class outlook is not different.

### **The Secessionist Threat in Assam**

Comrades, another election has been held and the Congress (I) has won with a thumping majority and drawn the world's

ridicule on itself. I am referring to the Assam elections, with its trail of blood, arson, massacre of innocent people, with toilers set against the toilers. Neither the former accursed British Government of this country nor the Czarist Government of Russia had succeeded so well in their pogroms.

The lessons from the blood curdling story of Assam must be fully mastered by our trade unions if the unity of the country is to be preserved. What is happening in Assam? It is said that the main question concerns the foreign nationals who have entered Assam from Bangla Desh, it is said that the main question is to remove the names of those foreigners from the electoral role so that the people of Assam can have a free and fair elections uninfluenced by foreign vote.

The question of foreign nationals is no doubt there. But it has been deliberately exaggerated beyond proportion to seek other ends. What is demanded now in the name of settling the foreign nationals issue is eviction from Assam of all non-Assamese speaking Indian nationals, all those who have been residing in Assam for years or who under the Indian law acquired Indian nationality. This is a clever move to deny Indian nationality in Assam to eke out a separate existence for Assam in the name of fighting influx of foreign nationals. The pose of the agitators is that they are fighting for the rights of Indian nationals in Assam for protecting the country against foreign influx. But the reality is that they want to drive out all non-Assamese speaking people as foreign nationals.

This a clear secessionist threat to India without the Indian people realising the danger. The bourgeois newspapers sustain this game of deception and cheating and a number of bourgeois opposition parties also join in it. Feelings of animosity are being created among toilers, among people speaking different languages. Assam is a composite State consisting of people speaking Assamese, Bengali, of tribals, Nepalis and others. There are Bengali Muslims and Hindus in a large number. A large number of the former have come to Assam nearly half a century back from East Bengal (now Bangla Desh) which was a part of India then. They were famished peasants searching for land. After partition and the Bangla-Pak war a large number of panic-stricken persecuted Hindu Bengalis came to Assam as refugees and in due time earned the status of citizenship. There was also an international agreement between the Government of India and the Government of Bangla Desh that all those who have come from Bangladesh after 1971 would be taken back to Bangladesh. In view of this it was proposed to the agitators that 1971 should be taken as the cut off year and citizenship rights of those who came to Assam after that

year should be investigated. Their names should be removed from the electoral role in case they are without citizenship right. They may be deported outside India or to other States. Also it was proposed that every measure should be taken by the Government to prevent further infiltration.

This was a fair proposal to ensure the rights of all Indian Citizens in Assam. There should have been no difficulty in accepting it and solving the problem of foreign nationals. But this was outright rejected because the agitationists want to clear Assam of all minoritis mainly of Bengalis-Hindus and Muslims.

It was therefore correctly proposed that people's verdict should be sought. The alternative was continuation of President's rule i.e. Indira Rule.

This was the time for the agitationists to demonstrate their mass strength among the people at best.

But the agitationists knew that they did not have complete control over the Assamese speaking people also. Large sections of the people led by left parties were opposed to their game of disruption and secession. They therefore decided to boycott the elections and enforce their boycott by means of terror tactics and a campaign of minority-baiting and anti-Indian hatred. These people later on with the least compunction tried to internationalise the issue, appealed to the non-aligned summit and sought foreign help against the Indian people and unity. They were supported by bourgeois opposition parties like the BJP, Janata and Lok Dal. What kind of democracy these parties represent when they openly oppose elections and the verdict of the people? Normally these parties are extremely vociferous in professing loyalty to democratic principles. But in Assam they openly opposed the rights of the people to decide issues. Which democratic principles they follow when they support a section to veto the people's right to vote? The farcical polling in the elections in a large number of constituencies was a result of terror and not the voluntary and willing boycott by the people.

The elections though constitutionally necessary have not altered the situation. The agitationists continue their secessionist activities. They can be fought and checked only by the united opposition of the democratic masses of Assam—the Assamese speaking people and Bengali and other minorities. The Congress (I) Government will never succeed in coping with this challenge by means of administrative measures.

Large sections of Assamese-speaking people are backing the agitation. They are the victims of chauvinist demagogy. Like the rest of India under the capitalist path, the people of Assam, Assamese speaking tribals, Bengalis all are suffering from poverty, unemployment. Thirty years of Congress rule have not brought about any improvement. Their anger is now being diverted into anti-unity and anti-minority channels — a lesson to the working class and India's democratic forces. The working class should realise that the chauvinistic agitation is also directed towards undermining its class solidarity and unity not only in Assam but all over India. This is not the first time that chauvinistic and regional appeals based on linguistic fanaticism is made to divide the ranks of the workers. In Assam it has gone to extreme lines pitting toiler against toiler.

### **The U.S. hand**

This situation is being fully exploited by U.S. agencies who seek to weaken and disrupt India. The Indira Congress, the BJP, the Janata, the Lok Dal and the bourgeois press have combined in a treacherous conspiracy to conceal the U.S. hand in this affair. But it was known that the U.S. Ambassador to India was taking a special interest in Assam, paying frequent visits to the State, and holding secret confabulations with the leaders of the movement. It was also known that financial resources were supplied by foreign agencies to the movement.

A USIS document entitled Project Brahamaputra dated June 1, 1979 and which was intercepted recently shows how the U.S. agency was working for promoting secession in the area. It states "With the agreement of the States Department, the Special Operation Research Office of George Washington University has asked the U.S. outfit in India for help in conducting sociological research in the Eastern State of India including Sikkim as well as Bhutan, whose aim is to throw light on public opinion in these regions to establish in what measures the present states remain acceptable or whether their indication for the formation of a new State is a current problem". Christian missions were also involved in secessionist activity. In 1978 Dr. Cunwell, associate of World Baptist Alliance called upon missionary societies to promote secessionist sentiments to propagate Christianity. The Ambassador of Thailand also toured Assam suddenly remembering that eight hundred years back his countrymen had reached Assam to found the Ahim dynasty. The special ties which binds the Thailand Government to the USA are well-known. Thailand is foremost in opposing the Hem Semarin Government to protect the aggressive interests of the USA.

And last comes the notorious document circulated by Jean Kirkpatrick the U.S. ambassador to U.N. It contains the following observations so that no one is left in doubt almost U.S. intentions: "India's weakness lies in its many unresolved domestic and international problems apart from endemic poverty. There is a noticeable growth of separatist movement to the extent that there is a real possibility of Balkanisation of India which would destroy its influence in the Third World and elsewhere".

### **Role of the Ruling Party**

Did the ruling party take the people into confidence to combat this danger? Did it warn Indian democratic option about the evil hand behind the Assam happenings. Did the bourgeois-landlord opposition parties warn the people against the impending danger. Did the bourgeois press which parades its freedom and objectivity stand by the nation to rouse the people against this game of a new partitioning of India.

All these agencies let down the people. The ruling party is the biggest criminal. Its economic and class policies drove the people of Assam to desperation and threw them in the chauvinist net. Instead of mobilising its influence to fight the chauvinist trend it did nothing except taking administrative measures, police repression, firing etc. In order to secure votes it openly appealed to communal sentiments and contributed to incendiary riots. The Congress(I) party and the bourgeois-landlord Government at the centre have proved themselves incapable of defending national unity, of keeping the country together. The anti-imperialist sentiments expressed at the non-aligned conference disappear into thin air when it comes to fighting the imperialist conspiracy at home. If the ruling party decided to appeal to the people against secessionist chauvinism, to mobilise democratic opinion, the struggle for unity carried on by the left forces and parties of Assam would have been strengthened. But, for Congress(I), better liquidation of national unity than the strengthening and advance of left forces. To the many crimes of economic policy and authoritarian attack against democracy Indira Gandhi has added the crowning crime — growing liquidation of all sense of national unity.

### **The Bourgeois Opposition Parties**

Nothing excels the criminal opportunism of the BJP, the Janata and Lok Dal. The BJP and Janata went on wrecklessly supporting the AASU chauvinism, serving U.S. designs and cer-

tifying that this secessionist struggle was a struggle to discover Assam's identity, of course in company with U.S. agencies. They supported every obstructive move of the chauvinists, they would not condemn the murder of Bengalis, Muslims, Hindus, etc. The BJP declared that all Muslims in Assam are infiltrators i.e. aliens. To keep true to its anti-Muslim communalism, they screened every act of terror practised by the agitationists. Not one of them uttered a word of condemnation against the inhuman Nelli massacre in which hundreds of Muslim peasants were killed. They all think it was a good opportunity to secure electoral advantages for the future. Of such stuff are these parties made.

### **Voice of the Left**

The section that remained loyal to the country and did its patriotic duty was represented by CPI(M), CPI other left parties, Congress (S) and the CITU, the SFI, the Kisan Sabha and other mass organisations like the AITUC. The CPI(M), CPI and other left parties and their mass organisations carried on an incessant fight both among the Assamese speaking people and the Bengalis and other minorities to keep the democratic forces together and defend national unity. Several of our CITU comrades, workers and trade union leaders have been killed. Several of our young SFI members have been murdered for the crime of supporting popular verdict through elections. Several members of other parties and mass organisations have gone through the same ordeal. These incessant efforts were bearing fruit both among the Assamese speaking and minority sections. The elections would have shown the great strides made by the forces of unity and exposed the claim that the agitationists have exclusive sway over the Assamese speaking people. This development was not to the liking of the agitationists, the U.S. agencies, the opposition bourgeois parties of the Congress(I). The terror helped them all to stifle for the time being the voice of national unity, the voice of the left.

Comrades, we must all express our warm appreciation of the patriotism, courage and integrity of our comrades from Assam who true to the spirit of the working class defend the unity of the country, the unity of the toilers, the unity of the class. Risking life and limb they held the banner of India's unity, exposed and unmasked the USA designs and have laid the foundation for victory of democratic forces in Assam.

### **The Punjab Imbrolio**

I have dealt with the Assam question at length because it

is a sinister political development deserving the attention of the working class. A development of an equally sinister type is to be seen at the Punjab and we again find the Congress(I) Government tinkering with the problem, allowing the situation to get worsened. Here again the extreme wing openly preaches a separate sikh state carrying the U.S. impress of balkanisation of India. But the leaders of the agitation are presenting their demands as demands for greater power to the state and even the Government seems to be agreeable to discuss it. But it is dragging its feet and diverting attention on minor questions. Certain genuine issues are mixed up with communal appeal and instead of checking the latter and settling the former, the Government is making concessions to the latter and dragging its feet on former. Instead of settling issues like Chandigarh and transfer of certain areas on the basis of language as the deciding factor, the Government has made concessions to communal demands like broadcasting of Sikh prayers on the All India Radio. For the rest the Government is playing one State against another thus passing on the initiative to the extreme Sikh reactionaries.

### **Tripura shows the path**

In contrast, see how the Left Front Government of Tripura led by the CPI(M) has protected the unity of the people. The left parties and Government in Tripura deserve special congratulations because they have frustrated the game of divisive forces to divide the people of Tripura into Bengalis vs. the tribals. Their victory is all the more important because the Congress(I) had entered into an alliance with tribal secessionists and reactionary organisations like Amra Bengali and Anand Margis.

### **Other Divisive Forces**

Apart from these secessionist forces, our country is plagued with other divisive forces — the heritage of the past. Hindu communalism — a wanton appeal to communalism not based on any genuine grievances; appeal to minority separatism which succeeds because of the discrimination practised against the Muslim minority the caste oppression, and harijan atrocities which offer a golden opportunity to the ruling party to divide the toilers by offering reservation in jobs to the extremely backward sections — every weapon is used to divide the toilers, disrupt class unity and with it all sense of national unity.

### **Task of the Trade Unions**

It cannot be said that our trade unions are aware of this danger, are aware of the fact that large sections of these people

are already showing their indifference to trade union organisations. Unless the trade unions recognise this reality, take into consideration that large sections of workers have vital problems other than the ones relating to the common problem of defending the economic conditions, their appeal will cease to be all-pervasive. They will have to yield ground to sectarian and sectional organisations. In Indian conditions the worker is not free from feudal social discrimination on the ground of caste or religion — this fact our trade unions must grasp in conducting their activities. At the same time the logic of class struggle enables all those sections to rise above old divisions and stand shoulder to shoulder facing starvation and misery. I am referring to the glorious example of Bombay Textile Workers who have maintained their solidarity for more than a year — a mass composed of diverse caste, and divisions but acting like a class. This is what the workers are capable of in all parts of India if the requisite practice and guidance comes from the trade unions.

### **Fight Against the Authoritarian Rule**

Comrades, the fight against the Congress-(I) authoritarian rule has to be carried on in the midst of most grim circumstances. We all must congratulate the democratic forces whose united resistance has barred the enactment of the notorious Bihar Press Bill till now. The press, the united resistance of all opposition parties supported by the agitation inside the Parliament and outside have made their pressure felt. The Bihar Chief Minister was forced to declare that the Bill was dead. Our CITU unions, especially in Bihar participated in this agitation to make it a success. A similar notorious Act has been enacted in Tamilnadu by the AIADMK Government and it is high time that agitation is launched to secure its withdrawal.

The drive of the authoritarian forces against the people continues. More and more power is being concentrated at the centre creating a crisis in the relations between the Centre and States. Anti-working class legislation is being passed and more anti-labour acts are on the anvil. Above all there is no appeal against police brutalities, rapes of women, murder in police custody. Every misdeed of the police is being hushed up. The so-called rule of law is hardly in existence. Courts are being packed with “committed” judges. Inside the Cabinet the supreme leader holds all power in her hands. Collective responsibility of the Cabinet is long ago dead. Behind the facade of Parliament dictatorship measures are being adopted. For years organisational elections are not held. The disruption

in the organisation, its alienation from the people, the economic crisis, make reliance on arbitrary measures a necessity for class rule. This is the dangerous trend. The trade unions have to fight and for this purpose join hands with all other democratic and oppositional forces who are interested in stemming the tide of authoritarian rule.

### **Support the Left Front Governments**

Comrades, the left front governments of West Bengal and Tripura form the advance democratic outposts in the struggle. For five years they have worked for the common man and widened the base of left forces among the people. In the recent elections they increased their voting strength inspite of recessionary conditions, the breakdown of energy and drought conditions in the States and the riots in Tripura. This is a real measure of their success with the people, the confidence they have earned. That is because these governments followed a policy of throwing their weight on the side of the workers and the common people and refused to lend to the capitalists the services of the Government machinery. The economic levers being in the hands of the Central Government the people and the working class of West Bengal could not escape the consequences of recession. Yet the West Bengal Ministry stood by the workers and did everything to protect the interests of the workers. It ensured freedom of strike to the workers and helped them to frustrate many a design of the money barons.

### **Parliament Denuded of Power**

In a parliamentary democracy people control the Government through the power of purse exercised by the Parliament, the elected representatives of the people. But in India the Parliament has been deprived of this power and is reduced to a ridiculous position. Just before the budget the Government raised additional resources of nearly Rs. 1,300 crores. A five per cent increase in the auxiliary customs duty was increased to net Rs. 200 crores. By withdrawing excise duty exemption available to cigarettes and import duty exemption available to stainless steel scrap the Government expected to collect another Rs. 200 crores. By raising the price of petroleum products the Government made provision for raising Rs. 800 crores. Not satisfied with this, just on the eve of the budget the government in pursuit of its policy of protecting the poor raised postal and telegraphic tariffs to net Rs. 70 crores. Thirteen hundred crores of rupees were raised outside the budget, while for courtesy's sake Rs. 716 crores were proposed

to be raised through the regular budget. Justifying the rise in postal rates without consulting the Parliament, the Communication Minister shamelessly quoted a British regulation of 1893. But all this is not accidental. This belittling of the Parliament, of the opposition, is part of the relentless drive of Congress(I) and its leader towards an authoritarian presidential form of Government. Issue of ordinances, affecting the rights of the people, or economic policies on the eve of the session of legislature or Parliament, has been a developing practice under the Indira regime. Concentration of all power in the hands of the inner Cabinet i.e. Indira Gandhi herself is going on reducing every other instrument of the Constitution to play a subservient role.

### **The Anti-People Budget**

The mass of workers in our country take hardly any interest in budget which affects their economic conditions and well-being. They are therefore unable to anticipate its attacks and beat them off. This year's budget offers the prospects of growing inflation, high prices, shrinking incomes and jobs. There is a massive increase in taxation this year. Including the increase in railway fares and freights it amounts to Rs. 2,500 crores. Through one device or another the burden will be passed on to the common man, including the working class. The increase in railway fares of daily commuters will prove a crushing burden to lakhs of workers and employees who have to travel daily for their jobs.

But this is not all. The budget leaves as uncovered deficit of Rs. 1,555 crores in the wake of a deficit of nearly two thousands crores for the preceding year. During the years that have passed there was an increase of nearly 15 per cent in money supply, while agricultural production has declined and there might be negative increase in per capita income. This itself will generate price pressure. And this year's deficit financing will definitely force the prices up with the workers and employees forced to fight against erosion of their wages.

The budget has no provision to fight unemployment to lessen its growth. It seems that the Finance Minister and Indira Government are unaware that millions are unemployed in India and their number swells every day.

The budget opens the prospect of a bleak economic situation, of pressure of prices, of increased unemployment and economic deterioration and erosion of workers' wage. The budget could have been influenced to some extent at least if

the trade union movement had unitedly worked to press its policy on the Government.

Mark, while almost every section of the people is being attacked the Finance Minister does not forget to give relief to the affluent landlord lobby — the capitalist farmers and rich landlord interests.

The Government has now made agricultural land totally tax free. Mr. Mukherjee says: "Our experience is that the valuation of agricultural land leads to administrative difficulties and litigation. The yield from the levy has also not been significant over the past several years. Moreover, after the abolition of wealth tax on agricultural land, including plantations, there is little practical justification for continuing the levy of estate duty on agricultural land."

There is no reason why after ensuring the exemption of the smaller holder from such levy, the estate duty should not have continued on the affluent sections the big landholders who have hardly any income tax to pay. They are so influential that they had made it impossible to realise the levy. And now Government advances that as an excuse to withdraw the levy. A Government which searches the pocket of the poorest section for any conceivable levy, allows the landlord sharks freedom from taxation.

### Unemployment

Comrades — The entire trade union movement must actively move to secure immediate relief for the unemployed and compel the Government to embark upon policies which would effectively check the growth of unemployment. The Government has been making bogus claims about plans to combat unemployment. It advertises its Rural Employment schemes and other projects. Of course so far as the urban areas are concerned it does not even advertise any scheme. The Sixth Five Year Plan claims that it would meet the job demands of all the new entrants of labour — another Congress (I) claim on par with the claim to fight poverty — but facts prove the contrary. The Economic Survey (1982-83) shows that the number of job seekers in the live register of the Employment Exchanges rose from 17.2 million at the end of August 1981 to 19.9 million at the end of August 1982. The average monthly placements during January-September 1982 were 38.7 thousand compared with 41.8 thousand in the corresponding period last year. The slow growth of employment can be seen by comparing the figures of the last few years. In 1975 — the year of emergency rule — employment in public sector was

128.83 lakhs and employment in the private sector was 68.08 lakhs, total amounting to 197 lakhs. In 1981 total employment in organised sector was 229 lakhs comprising of 18.84 lakhs in the public sector and 73.95 lakhs in the private sector. This was a growth rate of only 2.3 per cent per year. Compare it with the 14 per cent growth in registered unemployment in one year from 1981 (August to 1982 August) — a jump from 17.2 million to 19.0 million.

The Sixth Five Year Plan makes boastful claims and promises jobs for all new entrants. It claims that its scheme will provide 34 million new jobs in the course of five years which will be sufficient to meet the increase in the labour force defined as persons of fifteen years and above in the same period. Even if this fact was achieved, it would still leave a backlog of 21 million — (which itself is an underestimate).

The continuous and rapid rise in unemployment figures shows that the Planners and the Government have totally failed to tackle the situation. That they have no plan whatsoever inspite of boastful claims and wasteful expenditure of public money.

Where are these jobs seekers to get jobs. Not in organised industry, not in modern industry, but in overcrowded occupations from which people are fleeing in thousands. "The major employment generation activities are to be found in agriculture, rural development, village and small-scale industries, construction and public administration and other services," (p. 154) that is mostly in industries with low paid and sweated labour. So scattered are these industries that no one will know whether any increase has taken place and to what extent.

The planners repeat again that agriculture must be further overcrowded. "At the present rate of growth the organised sector can provide only four to five million regular jobs in the course of the Sixth Five Year Plan. This would still leave large number of absorption in agriculture, small scale sector and other unorganised industries."

Another document however spells out the truth and says reliance for jobs on agriculture and other sectors means lack of security and underemployment. "The bulk of the labour force is in the unorganised sector with a preponderance of self-employment, since the absorption capacity of the organised sector is extremely low. In fact the trends in recent years indicate that only about 12 per cent of the increase in labour force is absorbed in the organised sector. The remaining members of the labour force will have to seek employment in agriculture and other sectors and in non-farm activities char-

tered by a high degree of under-employment meet and (self employment (self-employment in present day conditions is often self-employment and self-starvation).

So the 19 million who have foolishly registered in the Employment Exchanges must go back to the village and find employment. The educated unemployed are also told to do the same thing. In particular they are asked to shun all employment and become self-employed. The number of educated unemployed, matriculates, graduates and above at the beginning of 1980 was estimated at 3.87 million. To meet the total demand for jobs from this sector during the Sixth Plan 6 million new jobs are required. But who will give them these jobs? The Planning Commission says they must provide jobs for themselves. Self-reliance and self-employment! "The increase (in employment in unorganised sector) from year to year has been around 0.8 million. Even if it is assumed that in future increase in the organised sector is wholly taken by educated persons alone we find that there will not be enough room for the educated persons unless they are diverted either into self-employment or the absorptive capacity of the organised industry is increased substantially. The second alternative does not seem to be feasible leaving us the option of self-employment as the major mode of employment." No wonder with this kind of planning unemployment increases every year.

The rise of registered unemployment to 19 million shows the colossal character of the problem and the trade union movement has to mobilise its full strength to organise the unemployed and secure from the Government immediate relief and a plan to provide work.

### **Rural Employment**

In this connection it is necessary to expose the tall claims made by the Government in connection with its programme of rural employment. The National Rural Employment Programme under the 20-Points programme is intended to provide employment to the unemployed in the rural areas. The target is to provide 300 to 400 million mandays per year. It is claimed that 267.1 million mandays of employment were provided in 1981-82 and the target for 1982 is 331 million mandays. It should be noted that Government underestimates the extent of unemployment in rural areas. Estimates place the figure at 45 million.

Even if the sponsors of 20 points programme succeed in reaching the target how far will it affect the massive figures of

unemployment? It will mean employment throughout the year for a million and half people at the most that is at best for three per cent of the unemployed.

It is known that these schemes under the bourgeois-landlord rule cannot reach the full benefit under them to the masses. Corruption takes away a large part of the expenditure leaving large number of expected beneficiaries high and dry.

The Rural Employment Growth scheme of the Maharashtra Government was highly praised by the World Bank, accepting the exaggerated claims made on behalf of the authorities. It said: Over five years from 1973 to 1978, Maharashtra Rural Unemployment declined by 21 per cent etc. But recent revelations show that corruption has been so rampant that such claims are difficult to entertain. It is quite possible that statistics about relief, mandays created etc. are fake and forged by corrupt officials. This was disclosed when the Collector of Dhulia (one of the districts of Maharashtra), a rare honest and courageous official, made a sample survey and estimated that there was corruption to the extent of Rs. 87 lakhs in this district alone. The Congress (I) men and Ministers combined to hound out the official and get him transferred to another district. But so big was the scandal that the State Government had to appoint a Committee. This Committee with Congress (I) majority tried to screen the real state of affairs and underestimate the extent of corruption. According to the Collector there was corruption to the extent of 87 lakhs out of a total expenditure of 5½ crores.

The Congress (I) dominated committee had to admit that there was misappropriation of wages to the tune of Rs. 10.90 lakhs. It was found that the Superintendent of Police of Dhulia district had ordered police stations under his jurisdiction not to record complaints of corruption in the Employment Guarantee Scheme without his permission. It was also noted that the transfer of corrupt officials called for by the Collector was done in a deliberately slow manner. What chance has any employment scheme under such circumstances?

The policy of the Government in connection with providing employment to rural and urban unemployed is an eye-wash. In the coming days the number of unemployed will increase because of this bankrupt policy, and further because of the recessionary conditions.

### Housing

Comrades—along with unemployment the workers and employees are faced with the prospect of finding residence in

the city slums. For a large number of them decent rooms, flats etc outside the slums are barred. This is what the Sixth Plan document says: "Of the total urban population, nearly a fifth is estimated to constitute a slum population. In 1985 the magnitude of such population is estimated to be about 33.1 million." This is some progress. Go to the slum those slugs and be self-employed—this is the call of the planners.

What is the housing programme for these 33 million people? The Government has made a promise of 29 lakh houses for them, the rest is left to the private sharks. The planners know that the private source will not do anything to provide housing for the poor. What return will they get with land prices continuing on the rise? Therefore on to the slums. How this situation puts the ordinary man at the mercy of gangsters and speculators can be seen from the following from the Times of India dated 12.3.1983. "Slum lords in Bombay are in big business. During the last three years they have made as much as Rs. 36 crores selling accommodation in unauthorised colonies. They make as much as Rs. 20,000 from a three square metre rooms."

The housing question has now become a major question for the workers and employees in cities, towns, mining and plantation areas. The deterioration in housing conditions, the enforced existence in slums, the dilapidated condition of the houses provided by the employers all constitute an attack on the existing living conditions, a deterioration in the quality of living. In the towns and cities the Government employees and other workers are demanding increase house rent allowances in view of shortage of residential accommodation. In Plantation areas, in spite of Government aid the plantation owners refuse to provide housing for the workers. They are treating the workers in the same way as the British Planters used to do.

A concerted attack on this conspiracy to drive the workers to slums and sharks must be organised by the trade union movement.

### **Productivity Year—Lockouts**

Comrades, the Prime Minister declared last year as productivity year and the results have been disastrous for the country. Was the Prime Minister unaware that the country was passing through a period of intense attacks against the workers and the employers were using unscrupulously the lockout weapon to bring down production and bring the workers into submission?

The last two years have proved night-marish for the workers who had to fight prolonged battles for their livelihood and jobs. The number of mandays lost in industrial disputes in 1981 went beyond 25 million, 4 million above that of 1980 figure though it was lower than the 35 million figure of 1979. Official figures admit that the CITU was foremost in leading these struggles and led more actions than any other organisation.

The 1982 figure surpassed all previous figures recording a loss of 62 million days. Excluding the Bombay Textile Strike the loss was 43.38 million days.

This by itself does not represent the sufferings and misery of the workers. In recent years lockouts are being increasingly used by the employers with the help of the Government. There is a systematic attempt to starve the workers into submission.

The following figures reveal the story.

#### The Mandays lost (in 000).

<i>Year</i>	<i>Due to strike</i>	<i>Due to Lockouts</i>
1978	15,423	12,917
1979	35,804	8,050
1980	12,018	9,907
1981	15,658	10,806

Except in 1979 at least 40% of the total mandays lost are due to declared lockouts. The productivity year of Indira Gandhi turned out to be a lockout year for the workers. But the Government and its spokesmen never cease to talk about strikes only—covering the lockout misdeeds of their master.

The trade union movement must devise new methods to fight back the lockout offensive. In West Bengal 17 Jute Mills are closed and it is estimated that 65,000 badli workers have also been thrown out of work.

### **Workers' Participation in Management**

Comrades, you will be surprised to learn that the productivity year of Indira Gandhi also announced the demise of Workers' Participation in Management. Workers participation was included in the first 20-Point Programme. The second 20-Point Programme has quietly dropped it, to ensure success for the productivity year. You will remember that the first 20-Point Programme was intended to divert attention from the Emergency and the only point of interest to the workers was this proposal for workers' participation. Of course the Government had absolutely no intention to introduce any scheme of

participation. The Government concerns and public and private sectors all were united in their opposition to it.

The CITU, fully realising the mismanagement of public and private sectors alike, the monstrous corruption that is rampant, the use of substandard materials and linkage of some officials with anti-socials, proposed to participate in management on terms of equality. The workers were prepared to discharge their responsibility to society. But who wanted their cooperation? Not the vested interests when they were locking out one factory after another; not the Government which was mercilessly suppressing one strike after another. And now the proposal is withdrawn. Unlimited hypocrisy thy name is Indira Government.

### Repression

Comrades, we must denounce the barbaric repression directed against the striking workers. In these years our strikes had to face unheard of repression in Congress(I) ruled States. Illegalisation of strikes, mass arrests of workers, prohibition of meetings, prohibition of picketing, brutal lathi charges, police firings killing workers, terror against working class with the help of goonda gangs and rapes of wives of workers — these are the instruments of Congress(I) Governments to subjugate the workers. Our workers have bravely withstood this medieval terror and often forced the employers and Government to retreat. They had to wage a tireless fight against repression to protect the right of organisation and in thousands they stood together. We all must rise to be worthy leaders of this great fighting army of Indian workers.

We all must offer our warm greetings to CITU leaders and workers of Kanpur for their glorious struggles in this period against terror, lockouts and repression. An insane authority wanted to plant its own stooges on the workers as leaders and withdraw the recognition of CITU unions. The J.K. Rayon and Jute workers of Kanpur waged a heroic battle for months under the leadership of CITU and recreated the old fighting spirit of Kanpur. May they continue to display the same unity and courage and bring fresh laurels to our organisation. It is strange that many international organisations, devoted to the cause of the workers, seem to be totally ignorant about the happenings in India. You rarely come across an indignant protest against this repression from abroad. Our CITU should see to it and that all international organisations are properly informed about the ordeals which Indian workers are passing through. Only under the left front government of West Bengal and Tripura the workers rights are protected, right to strike is

ensured, the repressive machinery is not used against strikers and the weight of the Government is thrown on the side of the workers.

### Offensive Against Wages

Comrades, we have noted on several occasions how through the Bureau of Public Enterprises the Government is trying to police wages and make the workers bear the burden of inflation and crisis. Encouraged by the Government the private employers are now in the field demanding withdrawal of bonus and whittling down of D.A. allowances. A paper jointly prepared by All India Organisation of Employers and Employers Federation of India demands that "Bonus and D.A. should be abolished and a minimum wage for a particular region should be the subsistence wage fixed for agricultural workers". Naturally the author of the paper blinks the concept of need-based wage which require to be looked into very carefully. Also that neither assurance of proper living conditions, and performance of work should have anything to do with wage. The wage should be the residue left after satisfying the appetite of capital in every way, the level of productivity, national income etc. "The capacity of industry must take into account the need for building resources for keeping the assets intact and in an uptodate condition, payment of annual dividends, necessary for attracting sufficient capital for the growth and development of industry." This leaves nothing unsaid. Never before any employer's organisation was so blatant in its claims to exploit. But the encouragement and confidence is born out of the Government policy and the Bureau of Public Enterprises.

This certainly foreshadows an offensive on wages in one form or another aided and abetted by the Government and the CITU unions will have to forewarn the workers and be ready to fight it if the employers desire to launch it.

To facilitate the offensive against wage and living conditions the Government relies on enacting a number of anti-trade union Bills to stifle the growth of fighting unions, to strangle the right to strike, to interfere with the internal matters of unions and finally through arbitrary recognition and patronage to pliant unions tie down the workers to machinations of corrupt and venal leaders. It is known to all of you that the Government has refused to accede to the demands that recognition of unions be decided by the free ballot of concerned workers.

## **Draconian Laws**

Since Indira's return to power series of anti-trade union bills have been prepared. The National Security Act providing for preventive detention was passed and was used against striking workers and trade union leaders. The Essential Services Act banning strikes in all so-called essential services was passed and being used to ban strikes including strikes of teachers. These who measures virtually re-enacted the provisions and bans obtaining during the emergency. An ILO Committee has opined that ESMA constitutes too much interference with the freedom of trade union movement.

Four other bills have been introduced attacking trade union rights, right to strike, right to organise unions. The Industrial Disputes Amendment Bill, the Hospital and other Institutions (Settlement of Disputes) Bill, the Trade Union (amendment) Bill and the Payments of Wages Bill all are directed towards one aim — attacking the freedom of the trade union movement including the freedom to strike. The total effect of all those Bills put together is complete ban on strikes by certain sections of workers, and virtual extinction of the right for all others. This is a part of the authoritarian drive against the democratic rights of the people.

The Conference must give a clarion call to all our unions and all other organisations to fight and defeat these Bills with the help of all democratic forces inside and outside the Parliament and mobilise all opposition parties in the Parliament for this purpose. A major attack is being planned by the Government and it must be defeated.

Comrades, our activities, our united actions, our struggles are having their effect and making it extremely difficult for the employers and the Government to push through their attack. Such actions as the 19th January (1982) strike, the three day coal miners' strike, the strike of Indian Seamen have immensely strengthened the resolve of the workers to fight official measures and designs.

### **Weaknesses of Struggle — New Problems**

I do not wish to deal here with our struggle for trade union unity. A full report on our work for trade union unity will be made in Com. P. Ramamurti's report. I wish to turn to some of our weaknesses and new problems on which the Conference must opine.

Satisfied as we may be with the militant role played by our

unions in defending the workers' interests and our initiative and persistent struggle in building trade union unity, we have also experienced set-backs. Sometimes we seem to lose initiative in the daily struggle, it passes off to non-political leaders professing no political ideology but making a show of militancy. The CITU or the State units concerned have not analysed this phenomenon and taken any steps to meet the situation arising out of it. Bombay and Maharashtra are classic instance of this phenomenon. But it is to be found in other centres and is likely to be repeated in future also.

At one time Madras saw the same spectacle but our comrades were able to win back initiative step by step and reassert our position. Their experience if it is reviewed may be of great help to us.

Comrades, from what I have said earlier it is clear that there is very little intervention of the CITU and its unions in the political developments of the country. Despite the laudatory role of the CITU unions in Assam, the support of CITU unions and the masses led by them to left forces and parties in West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala, the CITU intervention in fighting forces of disintegration-secessionists, communalists-casteists for issues common to the people, fighting measures like Bihar Press Bill has been minimal if any.

Situation is much worse if the role of country's trade union movement is taken. The voting in industrial centres of Andhra Pradesh like Hyderabad in recent elections reveals this weakness, with mass of workers voting for non-left parties.

The trade union movement will be reduced to a purely sectional movement making the workers a plaything of reactionary forces if this weakness is not removed.

In a number of Third World countries the trade unions are directly taking the challenge of imperialism and fighting the imperialist conspiracies against their country. In India the situation is otherwise. A great part of the trade union movement does not even acknowledge the existence of imperialism and the danger arising from it to our country. The IMF loan, the imperialist conspiracies to divide the country go unnoticed by them. Even our own propaganda needs to be increased many times before it can prove effective among our followers.

Notwithstanding the warm feelings of friendship and admiration among our workers for the workers, peoples and Governments of Socialist countries, the USSR, Peoples' China, Viet Nam, Korea and others, consciousness about international

events, danger of war, is very weak. This weakness has to be removed.

### **Effective Forms of Struggle**

The years that have passed have been years of crisis, lock-outs and strikes.

Question is how effective has been the workers' resistance, how effectively has the CITU countered the attacks? Lockouts and retrenchments deprive thousands of their jobs. Their families are part of the common people. How far have we succeeded in raising public opinion against a lockout as an anti-social act? Didn't our form of struggle make it a question between worker and his employer with society and public opinion standing on the side-lines? The year that has started is going to see an intensification of the offensive against jobs and earnings. The economy is in a perilous condition. The IMF loan, the need of increased exports arising from balance of payments difficulties, the increased imports under the IMF loans which are already affecting Indian concerns, all are leading to a greater job-offensive in pursuit of cost-reduction. Mechanisation, modernisation, automation preceded by closures or mass retrenchment, these loom large. One of the problems before the CITU session will be how to develop proper forms of struggle to combat the offensive. It can be nobody's case that forms of struggle require no change, that the working class has no need to change its tactics when the capitalists change theirs.

The CITU Conference will have to study the experience of the past and think of effective forms of struggle to combat the new offensive. It will have to review the efficacy of previous struggles, heroically fought no doubt.

The general indifference and failure to secure more democratic support for strikes etc. has to be rectified.

### **Unorganised Labour**

The organised trade union movement, including the CITU unions have developed a failing which may prove injurious and damaging to the entire movement. The years since the last Conference of the CITU have witnessed a spurt in the activities of workers in unorganised industries who have hardly any legal protection — most of them working without any provision for D.A. The minimum wage legislation which is supposed to guarantee a miserable wage is also not observed in practice. This section driven to desperation is easily cap-

able of being used by reactionaries. In fact efforts are already afoot to make use of them against the organised movement. If the trade unions do not pay attention to this widespread section they will be damaging the movement by alienating a section which is militant, heroic and has become a strong contingent of the common movement.

### **Agricultural Workers and Peasants**

In this year of death centenary of Karl Marx it is pertinent to recall the following: "They (the trade unions) must look carefully after the interests of the worst paid trades, such as the agricultural labourers, rendered powerless by exceptional circumstances. They must convince the world at large that their efforts, far from being narrow and selfish, aim at the emancipation of downtrodden millions."

A dangerous weakness of India's trade union movement is its isolation from agricultural workers and the mass of peasants. This is bound to be fatal in a country where the agricultural workers and peasants form the overwhelming majority of people.

During the year when the working class was facing lock-outs, the peasants and agricultural workers were being ruined. There was hardly any consciousness about this and the responsibility of the trade unions.

All trade unions including CITU unions, are to a greater or smaller extent guilty of this weakness. Some efforts are made to overcome it no doubt. But it is an evil built-in in the trade union consciousness since early days under the influence of the bourgeois-leaders. They opposed every activity of the trade unions except acting for their own demands. For the rest they must await signal from the bourgeois leaders.

This outlook still grips a major part of the trade union movement—outlook of isolation of the movement. The CITU Conference will have to first clear its own stables before it can take steps to cure the movement of the disease.

### **Working Women**

Another failing of the trade union movement is the total neglect of the women workers and their demands. It is a matter of shame that when thousands of women are being retrenched and thrown out of jobs, there is hardly a ripple of protest or action from the CITU and other unions. The trade union movement is not a preserve of men. Yet all kinds of

hyprocritical excuses, born out of feudal outlook, are to be found to explain away the neglect of the problems of working women, failure to draw them as active contingents of the working class. The trade unions in other parts of the world have started fighting against this deviation. But Indian trade unions lag behind. Reactionary forces are already active in India to penetrate the ranks of working women neglected by the organised trade union movement. However some organisations of employees have started paying attention to the problem and that is good. The CITU started the fight for working women at its last conference. A full review will reveal how far our unions have advanced in this direction.

Let me quote the latest information available.

The Indian Express of March 16 contains the following despatch. "According to the Energy Ministry Records there were more than 30,000 women workers under the Bharat Cooking Coal Limited coking coal mines in Bihar in 1973. By 1979 their number dropped to 16,000 and by 1982 to 12,000.

"Secondly to give respectability to its anti-worker policies, the BCCL has also introduced a voluntary scheme giving the job opportunities to the younger male dependents in lieu of the parents' job. Here also the female members of the families have been barred. A notice issued by one of the General Managers in 1979 said if a woman worker gives her job the company will employ her son or son-in-law or husband in piece-rate underground loading job. The prohibition against employing women in underground work is now used to deny them jobs when the company is going in for open caste mining.

### **The New Young Entrants**

The Government and the employers are adopting new tactics to break the solidarity of the workers. They discriminate against the young entrants who are kept temporary for years. By and large there is a tendency to neglect the special demands of this section and concentrate on general issues which for the most part benefit permanent workers long in service. The young and militant section often gets frustrated, loses faith in the common movement and becomes a plaything of anarchist individualist outlook. This phenomenon is developing because of the crisis and the policies of the Government. It also partly explains the rise of individualist leadership. The CITU will have to take note of this development and call upon its unions to pay special attention to the new young entrants.

## Severe Drought

Comrades, an unprecedented drought gripped several states last year which has bleaked the prospects of crops this year also. The drought severely affected the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka. In Tamilnadu, Maharashtra and other states there is acute scarcity of even drinking water. In addition to this Orissa and Gujarat were affected by floods and cyclone also. Near famine conditions haunt the people in many areas. The peasantry and the agricultural labourers have been left at the mercy of the landlords and unscrupulous traders. We must denounce the Congress (I) Government for its utter failure to meet the situation and its callous unconcern to the sufferings of the people. I congratulate the Left-Front Government and the working class of West Bengal for rising to the occasion to give succour to the suffering people and the rural masses. I call upon the CITU unions to realise their class responsibility and raise their powerful voice to force the Government to rush sufficient foodgrains and take adequate rural employment programme and give relief to the suffering people.

## The Confederation

The CITU has persistently worked for unity of trade union movement. Its efforts have earned a measure of success with the formation of the National Campaign Committee. The activities of the Committee, the 19th January strike, the three day strike of coal miners are all important steps in the direction of strengthening unity. A thorough review however is necessary to find out how far our common activities have helped to shape official policies and ward off attacks, how far the consciousness of the participating workers has been enhanced. The ambit of the National Campaign Committee is restricted at present. It is obvious that the further demands on trade union unity cannot be met by the National Campaign Committee as it is constituted. It is necessary to secure the active involvement of federations and employees' organisations which have been supporting the call of the Campaign Committee. The CITU at its last conference gave a call for a Confederation of Trade Union organisations for exchange of opinions and discussions of common problems. Both the proposals of expansion of National Campaign Committee and Confederation must be seriously discussed by the CITU Conference.

A common blue print on the economic situation outlining

policies to deal with the crisis, unemployment and efficient management of industries in the interest of the people will go a long way to introduce cohesion in the movement and inspire the confidence of the people.

The urgency to intervene in the labour and economic policies of the Government should be fully realised. This cannot be done unless the full strength of the labour movement is mobilised and the movement develops common understanding. The trade union movement must also express its united will to help in managing the affairs of the economy and industry on the basis of equal status. It must declare its willingness to do so to the Indian people and let them know that it is the Government and the ruling classes that came in the way of labour discharging its responsibility to society. Such a call on behalf of the united trade union movement will help the trade unions to overcome their self-centredness and recognise their obligation to society the rest of whom consists of the oppressed and exploited peasantry.

Some people are worried about how the office bearers etc. of the Confederation will be elected and so on. Com Indrajit Gupta, General Secretary of the AITUC also has written a letter to the CITU seeking clarification. The details can be worked out provided there is agreement on the necessity of trade union organisations coming together. The name does not matter. If the purpose could be served by any alternative form we will be satisfied. But there must be genuine attempt to bring all organisations who have a say with the workers, who are vitally interested in the unity and cohesion of the trade union movement and who do not indulge in cross firing within the movement itself and specialise in attacking progressive and left forces.

### **CITU's Independent Activities**

The experience of the CITU in relation to trade union unity and common action shows that success cannot be achieved without the initiative and independent activity of the CITU. This aspect will have to be stressed and examined at the Conference.

This is all the more necessary because after all the united struggle along with others has certain limitations laid by the different ideologies of the partners. These are already noted in connection with anti-war agitation. It is because of these that unless the CITU's independent activity increases, the intervention of the trade union movement on the democratic issues affecting the people, in economic issues like protecting

the people from high prices and fighting the authoritarian danger and defending democracy cannot be ensured. More and more the trade union movement has to turn to these tasks and assert itself as a leading force in the struggle for democracy and socialism. The CITU has to examine its activity on this test.

Certain trade unions and leaders excel in slandering the left front governments of West Bengal and Tripura—the advanced outposts of democracy. This has to be countered. These governments constitute the achievements of the working class and democratic movement, support to them and the left forces has to be developed by the CITU among other sections of workers. Without this struggle for democracy cannot be carried on successfully.

### **Strengthen the CITU**

Comrades, it goes without saying that the tasks outlined cannot be fulfilled without strengthening the CITU, including the mass membership of the CITU unions, functioning them democratically and making the CITU the foremost central organisation. May the efforts of all of you be directed towards this goal so that the working class and trade unions of our country are able to discharge their contemporary responsibilities.

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