



THE WORKING CLASS

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**SEPTEMBER 16-17
WORKING WOMEN CONFERENCE
HALDIA, WEST BENGAL**



SAVE FCI, SAVE PDS RALLY, 17 AUGUST

TWO DAYS STRIKE IN TELECOM SECTOR

The NDA Govt. led by the BJP has been pursuing corporatisation of the Department of Telecom operations (DOT) with undue haste. The Central Govt., at the dictate of World Bank and IMF, has taken steps to corporatise the DOT on one hand and at the same time opened up substantial part of the high yielding telecom operation to private sector, to be more specific to the foreign companies. All taken together, the game plan of the Vajpayee Govt is to create ground for making the corporatised telecom units under the name and style of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) sick within a short period of time, by opening up particularly the profitable sector of the telecom operations to private and foreign companies and thereby slashing down the earning of the corporatised telecom unit and then privatise it wholesale.

The Govt. decision to open up national long distance telephony to private companies, the independence day gift of the NDA Govt. to their masters in private corporate foreign sector would immediately result in huge losses to the tune of at least Rs. 7000 crore to DOT and MTNL. This would also affect the national exchequer, besides severely affecting the expansion of tele-network to rural and so-called un-remunerative areas.

That the move of corporatisation is a route for privatisation is no longer a camouflage. In line with the persistent practice to engage foreign firms as global consultants for the Indian PSUs and the Govt. depts. to facilitate their fast track privatisation, the Govt. appointed a consortium of foreign companies for corporatisation of DOT. This consultant consortium has already recommended choosing of a foreign company as a strategic partner in the corporatisation move.

The CITU denounced the anti-national moves of the Govt. to hand over the countrywide telecom network to foreign players in the name of corporatisation.

In this background, the National Action Committee Against Telecom Corporatisation/Privatisation had called a two-days strike in the telecom sector against the Govt. move to corporatise and privatise DOT. The decision of the Joint Action Committee for two days' strike in telecom sector drew widespread support from the mass of the telecom employees irrespective of affiliations, although some of the telecom unions have not come forward to support the strike and fallen victim of opportunism. The Confederation of Central Govt Employees & Workers extended all support to the strike action in telecom sector and called upon all central Govt. employees and their unions to hold solidarity demonstrations in all central Govt. offices and establishments on the days of the telecom strike on 24th and 25th August.

The CITU extended all support to the telecom strike and congratulated the telecom workers and the concerned unions for their struggling role against the anti-national policy of the Vajpayee Govt. and called upon all the trade unions and workers to stage solidarity actions on the days of telecom strike.

CITU WORKING COMMITTEE MEETING CANCELLED

In view of the inability expressed by the Kerala State Committee of the CITU for participating in the working committee meeting in view of the Panchayat elections in the State being held on 23-25 September, 2000, the meeting of the CITU Working Committee, scheduled to be held from 18th to 20th September 2000, at Haldia, West Bengal, stands CANCELLED.

WORKING WOMEN CONFERENCE

However, the Sixth Conference of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) will take place as scheduled on 16-17 September, 2000 at Haldia (West Bengal). The State Committees of CITU are requested to ensure participation of the women delegates, as per quota already advised.

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CITU MONTHLY

SEPTEMBER 2000

YOU SAID IT by Laxman



Whose brilliant idea is this? What will the investors think!

Courtesy: The Times of India

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EDITORIAL

WILL THE PRIME MINISTER ACT?

An interaction between the Prime Minister and the leaders of the Central Trade Unions on 12th August 2000, served at the first instance to reassert that the role of trade unions as a social partner cannot be wished away at will. It also helped the trade unions to draw the attention of the PM to some of the pressing problems of the working class of the country. The PM's assurance not only to look into the grievances needing immediate redressal, but also to have periodical structured meetings with the trade unions - to begin with, one in November next - is a positive outcome. The Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions (CPSTU) responded by deferring the three days strike slated for 17th to 19th August.

But two subsequent developments are rather disquieting.

One was a report in the national Press that the Finance Ministry had turned down a proposal from the Labour Ministry, for revising the income ceilings in the Payment of Bonus Act. This was a demand pressed by all the trade unions in the meeting with the PM with a plea to urgently respond in view of the ensuing festival season.

The Press report revealed that the Finance Ministry went to the extent of linking any consideration of this demand to acceptance of disinvestment etc moves of the Government. If the Finance Ministry expected the trade union movement to barter their resistance to disinvestment, privatisation, downsizing etc. for some monetary relief on the bonus issue, it must be living in a fool's paradise. It should realise that Bonus is a pressing demand and workers can neither wait any longer nor agree to this barter.

Next was a move blessed by Maneka Gandhi, Minister for Social Justice, to kick start implementation process of the Dave Committee report on the so-called pension fund reforms. The occasion was a seminar organised by FICCI, on 17th August, sponsored by Prudential UK and the IDBI, with the main intent of diverting the workers savings in Provident and Pension Funds to the capital (share) market. In the whole exercise, even the Labour Ministry was deliberately kept out.

These developments, coming in the wake of the Finance Ministry rejecting the unanimous decision of the Central Board of Trustees to continue the interest rate on Provident Fund at 12% for the year 2000-01, raise a basic question.

Is there a dichotomy in the present dispensation of governance at the Centre, that the Labour Ministry is for holding sterile discussions and Finance Ministry is for taking capital friendly decisions, behind the back of the workers, even on issues represented to the PM?

The trade union movement shall not countenance this dichotomy. It is time for the Prime Minister to act, if his effort to engage the trade unions in constructive dialogue is sincere. Will he? If he does, he will be reciprocating the trust reposed in him. In case he does not, workers will draw their own inference and act accordingly.

12 DEC: ELECTRICITY EMPLOYEES STRIKE

E BALANANDAN

The angry mood of the power sector employees during the General Strike in Uttar Pradesh in January last, witnessed a participation above 95%. The same scenario manifested in Maharashtra during July raising the strikers' strength to a near total at 98%. This fighting mood was visible in the Delhi rally on 9.8.2000.

The memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister exposed the dangerous consequences of the new power policy, and demanded immediate reversal of the policy by the Government. The essence of the power policy of the Govt is wholesale privatisation of the power sector of the country and the claim of the Govt is that through privatisation route higher investment in power generation and efficiency in distribution can be achieved. But what is the reality? Even after opening up of the power sector for hurdle less entry of the private sector and foreign companies, what is their contribution to power-strength of the country and at what cost? In the midterm appraisal of the performance of the private-sector during the 9th 5-year plan period, the following facts were submitted to the planning commission -which exposes its dismal failure.

Total capacity addition envisaged in IX plan (1997 - 2002)	: 40,245 MW
Private Sector	: 17,588 MW
Central Sector	: 11,909 MW
State Sector	: 10,748 MW

The expected performance with regard to each sector:

	Performance	slippage
1. Private Sector	6,000 MW	11,588 MW
2. Central Sector	9,704 MW	1,045 MW
3. State Sector	9,851 MW	897 MW

The above shows that the private sector could only complete one third of its commitment and 25% of the total slippage in the capacity addition of the five-year plan target is because of the failure of the private sector (11588 MW).

The impact of this needs no explanation. The power crisis has further worsened to unbearable levels, which caused huge production losses in various sectors of economy. Besides the cost of the private power also is abnormally high. The Enron in Maharashtra is a telling example. The Maharashtra Electricity Board's power cost is around Rs.2per unit while they have to pay Rs.5 for buying bulk power from Enron. The Electricity Board had to lose more than Rs 850 crore per annum because of this. The State Government wanted to do away with the second stage of Enron, which they cannot do because of contractual obligations. Thus the Maharashtra government is in a fix.

The experience of Orissa is very clear and specific. The private distribution companies are extremely reluctant to continue with the power supply to the rural areas. Even nine months after the Cyclone, in

more than 800 villages the power supply has not been restored. This is in spite of liberal loans being extended by LIC/PFC to the private power companies. There is absolutely no doubt that with the privatisation of distribution the situation will revert back to the pre-independence days when power supply was limited to the urban areas and to those who could pay."... In Orissa even after the tariffs have been increased by almost 200%, there is a demand by the private companies particularly the American Multinational AES to further increase the tariffs by another 300%.

Orissa and Andhra Pradesh conclusively proved that the privatisation and unbundling of State Electricity Boards miserably failed to attain the objectives with which the Government of India embarked upon the power sector reforms. In Andhra Pradesh power rates are hiked to sky-high levels in spite of the fact that State had to subsidise more than double the amount of the losses suffered by the State Electricity Boards.

The memorandum further pointed out: Since independence the Electricity Supply Act 1948 and institutions like the Electricity Boards were based on two principles: 1) that infrastructure must be consumer friendly and 2) that the natural resources of India should be optimally utilised. The World

Bank inspired reform based on allowing independent Power Producers (IPPs), private distribution companies places priority on making the power industry investor friendly based on profit maximisation not only in distribution but also in the import of fuel.

The concept that regulation of an infrastructure industry can be done by an agency independent of the executive and legislature is unworkable in an underdeveloped country. Given the level of corruption and the financial muscle of the Multinationals there is a real danger of "regulatory capture". The Central Electricity Authority (CEA) and the Regional Electricity Boards (REBs) have been successful regulatory agencies with a national and regional perspective. To relegate the CEA to an agency that merely does planning and to eliminate REBs negates the federal principle, which in the present political situation is very critical. The CEA should be the adviser to the Government of India as provided for in the Indian Electricity (Supply) Act 1948. Unfortunately it is the bureaucrats in the Ministry of Power who are deciding the fate of the power industry.

We want that there should be reforms in the electricity industry. But what should be the direction of the said reform? Is it for making the power costlier to common people and to ensure guaranteed profit for the foreign companies while putting the public sector power companies in disadvantage and difficulties? The SEBs have been driven to

bankruptcy by the populist policies of the State Governments. Instead of taking corrective measures and enforcing fiscal discipline, the financial state of the SEBs are being used as a justification for breaking up the Boards, corporatising the components and then privatising them. And in order to protect the interests of the investors, Regulatory Commissions are set up independent of any accountability to the legislature or the people. We completely reject this model. We are convinced that any model that violates the unity and integrity of the integrated SEBs will be counter-productive. Reforms must be made within the framework of the Indian Electricity (Supply) Act 1948 and integrated SEBs.

Demands raised in the memorandum to the Prime Minister are:

a) The power industry be rescued from the dictates of the World Bank and that the de-nationalisation of decision-making be stopped immediately.

b) The Electricity Bill 2000 should be scrapped. Reforms should be made within the framework Indian Electricity (Supply) Act 1948 and the SEBs.

c) Wherever the SEBs have been broken up they must be reconstituted.

d) Any regulatory authority must be accountable to the legislature.

e) SEBs must be made financially viable by ensuring that Section 59 of the Indian Electricity (Supply) Act 1948 is not violated. Theft of electricity

be strictly controlled. Metering of power supply be made compulsory. Any loss incurred by the SEBs on account of concessional or free tariff should be fully compensated by the state and Central Governments.

f) The optimal use must be made of the built up capacity in manufacturing and commissioning of power plants as well as indigenous fuels.

g) CEA should be asked to prepare an overall strategy and programme for rehabilitating the SEBs for making them financially autonomous and for strengthening their planning and technical capabilities to meet the challenges of the new situation.

h) The Central Government should come to the help of the State Government and the SEBs in implementing these rehabilitation programmes.

i) A high power commission should be appointed to look into the economic, legal, political, financial and technological implications of any fundamental change in policy before attempting any new legislation.

The issues raised above by the electricity engineers and workers are not simply connected with their wage and employment, but are intended to protect the vital power sector

The workers and engineers have taken up the cause of our national development and fighting back this World Bank offensive to keep India still backward and exploit a country of thousand million people. So this fight needs to be supported by the people in general and especially the working class.

(In his customary address to the nation on the eve of Independence Day, K.R. Narayanan, President of India, expressed serious concern over the state of affairs in the country. Here are some excerpts from the address. Editor)

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS TO THE NATION

My fellow citizens, fifty-three years, of independence inspires pride and confidence among all of us. We liberated ourselves from foreign rule and established a democratic polity through our Constitution, which embodied modern ideas of governance and the rights and liberties of the people, and blended them with advanced ideas of social equality and justice, integrating them all into our age-old human values and cultural heritage. Our second struggle began for economic independence and social transformation soon after 1947.

Indeed, this second struggle is even more arduous and prolonged than the first one. Our objectives of national construction, social change and the upliftment of our people from the abyss of illiteracy, ill-health, economic deprivation and social backwardness, became the driving force of our development. To-day, on the anniversary of our Independence, it is appropriate to reassess our progress and advancement and reflect on our failures and shortcomings. I have no hesitation in saying that our achievements have been impressive inspite of many shortcomings.

The forging of the unity of the nation and its consolidation during the last fifty-three years, is an achievement that we could be proud of. The unity of India, which had haunted us for centuries as an elusive dream, has become a reality born out of diversity. The establishment of democracy in this vast and of bewildeerng variety is the greatest achievement of India since Independence. It is heartening to know from a recent study of people's attitude in our country that *the poor and deprived classes defend democracy with greater conviction and vigour than the elite and the affluent.*

In the area of economic, technological, social and human development we have also registered impressive progress. We have achieved enviable industrial growth. We are

reckoned as one of the twelve industrialised countries and also one of the fastest growing economies of the world.

In the field of science and technology, India has made rapid strides that is today the envy of many countries.

Inspite of this impressive catalogue of achievements, we are still plagued by poverty, ignorance, disease and superstition. Our policies, programmes, five year plans and other developmental efforts as reflected in our economic liberalisation, have not been adequate enough to ensure basic needs to our vast millions even after more than five decades in Independence.

The common man and woman have nursed the lingering feeling that they have yet to taste the fruits of Independence. On the other hand, the conditions of society after Independence, especially the new affluence of the privileged classes, have given rise to certain evil fruits. The precious heritage of tolerance of different faiths and ideologies, which has been the cementing force in our complex pluralistic society, is showing signs of breaking down and a new intolerance, resulting often in violence, is manifesting itself in our society.

In addition, there has been a resurgence of old superstitions and outmoded social practices retarding the progress of society along modern lines. Child marriage, for example, was made illegal during the British time under the pressure of enlightened Indian social reformers. But today child marriages are common in some of the States of India and are celebrated openly with impunity, receiving publicity in the sensation-crazy sections of our media.

Our women are still treated as less than human. Day in and day out, we read in the newspapers gruesome stories of dowry deaths of young women in the flower of their youth, because of the insatiable greed of husbands and the in-laws. The

law enforcing agencies remain indifferent or ineffective, and the law itself remains awfully inadequate. In fact, statistics show that crimes against women have been on the increase. No place is safe for them, not even their own homes. **Swami Vivekananda used to say, "the land of India is.....soaked with the tears of widows". Today it is soaked by the tears of women in general, and even girl children, who are ill-treated and murdered.**

In a recent case of a five-year old girl abducted, raped and murdered, the Sessions Judge let the accused go scot-free. In his eloquent judgement he said: "I am of the view that the prosecution has not been able to prove the guilt of the accused beyond the shadow of doubt. Dark clouds of doubts are hovering all around; the benefit of which is to be given to the accused". Indeed, there are dark clouds of prejudice and callous unconcern hanging over our society with regard to the problem of rape and atrocities on women. Since neither conscience nor common sense is responding to this tragic problem, should not the law-makers rewrite the laws so that a deterrent against such crimes exist in society?

I referred to the growth of violence in our society. Indeed, crime and violence and the links between criminals, politicians and important people in society, has become almost an unholy alliance. Criminals are being glamourised by the media and are treated as if they are the new heroes of our society. It is time that civil society and the lawful government asserted their authority and primacy over the dare-devil heroes of crime and banditry.

At every social and political level there is crying need to speak out against crimes and violence of all kinds, but even such rhetoric is absent in India today. On the other hand, there is a tendency to romanticise them. Kazi Nazrul Islam talking about the colonial times in Bengal had observed: "Today the greater the robber, the bigger the thief and the cleverer the cheat, the more honourable, the more distinguished and the more dignified his seat". We should take care not to have those times return to our society.

My fellow citizens, in the encircling gloom of

these negative tendencies manifesting themselves in our society, there are positive and encouraging trends that give hope to us.

There are, in fact, hundreds and thousands of examples in our country, that too at the grassroots levels, in remote villages and tribal belts, where poor and deprived people, women, dalits etc. through their associations, panchayats, youth clubs, mahila mandals, community efforts, thrift societies and as individuals, took innovative steps, raised resources, used locally available skills and contributed voluntary labour to change their conditions of life. These examples of assertion of people's power are testimony to the success of democracy.

India, my fellow citizens, had always a world view and believed that she has a part to play in the world. Our wise leaders who got us Independence and shaped the future of free India, had formulated a world approach and a policy for India - the policy of non-alignment and peaceful co-existence. That policy has performed a historical role - that of showing the world a way out of the nightmare of the cold war. Basically, we have adhered to that approach and to that policy. We wish to be friends and live in peaceful co-existence with all nations of the world, more especially with our neighbours. At the same time, we will have to be prepared to defend the unity and integrity of our nation and the safety and prosperity of our people.

It is indeed a tribute to our democracy that people are now mobilising themselves to protect their rights and to realise their basic needs and change their living conditions. After all, democracy is a method of enlisting people's participation. Howsoever deprived and distressed our people are, they have shown remarkable initiative to participate in civil society to fight against social evils, poverty, corruption, environmental degradations and a host of other ills gravely affecting their daily lives. In fact the silver linings in the dark clouds of backwardness and deprivation are the people's initiative which have served as crucible of new ideas and methodologies for nation building.

(Dipankar Mukherjee MP and member of the CITU Working Committee participated in a short duration discussion on Disinvestment Policy of the Government in Rajya Sabha on 31-07-2000. Here is the text of the speech - Editor)

PSU DISINVESTMENT: THE COUNTRY ON AUCTION!

It is being frequently and too loudly talked about by the Govt, both ministers and officials, both inside and outside the Parliament that present disinvestments exercise with PSUs is a continuation of the policy of earlier governments, both Congress and United Front Governments. Is it so? Does this govt want attestation of what they are doing from the previous Congress Govt?

So far as Congress is concerned, let us see what is being said by Narasimha Rao, the initiator of the present reform policy in India. In his article in Times of India dated 5th March 2000, he said, "To put it bluntly, 'sale' is certainly not the next generation of disinvestments. Let us not delude ourselves. Sale is a totally different species, not in the genre of disinvestments. It is expropriation of the nation; pure and simple." This is how the father, the initiator of the reform characterizes 'the strategic sale' of PSUs as being pursued by the present Govt. It is not just disinvestments, it is strategic sale of 51% or more shares to strategic buyer, leading to change of ownership. I do not know what Pranab Mukherjee of Congress would say about this. But Narasimha Rao has termed this to be nothing but 'expropriation of nation.'

Next came the United Front Govt. The Disinvestment Commission was formed in August 1996. In response to a Call Attention Motion on 'Situation arising out of disinvestment of profit making CPSUs and the sickness' the then industry minister of the United Front Govt, Mr Murasoli Maran stated in this house on 19th December 1996. I quote, "I want to make it very clear that we are not doing privatisation at all. I know it very well that privatisation, as it happened in the erstwhile Soviet Union or the East European Countries, is unthinkable in near future in India. So, we should make them more effective. What we are doing is a limited exercise of diinvestment...it will not result in the change of

ownership because what we are disinvesting is just 5 per cent, 2 per cent like that. The IOC has a plan to disinvest 5 percent,, VSNL only 7 per cent of the govt equity. So the ownership will not change certainly....I give you that guarantee."

"DO NOT CONFUSE"

Just now Mr Pranab Mukherjee said that 'the Govt is a continuing process.' Hence, in continuity to what the Govt side guaranteed in this house during the previous UF regime 'that ownership of PSUs will not change' if this Govt says that such guarantee is going to be maintained, I will not speak further. But I know, they cannot do that... So don't say and don't confuse and mislead saying that your policy is a continuation of the policy of the previous Govt. It is your policy of total sell out and also total expropriation of nation and you must have the guts to say it forthright.

The next point is how you are treating the Parliament, the highest forum of the nation while dealing on national asset. In reply to a specific question of Mr Pranab Mukherjee on disinvestments of profit making PSUs, the minister said, "...there is no separate policy for disinvestments in profit making central PSUs." ... What does it mean? This clearly exposes Govt's motive not to share with the Parliament its game plan of selling the profit making PSUs, the national assets.... Not only this, 112 members of Parliament submitted a joint memorandum against the Govt decision to sell PSUs without evaluation of the assets and enquiring whether the Govt will act on the memorandum and whether PSU wise examination will be made by the Govt. And reply is given by the Govt that 'information is being collected' This is how the Parliament is being treated on such vital issue of disposal of national assets!

EFFICIENCY & OWNERSHIP

The entire steel industry is in crisis, whether in

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private or public sector. For the private sector steel companies in crisis or in loss, the Govt is not contemplating to change their ownership although bungling of the owner with funds from public sector financial institutions, particularly diversion or drainage of funds is a major factor behind their crisis. Instead, govt has given the private sector steel companies a bail out package of Rs 5240 crore. But for public sector SAIL, change of ownership, privatisation is the only medicine. Another aspect is important. Bridge & Roof another public sector company has been asking for a financial restructuring, conversion of a part of loan into equity and waiver of the rest, for last five years, so that they can raise resources from market, modernize themselves and compete to earn profit for the company and the Govt. They have not been given the financial restructuring so long. Now when this Bridge & Roof has been identified for strategic

sale to some private sector or foreign player, Govt has become liberal to grant financial restructuring to them. Whose interest is your Govt serving here? You are denying some facility to the PSU for its survival, and you become liberal at the cost of public money when the same PSU is slated to be handed over to your private sector/foreigner friends. Then why do you mislead the parliament and the people by talking about revival, restructuring efficiency etc?

The problem of efficiency should not be confused with ownership. Sickness is being talked about while referring to PSUs. But what is the reality? As per Annual Report of BIFR, the number of sick PSUs is 67 out of 237, around 25% involving 5,19,000 workers. What about private sector? Number of sick companies is 2293 out of total 11588 large and medium scale(not small scale) companies involving . If you take into account

The Govt is deliberately confusing the people on its intents of disinvestments. The issue relates to divestment in 127 profit making PSUs. The Prime Minister stated in the SCOPE conference on 1st April that 'revival and restructuring', 'making the PSUs more efficient' are the purpose and goal of disinvestments... Is it really so? Let us take a test case. National Fertilisers Ltd (NFL) has been taken up by Govt for 51% disinvestments and thereby transfer the ownership. Now, since 1991-92 till date, this PSU has never run below 100% capacity utilization. This year, the capacity utilization of NFL has been 111.8%. What more efficiency do you want to do, do you want to make 200% capacity utilization? Is that feasible whether public or private? Please also note, NFL have drawn minimum subsidy, much less than the private sector fertilizer plants. The retention prices of the public sector fertilizer plants, whether naphtha-based or fuel oil-based, at Nangal, Bhatinda and Panipat or the gas based plant at Vijaypur have drawn least subsidy compared to all the private sector plants like Chambal, Oswal, Nagarjuna, Indo-Gulf etc, which another indicator of the superior efficiency of the concerned public sector fertilizer unit. Still you want to privatize them. Where lies the problem? Problems of all the naphtha-based or oil-based plants, whether they are in public or private sector is that they require modernisation if they are to compete with gas-based plants from abroad particularly after withdrawal of quantitative restrictions. The solution lies in suitable feedstock policy and not merely in change of ownership.

How the change of ownership is going to change the concept of efficiency, drawal of subsidy and efficiency of the plants?

So far as competitive efficiency is concerned, the Govt must allow a level playing field to PSUs and should not discriminate against them and talk about efficiency and competition. If you want the IPCL to compete at par, or IOC and other public sector oil companies, you must give them the same sales tax exemptions, same concessions as you are giving to the private sector refineries. By not doing so, the Govt is deliberately putting the PSUs in disadvantage and then finding plea for privatisation."

-DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE

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lakhs of small scale sick and closed units, the number of the sick private companies would swell many times. So how do you relate sickness with ownership alone? No doubt, the situation of sickness is worrying. But do not relate it just with ownership. Better relate it to your policy. The steel sector, engineering sector, textile sector, jute sector, in fine the industry sector are all turning

sick. This not because of just ownership problem but because of your policies.

DISTRESS SALE

And how you are going to make your strategic sale of profit making PSUs? It is nothing but a distress sale. You want to sell the PSUs. You are going to market and telling: I will sell all these, 17 PSUs and I want Rs 10000 crore by March next. It has nothing to do with restructuring or revival of the PSUs. You want to procure money by selling them. And you declared the money-making target, Rs 10000 crore by March next. You have given a clear message to customers, to come and pick up PSUs being auctioned at whatever price they want. This is nothing but a distress sale. You have not yet made the valuation of tangible and intangible assets with the PSUs slated to be sold out and you have declared your target of Rs 10000 crore sale proceeds. You have said about the market price while selling PSUs. Many of the PSUs slated for strategic sale are not having their share traded in stock market. Then how do you determine the market price? And market price alone cannot be the basis for selling the PSUs. Valuation of assets is a must. Otherwise it would be frittering away national wealth for a platter to serve the prospective customers' interest at the cost of this country. In the name of privatisation, strategic sale, you are exactly doing the same thing.

The Govt is frequently talking about blocking of huge fund with public sector. But what is the reality again? As per Public Enterprise Survey, Rs 30000 crore are with the PSUs as Govt loan and Rs 1,00,000 crore as bank loan. And for most of this amount both the Govt and the banks are getting interest. But the Govt is not telling where the public money is getting blocked. In reply to unstarred

question no 221 dated 25th July 2000 in Rajya Sabha, the minister had to admit that Rs 62,392 crore is the amount of unrecovered taxes from the defaulters and the number of major defaulters is not more than 100. Harshad Mehta the great is heading the list with Rs 5243 crore outstanding besides others mostly from private corporate and financial sector. And what about Non Performing Asset(NPA) of nationalized banks owing to debt-defaults again mostly by private corporate and financial sector, amounting Rs 58000 crores? How do you propose to clear this huge blockade of public money? How much money do you require to revive the sick PSUs? Or how much more do you require to dress up you fiscal deficit? But you do not prefer to touch these defaulters and offenders. In stead you prefer to sell out the PSUs, the national assets for a platter. You may prefer to do so, but we cannot agree to this.

OFFERING ON A PLATTER

Another important point I want to say, about you sayings about workers' interest. But have you talked to the Central Trade Unions, taken them into confidence about your game plan? You have not done so as yet. How can you take care of the workers interest without serious consultations with the trade unions?

Lastly if at all you have the intention to revive the sick units, if you are serious at all for revival, you must offer the PSUs the same terms, facilities which you are planning to give for selling them out. To be specific, when you are talking about closing down six units including four in West Bengal, despite the options for revival given by your Expert Committee, why should you not give them a clean balance sheet through suitable financial restructuring and seriously try for revival of them? But you lack or do not have such political will for revival. You only talk about revival and restructuring and sell out the profit making PSUs for a platter just to tackle your current expenditure and close down the sick ones to make space for the private and foreign players in the market and nothing else.

STRIKES AND LOCKOUTS ! REVEALING FACTS

In reply to a starred question by Jibon Roy in Rajya Sabha on 17-08-2000, the Union Labour Minister stated the following:

"According to provisional information available with the Govt, man-days lost due to strikes and lockouts has increased from 22.06 millions in 1998 to 26.08 millions in 1999. The increase is mainly on account of man-days lost in strikes and lock outs in the state sphere and in the public sector. The main reason for this is increase of workers involved in strikes and lockouts as well as increase in duration of strikes and lockouts."

MANDAYS LOST

While participating in the debate, the Labour Minister further stated that in 1998, man-days lost in central sphere (mining, banks, insurance, port & dock, telecom, Airport Authority, atomic energy, space and railways etc) were 72.50 lakh and in state sphere it was 148.1 lakh. The mandays lost in 1998 were 75.08 lakh in public sector and 144.09 lakh in private sector. Out of these, mandays lost due to strike were 93 lakh and 127 lakh due to lock outs.

As prefigure available from Labour Bureau, in 1995, incidence of strikes was 732 and lockout was 334 (total 1066), in 1996 it was 763 and 403 respectively (total 1166). Strike and lock outs were 793 and 512 respectively (total 1305) in 1997. In 1998 it was 665 and 432 (total 1097) and 537 and 387 (total 924) in 1999 respectively. In 2000 till May, the provisional figures of strikes and lock outs are 146 and 161 (total 307). These kinds of happenings of competing incidence of lockouts and strikes are matters of serious concern and anxiety. As also expressed by the honourable members, the reasons behind all these strikes are mostly policy-related, not merely for wages and other benefits and this is also a matter of serious concern.

The incidence of strikes in the private sector was 1034 in 1993, 855 in 1994, 343 in 1995, 381 in 1996, 448 in 1997, 283 in 1998, 167 in 1999 and 45 in 2000 (Jan-May). Incidence of Lockouts in private sector was on the increase, it was 1034,

885, 723, 785, 857, 814, 761 and 262 in decreasing order during the same period.

State wise figures show that strikes and lockouts in industrial sector in the year 1999 (provisional) were 123 in Andhra Pradesh, 22 in Bihar, 9 in Delhi, 6 in Goa, Daman & Diu, 114 in Gujarat 33 in Haryana, 32 in Karnataka, 54 in Kerala, 17 in Madhya Pradesh, 21 in Maharashtra, 17 in Orissa, 19 in Punjab, 36 in Rajasthan, 182 in Tamilnadu, 31 in Uttar Pradesh and 129 in West Bengal and 924 in total.

SERIOUS CONCERN

Jibon Roy while raising supplementary points on the reply of the minister, stated the following:

The current Annual Report of the labour ministry reflects a horrible picture of the industrial scenario. In 1992 the number of strikes and lock out were in the higher side and man-days lost were 3.13 crore. In 1999 till September, as per figures given by you the man-days lost reached almost 2.61 crore. In 1992, the figures of man-days lost due to strikes and lock outs were almost near to each other (1.51 crore for strike and 1.61 crore for lock outs). But the present trend is far more dangerous since the man-days lost due to lock outs in 1999 has gone much above that lost due to strikes and the figure is much higher than the 1992 level. It is a reflection of deep-seated crisis in industrial sector. Lock outs are increasing and the workers are fighting against these lock outs through various actions.

You admitted that all these developments are matters of serious concern. In your reply you have also admitted much greater involvement of larger number of workers and also bigger duration of strikes and lockouts, leading to increase in loss of mandays. If looked into more closely in the phenomenon of lock outs, figures of lock outs alone do not reveal the real impact. In the recent years lockouts increased in a big way in medium scale and large scale units in private sector leading to involvement of larger workforce. Out of total 2.61 crore mandays lost in 1999, only 10 lakh pertains to public sector and rest all in private sector units. The situation in small scale sector have no

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reflections here since the figures of small scale units are not included here.

CRISIS RIDDEN PRIVATE SECTOR

The crisis is more revealing in the private sector. Over and above around 4% of the medium and large scale industries are closed down. As per Economic Survey, 2476 industries are sick and languishing under BIFR. Around 25% of the industries are under BIFR. This is the state of economy under your so called reform. Lock outs are on the rise which you have also admitted. Is that a very healthy state of affair for the economy? On the other hand, incidence of strikes are also increasing since the workers have no other alternative but to fight back the onslaught on them. You are telling everyday that national consensus is there on the reform process. Is this the reflection of consensus. The most important social force, the labour are expressing their disagreement and opposition to the process by trade union actions.

The two most important social forces, the labour and capital are fighting each other, the latter trying to kill the former, is that a reflection of consensus? Moreover the crisis is more revealing in private sector. Both strikes and lock outs galore in private sector and the figures surpassed the public sector in a big way. And in such a background, the Govt is proposing to transfer the entire public sector, rather the entire economy to private sectors and also to foreign hands. This is despite the fact the reflections of strikes and lockouts together in private sector in particular, reached a record level this year(1999) after 11 years' hot pursuit of the so called reform policy. Such reflections challenge the very efficacy of the reform policies. Such developments also debunks the self-patting claim of so called consensus on reform policies. Will you please see reasons and get your policies reviewed?

WHERE IS THE COUNTRY HEADING TOWARDS ?

(Speech of Jibon Roy, MP in Rajya Sabha on 28-07-2000)

In what direction, the country is moving towards? Every body, while expressing concern for labour and the unemployment scenario, is speaking that he is for full employment. But when question comes as to what policy would ensure full employment and save jobs etc., or whether the present policies are in the right direction, many of us resort to poetry only....

It is being said that the population is the biggest problem. Is that really so? Wherever the productive forces are deployed and used to the best of their capabilities, no unemployment problem is there. Destitution generates unemployment. Poverty generates unemployment. While lectures are being showered on us by the policy makers, poverty and destitution are aggravating. For eliminating poverty and destitution, you require a correct policy decision on a national perspective, not just poetry alone.

The Govt and the ruling party have adopted the policy of globalisation and they should not talk

merely about the population while addressing the problems and the questions thereon. The entire globe is your market now, according to your own philosophy and policy...Why should you cry hoarse about population of a single country when the entire world is your market ?

The number of registered unemployed has reached 4.8 crores as on 1993-94 according to figure given by hon'ble labour minister. Now we are in 2000. Have the minister assessed as to how many have gone out of factories, industries and services during the last six years ? The minister has not answered yesterday as to how many factories/units/offices have closed down and how many new ones have come up, how many have lost employment and how many new jobs have been created and what are the net figures ?

According to the estimate made by IDBI, out of all private companies, 25% are non-profit making. The companies which are now closing down in the private sector, all belong to medium and the

LABOUR ISSUES IN PARLIAMENT

large-scale category.. In Mumbai, out of every four companies, one has closed down. The industries in Kanpur, Ghajabad and Jaipur are facing similar crisis. Kindly see the figures quoted in the Annual Report of the Labour Ministry for the current year. Between 1991 and 1999, 3500 factories have closed down. The crisis is all pervading and getting chronic everyday.

In the eighties, when Rajiv Gandhi was prime minister, out of total electricity generation, 55% was being consumed by the manufacturing sector. Now the growth rate has gone down, and only 32% of the electricity generation is being consumed by the manufacturing sector. This speaks volume about the horrible state of our manufacturing-sector economy and its worst ramification on employment.

At the same time quality of employment is also going down as indicative from the minister's response. There is unemployment in agriculture, manufacturing, everywhere but there are some employment in hotels, restaurants etc and similar low quality occupations. But that could not compensate for the total job-losses in industry and agriculture. Hence, not only employment is going down, the quality of employment is also going down sharply. The Govt is stressing on manpower reduction in PSUs and central govt services. It is

pressurising the State Govts to follow suit. As a result of the Govt policies the country is being pushed towards a situation of beggars and destitutes. How can you expect that the population problem can be controlled by a country in destitution ?

Instead of addressing the problems from the roots, a mad drive of privatisation is going on. Everything tangible that has been created since independence, are being sought to be transferred to private sector despite the fact that the private sector is more in the grip of sickness, and to a major extent deliberate sickness. And when you are privatizing all means of production in a country like India, you are leading the State power itself to privatisation and destroying the self reliant economic base of the country. Now you are seeking to survive on information technology, on computers. I am not biased against that. But the fact remains that on every Saturday, if America does not unload the anti-virus system, you cannot protect your system, the IT system as well. That way we are getting completely dependent on them. In this process, everything we have, is being put on the process of destruction by your anti-people anti-poor policies, while you are shedding crocodile tears for the poor.

COMRADE NAREN SEN IS NO MORE

Veteran freedom fighter and a frontline organiser of the working class movement of the country since the forties, Comrade Naren Sen died of a sudden heart attack on 12th August 2000, at Calcutta. He was 91.

Born in 1909 in Barishal district of present Bangladesh, Comrade Sen joined the freedom movement in his teens and braving repression and imprisonment at his early age. He spent seven years in jail under the British rule. He was drawn to Marxism while in jail and after release he started organising the trade union movement. He joined the Communist Party in 1938 itself and played a very important role in organising the Tramway workers at Calcutta since then. Braving the prohibitive orders by the then British raj, he, along with other comrades, could organise the tramway workers effectively who played important role in the anti-British movement and also in subsequent period. Com. Naren Sen also played an important role in organising and expanding the trade union movement in Calcutta from early forties onwards till his death.

Com. Naren Sen dedicated his entire life to the cause of the working class and the left movement. He had also remained a frontline organiser of the communist movement. He also faced imprisonment many times during the congress rule.

CITU and 'The Working Class' pay homage to the memory of the veteran comrade.

ECONOMY ON RAILS !

PATH TO DISASTER.....

Michael Chossudovsky, in his book, 'Globalisation of poverty' noted about India that "With active secessionist movements in Kashmir, Punjab and Assam, disturbances in Amritsar and uncertain truce along with the Line of Control with Pakistan, the IMF's economic medicine has contributed to polarising further the Indian society as well potentially creating the preconditions for the political break-up of the Indian Union. The austerity measures imposed by the IMF have intensified tensions between the Union and the State Govts. More generally, the economic programme has contributed to embittering religious and ethnic strife."Under the heading "The IMF's Indirect Rule", he wrote, "the Washington based international bureaucracy has installed in India a parallel Govt which builds upon these internal social, religious and ethnic divisions (divide and rule)..... The conditions of IMF had clearly forestalled "virtually from the outset the possibility of economic growth." ...Since the Govt of India abdicated its economic sovereignty to the IMF, millions of people have been thrown out of employment. With globalisation and competition,..... MNCs are going in for contracting and subcontracting their production to small units in backward areas with cheap labour, and using govt subsidies to enrich itself and leave a trail of unemployment in its wake....

There is an unwritten understanding between the IMF and the Govt of India that unemployment is necessary because then only can labour be cheap. The hordes of unemployed whose ranks are swelling are a necessary input for globalisation..... Chossudovsky wrote further: "While the IMF programmed India the possibility of an autonomous national capitalist development, the reforms nonetheless received firm backing of India's largest business houses (in a fragile alliance with upper caste landlord lobby). The Tatas and Birlas identify increasingly with foreign capital and the global market economy rather than with the 'national interest.' The tendency is towards increased concentration of ownership.".....Destitution and deaths are

increasing....

With huge import of food, pulses, oilseeds, fruits and vegetables, small farmers are losing their livelihood and already domestic oilseed production during the current year will fall to 19 million tonnes from 21.7 million tonnes in 1998-99. This not only means huge imports, but it means thousands of growers losing their livelihood.... Same goes for wheat, cotton, foodgrains, vegetables etc. Hence the number of suicides and starvation deaths is on the rise as India enters 21st century and 54th year of independence.....

Mother India wears a mantle that is a patchwork of distress, terrorism, suicide and starvation deaths, secessionist demands and caste and communal carnage.

(Olga Tellis in the Observer, 15-08-2000)

DECLINE AHEAD.....

Falling domestic and foreign investments are threatening the overall growth of the economy...says the Associated Chambers of Commerce & Industry of India (ASSOCHAM).

ASSOCHAM observed that though most of the economic indicators show a modest performance in the first quarter of the current year, possibilities of sustaining the recovery are receding....

The inability to reverse the declining trend in foreign direct investments (FDIs) in the last two years has had an impact on the balance of payments position.....

Latest index of industrial production (IIP) figures show that industrial growth rates have slackened in the first quarter...IIP figures indicate that declining investment has reduced output in the capital goods sector. The intermediate goods segment has also been hit by falling demand...

The sharp increase in imports-both oil and non-oil together with the declined inflows of foreign investment have brought down the foreign exchange reserves and led to a sudden depreciation of the rupee exchange rate.....Policy response to reverse the current trends in external sector is now threatening the overall growth prospects of the economy....Overall investment levels have fallen since mid-nineties....

(The Financial Express, 17-08-2000)

HEADING WHERE ?

ECONOMIC SITUATION TO WORSEN....

The country's economic scenario in the coming months is not very rosy, according to a leading research institute. The Institute of Economic Growth, in its monthly monitor of the economy, has projected a further decline in the value of rupee, increased fiscal deficit, higher interest rates and slowdown in industrial growth.

The combined effect of inflation rates higher than international levels, declining forex reserves on account of FII outflows, dollar demand from importers and rising world oil prices are expected to weaken the rupee further, according to Institute's monthly monitor for July.

In addition, the report states "Industrial growth in coming months may not be as rosy as pictured."

....Imports have also started showing a rising trend....Trade deficit has widened from \$2.37 billion in the first quarter of 1999-2000 to \$2.98 billion in the first quarter of 2000-2001.....

(Business Standard, 21-08-2000)

WTO SAID SO....

All quantitative restrictions on import are being withdrawn by Govt of India, since WTO wanted so. The removal of restrictions has been pre-poned by two years, since Clinton wanted so.

The Govt is now planning to gradually withdraw all subsidies on agriculture, since, again WTO wanted India to do so.

But, what the operators of WTO, the rich nations of Europe and America are themselves doing ?

As per a study, average subsidies on agriculture provided by the rich western countries work out to be \$7 billion per annum. Obviously the European Community(EC) has an overwhelming share(90%). The biggest amount of subsidy is pumped into the dairy sector. Dairy products account for about one-third of the \$7 billion export subsidy on all agricultural products, followed by beefs(20%), sugar(11%), and wheat and wheat products(5%). Remaining 23% is distributed over a large number of items all from agricultural sector. On per tonne basis, the subsidised exports of butter and butter oil, led by EC, carried a subsidy

of \$2169, on an average for the period 1995-98. For the same period, export subsidy on milk powder was \$796 per tonne; for cheese \$1018 per tonne; for sugar \$470 per tonne; for coarse grains \$47 per tonne; for wheat \$30.5 per tonne and so on.

(figures taken from a write-up Economic Times, 17-08-2000)

PENALTIES OF FALLING RUPEE...

Collapse of Indian Rupee in relation to US dollar in recent months is going to impose huge invisible burden on the country's economy...Though India's foreign debt amounting to US \$ 99 billions remains unchanged, the country's obligation to discharge the same has shot up by about Rs 21400 crore assuming that entire debt is repayable in US dollars....The exchange rate which stood at around Rs 43.50, to a dollar, at the beginning of 2000-01, has slumped to Rs 45.85 to a dollar (10th August 2000). This may imply that a stupendously large amount of Rs 4539 billions may now be needed, against Rs 4314 billions previously to meet the same foreign debt of US \$ 99 billions.... The manufacturing costs of industries depending on imports of crude oil, petroleum products, fertilisers, non-ferrous metals, various raw materials, components and machineries etc will automatically go up and they will be less competitive in overseas markets. They will be forced to hike their prices for domestic consumers, adding to inflationary pressures, which may tend to further depress the rupee... No doubt, it may give some immediate advantage to exporting community, but the past experience shows that such advantages based on depreciation of currency do not last long....All these issues become more important now than ever before, as mistakes seem to have been made by the authorities concerned by yielding to pressures from industry circle to lower the interest rates.. in view of lower rate of inflation. The authorities should have realised that the low inflation rate of around 3 per cent was a temporary phenomenon and that it would highly imprudent to prune our interest rates when the US was gradually stepping it up over the earlier several months in a bid to control inflation.*(M D Dewani, in The Observer. 19-8-2000)*

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RALLY BY ELECTRICITY EMPLOYEES & ENGINEERS

The National Co-ordination Committee of Electricity Employees and Engineers (NCCOEEE) consisting of all the Engineer Associations and almost all the trade unions (except a portion affiliated to INTUC) together with nearly all the independent unions took part in a mammoth rally assembled at Feroz-Shah Kotla Ground and took a massive protest march by more than 50,000 powermen before the Parliament demanding:

1. Scrap Electricity Bill - 2000.
2. Stop unbundling and privatisation of Electricity Boards.
3. Restore the State Electricity Boards which are unbundled.
4. Unaffordable power rates imposed on Agriculture, Industry and domestic consumers be withdrawn.

The speakers at the rally were E. Balanandan (EEFI), A.B. Bardhan (AIEEF), Shailendra Dubey (AIPEF), Tyagi (ABVMS), H.N. Mishra (AIPDEF), Girish Pande (HMKP), Mangal Singh Negi (DVB Workers' Union), Chander Singh Mandyal (HPSEB employees Union), M.L. Chokse,

(MPEB Janta Union), B.D. Patel (Convenor, GEB Employees Joint Action Committee) and other leaders from KSEB Employees union. They have explained the disastrous effects of the policy of privatisation, unbundling of SEBs and allowing foreign and Indian Capital in Electricity Sector. The electricity Bill-2000 will not only destroy the self-reliance in electricity sector but also accommodate all the prescriptions of World Bank. And to allow the private capital-Indian and foreign-to garner millions of crore rupees worth of assets of Indian power sector. The speakers at the rally also highlighted that the sovereignty of the country is being mortgaged and the unity of electricity employees alone can fight back and force the Government to retrace the steps and change these policies.

A memorandum to Prime Minister was forwarded demanding that the power industry be rescued from the dictates of the World Bank and progressive reforms were suggested to be taken up within the existing structure of Electricity

Boards under the existing laws. The NCCOEEE, however, announced that should the Govt. continue with its present policies and fail to take appropriate corrective measures on the lines suggested in the memorandum, electricity employees would be compelled to call for a countrywide agitation culminating in an all India one day protest strike on 12th of December, 2000. In the resolution adopted the following action programme was announced:

1. "Extensive mass awareness Campaign" be initiated w.e.f. 1st November 2000 to 14th November 2000 through which the district level meetings and seminars will be organised to awaken people in general and farmers and employees in particular.
2. On 15th November 2000 in every State capital, the employees and engineers will organise big rallies.
3. A 24 Hour protest strike will be conducted on 12th December 2000 w.e.f. 8 A.M.

BANKMEN ON WAR-PATH

The United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), comprising the 9 trade unions of millions of Bank officers and employees has decided to fight back privatisation

of Banks and introduction of VRS aimed at downsizing the staff and deunionisation. They resolved to step up campaign on both the issues intensively and extensively.

For this purpose UFBU chalked out the following programmes. By 31st August, 2000: Rallies at all State Capitals/District Headquarters/Towns under the

banner of UFBU;

11th September, 2000: Dharnas at all State Capitals before BI/IBA Local Chapter and Morchas to Chief Ministers and submission of Memorandum (common draft);

20th September, 2000: Submission of Mass Memorandum as per common draft to all CMDs/Chief Executives along with Mass Signature of all employees and officers.

The UFBU will also seek meetings with the Prime Minister, Finance Minister, leaders of the opposition and other political parties, in this connection.

The meeting reiterated its earlier decision to go on a nationwide strike within 72 hours in the event any Bill is presented for Bank privatisation in the current monsoon session of the Parliament. S.R. Sengupta, Convenor, UFBU, has been

authorised to declare the date and inform the Constituent Organisations/General Secretaries accordingly.

The same decision shall also apply to any ordinance passed by the Govt. after Parliament session is over.

The meeting also decided to observe a day's strike sometime in the 2nd fortnight of September, 2000.

HANDLOOM WORKERS ON TO STRUGGLE

The All India Handloom Workers Convention held at Calcutta on July 27 and 28 decided to launch countrywide struggle against the Satyam Committee recommendations.

The Convention was organised by the All India Coordination Committee of Textile Workers of the CITU. It was attended by nearly 200 delegates including some women from W.Bengal, Kerala, Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tripura, Assams, Orissa, etc. The Convention was conducted by a presidium consisting of Gopal Bhattacharjee (W.Bengal), Bharati Mohan (Tamilnadu), J.V. Raghavulu (A.P), Arakkan Balan (Kerala) and Naryan Roychowdhury (Tripura).

The Convention was inaugurated by Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary of W.Bengal State CITU and Secretary of CITU. He dwelt on the adverse effects of imperialist globalisation and the

crisis created by it in the handloom sector. He called upon the workers to launch countrywide agitation demanding rejection of the Satyam Committee report by the Government.

P.K. Ganguly, Secretary, CITU and Convenor of the All India Coordination Committee of Textile Workers, placed the report. The report dealt with in detail the crisis developing in the handloom sector over the years and in particular the most retrograde recommendations of the Satyam Committee which will virtually ruin the handloom sector. The report also emphasised strengthening of the organisation in the handloom sector. 23 comrades from all the States participated in the discussions on the report.

The resolution with the demands and action programme was placed by A.K. Padmanabhan and seconded by Alok Bhattacharya. The Convention decided to launch

campaigns culminating in an All India Protest Day on August 21.

The resolution unanimously adopted at the Convention expressed its deep concern over the crisis engulfing the handloom industry, which employs more than 40 million workers, next only to agriculture in employment opportunities.

The resolution noted that the textile policies of the Govt. of India had caused severe crisis in this sector. The Govt had appointed a Committee under S.R. Satyam, which, without even caring to have discussions with the Central Trade Unions, on such an important issue, had already submitted its report. Details available on the contents of the report showed that the recommendations of Satyam Committee would totally ruin all sectors of textile industry, not to speak of handloom sector which is already in doldrums. The other recommendations of the

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Committee were the repeal of the Handloom (Reservation of articles for production) Act, withdrawal of the Hank Yarn Obligation Scheme and restructuring the handloom industry, which will virtually wipe out at least 60 per cent of this sector.

The convention called upon the handloom weavers all over the country to conduct national level struggles on the following demands:

1) Rejection of the Satyam Committee recommendations by the Government in total and formulation of a new Textile Policy in consultation with the Central Trade Unions, which should be a self-reliant policy so as to ensure balanced development of all the three sectors viz, organised mills sector, the powerloom sector and the handloom Sector.

Restructure of the handloom sector dividing it in 3 Tiers has to be withheld and all support should be extended to all handloom weavers producing low, medium and high quality cloth. As a measure of safeguards against the foreigners, the unique products in each State should be patented.

2. Substantial increase in the prevailing low wages of the handloom weavers and fixation of an uniform fair wages on an all India basis with Dearness Allowance linked with price index.

3. Extension of all labour laws and social security measures and welfare schemes to all sections of

weavers.

4. The Handloom (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act of 1985 for all the 22 reserved articles must be strictly implemented as per the verdict of the Supreme court.

5. The Hank Yarn Obligation Scheme has to be implemented strictly ensuring the supply of at least 50 per cent of Hank Yarn to the handloom Sector by the mill sector.

6. Other inputs like dyes, chemicals, etc. have to be supplied to the weavers at subsidised cost. There should not be any export of cotton or yarn without meeting the internal demand.

7. The handloom cooperatives should be strengthened by weeding out corruption and the benami cooperatives and through regular elections. All the weavers should be covered by cooperatives.

8. Identify cards should be given to all weavers.

9. Marketing of handloom products has to be ensured through the cooperatives eliminating the middlemen. Government must purchase their requirements of handloom cloth from the cooperatives.

10. For continuous employment of the weavers and sale of stocks, restore the rebate given by the Central Government. The State Apex Societies and the Cooperatives should be given financial assistance by the Central Government.

11. Provision for loan, housing,

workshed, thrift fund and old age pension should be made for all weavers.

12. Pre-eminent role of cotton as the main raw material of the textile industry and remunerative prices to the cotton growers have to be ensured.

The convention also drew up the following action programme to "Save the Handloom Sector":

1. Submission of charter of demands to local officials through deputations.

2. Campaign among the handloom workers on charter of demands.

3. All India protest day on 21st August through demonstrations, dharnas and rallies.

4. Raj Bhawan marches to be organised in State capitals (Date to be finalised later)

The convention urged the handloom workers all over the country to make the campaign a big success and to prepare for all India Protest strike for which the date will be finalised later, if the Govt. of India did not reject the Satyam committee report and formulate a proper Textile policy.

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REPORTS & EVENTS

STRUGGLE BY STATE GOVERNMENT STAFF

Lakhs of state employees and teachers will observe one day countrywide general strike in the month of December 2000 against privatisation, retrenchment, downsizing, cut in existing economic benefits and the overall disastrous economic policy of the Government.

The date of the general strike will be announced in the countrywide rallies to be held on 15 November 2000, when lakhs of employees and teachers will gather at all state capitals to observe 'Stop Privatisation Day'.

These programmes were decided by the National Executive of the All India State Government Employees Federation which met at Mysore, on 17 - 18 July 2000. The employees are very gravely

affected by the World Bank-IMF-WTO dictated new economic policy of the Government. At the dictation of these international financial and trade institutions, the Government of India and most of the State Governments are intensifying their policies of privatisation, retrenchment, downsizing and cut in existing economic benefits of the workers and employees in all sectors.

In many States, different Government departments are either corporatised or outrightly privatised or being drastically downsized. State Public Sector undertakings are being sold out or closed down. Educational institutions and hospital services are being privatised.

World Bank is directing the State

Governments to reduce the number of employees and in UP alone 4 lakhs posts have been so abolished. In M.P. 30,000 temporary employees have been retrenched. In other States, employees are threatened with losing their jobs.

So far as the States finances are concerned, the State Governments are deprived of necessary funds by the Central Government. Now, the Central Government is putting pre-conditions for devolution of funds to the States. This will harm the interests of the States.

It is in this background the All India State Government Employees' Federation had decided to intensify their struggles.

(Report from Sukomal Sen)

NPCC WORKERS' UNION ON REVIVAL PLAN

The IDBI had a meeting at the Delhi corporate office of the National Projects Construction Corporation Ltd (NPCC). The discussions were held with the management and the unions on the report of Batliboy & Co for revival of the NPCC. The NPCC Workers Union of India, affiliated to CITU, was not invited for the meeting under a spurious plea that the union headquarters is at

Calcutta. Perhaps, they lost sight of the fact that the President of the union, Basudev Acharya, is an MP and could be contacted at Delhi. However, the NPCC management sought the views of the CITU union through a letter.

The CITU union drew the attention of the management to the revival plan prepared and submitted by the union in 1991 and reiterated the suggestions

made therein.

Further, the union urged capital restructuring of the NPCC by converting the Govt of India loans into equity, proper manpower study, reverting back the NPCC to the control of Ministry of Power as in the past, disposal of old machinery and purchase of new machinery, shifting of corporate office to Calcutta, etc.

(Report from Binoy Mukherjee)

WAGE BOARD FOR NEWSPAPER EMPLOYEES

The Wage Boards for Journalists and Non-

journalists submitted their final report to the Labour Ministry on

July 25, 2000. They have recommended a wage rise of 27

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to 40 per cent depending on the classification of newspapers. Earlier they have announced 20 per cent of interim relief plus Rs.100/- The final proposals has been slightly reduced as compared to

the tentative proposals. The wage Boards were set up on 2.9. 1994. Satyanarayan Jatia, Labour Minister, who received the report, said the cabinet approval will take nearly two months.

The award will be implemented, as per the recommendation, as follows:

Class III and above	: 1.4.1998
Class IV & V	: 1.6.1999
Classes VI to IX	: 1.4.2000

(Report from K.L. Kapur)

BIRLA TEXTILE WORKERS ON WARPATH

The workers of Birla Textile Mill at Baddi, Himachal have been on continuous strike since 12th July 2000 braving prohibitory orders and police repression.

As ordered by Supreme Court, the textile Mill was relocated from Delhi to Baddi at Himachal Pradesh. The order of the Supreme Court provided for continuity of service and all service conditions including pay and benefits for the workers after relocation. But, when the workers came from Delhi to Baddi for joining work in January 1999, the Birla management made no arrangement for their stay, as committed by them earlier and many workers had to stay under the open sky in extreme cold weather of Himachal Pradesh.

One worker, named Bharat, died of cold. Despite repeated persuasion by the CITU union, no compensation has yet been paid to his family. During the said period, the factory did not start production, but still the workers were not allowed to enter the factory premises even despite extreme cold. The workers had to

go back to Delhi finding no other way out.

Since then the Kapra Mazdoor Lal Jhanda Union (CITU) tried to unite all other unions of the workers to pressurize the Birla management to give minimum facilities to the workers on the job, but none came forward. The CITU ultimately had to file a case in Supreme Court and the workers could ultimately join duty at the direction of the Court.

But, the Birla Management denied many of the existing facilities earned by the workers through struggle after the relocation of the factory to Baddi in January 1999. The workers are even being denied of payment of Dearness Allowance, which the workers used to get at Delhi. Practically wage freeze has been imposed on the concerned workers. As a result, even after 30-35 years of service, many workers are getting hardly Rs 1900/2000 per month. Side by side, the Birla Management recruited many workers under the nomenclature of trainee or apprentice and paid them even below the statutory minimum wage level for their hard

work in production.

After the failure of all persuasive efforts by the CITU union there, the workers went on indefinite strike from 12th July 2000. Almost the entire workforce joined the strike and a substantial section of the trainees also joined the strike action.

The Birla Management and the State Administration joined hand to break the strike at any cost. On the fifth day of the strike, it was declared illegal. It is interesting to note that despite repeated persuasion by the union before the strike, the state labour dept. did not respond to the union's request to conciliate the matter. But, immediately after the commencement of the strike, at the instance of the Birlas, the state labour dept. referred the issue for adjudication by the tribunal and issued prohibitory orders against the strike on the ground of pendency of the dispute before the tribunal.

And from the day one of the strike, the State administration headed by the BJP Govt. started behaving as a servant of the Birlas. Every day, in the very presence of police

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personnel, the agents and hirelings of Birlas were throwing stones on the striking workers' camp and creating provocation, but the police force only chased and harassed the striking workers. On 20th July, indiscriminate stone throwing was organised by the police from inside the factory to disrupt the public meeting at the gate, in support of strike. The attempt of the police to break the meeting following the stone throwing was foiled by the resistance from the crowd that had assembled for the public meeting. On 31st July, demonstrations were held all over the State in solidarity with the striking Birla workers. During the 1st week of August, the Birlas managed to get an order from the Court, prohibiting assembly within 200 meters of the factory gates. Immediately thereafter, police sprang to action and demolished striking workers' camp before the factory and arrested five leaders. Among those arrested were N D Ranaut, Secretary of Solon District CITU, Ramakanta Mishra, President of the CITU union in Birla Mill and also Secretariat member of State CITU, besides three others in a false and fabricated case. They were detained in custody for seven days. Subsequently, Kashmir Singh Thakur, General Secretary of the State CITU, camping at there since the commencement of the strike, was also arrested by the police. From the day one of the strike, the police and the state administration

commenced terrorising the workers as well as the local population, in a bid to pit the local people against the striking workers. Anti social goonda elements were recruited as security staff. The Birlas, while refusing to pay the workers their dues, are liberally spending money to buy the support of the locality. The police force camping at the factory premises are being provided free lunch and dinner. But, owing to intensive organised campaign by the CITU among the local population and the workers of the surrounding industries, the game of the Birlas to pit the local people against the striking workers could not succeed. Rather, at the initiative of the CITU, a coordination committee of the trade unions of other industrial units in the area was formed and has been working in solidarity with the striking workers along with representatives of local yubamandal, panchayat members and other mass organisations. On 20th Jul, in a public meeting in support of the strike, workers of the entire industrial area assembled and all the trade unions in the industrial area, coming from all affiliations expressed their support and solidarity to the striking workers. On 30th July again, a massive rally of workers and the common people of the locality demonstrated solidarity with the strikers which was addressed, among others, by Kashmir Singh Thakur, General Secretary of

Himachal State CITU, Chandrasekhar, General Secretary of Punjab State CITU and the pradhan of the local panchayat. On 13th August, yet another massive public rally was organised which was participated by several thousands of workers and common people of the locality and was addressed by the local MLA, Laggo Ram and other eminent personalities of the locality. Bratin Sengupta, MP and Rakesh Singha, President Himachal State CITU, also addressed the public meeting besides others. Despite the terror unleashed by the Birla-State Govt nexus, the strike is going in full swing with total unity of the workforce. On 27th August 2000, at the call of the CITU an industrial strike in the Baddi-Beroutiwala industrial area was staged, besides a rally of the striking industrial worker along with peasants and local population in the afternoon, again demonstrating their solidarity with the striking textile workers of Birla Mill.

**ATTENTION
STATE COMMITTEES!
PLEASE SEND IN
YOUR
COMMENTS/
OBJECTIONS
ON VERIFICATION
CLAIMS MADE BY
OTHER TRADE UNIONS**

REPORTS & EVENTS

BHOPAL: INDUSTRIAL WORKERS' STRUGGLE

The industrial workers of the Gobindpura industrial area near Bhopal are struggling for basic trade union rights and for implementation of labour laws, led by CITU.

In most of the industrial units in this region, there are no trade union and wherever it is there, it was non-functioning or functioning under employers' control. The employers, thus getting a free hand and with the support of the State administration have been arrogantly violating all basic labour laws in respect of minimum wages, service conditions, basic working amenities and what not. In the era of liberalisation, the employers got further emboldened to ignore the statutes. Whenever workers raised questions against such unlawful acts of the employers, or tried to build up effective trade unions in the industrial units, the employers suppressed all dissent by atrocious victimisation with direct assistance from the State administration and labour dept.

At the initiative of Bhopal district committee of CITU, efforts are being made since long to build up trade unions and consolidate the workers against the inhuman exploitation and desperate violation of labour laws by the employers.

In October 99, at the initiative of CITU, union was formed and registered in M/s Copper Strips

and Sree Cables in Gobindpura, owned by the same person. All efforts at forming union in these companies were foiled by repression and retrenchment by the employer during past 27 years. CITU somehow managed to form the union and got the same registered secretly and thereafter submitted the charter of demands. All the workers of the two units joined the union *enmasse*. The charter of demands of the workers mostly related to proper implementation of various aspects of labour laws.

From January 2000, due to constant persuasion by CITU, the State labour dept. had to start conciliation on the charter of demands. The employer did not participate in conciliation and at the same time unleashed repression on the workers and their leaders. Inside the factory, effort was made to kill a leading worker, Ramashish, through electrocution. On the day after Holy, the employers plotted homicidal onslaught on the leading workers of the factory by hired armed hoodlums in order to terrorise the workers and kill the union. Despite written complaint to police with all evidence, police took no action. The Workers unitedly resisted and foiled all these games of the employer. Wage-cut for 8 days, and thereafter for another fifteen days have been inflicted on all the workers most

arbitrarily by the management for their participation in demonstrations beyond their duty hours. All these were designed to scare away the workers from the union, but workers got more united and determined to fight under the CITU leadership in that process.

In their desperation to destroy the union, the management suspended 7 leading workers of M/s Sree Cables followed it with dismissal. 55 casual workers, working continuously for more than five years have been dismissed illegally and the company deployed contract workers in their place. On 14th June, the company locked out the factory without any notice and when the factory reopened on 19th June, the management refused to allow the entire workforce to resume duty. They brought contract workers from outside in their place. The company wanted each worker to give an undertaking that they will not sabotage and also not remain with the union as precondition of their joining duty. The workers flatly refused and remained firm with the union. The workers thus being disallowed to enter factory started squatting peacefully before the factory gates from 19th June. Time and again the employer tried to engineer clashes between the squatting workers and the contractor and the workers brought by them but that failed

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owing to cautious and organised handling by the CITU union.

On 12th July again, the management made a ploy to let the armed hirelings of contractor on the workers and a contractor's man got injured and died on 15th July. The police force immediately scooped on the CITU activists through indiscriminate arrests and terror on the mass of the workers. The situation went to such an extent that police chased to arrest even Promod Pradhan and Zakir Ali, President and General Secretary of Bhopal District Committee of CITU. None of them was present at the spot of the incident. Police also carried on desperate operation on the State CITU office on 1st August and manhandled comrades there including S Kumar, President of MP State CITU, Ramlakhan Sharma, former MLA and Jasvinder Singh.

The entire game plan of the employer and the State administration is not to allow the

trade unions to consolidate its position in Gobindpura industrial area. The State labour dept. also has been trying to tackle the specific complaints of the workers on illegal activities of the employer by delaying the process and by not taking any action. But the determined struggle by the workers, along with massive rallies before the State Assembly on 31st July, intervention by the State CITU leadership at the level of labour minister and Chief Minister and raising the issues in Assembly session etc, ultimately could move the authorities to some extent. Subodh Roy MP addressed the rally before the Assembly on 31st July. Ram Lakhan Sharma, former MLA and also State Secretariat member of CPI(M) also intervened at all levels to highlight the issues and pressurise the Govt. The labour dept. had to give in writing to the employer for allowing workers to join duty without insisting for undertaking. Through prolonged

struggle, the workers could foil the game plan of the employer and further consolidated their union.

The struggle of the workers of Sree Cables and Copper Strips, had also generated high hopes among the workers of other industrial units of the area. The workers of other industrial units in the area came forward spontaneously in support of the struggling workers of these two factories, in raising funds for the struggle and court cases, for giving subsistence allowance to dismissed workers and common people of the workers colonies in and around also extended their support. CITU workers and activists are now moving round the industrial area to consolidate the popular support among the common people and the workers organisationally. Similar efforts are also going on in Mandidwip industrial area and immense response is being received by CITU there also.

UNITED MOVEMENT IN PLANTATION INDUSTRY

The National Conference of Trade Unions in Plantation Industry held in Kochi on 20-21 August, gave a call to all the workers in plantation industry to unite, irrespective of affiliations, to fight against the Government of India's economic policies, which are ruining the plantation industry. 75 representatives from all over India attended the conference. A

joint committee of unions in Kerala plantation industry belonging to INTUC, CITU, AITUC, HMS and UTUC was formed to prepare for the conference.

Sanjeeva Reddy, President, INTUC, inaugurated the conference and emphasised the need for coming together to save the plantation industry and its

workers. P A Joseph, Vice President, Indian National Plantation Workers Federation (INTUC) welcomed the delegates. M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, criticised the policies of globalisation, which have brought serious crisis in plantation industry in India. He stressed the need for unity of the people in all the developing countries. He

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welcomed the unity achieved by unions in plantation industry and pointed out that if we assert effectively the policy of the Government can be changed. S R Sengupta, General Secretary, UTUC, Lalaji Babu, General Secretary, All India Plantation Workers Federation and E Balasubramanyam, President, HMS spoke highlighting the problems faced by the industry. The representatives of the Kerala Planters Association as well as UPASI observed that all the difficulties faced by the industry were due to the economic policy of import liberalisation. They pointed out that from 1st April 2000 the quantitative restrictions on imports would be removed as per WTO conditionalities. The Indian plantation industry would face very serious situation making

its survival at stake.

Speakers participating in the discussion explained the local problems and noted the deteriorating condition of the industry due to the policies of globalisation.

The conference decided to observe all India 'Save Plantation Industry, Save Plantation Workers Day' on 8th November 2000, to highlight the condition of plantation industry and its labour. Tea, coffee, rubber, cardamom, pepper and other plantations will observe the day all over India.

Another conference will be held at Siliguri (West Bengal) in the last week of October, in which trade unions and employers will participate in good strength. A joint seminar on plantation industry will be organised at New Delhi in the first week of

December to chalk out alternative policies to save the plantation industry. The conference further decided to collect signatures on a petition to Parliament.

A massive march will be organised in the budget session of Parliament next year. A demand to change the Plantation Labour Act and ensure its full implementation will also be raised.

A remarkable unity of central trade unions and plantation owners was achieved to protect the industry and living conditions of workers. They will jointly fight to change the present policies so that the national interests are properly protected.

The conference generated enthusiasm among workers of all affiliations as well as independent trade unions.

KANPUR TEXTILE WORKERS DEMONSTRATION

Over two thousand workers of the NTC and BIC mills of Kanpur came to Delhi and staged demonstrations continuously on July 31 and August 1, in front of the textiles ministry, demanding revival of the NTC and GIC mills. The call was given by the Joint Action Committee of Kanpur, comprising the CITU, AITUC, HMS, AICCTU, INTUC and UTUC unions.

On July 31, the workers were confronted by the police when they broke the heavy barricades and were taken to the Parliament Street police station enmasse. The

workers continued the demonstration inside the police custody for the whole day. They were addressed among others by Basudev Acharya, MP, KL Mahendra (General Secretary, AITUC), P.K. Ganguly (Secretary, CITU), D L Sachdev (Secretary, AITUC), R A Mittal (Secretary, HMS) etc.

On August 1, the workers entered the Udyog Bhawan and sat on a day-long dharna before the textiles ministry. A ten-member joint delegation went in to hold talks with the textiles minister.

The delegation told the minister

that if the minister does not write to the High Court to stay its order latest by August 18, when the High Court is expected to give its final verdict on the BIC, the workers would start a dharna before the minister's residence.

On the NTC issue, the delegation demanded revival of at least 78 mills which, according to the government itself, can be revived. It also asked that a bipartite meeting be called to sort out the case of other NTC mills. The delegation totally opposed any privatisation. It also demanded rejection of the retrograde Satyam

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Committee recommendations in toto.

On assurance given by the minister to positively loom into

the matter, the delegation went back to the workers at Udyog Bhawan and addressed them. The dharna was withdrawn with the

resolution that the workers would come back to Delhi with their families if the minister failed to fulfill his assurance by August 18.

WEST BENGAL CITU CALLS FOR ONE HOUR STRIKE

West Bengal State Committee of CITU has called upon the workers to observe one hour's strike in each shift on 30th & 31st of this month. The demands are 1) removal of all ceilings in the

payment of Bonus Act, thereby enabling all workers to get annual Bonus before Puja/Diwali and 2) restoring interest rate to 12% per year which has recently been reduced to 11% P. year by the Govt

of India.

The State Committee of CITU condemns that such reduction in the interest rate will cause huge loss to the workers of all sections.

PARLIAMENT MARCH BY FCI EMPLOYEES

A Parliament march was held under the banner of "Save FCI-Save PDS" Action Council of Kerala on 17.8.2000. Leaders of

various trade unions participated in the march, which started from the Kerala House, New Delhi in the morning.

MPs from various political parties led the march and addressed the demonstrators.

Basudev Acharya, V M Sudheeran, K Muralidharan, P Rajendan, K Suresh Kurup, Francis George, A K Premajam, V S Sivakumar, V V Raghavan, N N Krishna Das, S Ajaykumar, Ramesh Chennithala, T Govindan, A Vijayaraghavan, A P Abdullakutty, P C Thomas and C O Poulouse (all MPs) and A Sampath, Ex MP, V M Damodaran, M N Pillai, K R Pushapadharan, M C Thyagi and Subramanian (leaders of the trade unions) spoke.

Later a delegation met Santhakumar, Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, who assured that the Govt would consider reducing the price of rice under the PDS, as in the case of wheat. Similarly, accumulated stock of rice would also be auctioned, he assured. *(Report from C O Poulouse)*

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Consumer Price Index Numbers for Industrial Workers on base: 1982 = 100

Sr. No	Centre	Apr. 2000	May 2000	June 2000	Sr. No.	Centre	Apr. 2000	May 2000	June 2000
1	Gudur	442	442	428	45	Amritsar	389	383	383
2	Guntur	438	438	439	46	Ludhiana	392	398	400
3	Hyderabad	422	424	422	47	Ajmer	433	435	436
4	Visakhapatnam	436	440	438	48	Jaipur	403	406	404
5	Warangal	435	437	446	49	Chennai	473	477	476
6	D D Tinsukia	386	387	388	50	Coimbatore	426	433	437
7	Guwahati	457	459	462	51	Coonoor	432	434	436
8	Labac-Silchar	369	378	378	52	Madurai	423	432	440
9	Mariani Jorhat	419	415	415	53	Salem	436	434	433
10	Rangapara-Tezpur	406	405	402	54	Tiruchirapally	480	476	476
11	Jamshedpur	400	405	404	55	Agra	407	399	401
12	Jharia	356	359	361	56	Ghaziabad	446	445	447
13	Kodarma	372	370	368	57	Kanpur	426	423	427
14	Monghyr Jamalpur	417	409	409	58	Saharanpur	403	398	398
15	Noamundi	399	398	397	59	Varanasi	470	465	468
16	Ranchi-Hatia	418	417	415	60	Asansol	405	409	410
17	Ahmedabad	439	439	443	61	Calcutta	434	439	440
18	Bhavnagar	466	473	473	62	Darjeeling	376	379	382
19	Rajkot	444	441	446	63	Durgapur	456	460	461
20	Surat	447	449	449	64	Haldia	480	478	476
21	Vadodra	429	434	435	65	Howrah	484	494	495
22	Faridabad	441	440	447	66	Jalpaiguri	397	395	393
23	Yamunanagar	409	409	416	67	Raniganj	376	377	379
24	Srinagar	471	467	465	68	Chandigarh	456	453	457
25	Bangalore	422	425	423	69	Delhi	517	518	520
26	Belgaum	473	478	477	70	Pondicherry	475	476	476
27	Hubli-Dharwar	435	438	436					
28	Mercara	458	459	460		All India	438	440	442
29	Alwaye	439	442	449		Additional Series of Labour Bureau			
30	Mundakayam	450	453	459					
31	Quilon	450	455	448	1	Kothagudem	433	437	445
32	Thiruvananthapuram	496	501	515	2	Himachal Pradesh	428	426	428
33	Balaghat	378	380	386	3	Bhilwara	436	436	439
34	Bhilai	388	390	395	4	Chhindwara	417	415	416
35	Bhopal	452	451	452	5	Tripura	319	324	427
36	Indore	452	446	445	6	Goa	520	523	526
37	Jabalpur	451	450	451					
38	Mumbai	501	511	513					
39	Nagpur	451	454	456					
40	Nasik	452	455	456					
41	Pune	488	492	491					
42	Solapur	465	466	468					
43	Barbil	403	406	410					
44	Rourkela	401	401	404					

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WHITHER PORT & DOCK SETTLEMENT?

M K PANDIE

After a successful 5 days strike in all the 11 major ports in January last, the wage negotiations in Port and Dock industry became a centre of attraction all over the country. But, the Port and Dock wage settlement has come as a rude shock to all the workers, not only in public sector undertakings but to the trade union movement in general.

The strike in Port and Dock industry was for a 5 year settlement and the Minister of Surface Transport had to publicly admit the justness of the demand. He agreed to get the issue resolved in a period of 3 months.

The remarkable unity achieved by the 5 Federations in Port and Dock industry enhanced the prospects of achieving a good settlement. They could achieve 20 per cent fitment benefit, full neutralisation at all levels, House rent allowance at the new rates, CCA at a more favourable rate than for the Central Government employees and liberalisation of the Pension Scheme for the employees.

Had the 5 federations remained united and fought with determination, it would have been possible to get the agreement limited for a period of 5 years. However, weakness shown by some leaders had resulted in letting down the workers' interests. The final agreement for 10 years provides for a paltry additional 7.5 per cent fitment benefit to the workers. Some trade unions quietly talked to the Government representatives behind the back of some federations and clinched the deal, which is not favourable to the workers.

Representatives of CITU and AITUC federations opposed the 10 year settlement and the rise offered by the proposals of the managements. They recorded their dissent during the negotiations and it was mentioned in the preamble of the agreement and the record note of discussions. The representatives of CITU and AITUC signed after recording their dissent.

The overall settlement ignored the concessions given by ONGC agreement and offers given by the managements of NTPC and the PSUs in oil industry. Abrupt withdrawal of the insistence of 5 year settlement by some leaders of the federations

changed the situation and the settlement came as a rude shock to public sector workers.

The settlement in Port and Dock has caused a serious setback in the struggle of the public sector workers.

The settlement will further adversely affect the interests of younger workers who will be tied to a 10 year settlement with a paltry rise in wages for the remaining period of 5 years.

The Port and Dock management is embarking on the path of drastic reduction in manpower in the industry. In the name of cutting down the cost of production, they are engaging more and more contract workers. With ban on recruitment imposed by the Government, posts of retired employees are not filled in. In the name of multi skilled jobs, further manpower is being reduced. The management is planning to further intensify the workload on the workers. In the name of labour flexibility, additional load and tasks are sought to be imposed.

OFFENSIVE OF PRIVATISATION

The Government of India has also decided to privatise the port operations and several multinational companies are having their eyes on Indian Ports. P & O company has already been given berths in Jawaharlal Nehru Port as well as Kandla Port. Taking advantage of all the infrastructure developed over the years by the Government and the Indian Ports, the MNC is in a position to earn huge profits by engaging large number of casual and temporary workers.

JNPT is also being privatised and workers are resisting the policy of the Central Government.

Privatisation of Ports will have serious repercussions on the defence of the country, as the MNCs will get to know all the movements of our Navy. However, the BJP-led Government is totally unconcerned with this aspect.

The Port and Dock workers must ponder over the disadvantages they will face due to 10 year settlement and find ways and means to overcome the weaknesses. They must prepare to organise resistance to the vile designs of the NDA Government. The workers in the industry should consider.

NATIONWIDE PSU STRIKE DEFERRED

IN the wake of intense preparation for the scheduled nationwide strike on August 17-19 by the central public sector workers at the call of the CPSTU, the prime minister met the central trade union organisations on August 12. It was good that trade unions including the INTUC and BMS, who are not the CPSTU's constituents, were also called to the meeting. Besides the prime minister, the finance minister, labour minister, minister for disinvestment and deputy chairman of the Planning Commission were also present in the meeting.

Apart from the retrograde economic policies, the issues which figured prominently in the discussion included disinvestments, privatisation and closures of the PSUs, revival of sick industries and non-payment of salaries to the workers of sick PSUs, problems pertaining to wage revision in PSUs, retrograde changes in labour laws, upward revision of bonus ceilings, expansion in coverage and enhancement of minimum wage, etc. Most of the trade unions expressed opposition to the policies of the government on the above issues. After hearing the trade union leaders, the prime minister assured that he would arrange for regular structured discussion with the trade unions on all the above the issues concerning labour and industries. At the level of the PM, the next meeting

will be held in November which will be preceded by structured meeting with the trade unions at the level of labour minister, along with the minister of disinvestments and others concerned ministers. The PM also commented that he is not in favour of indiscriminate privatisation and closure of the PSUs. The ministers also indicated that revision of the bonus ceiling is under active consideration of the government, and urged the trade unions to consider withdrawal of the proposed three-day countrywide strike in the public sector units.

Considering the above development and in appreciation of the necessity to forge broader unity and greater mobilisation of the workers in the movement to defend the public sector and the workers' rights and livelihood against the policy onslaughts, the CPSTU has decided to defer the proposed strike in PSUs for the time being.

The CPSTU congratulated the PSU workers and unions for their effective role in pre-strike preparatory actions and campaign which brought all the issues to national focus, and called upon them to build up broadest unity to defend the public sector, the national economy and workers' rights. The signatories to the statement are Gaya Singh (AITUC), V Tiagi (HMS), Jibon Roy (CITU), Michael Fernandes (JAF, Bangalore) and Y Adinarayana (PSUTU Coordination, Hyderabad).

MASSIVE WORKERS' RALLY AT DELHI ON 27TH SEPTEMBER

As decided by the Kozhicode session of the General Council of CITU in last April, mass signature campaign on petition addressed to President of India, against the anti-national and anti-people policies of the Vajpayee Govt, is going on in full swing all over the country. The mass signature campaign is expected to conclude by the end of August.

It has been decided to submit the mass petitions, collected from all over the country, to the President of India through a massive, several thousand strong demonstration of workers at Delhi on 27th September 2000. The mass demonstration will be participated by the workers from Delhi and adjoining States, viz., Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh etc. Accordingly preparation for the massive mobilisation for the 27th September rally is going on in the respective States, through various programmes along with the mass signature campaign, which has already evoked good response from the workers and the public.

The Delhi is going to witness a massive workers' rally and demonstration on 27th September. Meanwhile, all the CITU State Committees have again been communicated to ensure that the petitions with the mass-signatures- from all the States should reach the CITU centre positively by the first week of September.