



# THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

## Mammoth Rally of Textile Workers

□ P K Ganguly

Braving the cold wave sweeping Delhi and the Northern India, nearly ten thousand Textile workers converged at the capital on December 15 from all over India to demonstrate before the Parliament.

The call for this March to Parliament action was given by the Joint Action Committee of Textile Workers, comprising of the six major Central Trade Unions, namely, INTUC, AITUC, CITU, HMS, BMS and NLO. Another Central Trade Union, UTUC also participated in the rally. The call was given in pursuance of the following main six point demands:

1. Implementation of the 8-point unanimous agreement on NTC mills.
2. Opening of all the closed textile mills in the private sector and reabsorption of the two lakh workers rendered jobless.
3. Revival of all sick mills in consultation with the trade unions.
4. Implementation of Labour Laws, Social Security Measures and Minimum Wages in Powerlooms.
5. Supply of Hank Yarn and other raw materials at subsidised rates and minimum wages in the Handloom sector.
6. Formulation of a new integrated Textile Policy in consultation with the trade unions, so as to ensure a balanced development of all the three sectors and generate employment.

### Demonstration of Most Massive Trade Union Unity

Workers came from all the major Textile producing States in the country, like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Bengal, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Delhi and Haryana. A few workers came from Assam also. A large contingent of women workers participated in the rally.

The procession started from the historic Feroj Shah Kotla grounds and marching through the busy Jawaharlal Nehru Marg, Ranjit Fly over and Tolstoi Marg, culminated in a public meeting in front of the Parliament Street Police Station near Jantar Mantar. It took nearly two hours to traverse the five kilometer route.

The march was led by the leaders of the JAC in

two Tempoos with big red banners inscribed "Joint Action Committee of Textile Workers" at the front. It was a most colourful procession with thousands of flags and festoons that included the red flags with hammer and sickle belonging to the CITU and AITUC and the tricolour and saffron belonging to the INTUC and BMS. The unique feature of the rally was that, not only the INTUC and BMS, but the Mazoor Mahajan(NLO) following the Gandhian philosophy, also joined the united march for the first time. Having made their commitment at the Ahmedabad convention held on 13th November, the NLO sent a contingent of over 400 workers including a number of women workers led by their veteran aging leaders. Their respect for Gandhiji was well depicted by their khadi dress and Gandhi cap. The INTUC incidentally was the major participant with about 2,500 workers, nearly 1000 from Maharashtra alone weaving the typical Marathi Pagri. A number of Technicians also joined the march. Slogans raised were from "Workers of the World Unite" to "Mahatma Gandhi Zindabad." It was a demonstration of the most massive trade union unity, cutting across all ideological barriers and crystallising in one common ideology of class unity of the workers to save the country's pioneer industry and the jobs of workers. All raised the common slogans against the Narasimha Rao Government's anti-labour and anti-people policies, against the IMF, World Bank and GATT and for the safeguard of the country's sovereignty against the onslaught of foreign powers. The workers rose to the occasion as per the demands of the situation. And it was a most peaceful and disciplined demonstration of workers' unity that dumbfounded even the high police officials who accompanied the march. The elaborate arrangements made by the police with their heavy contingent ready with lathis, tear gas shells and water-cannons remained totally unutilised throughout the four hours of the march and the public meeting.

### Meeting with the Prime Minister

Before the start of the public meeting, a delegation of the JAC met the Prime Minister and submitted a memorandum to him. The delegation included Haribhau Naik, N M Tidke(INTUC); P K Ganguly, V J

K Nair, Subhasini Ali(CITU); B D Joshi, G V Chitnis(AITUC); V Tiagi, Malti Ruikar(HMS); V Satam(BMS) and N M Barot(NLO). The delegation was led by E Balanandan, MP, President of CITU and included a large number of MPs namely, Basudev Acharya, Ajoy Mukherjee, Malini Bhattacharya, Hannan Mollah, Tarit Topdar, Subrata Mukherjee, Masudal Hossain, Sudarshan Roychowdhury, Gurudas Das Gupta, Chaturanan Mishra, Sharad Dighe, Pramathesh Mukherjee, etc.

Discussions were held with the Prime Minister for some time quite in details, point by point on the six point demands in the memorandum. Particular stress was given on the unanimous agreement regarding the modernisation and revival of the NTC mills, which the Cabinet was yet to approve. The delegation further demanded that budgetary support must be continued in the NTC mills till the agreement was fully implemented. The irregularities in the payment of wages was also pinpointed. Regarding the growing sickness and closures of the private sector mills, he was informed that despite commitment by the Labour Minister, no meeting of the Tripartite Textile Committee was being called to discuss the issue. The deplorable state of affairs in the powerloom and handloom sector, were also pointed out, where a sort of jungle rule was prevailing without any labour laws, social security or minimum wages. Stress was laid on the necessity of consultation with the trade unions regarding a Textile Policy, that can ensure a balanced development of all the three sectors of the Textile industry.

The Prime Minister had no answer to the problems. He in fact had no idea regarding the whereabouts of the NTC agreement. This showed the height of irresponsibility on the part of the Government that an unanimous agreement was arrived at eight months before in the Special Tripartite Committee, the apex body constituted by the Government itself for consultation and taking decisions regarding the impact of the new Industrial Policy, and the agreement was lying in cold storage. Even the BIFR had commented that the NTC matters would have been resolved, had the Cabinet given approval to the agreement. However, the Prime Minister requested for 2-3 days time to look into the matters--- the NTC first, followed by the other issues.

The delegation came back in the public meeting and reported about the meeting with the Prime Minister in the course of their speeches. Among those who spoke were Haribhau Naik, N M Tidke(INTUC); M K Pandhe, P K Ganguly, Subhasini Ali(CITU); A B Bardhan, B D Joshi(AITUC); V Tiagi(HMS); V Satam(BMS); N M Barot(NLO) and Ashok Ghosh(UTUC). A number of MPs namely Ajoy Mukherjee, Subrata Mukherjee, Sharad Dighe, etc also greeted the rally and informed that all parties had raised the issues of the NTC and the Textile Industry

in the Parliament, and the Textile Minister had assured that the NTC agreement will be implemented. The workers greeted each speaker and with uproarious slogans expressed their determination to further intensify the united struggle till the NTC agreement was actually implemented and all other demands were conceded.

Later in the evening the JAC delegation met the Textile Minister who was consulted by the Prime Minister during the time. It was reported that the Finance Minister had raised objections on particularly two points in the agreement on NTC. Those are, (1) Fifteen Taken over Mills in NTC have to be nationalised and modernised, and (2) There would be no privatisation. Although the ministry of Law had cleared those points, yet the Finance Minister's argument was that how can the Government approve these two points when its present policy is privatisation and liberalisation. However, the Textile Minister reported that the Prime Minister had assured that those two points would be approved by the Cabinet.

### **The Agreement in Retrospect**

It is to be recalled that the 8-point unanimous agreement arrived at in the Special Tripartite Committee had hit at the root of the present IMF dictated economic and industrial policies of the Government. When the Government had embarked upon the path of privatisation accompanied by the Exit Policy, and the BIFR has been given the power of liquidation as demanded by the World Bank, the agreement has laid down three vital points, namely, "no privatisation," "no closure" and "no retrenchment." Another major point was nationalisation of the 15 Taken Over Mills in an era of denationalisation. Although the NTC was formed in 1974 after an Act in the Parliament, the Government did not nationalise these 15 mills---13 in Bombay and 2 in Kanpur. The trade unions compelled the Government to agree to this point, otherwise these mills might have been modernised and given away to the private sector. It is no wonder therefore that the Finance Minister, who obviously acts directly at the behest of the IMF, got unbalanced over the agreement.

### **Further Action Programme:**

The Joint Action Committee therefore did not leave the matter as it is only on assurances. It held an emergency meeting at late evening the same day. The meeting decided to chalk out the next phase of militant action programme shortly. The programmes will have to be staged at Delhi at the start of the Budget Session on an all India basis, as well as in the States. The concrete shape to the programmes will be given in a broader meeting of the Joint Action Committee to be held at Bombay on 7th January.

**Memorandum to the Prime Minister  
Joint Action Committee of Textile Workers**

15.12.94

Shri P V Narasimha Rao Prime Minister  
Government of India New Delhi  
Sir,

Nearly ten thousand Textile Industry workers from all over India have come to Delhi today, the 15th December, 1994, to demonstrate before the Parliament in pursuance of the following main demands:

1. Implementation of the 8-point unanimous agreement on NTC mills.
2. Opening of all the closed textile mills in the private sector and reabsorption of the two lakh workers rendered jobless.
3. Revival of all sick mills in consultation with the trade unions.
4. Implementation of Labour Laws, Social Security Measures and Minimum Wages in Powerlooms.
5. Supply of Hank Yarn and other raw materials at subsidised rates and minimum wages in the Handloom sector.
6. Formulation of a new integrated Textile Policy in consultation with the trade unions, so as to ensure a balanced development of all the three sectors and generate employment.

The call for this action programme has been given by the Joint Action Committee of Textile Workers comprising of the major Central Trade Unions, namely, INTUC, AITUC, CITU, HMS, BMS and NLO.

As you are aware, the Textile Industry is reeling with crisis due to widespread closures and sickness of the organised mills, which have rendered over two lakh workers jobless from the NTC mills and from the private sector mills. About 132 mills are closed in the private sector only.

In NTC after prolonged discussions spread over nearly two years, an unanimous 8-point agreement was arrived at in the Special Tripartite Committee meeting on 9th April, 1994. But the agreement has still not been implemented, nor has the modernisation process started. This is causing more losses in the NTC mills. Workers are not getting their wages regularly and even power supply has been cut in various mills. Further, the workers' statutory dues like the Provident Fund are not paid and are being misappropriated in flagrant breach of labour laws. The Government has stopped all budgetary support to the NTC mills.

The organised mills in the private sector are closing down the weaving sections and switching over to Powerlooms, which are producing about 80 per cent of the cloth in the country. But the powerloom workers are fleeced through paltry

wages and are deprived of the labour laws and social security measures.

Similarly, the handloom weavers are pauperised due to absence of minimum wages and lack of supply of Hank Yarn at subsidised rates.

In the above background, the trade unions have been carrying forward joint struggles in all the Textile producing states.

The Joint Action Committee had made a number of representations both to the Minister of State for Textiles and to the Minister of State for Labour. The JAC also sought appointment with you several times through both the Textile and Labour Ministers. But so far no positive steps have been taken by the Government to rectify the serious situation, nor towards implementation of the NTC agreement. No meeting of the Tripartite Committee in Textile Industry has been called to discuss the sickness in private sector mills.

In the above background, the Joint Action Committee has been compelled to give the call for this March to Parliament today, in pursuance of the above demands.

Under the compelling circumstances, we earnestly appeal to you to personally intervene in the matter so that,

1. The Cabinet approves the 8-point unanimous agreement on NTC and the Government continues Budgetary support to the NTC mills till the modernisation process of the NTC mills is complete, fulfilling the 8-point agreement in letter and spirit.
2. The Tripartite Committee in Textile Industry is convened to discuss the closures and sickness in the Private Sector Textile mills and other problems as given in the demands concerning the Powerloom and Handloom sectors of the Industry.
3. A meeting of the Central Trade Unions is called to discuss the formulation of a new integrated Textile Policy to ensure a balanced development of all the three sectors of the Industry, namely the organised Mills, the Powerloom and the Handloom sectors, and generate employment in the industry.

We shall be grateful to receive a positive reply to our appeal.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

Haribhau Naik  
(INTUC)  
V Tiagi  
(HMS)

B D Joshi  
(AITUC)  
V Satam  
(BMS)

P K Ganguly  
(CITU)  
N M Barot  
(NLO)

# Trade Unions Demand Change In Fiscal Policies

In a pre-budget discussion with the trade unions held under the chairmanship of Dr Manmohan Singh, Minister of Finance the representatives of the Central Trade Unions demanded change in the fiscal policies of the Government of India. Representatives of INTUC, CITU, AITUC, HMS, BMS, UTUC, TUCC and NLO participated in the discussion.

The trade unions criticised the fiscal policies of the Government which have increased inequality in the country. They therefore demanded evolving a national wages and income policies in the country and limit the earnings of the top richest strata in the country. The trade unions further demanded removal of the ceilings in the Payment of Bonus Act, settlement of the question of DA slab system for the employees in the public sector undertakings, finalising the Pension Scheme in consultation with the Central Trade Unions, and increasing the exemption limit of the Income Tax Act to Rs 60,000/-

M K Pandhe, General Secretary of CITU, speaking in the meeting pointed out the super profits earned by the leading industrial houses as a result of the concessions given in the the previous budgets and criticised these houses for not reinvesting the money in productive activities, which led to increasing speculative practices. He demanded that the Government of India should mop up these funds for revival of the units in the public and private sectors. The CITU further demanded that the National Renewal Fund should be utilised for the overcoming the sickness of these units.

The CITU representative criticised the growing uneven development in the country following the new

## CITU Denounces Police Firing at Kerala and Calls for Countrywide Protest Actions

The Secretariat of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions denounces the Congress(I) led UDF Government of Kerala for the brutal police firing on unarmed students and youth at Kuthuparamba in the Cannannore District of Kerala on 25th November, which killed five students, youth and others.

It is further to be condemned that the blood thirsty police have ransacked even the CITU office at Quilon. It is reprehensible that army has been deployed at various places in Kerala to suppress the democratic protest actions by the people, and the Chief Minister, Karunakaran has sought to justify the brutal actions on the plea that violence cannot be tolerated, without expressing any compassion on the tragic death of the students. On the contrary, it is on record that he has utilised the Police to act as a most violent organised force to trample down people's democratic aspirations in a semi-fascist manner.

This was the most barbarous action in

economic policies of the Government of India. This would result in some area remaining backward leading to divisive forces increasing their activities in the country.

Attacking the Government's policies towards the sick units Pandhe observed that this is making the public sector more sick which may ultimately result in their closure. He criticised the policies of disinvestment which was privatisation through the backdoor.

The CITU demanded a meeting of Central Trade Unions with the Ministry of Finance to review the economic policies of the Government of India to which the Finance Minister agreed on the spot.

Pandhe criticised the counter-guarantees given to ENRON Power Project which would hit the national interests. Dr Manmohan Singh admitted that he was opposed to such counter-guarantees.

The CITU demanded introduction of the agricultural income tax in order to mop up resources for increasing employment in the country.

E Balanandan MP, president, CITU demanded withdrawal of the excise duty on tin plate manufacturing small units which do not use power. He further criticised the introduction of small cigarettes which would hit the jobs of large number of bidi workers.

Balanandan criticised the policy of concessions given to multinational companies adversely affecting the interests of Indian companies.

Dr Manmohan Singh assured the trade unions that he would call a meeting of Central trade Unions after the introduction of the budget for 1995-96 to ascertain their views prior to its finalisation.

Congress(I) ruled states after the Nagpur massacre only a few days before, which was also created by the police. The Kerala killing following this shows the total isolation of the Congress from the people because of its new privatisation policies imposed by the IMF, World Bank, etc which go against all sections of the people in the country.

The new education policy with privatisation as its essence has very rightly been opposed by the students and youth, as it is bound to lead to further joblessness and will be out of reach of the overwhelming mass of the young generation and make their future bleak.

The CITU demands immediate withdrawal of the new education policy being pursued by the Karunakaran Government and extends full support to the agitation launched by the students and youth against it.

The CITU calls upon all its State Committees and unions to observe countrywide protest action on Nov. 28 against the police firing and demanding withdrawal of the policy.

# Joint Convention on Scooter India

A joint convention on Scooter India Ltd was held at Lucknow on 1st December with all the trade unions and officers associations. The Convention adopted the following declaration unanimously:

We the undersigned have come to Lucknow with the specific purpose of studying the problems of Scooters India Ltd. Some of us had the opportunity of knowing the views of the Govt of India at the tripartite Committee meeting held in New Delhi on 30.11.94. At Lucknow, we have had the opportunity of understanding the views of all sections of employees as well as the management. Based on this we have drawn the following conclusions:

That Scooters India Ltd is a viable enterprise and can be revived based on the revival plan prepared by the management and endorsed by all sections of the employees.

This is particularly important since the management and the employees have shown excellent result even under the most adverse conditions. Examples of this are:

- a) Increase in production by 300% between 1990 to Oct 1994.
- b) Cash loss has come down from Rs 18.27 crores to Rs 8.5 crores i.e. 46% from 1990 to 1994.
- c) The exports have increased from Rs 0.5 crore in year 1990 to Rs 4 crores in 1994.
- d) Manpower has been reduced by 30%

It needs to be emphasised that this achievement has been based on the market credibility of the company where the suppliers and dealers have shown confidence in the company by providing credit.

On the other hand, the operating agency (IDBI) has made contradictory assessment of the company at different points of time. For example, in 1990, IDBI has found the company viable whereas on the basis of arbitrarily chown capacity norms and levels of employment, in 1994 they have assessed the company as non-viable. This inspite of the above mentioned performance as well as reduction in the number of employees during the interim period establishing the arbitrary nature of the revised assessment. It may be noted that earlier evaluation of the company, in 1992-93, by an independent consultatnt M/s Ferguson appointed by the Govt of India, had also established the viability of Scooters India Ltd.

On the basis of the various studies available, the availability of the market is not the major constraint of Scooters India Ltd. The market is elastic and capable of absorbing any amount of increased production of Scooters India Ltd. In addition to the Indian market, there is an enormous export market for both the product of Scooters INida. This is established by the fact that the exports have increased inspite of Industrial sickness. And due to constraints of sickens the company has not been

able to service the export enquiries received. At a time, when the GOI's major policy thrust is on increasing export, the indecision of the GOI in reviving the unit is inexplicable.

The most serious lacuna in the assessment of the operating agency as well as the approach of the promoter is the lack of appreciation of the fact that Scooters Inida is the only Indian company in the automotive sector which is the owner of its brand named and associated technology. This fact has tremendous implication for the company's ability to export.

Disproportionate emphasis has been placed by the operating agency and the promoter on the levels of employment in assessing the viability of the company. The methodology used is based on historical performance which was under adverse condition of industrial sickness. The levels of employment must be based on the post revival of the company. Therefore, we believe that the levels of employment taken at 2000 employees by the Management in preparing their revival plan is more reliable and realistic since its is based on industry norms, M/s Bajaj Auto Ltd., being the bench mark.

There is a need for vertical integration for the three wheeler sector, not only for the purpose of viability but also to meet the growing stringent environmental target set by the Govt of India.

On the basis of the above arguments, we recommend that the Government of INdia should:

- a) place, as promoter, before the BIFR on 28.12.94 a firm commitment to revive Scooters India Ltd.
- b) base such a commitment on the earlier commitment of the Govt of India to:
  - i) write off past liabilities and financially restructure the company.
  - ii) Adopt the revival plan prepared jointly by the management and employees
  - iii) Ensure timely financial and other input as envisaged in the revival plan.

We also urge the Govt of Uttar Pradesh to take an active interest and commit themselves to the revival of Scooters India Ltd.

We wish to record our commitment to the revival plan and an assurance that we would collectively and individually provide all such support as may be required to ensure the fulfilment of the revival plan.

Sd/- (A B Bardhan) AITUC	Sd/- (Dipankar Mukherjee) CITU	Sd/- (S N Rao) INTUC
Sd/- (R K Bhakt) BMS	Sd/- (B D Joshi) AITUC	Sd/- (K Ashok Rao) NCOA

(Uma Shankar Mishra) HMS

# Bihar State CITU Conference

□ J S Majumdar

In Bihar success of 4 industrial strikes, 19 August 1993 courting arrest and 20 Sept 1994 rail roko programmes, biggest and fore front participation in Delhi rallies including 5 April 1994 rally in response to the call of national trade union sponsoring committee and Platform of Mass Organisations against new economic policy, Dunkel and GATT; Sixty per cent response of three and half lakh coal workers of Bihar to independent strike call by CITU for the first time; three complete strikes by 25 thousands stone quarry workers in response to CITU union's call achieving agreements breaking INTUC-BMS unions agreements; 45 thousands unorganised sector workers strike to the first time independent call of CITU and 70 thousand workers under CITU banner out of 1 lakh 7 thousand unorganised sector workers strike jointly by 10 central trade unions in Bihar; Bidi workers strike and agreement; successful strike by Bokaro Steel contract workers under CITU banner two successful indefinite strikes by auto-rikshaw drivers at Patna; independent and joint struggles including strikes, protest and resistance against victimisations in coal, electricity including NTPC factory at Kahalgaon, State Road Transport, Barauni Oil Refinery, Sugar industries, rail and footpath hawkers, NTPC Gangmen, Bharat wagon, etc were some of the highlights of CITU unions struggles in Bihar; successful strikes and struggles of State government employees, pharmaceuticals, postal employees, banks and insurance industries noted in the general secretary's report placed in the 6th Bihar State conference of CITU held at working class city of Jamshedpur from 15th to 17th November 1994. The report noted the weaknesses of some organised sector workers and steel industry workers in joint movement and strike struggles.

The conference, was attended by 251 delegates and 3 observers from 21 industries, 32 unions from different parts of the State which was inaugurated by CITU's all India general secretary Com M K Pandhe and addressed by all India vice president Com. Samar Mukherjee and Secretary and steel workers leader Com. Jiban Roy MP. The conference began with hoisting of CITU flag by State president Com. Chandi Prasad at Bari Maidan, the conference venue, which was named as Com. Nakul

Guha Nagar after the widely respected iron ore and steel workers leader of Jamshedpur while the main gate was named as Com. R C Sigh Dwar, CITU union leader who was brutally murdered by the criminals.

Apart from the general secretary's report the conference adopted an organisational report which was prepared to implement all India organisational decisions of CITU in the existing realities of Bihar. The report was prepared by the State Committee, discussed by the unions and finally adopted by the conference for effective implementation by the unions, state committee and district committees.

The Conference adopted number of resolutions which include Bihar MC Udyog Bachao, Udyog Bahdao (Save Industry, progress, industrialisation in Bihar); to defend present and future jobs, wage and trade union rights; for regular payment of wage, work and against victimisation in government, state public sectors and local bodies; for demands of unorganised sector workers, against delay in coal agreement and attempt to enforce check off system in central coalfield Ltd; on working women against discrimination and exploitation; on birth anniversary of Com. BTR, etc and to build up industrywise movement.

The conference adopted number of movemental and organisational programmes which include joint agitation by Bihar Shram Sangathan Manch, an united platform of 10 central trade unions including INTUC and BMS; building up movement of unorganised sector workers; movement in pursuance of the issues raised in the resolutions raised in the conference, etc. The Conference also adopted organisational task to increase membership to 1.25 lakhs within 30 May 1994, the day of 25 years of the formation of CITU, strengthen state centre, improve collective function, ensuring democratic functioning of the trade unions, etc.

The conference noted that despite many weaknesses the State could host 8th All India Conference of CITU successfully at Patna, improved the State Centre's functioning and successfully organised joint initiatives.

The conference unanimously elected 115-members state council, a 50-members State Committee and

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# Jute Workers Prepare for Strike

The Central Trade Unions working in jute industry met at the office of the CITU on 2.12.94 under the chairmanship of Sri Niren Ghosh, President of the BCMU to discuss the present situation prevailing in jute industry.

After a thorough discussion it was decided unanimously that a joint mass deputation on behalf of all the Central Trade Unions will be organised in all the jute mills on 27th December 1994 and a memorandum will be submitted demanding the following.

## **Demands:**

1. Implement the Jute Industry's tripartite agreement of 1992.
- 2) Withdrawal of the letters given by the IJMA and Sri Arun Bajoria (which is illegal and open violation of Jute Industry's tripartite agreement of 1992).
- 3) Implementation of the agreement arrived at between the Govt of India and Central Trade Unions on 27th July, 1994 at New Delhi in respect of NJMC mills, and demand withdrawal of Alexandra mills lockout.
4. Ban the production of synthetic packaging.

Delegation of Central TU leaders will go to Delhi to meet the Textile Minister for the implementation of 27th July NJMC agreement.

If the above mentioned demands are not conceded then the workers will be compelled to resort to a united agitation under the Central Trade Unions to begin with one day protest strike.

Following press statement made by Shri Niren Ghosh, Siva Prasad Bhattacharya and Mohammed Amin president, Working President and General Secretary of Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union.

This is a dangerous move cultivated by the NJMC authority as it has been apprehended by the different trade unions. It might be a first step towards denationalisation and NJMC mills will be thrown open to the raw Jute traders and suppliers, this practice is going on in the Thomas Duff mills owned by the Mr R J Brailly. It seems that the Central Govt is

out to break the 27th July Delhi agreement regarding NJMC.

We can never be party to such a dangerous decision and workers of JNMC mills and trade unions will fight tooth and nail for the implementation of 27th July Delhi agreement.

## **Contd from page 6**

14-members Secretariat. The Conference re-elected Com.Chandi Prasad as president, Com.J S Majumdar as General Secretary, Com.S N Singh as Treasurer, Com.narendra Singh, Com.Amrendra Mishra, Com.Ganesh Shankar Singh as secretaries and com.Ramanika Gupta and Com.K K Tripathi as vice presidents; and also elected senior leader Com.S K Baksi as vice president, Coms T N Singh, Mihir Chowdhury, K K Mandal and Arun Mishra as secretaries.

At the conclusion of the conference a public meeting was held at Bari Maidan which was addressed by Com.M K Pandhe, Com.Samar Mukherjee, Com.jiban Roy, Com.narendera Mishra, Com.J S Majumdar and was presided over by Com.Chandi Prasad. Com.Pandhe cautioned against entry of Mafias in trade union field who are responsible in killing of V G Gopal INTUC leader of Tata establishments. He explained tasks before the working class in the new situation created by Central Govt's policies and highlighted the success of united working class movement despite the fact that the policies of Central Govt could not yet be altered. Com.Samar Mukherjee called upon the working class to build up class struggle with class objectives. Com.Jibon Roy called upon the steel workers of Jamshedpur to shake off their inertia and join the mainstream of working class struggle.

## **Editorial Board**

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# THIRTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE WFTU

□ M K Pandhe

The Thirteenth Congress of the World Federation of Trade Unions held in Damascus (Syria) from 22nd to 26th November 1994 reflected its struggle for a renewal of organisation. More than 400 delegates and observers from over 80 countries participated in the Congress held in Ebla Cham Palace Hotel in the outskirts of the historic city of Damascus. Thirty-nine delegates and observers participated from India. On behalf of CITU M K Pandhe General Secretary, Robin Sen, vice president, and K N Ravindranath, Secretary participated in the Conference as observers. On behalf of All India State Government Employees Federation Sukomal Sen, General Secretary participated.

This was the first conference in the WFTU after the dismantling of socialism in USSR. The delegates and observers had to meet their own travelling expenses since the WFTU was not in a position to meet these costs due to acute financial difficulties.

After set back to socialism in Europe the WFTU got considerably weakened. Its central staff was reduced from over 600 to only about 25. It had to rely more on regional offices. The new capitalist Government of Czechoslovakia created several obstacles in the functioning of the WFTU. The very survival of this international organisation founded in 1945 was at stake. It could not even publish its monthly journal, **The World Trade Union Movement**.

However, historic necessity of an International organisation of the working class was very much there. The trade unions from the third world countries remained solidly behind the WFTU which enable it to carry some activities. Despite heavy shocks WFTU managed to survive which itself was a significant achievement.

## ICFTU HOPES BELIED

The ICFTU camp was hoping that WFTU would collapse and die a natural death in the face of the several onslaught. It dreamt of emerging as a supreme world trade union Centre with none to challenge its authority. However, these fond hopes were belied and WFTU stood on its legs with sufficient strength to hold its Congress.

For the first time the WFTU Congress was

being held in Asia since its inception. The General Federation of Syrian Trade Unions made excellent arrangements to host the Congress which facilitated conduct of its deliberations without any difficulty.

Izeddin Nasser, President, General Confederation of Syrian Trade Unions welcomed the delegation. The inaugural session was addressed by the Prime Minister, Syrian Arab Republic. A seven member presidium was elected to conduct the deliberations of the Congress.

Alexander Zharikov, General Secretary of the WFTU presented the policy Document to the Congress. The document emphasised the machinations of the imperialists powers all over the world and need for united struggle against them, which was absent in the report of the last Congress. It also further stressed that capitalism was no answer to the present day problems of contemporary work. However, it failed to mention that socialism will alone solve the problems confronting the world today.

The document sought to create illusions among the working class by advocating "The IMF and the World Bank must be democratised and their activities made transparent."

However, the document correctly emphasised the need for all-in unity of the working class all over the world in the struggle against depredations of the transnational corporations and for world peace.

It opposed the so-called "New economic order" advocated by the imperialist countries and called for a worldwide struggle for a genuine world economic order ensuring self-reliant economic development of the third world countries and protecting the sovereignty of these countries to ensure all round social progress.

Zharikov, in his speech traced the innumerable difficulties through which the WFTU had to pass since the last Congress posing problems for its very existence. However due to cooperation of all affiliated and friendly organisations the WFTU managed to survive and hold its Congress. He appealed to the delegates to learn from the past mistakes and correct them so that WFTU can effectively achieve the goal of renewal in the interest of the working class all over the world.

The General Secretary of the WFTU called for a frank discussion on all issues over which different organisations have different perceptions so that attempts could be made to evolve a common understanding to strengthen the united movement of the working class.

### **FORMATION OF COMMISSIONS**

The Congress then formed into Commissions including one on Policy Document and another on Resolutions. The Commission on Constitution was open only to the affiliated organisations. M K Pandhe and Sukomal Sen worked in the Commission on Policy Document while Robin Sen and K N Ravindranath joined Commission on Resolution.

A great deal of discussion took place in the Commission on Policy Document. After prolonged discussion the Commission ultimately agreed to drop the clause relating to the democratisation of the IMF and the World Bank. The CITU representatives supported a number of amendments suggested by the Japanese delegation since they were seeking to give a clearcut perspective for the WFTU. However, not all proposals were accepted by the Commission.

Surprisingly the Commission did not accept the following forthright amendment from an observer of USA.

"Organised workers and their trade unions are the only force on earth with the potential power to confront and defeat the transnational corporations.

"The transnational corporations together with their financial institutions which control the flow of capital, operate openly and freely only because they control governments, armies and police forces which do their bidding.

"Organised workers, through their trade unions and political arms, must work to change control of governments so as to transform political institutions which aid working people, which seeks to establish betterment of people as the governing principle for all economic and social activity."

The non-acceptance of this amendment only indicate the pressures within WFTU which seek to restrict the trade unions to involve them merely in economic activities and not to undertake any political activity by the trade unions.

If the WFTU is left open for any trade union even it does not have any commitment to the working class then such problems are bound to come up. The CITU

delegation was informed by some affiliates of the WFTU that some organisations advocating fundamentalism were also allowed to join the WFTU. This would certainly water down the militancy of the WFTU and would led to development of some pressure groups preventing the WFTU from taking a forthright position on several issues facing the working class in the world.

However, after several improvements the Policy Document was adopted in the Commission which would be the basis of WFTU activities in the forthcoming period.

### **RESOLUTIONS OF THE CONGRESS**

The Commission on Resolution adopted several important resolutions on problems in all the continents. In an exhaustive resolution on the situation in the Arab region the WFTU Congress squarely condemned the Israeli aggression and called upon the people to confront the challenges posed by the imperialist and Zionist forces.

In a resolution on Cuba the Congress condemned the criminal blockade imposed by US imperialism and demanded its immediate withdrawal. As a result of the initiative taken by the CITU the Congress expressed firm support to the International Solidarity Conference being held at Havana at the time of the Congress.

The Conference adopted a resolution on Korea which condemned US imperialist machinations against DPRK and expressed firm support to the 10-point programme to bring about unification of Korea peacefully. It called upon the trade unions all over the world to organise solidarity action from 25th June to 27th July in support of the just struggle of the Korean people.

By a resolution on trade sanctions the Congress noted the adverse effect on the third World countries, rejected "the inappropriately named social clauses contained in trade agreements" and condemned "the attempt to adopt and impose the most brutal and inhumane protectionist measures against products from Third World countries." The Congress also called for lifting of economic blockades against Cuba, Libya, Iraq and other countries.

The Congress condemned the violation of human rights and trade union freedoms in Columbia and Argentina. It expressed solidarity with the people of Cyprus in the struggle for the unification of their country and liberation from Turkish military occupation.

The Congress adopted a resolution on Kashmir welcoming the joint statement issued by the delegates from India and Pakistan calling upon the Government of their respective countries to settle the Kashmir dispute without further delay so that peace prevails in the sub-continent.

The Congress called upon the trade unions of all affiliations to observe 50th Anniversary of the Atomic Bombing on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and organise joint actions at the grass root level demanding total elimination of the nuclear weapons. By another resolution the Congress decided to coordinate the trade union action to defend rights of workers in transnational corporations.

The Congress noted the immense problems faced by the people of Africa relating to imperialist sponsored civil wars, as in Rwanda, devaluation of currencies and the international debt, unemployment, violation of human and trade union rights and disastrous consequences of the World Bank/IMF structural adjustment programmes, etc. and decided to give special emphasis on the activities in the region in order to strengthen the TU movement on these problems.

#### **GREETINGS BY CITU**

M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU while speaking in the Congress noted at the outset that though we are not affiliated to the WFTU we regularly participate in its activities and programmes. We had our criticism about the past policies and methods of functioning of the WFTU and we hope that all this past legacy which retarded the growth of the WFTU will be rectified without any further delay. Therefore we take a positive attitude towards the WFTU."

Reviewing the world situation and dismantling of socialism in USSR Pandhe said, "The US imperialism has become more aggressive in pursuing both cold and hot wars all over the world. Its military bases round the globe, its direct intervention in various third world countries, its politics of blackmail and blockade continue to cause concern in all the continents. We therefore are happy to note the victory achieved by the people of South Africa in the struggle against apartheid. we further demand that Israel should vacate all the lands forcibly occupied from Arab countries and restore full independence to the people of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital. We strongly condemn US imperialism for not lifting the economic blockade

against Cuba, Libya and Iraq. We also support the demand of the release of the prisoners of Kuwait in Iraq. We fully support the struggle of the working class of the Russia and East European countries against the privatisation and deteriorating living conditions. We express our solidarity with the struggle of working class of advanced capitalist countries against the growing unemployment, withdrawal of benefits and attack on TU rights."

The CITU representative then narrated the struggle conducted by the working class of India unitedly against the economic policies of the Government of India and how even the ICFTU constituents were involved in these struggles. He referred to the formation of the Platform of Mass Organisations and the series of strike struggles and people's actions organised under its banner.

Referring to the functioning of the TUIs under WFTU leadership, Pandhe pointed out, " We appreciate the thrust of the WFTU on improving the functioning of the TUIS. We however, doubt whether simply merger of TUIS will solve the problems. We would like to note that some of TUIS just don't function. Even our letters remain unreplied. If WFTU has to advance, the TUIs must play their role effectively. Help from the constituents may be forthcoming if proper approach is taken and the style of their functioning is improved. "

Criticising the functioning of the Coordination in Asia and Pacific, Pandhe observed, " Regarding regional coordination in Asia and Pacific we had a very sad experience. Since its inception we have been objecting its method of functioning but our views and suggestions were ignored. Most of the decisions taken in the meetings remains unimplemented. I would earnestly request the WFTU leadership to review the causes of its becoming totally defunct when the need for such coordination is extremely important. "

Underlining the need for a worldwide initiative by the WFTU, Pandhe asserted, "In the situation round the world today ICFTU cannot be a unifying force because it is interfering in internal affairs of several countries in the world in favour of capitalist class. Under these circumstances possibility of taking initiative by WFTU are very real and our experience shows that development of united action in cooperation with local affiliates of the ICFTU on common issues facing the working class are very

much real and WFTU should adopt suitable tactics to achieve this united approach in the overall interest of the working class. Merely making vague appeals from time to time does not help.

The General Secretary of the CITU while concluding his speech called upon the WFTU to rise to the occasion so that it can effectively cope up with the challenges faced by the situation in the world today. He said, "Let the WFTU reorient its understanding and style of work to meet the new challenging situation in the world. The WFTU can develop capacities to find ways and means if its affiliates and friendly organisations are involved in a proper coordinated approach. If this is done then WFTU will definitely have a bright future in the forthcoming days." Sukomal Sen, General Secretary, All India State Government Employees Federation elaborated the struggles conducted by the seven million State Government employees in India against the attack on their living standards and for TU Rights. He pointed out the increasing role played by the Government employees in the united moved of the working class and the people against the IMF dictated policies.

Reviewing the present international situation, Sen pointed out that the WFTU should strengthen its activities all over the world to meet the new challenging situation.

The Congress adopted Reports of Commission, new constitution and ratification of nominations to the General Council. The Congress decided to have the President of the Organisation for one year to be decided by the General Council. It re-elected Alexander Zharikov as the General Secretary, and Valentin Pachon (Peru) as the Deputy General Secretary.

The Congress concluded with a spirit of unity of the organisation and determination to strengthen the activities of the WFTU in all the continents and the stress on the renewal of the WFTU as international TU Organisation to champion the cause of workers' interests. Participation of large number of observers in the Congress indicated the desire of several friendly organisations to associate with the activities of the WFTU.

The success of the Congress must be further consolidated. The WFTU should emerge as the unifier of the entire working class all over the world in the struggle against imperialism, transnational corporations, for TU and democratic rights, for social progress and for world peace. Despite difficulties and shortcomings WFTU can march forward to strengthen the international TU movement of the workers.

The delegations visited Qunaytra a town devastated by the Israeli troops near the Golan Heights. The Indian delegation shouted slogans demanding vacation of all aggression by the Israeli troops and implementation of UN Resolution on Golan Heights.

The delegation also visited a town Maloula where one of the oldest Church in the world existed and people even today speak the language spoken by Jesus Christ.

During the Conference President Assad of Syria gave a dinner in honour of the delegates to the Conference and impressive cultural performance was given by the folk artists from Syria.

The Indian delegation found the people of Syria extremely friendly towards the people of India. They also witnessed lack of influence of fundamentalist forces within the country while Muslim and Christian population live in complete harmony without any trace of communal tension.

A meeting of the Asian and Oceanic delegation was held during the Congress which was useful in exchanging views on strengthening regional coordination in the struggle against the World Bank/IMF offensive in view of the largest amount of transnational corporations' investment is witnessed in this region in the recent past.

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## **Joint Statement by Indian and Pakistani TU leaders**

Trade Union delegations from India and Pakistan participating in the 13th World Trade Union Congress in Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic exchanged views on the situation in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent and on the problems faced by the workers and trade unions in this region. On this basis of views, they decided to issue the following statement:

Having regard to the common interests of the working class and the people of both India and Pakistan, and the urgent need to meet the offensive of international capital spearheaded by the TNCs against their working and living conditions and their sovereign rights, it is of utmost importance that the two countries should settle the Kashmir issue without any further delay.

Such a settlement, based on the age-old fraternal bonds between the people of the two countries, would enable them to play their rightful role in the affairs of the Indo-Pak sub-continent. It would eliminate the wastage of scarce resources of the two nations on rising military expenditure, diverting them to raise the living standards of the mass of their people.

## Seminar on formation of a Confederation of all Central Trade Unions

On the solemn occasion of observance of 90th birth anniversary of Com. B T Ranadive, the tallest leader of Indian communist movement, one of the great organisers and leaders of revolutionary movement of the working class and the founder President of Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), a seminar was held in the Constitution Club, New Delhi on December 18. The theme of the seminar organised by the CITU, very appropriately, was "issues before the trade union unity," a theme closest to the heart of Com. BTR, as he was popularly known. It was attended by representatives of AITUC, BMS, HMS, TUCC, Confederation of Central Government Employees, BEFI, AIIEA, Mercantile Employees' Federation besides CITU. The President of CITU, E Balanandan who presided briefly explained the context and purpose of the seminar on an issue of utmost importance to the trade union movement and appealed to everyone present to contribute in a constructive way.

The CITU General Secretary, M K Pandhe made a presentation on the salient features of paper authored by him. He referred to the disabilities that have been afflicting the trade union movement and hindering its progress of which the employers and government were taking utmost advantage. The new Fund-Bank prescribed dispensation has made the employers unreasonable and intransigent. The government finds it proper to include representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGO) of doubtful antecedents but exclude those trade unions in such vital issues like child labour, environment and so on. Apart from the onslaughts on workers in the realms of jobs, wages and rights, new offensives are in the making by way of changes in labour laws as would extinguish the few surviving rights of workers and their organisations. Commitments made in tripartite committees are indefinitely kept pending. In the Standing Labour Committee or Indian Labour Conference while employers speak in one voice, trade unions quite often tend to contradict each other. The situation has been exacerbated by the evils flowing from the new economic and industrial policies--the goings-on in the realm of liberalisation and privatisation. Some trade unions have been found concluding agreements which are against the interests of the workers. Yet another ominous development is the emergence of anti-social elements in the TU movement which not only has taken a toll but is showing signs of spreading tentacles.

The employers, the government and adversaries of the workers are making most of the prevailing divisions in the TU movement despite united actions on common demands.

Such a situation, trade union unity has assumed greater than ever importance. It is, therefore, time to actively consider and provide towards materialisation of BTR's concept of a Confederation. It would be wrong, Pandhe said, to experiment with mergers to begin with as experiences have not been happy. Instead, a confederation working on the basis of consensus would open up the possibilities of closer cooperation and common actions, reduce rivalries and help eventual coming together. With a view to ensuring success of a confederation, thoroughly democratic functioning must be ensured with bureaucratic and domineering ways banished.

Pandhe was followed by A B Bardhan, General Secretary, AITUC who read out his well prepared paper. Bardhan after paying glowing tributes to the sterling qualities of BTR declared that the AITUC was willing to work for unity for (1) class struggle as against class collaboration, (2) secularism and national unity, (3) peace and anti-imperialism and (4) international working class solidarity.

Elaborating the ideas further, Bardhan contended that organisation cohesion must not remain confined to the top level, it has to embrace the grass root level, the present central organisations will exist as separate entities for a transitional period until proposed confederation becomes functional; for such industrial federations as may prefer to opt out, a structure like the existing Sponsoring Committee or the CPSTU, JAC, etc should continue functioning; the industrial federations affiliated to central trade unions like CITU, HMS or AITUC should organise joint programmes by mutual consultation if possible also with BMS and INTUC and the legacy of rivalry and hostility replaced by democratic functioning and mutual respect.

V Tiagi, secretary, HMS, in his prepared address, after a brief review of the current socio-economic situation, pleaded for one single centre so that the trade union movement can be united, strong, viable, decisive and relevant at national policy-making level. Forums like the erstwhile National Campaign Committee or the present Sponsoring Committee are no substitution for a single united trade union centre. All efforts should be directed towards achieving that as early as possible.

R Misra of BMS referred to the ideological differences, apart from others. These cannot be just wished away and need to be addressed. While the Left unions call the workers proletariat (sarvahara), the BMS considers them to be the real builders of the state and the country. They in fact own all the wealth. BMS feel trade unions have to be non-political and TUs must not get aligned with any political party. TUs must concern themselves not only with economic demands, but also strive for their cultural upliftment. The idea of a confederation is not realizable now. THE JCM did not the process of unity of Central Government employees who should be drawn towards central trade unions.

D D Shastri (TUCC) said that the reasons for division in the trade union movement are political. The confederation idea is welcome. But its success would depend on democratic functioning and respect for the views of all TUs irrespective of their size. Unless these two conditions are fulfilled unity will elude us.

In the discussion also participated H K Vyas of Central Government Employees Confederation, Sukomal Sen, State Govt Employees' Federation, S R Saini of All India Insurance Employees' Association, Harish Sharma of BEFI and B S Rao of Mercantile Employees' Federation. Each one drew attention to the

attempts made so far to achieve greater unity and cohesion, the obstacles encountered and the possibilities. While generally welcoming the idea of confederation, they emphasised the need to expand united actions at the industrial level alongside efforts of unification at the top.

Summing up the discussion M K Pandhe said that the deliberations had revealed a greater area of commonness than before. There was no shortcut to trade union unity. It has to be a continuing process at various levels. It would be the endeavour of CITU to carry the exchange of views further, to take positive steps to strengthen united actions and to eventually bring about a confederation as a historic duty. Thus end the seminar.

### **BTR's 90th Birth Day**

A largely attended meeting was held at the laws of CITU Office on Dec 19 evening. Speakers who included M K Pandhe, Smt. Pramila Pandhe, P K Tandon, S B Bhardwaj, and CITU President E Balanandan recalled the great revolutionary qualities of Com. BTR, his stupendous contributions to the cause of working people as a thinker, organiser and builder of CITU. The meeting was presided over by Kali Ghosh.

## **Women Hit Hardest in Russia**

The transition from a socialist system to market economy is wrenching Russia, and the people being hit the hardest are the Russian women.

According to the Russian Labour Ministry, about 1.5 million Russians are unemployed, but almost 70 per cent of those who have lost their jobs are women. The Ministry estimates that a similar percentage of the five to 11 million hidden unemployed (those who have been sent on unpaid leave and not formally laid-off), are also women.

Market reforms have forced almost all of Russia's state-owned industries to restructure and to cut back on "excess" labour they can no longer afford. In most cases, factory Directors, who are overwhelmingly male, are choosing to lay off women, not men.

"Women always lose out because the Directors feel that they put the interests of the family ahead of the enterprise," said Mr Alexander Safonov, an official at the labour ministry responsible for women's issues.

"Owners want to make their companies competitive and they don't want to pay for things like pregnancy leave and sick days to take care of children," he added.

"Women were proclaimed to be the equals of men ever since the earliest days of the former Soviet Union. Women had access to the same education

and same opportunity to jobs.

While the Soviet Union glorified female workers and peasants, it also promoted women's role as mothers. The state had a special medal for mother heroines who had more than six children.

The collapse of the Soviet Union has changed the situation. While the new Constitution still proclaims that men and women are equal, they continue to run into problems in real life.

In military equipment factories, one of the most important segments of the Russian economy, women make up nearly half of the work force. But they are paid only between 40 and 70 per cent of what men earn and now make up about 70 per cent of those who have been laid off.

"Female engineers and scientists are being offered new jobs, as hair-dressers and secretaries," said Ms Elenora Ivanova, the president of Conversion and Women, a group dedicated to showing the effect on women of converting defence industries to civilian production. "They speak about equal rights, but this is the result."

Russia's new private companies are also causing problems for women. Many of them put out ads that explicitly state they are looking for men, despite the fact that such ads are illegal. With no union protection, women who get pregnant are often unceremoniously fired.

(Deutsche Press Agentur)

# CONSUMER PRICE INDEX NUMBERS FOR INDUSTRIAL WORKERS

(BASE 1982 = 100)

Centre	Linking factor for Old Base		Centre	Linking factor for Old Base	
	Aug. '94	Sept. '94		Aug. '94	Sept. '94
All India	284	288	Rourkela	259	263
Gudur	272	274	Amritsar	264	271
Guntur	285	288	Ludhiana	269	277
Hyderabad	262	265	Ajmer	287	289
Visakhapatnam	265	265	Jaipur	276	280
Warrangal	278	280	Coimbatore	277	278
Doom-Dooma			Coonor	295	297
Tinsukia	261	262	Madras	289	294
Guwahati	290	290	Madurai	279	288
Labac-Silchar	256	257	Salem	287	290
Mariani-Jorhat	269	270	Tiruchirapally	307	307
Rangapara-Tezpur	271	273	Agra	273	274
Jamshedpur	267	269	Ghaziabad	274	279
Jharia	251	253	Kanpur	284	290
Kodarma	254	256	Saharanpur	274	279
Monghyr	269	275	Varanasi	295	297
Noamundi	260	260	Asansol	266	271
Ranchi-Hatia	278	281	Calcutta	286	290
Ahmedabad	286	290	Darjeeling	260	261
Baroda	290	293	Durgapur	291	294
Bhavanagar	308	309	Haldia	295	296
Rajkot	290	290	Howrah	297	304
Surat	298	309	Jalpaiguri	261	263
Faridabad	280	285	Raniganj	252	256
Yamunanagar	276	274	Chandigarh	281	285
Srinagar	278	288	Delhi	311	314
Bangalore	275	280	Pondicherry	318	320
Belgaum	292	294			
Hubli-Dharwar	285	287			
Mercara	274	280			
Alwaye	278	279			
Mundakayam	280	281			
Quilon	298	295			
Trivandrum	311	313			
Bhalaghat	283	288			
Bhilai	258	261			
Bhopal	299	303			
Indore	304	307			
Jabalpur	304	310			
Bombay	314	317			
Nagpur	301	305			
Nasik	304	306			
Pune	303	306			
Sholapur	295	298			
Barbil	280	280			

  

	<b>Additional series of Labour Bureau</b>			
	Kothagudem	286	284	3.25
	Himachal Pradesh	272	277	3.75
	Bhilwara	302	301	3.20
	Chindwara	287	292	2.59
	Tripura	273	277	4.37
	Goa	316	317	3.40

**Note:** Figures on old base can be obtained by multiplying the Index Number on New Base by the linking factor given and rounding off the result to nearest whole number.

--Dash denotes new centres under 1982 series,

# Conference of Tamilnadu Construction Workers

The second Tamilnadu conference of Construction Workers Federation of India, was held successfully at Kumarapalayam of Salem district on 20, 21 of November, 1994.

On 20th November a big procession of about 5000 workers marched through the main roads of Kumarapalayam. More than 300 women also took part in the procession. Hundreds of Volunteers of Democratic Youth Federation of India and Democratic Women's Association greeted the rally.

The massive public meeting at the end of the rally was presided by R Singaravelu, CITU State Secretary. Com.M Rajagopal, R S Rajendran, M S Raman and others spoke in the meeting.

On 21st November, delegate session was held in which 316 delegates including 31 women took part. M Rajagopal hoisted the flag. Com.A K Padmanabhan, CITU Assistant General Secretary inaugurated the session. CWFI Tamilnadu general secretary R S Rajendran placed the work report. 31 comrades took part in the discussion. T H K Variar, All India Secretary of CWFI greeted the session.

Due to continuous movements launched by CWFI, Tamil Nadu Government issued a notification No.198 on 4th October on Tamil Nadu Manual Laborers(Construction workers) Welfare Scheme. The Scheme will be implemented only in Madras, Madurai and Coimbatore to start with.

The Conference resolved to complete the on going signature campaign by December 10, urging the Tamil Nadu government to extend the Welfare Scheme throughout Tamil Nadu and also to constitute and convene the Welfare Board immediately. In 1995 February, demonstrations will take place in Taluk headquarters with construction tools and in April, a massive hunger strike will be observed in Madras demanding free house sites house pattas, etc.

Some of the important resolutions passed in the conference are as follows:

A wage board shall be constituted. Governmental construction works shall not be left to the contractors. Prices of construction materials shall be controlled. Certain houses built by Slum Clearance or Housing Board shall be allotted to construction workers. Indian Embassies shall guarantee the lives and properties of Indian Construction workers board.

The following were elected as new office bearers:

K Vaidyanatha, Honoaray president; R S Rajendran, President; M K Baskaran, Com.K Kathiraraj, Com.G Pondy; S Sekar, vice presidents, R Singaravelu, General Secretary; K Mani, Com.V Arumugam, Com.S Yesudoss; K R Ganesan, Secretary and M S Raman, Treasurer.

## Contract Workers of Steel Industry Demanded Wage Revision and Interim Relief

The delegation of the contract workers working in the Steel Plants all over the country led by M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU and president Steel Workers Federation of India and Jibon Roy, M.P., and Sankar Ghosh, Secretary, SWFI met M.R.R. Nair, Chairman, SAIL and demanded payment of interim relief to the contract workers of SAIL plants and mines all over the country and also early wage revision in line with permanent workers. They also forwarded the charter of demands finalised by the All india Contract Workers Convention held at Bokaro on July '94.

The delegation pointed out to Chairman, SAIL, that the contract workforce in the Steel Plants and mines play a vital role in smooth and productive operation of the plants, mines and stockyards and it would not be in the interest of the industry as a whole

to neglect the basic needs of these vast workforce who are still being paid a pittance and exploited most. Even the statutory provisions like provident Fund, ESI, and others are not implemented in many plants and mines. The delegation also appraised the Chairman, SAIL regarding widespread resentment among the mass of the contract workers all over the Steel Industry demonstrated through one day strike by the contract workers on 12th September 1994 in all the Steel Plants and mines all over the country.

The Chairman, SAIL took note of the demands and assured the delegation to look into the matters and try to sort out the same.

The Steel Workers Federation of India (CITU) calls upon all its units to remain united and prepare for further action if the demands are not fulfilled within reasonable time.

# TUs Demands Implementation of Prasar Bharati Act

Four Central Trade Unions, viz CITU, INTUC, AITUC and HMS have written the following letter to the Prime Minister demanding early implementation of the Prasar Bharati Act:

12.12.94

Shri P V Narasimha Rao  
Prime Minister  
Government of India  
New Delhi

Dear Shri Rao,

You are aware of the fact that for a year or more people from different walks of life have raised their voices in favour of early implementation of the Prasar Bharati Act giving full autonomy to All India Radio and Doordarshan.

In fact Doordarshan Production Staff are agitating on this issue for more than two years. The members of the Parliament irrespective of their party affiliations have extended their support to this agitation. Moreover, all Central Trade Unions and leading intellectuals of the country have also supported their plea.

Meantime 34 Parliament Members requested you to implement the Act at the earliest. You also communicated that the matter would be looked into by you. The letter of the members of Parliament and

your reply have been produced before Calcutta High Court as exhibits during the final hearing of a Public Interest Litigation praying early implementation of the Act. Smt Aruna Asaf Ali, Shri Khuswant Singh, Shri Mrinal Sen, Justice V N Tarkunde, Shri Kuldip Nayer are among the petitioners in that litigation.

Justice Shyamal Kumar Sen has observed that "since the matter is under consideration of the Prime Minister, hearing of the matter is adjourned till 16.1.95. It is expected that the matter will be looked into in the meantime." The copies of the letter of the members of the Parliament, your reply and the court order are enclosed herewith.

In this context we request you that the Act should be implemented without further delay. The Executive arrogance should not deny the unanimous desire of the Legislature, the Presidential assent and the observation of the Court of Law.

Thanking you,

(M K Pandhe)  
General Secretary  
CITU

(S N Rao)  
Secretary  
INTUC

(Umraomal Purohit)  
HMS

Yours sincerely,  
(A B Bardhan)  
General Secretary  
AITUC

## Accident in Bokaro Steel Plant; 10 workers injured

Massive accident took place at the steel melting shop of Bokaro Steel Plant in Bihar on 19-12-94 at 9 am. 10 workers were injured and five of them are in serious condition.

Accident was caused by bursting of steam pipe line in the steel melting shop, leading to severe burn injury of 10 workers.

Notable is that of injured workers, eight were contract workers and six of them were women.

It is also noteworthy that eight months back in April 1994, similar accident took place in steel melting shop No.1 at Bokaro steel plant and affected workers were mostly contract workers.

This accident within a span of eight months, that too in steel melting shop points out to serious gap and lapse in safety management.

The Bokaro Steel Mazdoor Union, CITU demanded through enquiry into the root of the accident and adequate compensation for the victims.

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# World Meeting on Solidarity with Cuba

□ J Ballabh

The World Meeting on Solidarity With Cuba was held at Havana from 21-25 November. The 42-member solidarity delegation from India was headed by CPI(M) General Secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet. It was the largest from any Asian country. It included political leaders, academicians, trade unionists, students, youth leaders and solidarity activists. From CITU Kali Ghosh, P R Krishnan, Ramnika Gupta, J Ballabh and Tapan Kumar Pathak attended the meeting.

The five-day solidarity meeting started in the magnificent Karl Marx Theatre located in the Western part of Havana. 3072 delegates from 108 countries had congregated in the spacious hall to express their solidarity and support to Cuba in its fight against the American blockade.

The hall resounded with thunderous applause when Fidel Castro and other leaders of the Cuban revolution appeared on the dias along with other members of the presidium consisting of political leaders and solidarity activists from various countries. The entire audience was surcharged with high spirits and deep feelings for the heroic Cuban people, who are locked in an uncompromising battle against the criminal, inhuman and unjust US economic blockade.

The first two days of the meeting were devoted to a plenary session, which was addressed among others by Sergio Corrieri, President of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), Roberto Robaina, Cuban Minister of Foreign Affairs; Ricardo Alarcon de Quesada, President of the National Assembly of Cuba; Richard Sahey, Cuban Health Minister; Basilio Nikitorov, Vice-President of Paraguayan Senate; C Cardenas, Former Mexican Presidential candidate; Rigoberta Menchu, Guatemalan Nobel Prize winner; Adolfo Perez Esquivel, Argentinean Nobel Peace Prize winner and several other dignitaries.

In his welcome address Sergio Corriere, President of ICAP launched a scathing attack on the United States for its 30-year old economic blockade against Cuba. He said, "The US maintains the blockade because it is strong and powerful and can permit itself the luxury of turning a deaf ear on the growing world opinion against it. It would be terrible if the precedent being set against Cuba would become the norm throughout the world in the area of

international relations: forcibly imposing political and economic measures upon another country. Today it is us, tomorrow it could be another nation, another people."

Condemning the American blockade, the Cuban Foreign Minister Roberto Robaina called for the real democratisation of the UN and wondered whether the UN was really united around the charter that gave rise to it and not around the government that handled it. He said, "Nothing makes us feel more insecure in this world than the meetings of the Security Council." He went on, "We do not defend what we are defending today in Cuba just for the sake of 11 million people of Cuba. We defend it for million upon million of men and women who support us in all the continents... To express solidarity with Cuba means to defend the hope of the most humble of this world, to defend the right of self-determination, to defend the independence and sovereignty, to reject aggression and interference.

The Paraguayan Senate Vice-President Basilio Nikitorov praised the prevailing political system in Cuba as "the real democracy." He also referred to the recent agreement of the Paraguayan Congress on rejecting the blockade.

The Argentinean Nobel Peace Prize winner Adolfo Perez Esquivel urged speedy implementation of the UN resolutions demanding the early lifting of the blockade.

Former Mexican Presidential candidate C Cardenas criticised the arbitrariness of the USA for the absence of Cuba at the Miami summit. He said that he had come to Havana to express solidarity on behalf of those in Mexico who are struggling for democracy and urged that respect to the right of self-determination of the peoples be made an international co-existence principle.

CPI(M) General Secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet spoke on behalf of the Indian solidarity delegation. Giving expression to the sentiments of the Indian people towards Cuba, he said, "Cuba was never alone, it is never alone, it shall never be alone, for the entire array of anti-imperialist forces, all right-thinking people are with Cuba, as this glorious conference for expressing solidarity with Cuba proves once again."

Paying high tributes to the outstanding contribution made by Fidel Castro, Surjeet said, "There could be no doubt left in the mind of even the

most hesitant person that Comrade Fidel Castro is creating history by taking forward the Cuban revolution along the path of history. The Cuban revolution has struck the deepest possible roots among the people. Like millions of people the world over, we too have come here with our delegation comprising workers, students, youth, teachers, professionals and academicians. The National Committee for Solidarity with Cuba in India has the support of a huge section of people from all walks of life." Amid thunderous applause he declared, "We shall defend Fidel, we shall defend the people of Cuba and we shall defend socialism."

On the third day the meeting broke into three Working Commissions on (i) Actions against the blockade (ii) Slander campaign and the truth about Cuba (iii) Exchange of ideas and experiences on solidarity with Cuba. After extensive deliberations for two days, each commission formulated recommendations for approval by the plenary session. These recommendations were read out and approved in the plenary session on Nov 25. The gist of the recommendations was:

- \* To declare 1995 as World Year of Solidarity with Cuba and October 10 as the Day of International Action in Support of Cuba.
- \* To commemorate the Centennial of Jose Marti's death with solidarity drives, which would provide an opportunity to acquaint people with his thought, life and work.
- \* To use all available ways and means to spread the truth about the Cuban Revolution, its achievements and its difficulties.
- \* To step up efforts to collect school supplies, powdered milk, medicines and other kinds of support for Cuba.
- \* To utilise personal contacts as well as radio and television programmes to break the news blackout on Cuban people's heroic struggle.
- \* To sponsor joint publishing of books by Cuban authors in the light of existing shortage of paper.
- \* To publicise real image of Cuba to bring about an increase in its tourism industry and participation of foreign companies in the island's economic activity with capital, technology and raw materials.
- \* To pressure the US Govt to comply with the UN Resolutions by demanding compliance with the resolutions and showing that in its anti-Cuba policy the US stands alone.
- \* To increase mobilisation for an end to the blockade, encouraging participation of labour unions, women's organisations, journalists' associations, lawyers' guilds and other groups.

- \* To support the Cuban delegation's participation in the UN World Conference on Social Development slated for March 1995 in Copenhagen.
- \* To promote the creation of a group of Nobel Prize winner intellectuals who would prepare statements of literary quality against the blockade for publication in major newspapers and magazines.
- \* To convene the Second World Meeting of Solidarity with Cuba, which shall be financed by the participating delegates.

The closing session of the Solidarity Meeting was held in the afternoon of Nov 25. The most significant event of the session was Fidel Castro's hour-long powerful speech, during which he denounced the US government for its dirty war against the Cuban revolution and its murder plots against the Cuban leaders. Underlining the blockade as a total harassment aimed at preventing all economic links with Cuba he said, "The blockade is not only a ban on the export of foodstuffs, medicines and machines but also a total economic war against Cuba."

"The US works through its embassies to exert pressure on countries, enterprises or individuals who wish to trade, invest or establish economic relations with Cuba. It violates the human rights of the Cuban people by trying to kill them by starvation and illness. Despite all this the people of Cuba are neither helpless nor without social security. Not a single child remains without school and teacher, not a single citizen remains without medical care."

He rejected outright any political conditions for the lifting of US blockade and reiterated that "Cuba is not ready to give up the full exercise of its sovereignty," adding that his country would rather die before renouncing self-determination.

The Cuban leader made it absolutely clear that the purpose of current reforms in his country was to safeguard the independence of Cuba, the Cuban revolution and the achievements of socialism. "We shall never negotiate principles, it is a price we are not ready to pay," he declared amid thunderous applause.

Appreciating the noble and generous words expressed by the representatives of various countries in support of Cuba, he said, "Encourage us to continue our fight to the end."

From all accounts the first Solidarity Meeting held in the Cuban capital was a great success. It provided an excellent opportunity to the participants from all over the world to interact with each other. Inspiring speeches and lively discussions led to a unified action programme which the participants' pledged to put into reality in their respective countries. This would indeed help a great deal in building pressure

on the US government for lifting the blockade and in defeating the US attempts to isolate Cuba from the rest of the world.

On Nov 22 our Cuban hosts organised a wonderful programme for all those who wished to meet the common people of Cuba. It was a post-dinner get-together with one of the Committees for the Defence of Revolution (CDRs).

The people we met at the get-together were workers and their families. They were extremely friendly. We mixed freely with them and visited their homes. They live in 2-bedroom or 3-bedroom apartments. The flats we visited were tastefully decorated. Refrigerators, washing machines and table fans are common. The average monthly salary of a worker ranges between 150 paiso to 600 paiso (official rate of 1 paiso = 1.32 US dollars). The Communist Party of Cuba and its leader Fidel Castro are held in high esteem.

There is no racial or colour bar among the Cubans. There is wonderful fusion of Spanish, Africans, Antilleans and Asians in their society, which makes a population of 11 million a real racial mosaic. There could be no better example of national integration.

On Nov 23 all delegates to the World Meeting were invited to a cultural gala at the National Theatre, where an excellent variety programme of Cuban dance and music was presented.

The same day during lunch hour the CTC leadership had a separate meeting with the CITU delegates. On behalf of the Cuban trade union centre its Secretariat Members Salvador Valas Mesa, Ramon Cardona Nuevo and Francisco Duran Harvey, and two officials Manuel Montero Bistilleiro and Osieis Ovideo of the International Department were present. The CITU was represented by P R Krishnan, Ramanika Gupta, J Ballabh and Tapan Kumar Pathak. The Cuban TU leaders thanked the CITU for its fraternal support to the Cuban cause and its participation in the World Solidarity Meeting, and hoped that bilateral relations between our two trade union centres would continue to grow in the coming years. The Indian side expressed sentiments of fraternal solidarity and support to the working class and the people of Cuba.

A larger meeting of trade union activists from among the delegates was organised by the CTC and its headquarters on Nov 24, which was attended by about 100 delegates. The presidium comprised of the central leadership of CTC. Replying to a number of questions coming from the delegates on the economic situation and trade union rights in Cuba, one of the CTC leaders said, "Positive signs of recuperation of our economy are visible. All the changes are going to be based on the principle of equality and social justice. We are trying to forge a

new system of economic management without any dilution of the revolutionary values. In a short span of 35 years we have solved problems which the capitalist system could not solve for 200 years."

In the evening a reception was held by the Indian Ambassador to Cuba Mr R S Rathore in honour of the Indian delegation. Later, all participants of the world meet joined a buffet dinner hosted by President Fidel Castro.

The next day we joined a half-day conducted tour of Havana city, which took us to all important streets, markets and historical sites of old and new Havana. The magnificent Revolution Square reminded us of the historic battles the Cuban people fought in Havana to defend their sovereignty and independence under the leadership of their national hero Jose Marti, who died on the battlefield in 1895. Marti succeeded in predicting very early that neo-colonialism would advance in Latin America and would take over from the old Spanish colonialists once they were defeated. The Revolution Square adorns the statue of Jose Marti before which the people of Havana swore to defend the first socialist country in the American continent down to the last drop of their blood.

During our tour we also visited the home of American fiction writer Earnest Hemingway in Havana. Just across the Bay, east of Havana is the fishing village where Hemingway used to keep his boat. A number of scenes for the film based on his novel "The Old Man and the Sea" were shot on this location.

Unfortunately, most of the achievements of Fidel's revolutionary regime have remained unreported in the Western news media, which dominates international information channels. Education is free in Cuba upto the university level. Illiteracy was eradicated way back in 1961. Although Cuba is a small country, it has 3 million students enrolled at various levels. It has 47 institutes of higher learning, 2000 secondary schools and 500 special schools for the handicapped children. In addition, there are art and sports schools and other specialised institutions. Education is compulsory upto the 9th grade. There is one university graduate among every 15 workers and one middle level technician among every 8 workers.

An excellent health network covering the entire population is yet another achievement of the Cuban revolution. Treatment is provided free of charge to all and special priority is given to preventive medicine. Cuba has one doctor for every 270 people. Consequently life expectancy has reached 77 years and infant mortality rate has dropped to 9.4 per thousand, among the lowest in the world.

Cuba has a large number of scientific and technical personnel. More than 30,000 scientists are

working in 156 research centres. Their work in diverse fields including bio- technology and pharmaceutical industry has received worldwide acclaim.

Before the collapse of Soviet Union and East European countries in the late 80s, Cuba had a thriving economy which was much ahead of most of its Latin American neighbours. However, in the changed circumstances Cuba had to face an acute shortage of raw materials, fuel and spare parts, which hit hard its manufacturing industry. Shortages of essential commodities compelled it to enforce strict rationing. An unprecedented storm in early 1993 further added to its misery.

Cuba has a socialist Constitution which guarantees the right to work, medical care, education, food, clothing and housing. It recognises the right of small farmers and cooperatives to own land and other means of production. Personal ownership of earnings, savings and residence are also guaranteed by the State.

Although our stay in Havana was short, we were deeply moved by the love and affection showered on us by our Cuban brothers and sisters, who hosted the World Solidarity Meeting and worked day and night to make our stay comfortable. We shall never forget their ever-smiling faces. With a heavy heart we said good-bye to our Cuban friends on Nov 26 and left for home carrying sweet memories of our brief sojourn in Socialist Cuba.

### Declaration

Meeting in the City of Havana, from 21-25 November 1994, we 3072 participants representing 108 countries of five continents and five regional and international organisations, who took part in the World Meeting of Solidarity with Cuba, declare that defending Cuba's sovereign right to work for a destiny in accordance with its needs and historic process, without interference, means defending the right to choose from a plurality of roads in the face of political and economic dogmas that are being imposed worldwide.

In our work sessions and in direct contact with the people, we have once again confirmed that, at the same time that Cuba is denied the possibility to trade freely with the rest of the world and all its efforts to rebuild its economy are being hindered, the Cuban reality is systematically falsely represented and distorted in an unprecedented propaganda campaign. We have verified with our own eyes the cruel effects of the blockade on the lives of the Cuban people. That is why we insist that the United States Government heed the demands of vast sectors of world public opinion and the General Assembly of the United Nations, to put an end to that unjustifiable

measure that has lasted for more than thirty years now. We have also been able to confirm the Cuba people's morale and will to resist as well as their determination to preserve their social achievements. We return to our countries even more convinced of the need to continue working for the Cuban cause.

In the coming days, Cuba, blockaded and slandered, will not be present in the Summit convoked in Miami by the United States Government. The hosts fear Cuba's gallant voice that speaks out in favour of the forsaken, the dispossessed, the outcasts, the helpless. But Cuba is not alone; proof of that is this meeting attended by only a fraction of that great mass of humanity in all parts of the world which supports this worthy country.

Our World Solidarity event took place as Cuba and all of Latin America prepare to commemorate the centennial of Jose Marti's death in battle. Marti was always aware of the importance of Cuba's independence struggle, both for the fate of what he called "our America" and for achieving "world balance."

These days, Marti's prophesy looms in all its significance and magnitude. "Whoever rises with Cuba today, will be rising for all times."

The blockade against Cuba must cease!

Cuba's inalienable right to build its own future must be respected!

General Agreements of the First World Meeting of Solidarity With Cuba 1. To declare 1995 International Year of Jose Marti and for the Struggle Against the Blockade.

2. To celebrate a Jose Marti and Support for Cuba Day on May 19, 1995, the Centennial of his death in combat. This day will be celebrated with different types of actions implemented by the solidarity movements in each country.

3. To continue and improve the national and regional meetings of solidarity with Cuba with the participation of all the forces and groups that work in favour of friendship.

4. To protest against the exclusion of Cuba from the US Government organised Hemispheric Summit to be held in Miami.

5. To continue and increase donations and economic aid campaigns as an expression of solidarity with Cuba.

6. To work for the growth of the solidarity movement, extending it to every possible sector of each society and promoting exchanges, visits to Cuba, tourism and investments in that country's economy.

7. To declare October 10, the day on which the Cuban people's revolutionary struggle began, World Day of Solidarity with Cuba.

# Regionwide TU Initiative for Workers' Right Planned From the Third Indian Ocean Region Trade Union Conference

□ Chittabrata Majumdar

The Third Indian Ocean Region Trade Union Conference concentrated on the theme of the globalisation of world trade and investment and observed that the current ideology and practice of free trade as developed through the IMF, the World Bank and now the WTO and APEC is seriously undermining the struggles for workers' rights, national economic sovereignty and indigenous industries. To build a strong regionwide struggle of the working class for protection of their rights in the face of organised attack the conference unanimously adopted two resolutions.

Signatures of the workers will be collected nationally on a statement entitled "Challenge to Political Leaders of Countries in the Indian Ocean and Asian regions" and the same will be presented to the leaders around the region towards the end of 1995 asking them to make a declaration of their principled position in support of the basic trade union rights of workers.

In another resolution on "Regional May Day Campaign" the third conference recommended that unions throughout the region organised a campaign on May Day 1996 to promote the right to work, the right to organise, the right to bargain collectively, the right to strike, the right to a safe workplace, the right to education and health-care and the right to freedom of expression. The campaign will start from May Day 1995.

The Conference decided to hold the Fourth Indian Ocean Region Trade Union Conference in India in November 1996. The Regional Coordinating Committee consisting of one representative each from South Africa, India, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, and Australia, one representative each from working women's and cultural workers and the Regional Coordinator will coordinate the development of the Conference, will monitor and report on the implementation of conference resolutions and will prepare for the next conference.

The Third Indian Ocean Region Trade Union Conference was held in Perth, Western Australia from 18th to 25th November, 1994. The Conference was attended by 108 delegates from trade unions of 11 countries which includes Australia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, South Africa, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. Out of the total delegates, there were 36 women delegates. Along with the industrial conference, separate conference of cultural workers, teachers and working women were also held.

From India 6 delegates including 2 women and 1 cultural delegates attended the conference from CITU. 4 teacher delegates attended the conference from All India Secondary Teachers Federation and All India Primary Teachers Federation.

## Declaration

### Challenge to Political leaders of countries in the Indian Ocean And Asian Regions

We, the workers of the Indian Ocean and Asian Regions, call upon political leaders in the region to actively support our hard struggle for our rights as workers, especially the right to join unions of our own choosing and to bargain collectively.

The current ideology and practice of free trade as developed through the IMF, the World Bank and now the WTO and APEC is seriously undermining our struggle for our worker rights, national economic sovereignty and indigenous industries.

We cannot build strong labour organisations that can defend our rights when companies are allowed to deny workers their trade union rights, especially by escaping to other countries where trade union rights are denied.

This type of free trade promotes these unjust practices of companies. That is why we have decided that there should be no free trade without free trade unions.

Companies are running away from those countries that allow worker rights to countries that deny those rights. In addition, certain national companies are also actively eroding existing trade union rights.

The denial of basic free trade union rights has meant that workers in the region are working under slave-like conditions. In the brave new globalised economy, workers in many Asian countries are paid a mere \$1 a day for a 16 hour working day. They work in dangerous and unhealthy conditions. Child labour is rampant. The economic miracle is being built on their backs.

Free Trade Zones in the region are promoting policies of very low company taxation and the denial of trade union rights to attract investment. Each country is competing against every other country by constantly lowering company taxes and by further denying union rights and social benefits to their workers.

This downward spiral of competition is undermining social infrastructure throughout the region. Unacceptable limits are being placed on the development of health, education and social welfare.

In this situation, every country is being told - be internationally competitive, or you will not survive.

We ask, competitive with what? Child Labour, brutally long working hours, slave wages combined with new technologies.

No this is unacceptable to us, the workers of the region. We demand our rights as workers. We do not accept free market driven trade under these slave conditions that undermine the rights of workers everywhere. We therefore call upon the leaders in the region to lend their names to this our just cause. We ask them to make a declaration of their principled position in support of our basic trade union rights.

We are determined to build a new society where workers share in the fruits of their labour; where labour leaders are no longer murdered and imprisoned because of their just work; where the misery and hardship for the majority that exists alongside unimaginable wealth will be changed; where children will be able to enjoy their teenage years instead of becoming old by the age of 24 because of daily exhaustion before the machines of mass production.

We, the workers who have placed our signatures on this document, will never give up this struggle. Ours is a long road to freedom. Are you willing to join us in our struggle? Will you walk with us, or will you find fancy excuses to abandon us?

We need your support, solidarity and commitment.

# CITU representative at International Trade Union Seminar, Seoul

□ S.DEV ROYE

An international seminar was held at Seoul on 5-7 Dec 1994. The title of the same was "Economic Growth Policy and Workers' Experience." The purpose of the seminar was to "provide the forum of discussion and exchange of experience amongst trade union activists in the developing countries, where export-oriented economic growth policy are being applied on priority."

The seminar was jointly organised by International Federation of Chemical, Energy and General Workers Unions(ICEF) and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung(FES), Korea Cooperation office. It was attended mainly by the trade union representatives of chemical industries. The countries represented were India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, South Africa and South Korea. Out of the three representatives attended from India, one was Com.S Dev Roye, Secretary, CITU.

Under different themes four papers were presented on the basis of South Korean experience by four professors from different universities of Seoul

It is interesting to note that while under the New Economic Policy, the Narasimha Rao Govt has been withdrawing the State from all productive economic activities and handing over the initiative and control to the Indian monopoly capital and foreign MNCs, the experience of East Asian three - Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, as noted by Prof Keun Lee and Hong Yong Lee is -- "represent a strong case for state activism. Their experiences suggest that a certain mechanism of state activism exists in the economy, which is effective for the goal of catching up in economic development...." Citing the cases of North Korea and China, they have noted the better economic growth achieved by these states under state initiative and control as termed by them "hard maximal state." In case of Japan also it has been noted, "Japan also experienced something close to maximal state...."

However, trade union movement in South Korea under market oriented economy has been witnessing state repression. According to Prof Song, Ho Keun, "organised labour had been regarded as a necessary evil throughout the modern history of Korean politics after liberation." He has pointed out that export led industrialisation has a close affinity with labour repression in developing countries.

Perhaps, one of the realistic pictures regarding the condition of working class in South Korea in the current situation has been drawn by Prof Jung Ee-hwan of the department of Sociology of the Seoul university of Industry in his paper--- Labour Policy and Workers' life in Korea. He concluded his paper with the following:

"--Korean economy has grown fast due to the low wage and the long working hours since the 1960's. But the fruits of growth were not well distributed to the working class. Workers tried to resist and change this situation, but their movement was oppressed by authoritarian government. However, we cannot deny the fact that workers' working and living conditions got better gradually these days.

--After 1987, with the upsurge of the strong labour movement, working and living conditions began to be improved considerably. The most symbolic feature is that it is not unusual for blue collar workers to have cars.

---But there are still many things to be improved for workers to have human living. Moreover, government and

employers are trying to aggravate working conditions in some areas with the slogan of 'national competitiveness.'"

The representation made by Prof Chai-on Lee, Department of Economics, Chon-nau National University, South Korea drew the most serious attention of the delegates and also could evoke deep interest. Prof Lee was introduced as a famous Marxist. His article published in the Cambridge Journal of Economics(1993) under the title "Marx's labour theory of value revisited", upholding the theory of surplus value, was circulated to the participants of the seminar.

His paper to the seminar has been titled---"Economic Growth policy in Developing Countries." The main highlights of the heavily theorised compact paper was the common background of the developing countries, two different paths of development---Inward Development and Outward Development, New order of international economy (IMF + WB + WTO), the future of ex-socialist economies--- primitive accumulation, cumulating foreign debts, monetary instability, fragile government and contradictions to be resolved.

From amongst the participants, nine delegates were asked to make presentations. Some of them presented papers.

Com.Dev Roye, presented a paper titled "Confronting Structural Adjustment - The Trade Union Alternative." The paper mainly dealt with the impact of the New Economic Policy, the response of the trade union movement and need for cooperation amongst the developing countries for a united resistance against the onslaught of the imperialist powers and for evolving alternative to the Fund-Bank prescription. More than an hour was allotted to Com.Dev Roye for the presentation followed by response from the floor.

The seminar participants although drawn from diverse political background, the discussion uniformly echoed the tune of anti-advanced industrialised western powers and openly expressed the urge for closer ties amongst the trade union movement of the developing countries in general and stressed particularly amongst the South Asian countries.

## BEFI Opens Punjab State Unit

The Bank Employees Federation of India (BEFI) opened its Punjab State Unit in the foundation conference held at Patiala on November 20, 1994.

In the State of Punjab, a good number of bankwide affiliates had been functioning well for the last several years along with similar others in Chandigarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir with BEFI (Northern States) as the Coordinating Body).

Over the years the organisation has grown substantially. Formation of Punjab State unit, which was overdue, is the beginning of the process of other State-level units in the Northern zone.

In presence of Com. Balwant Singh, the veteran trade union leaders as the inaugurator and Coms. Ashis Sen and Harish Sharma, General Secretary and Joint Secretary of BEFI, 600 delegates from almost all parts of the State assembled at the panchayat Bhawan to usher in BEFI (Punjab) to lead the members in various banks operating in the State.

The Conference elected Coms. G.S. Tiwana (P&SBSU), M.C. Menon and S.K. Sharma (PNBEU) as President, General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary respectively.

## International Trade Union Conference Against IMF-world Bank Structural Adjustment Programme

Four-day International Trade Union Conference organised jointly by the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT) and the Asia Pacific Workers Solidarity Link (APWSL) concluded on 14 Dec. 1994 at Kathmandu with a call for struggle against new imperialist offensive in the form of IMF-World Bank Structural Adjustment programmes of liberalisation and globalisation imposed on countries which, in distress and debt, approach these agencies for accommodation. Delegates from fourteen countries attended the conference besides representatives from regional organisations.

The conference had acquired special interest, perhaps for most of the delegates, as it was held in Nepal where the people had just voted the party of the working class, the Communist party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist) to power; a wonder of Himalayan magnitude if considered in the background of the debacle of socialism in Europe.

Countries represented in the Conference belonged mostly to the Asia and Pacific region- Nepal, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan and New Zealand. Three European countries were also represented, namely, Sweden, Germany and Holland. Asian Pacific regional office of World Federation of Trade Unions was represented besides APWSL and two Hongkong based organisations.

In all 56 delegates participated in the conference. Not all attending delegates belonged to trade unions, a number of them work for centres/institution for labour education, information and/or research.

Three Central trade unions from India were represented, CITU by Kanai Banerjee, Secretary, AITUC by AB Bardhan, General Secretary, and AICCTU represented by its General Secretary Depankar Bhattacharya and another Comrade. 3 individual HMS unions participated as APWSL units. Bangladesh delegation comprised of mainstream trade unions in the country. KMU the heroic vanguard of Philippines workers represented the country. Similarly GEFONT the co-organiser of the conference is the representatives of Nepalese Working class, whose contribution was substantial in bringing about pro-working class political change in Nepal. While some other participants, too, might be representing the main stream trade unions of the representative countries, not all of them did. Ofcourse in some such countries the mainstream trade union movement show pro-establishment trend and new formations against establishment are emerging. As for Sweden and Germany, only the anarcho-syndicalist organisations were represented. Zenroren (Japan) and Vietnamese trade unions sent their message of greetings.

In the over all picture of the conference, however, the hands

of so-called non government organisations, popularly called NGOs', were apparent.

### The Conference

The conference was inaugurated by the Prime Minister and CPN' (UML) leader Manmohan Adhikary who

was also a pioneer of Trade Union movement in Nepal. His address in the largely attended inaugural session exuded confidence perfectly balanced by full awareness of the extremely difficult task confronting his Govt. The session was also addressed by the Labour and Health Minister besides GEFONT officials and the APWSL spokesman. A number of delegates responded on behalf of the entire delegation.

### Delegate session

During the 3-day delegate session, 4 Theme papers were presented and work shops were held for detailed discussion on the papers and identification of issues etc. for the "Kathmandu Declaration" scheduled to be adopted in the last plenary session. The first of these 4 papers was on "Economic Liberalisation and the labour movement" which was presented by Riffat Hussain, Coordinator, Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research. The paper examined different aspects of IMF- World bank stabilisation and structural adjustment programmes and their consequences. "Labour and labour movement is the direct target of SAP" the paper read, and outlined some vital effects as unemployment, wage cut, insecurity of jobs, erosion of rights, informalisation, woman and child labour, bounded labour and forced labour.

The next presentation dealing with the on-going liberalisation and globalisation process in India and the response of the trade unions was made by Kanai Banerjee, Secretary, CITU. The paper explained how the post independence policy regime based on recognition of the fact that without important entrepreneurial and regulative role being played by the state it was impossible to free the economy from domination by foreign (British) capital and to build up a self reliant economy, was being dismantled in the name of liberalisation and globalisation and opening up the country for foreign capital to enter and once again establish its domination in the economy abridging the sovereignty of the country. While showing that none of the promised benefits had actually accrued to the country, the paper related the devastating economic consequences that have been following even the partial implementation of the programmes. It emphasised that the basic premise for any development programme was thorough agrarian reform which even the earlier policy regime avoided. The paper also gave an account of how the working class of India and their trade unions were carrying on persistent united struggle against the programmes and how they have mobilised the organisations of other classes and strata of India society and put up all out resistance to Govt.'s effort to implement its policies based on IMF-World bank programmes. The paper called for united resistance by world working class.

In a valuable paper entitled " Problems in NICs Development Paradigm and Labour Movement" presented by Manual Sirmunto General Secretary of KMU, the Philippines trade unions, wealth of information was supplied regarding the plight of the working class of Philippine in consequence of the attempt to achieve export-led development (the NIC modal) as followed by the

so called Asian Tigers like South Korea). It was all the more valuable as it threw a flood of light on the developments in the NICs themselves. The paper gave an account of the rise of militant working class struggle in the NICs of Asia and briefly examined the impact of GATT ratification by these countries. The paper finally concluded that the so called NIC model " is not the development model which could emancipate both the peasants and farm workers-the majority of Asian people - but a genuine and nationalist industrialisation. As Asia is basically agricultural, industrialisation then must begin with liberating the peasants from bondage through genuine agrarian reform, developing national industries so that the workers could lead in the whole process of industrialisation. On terms of production, while we are not against exports, priority must be given to addressing the domestic needs, and protection of local produces against the onslaught of TNCs.

"It is only then where we could assure to benefit from the development".

The fourth theme paper entitled "Strengthening Pro-Worker Trade Unionism: Problems and prospects in the context of Economic Liberalisation and privatisation" was presented by Bishnu Rimal, General Secretary of the host trade union the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions-GEFONT. The paper outlined the condition of Nepalese' economy under the impact of liberalisation policy pursued by the earlier Govts. it also gave a brief account of the development of trade union movement in Nepal. Identifying some of the specific forms in which the working class is facing attack in the context of the liberalisation process different countries pursued at the behest of IMF and World Bank and referring to the growing working class struggle against these policies, the paper stated "We believe this will help to forge a broad-based alliance nationally and internationally in opposing the anti people and antiworker policies in the days to come". The paper concluded by offering some ideas about the concrete measures to be adopted in order to achieve the above objective.

## Country Reports

Besides these four theme papers, all participants presented report on the developments in their respective countries showing the impact of them IMF-WB liberalisation policies. Although the reports did not always reflected a unified view point, yet, together they present a fairly detailed picture of the Asia and Pacific region reeling under the impact of the liberalisation policies. The reports showed that in Asia and Pacific region working class conditions in different countries are essentially similar. This is true even for the so called Asian Tigers.

## Women Workers Problems

An important feature of the conference was a half-day session exclusively devoted to the problems of working women. Business of the session was also conducted by a women participant, Maxine Gay, General Secretary, New Zealand Trade Union Federation. In all 13 women delegates participating in the conference were present in the session. Among them were Bidyu Bhandhari from Nepal and Kuldip Kaur from India. All of them reported on the problems faced by women workers and their role in Trade Union Movement. While condition is more or less similar in most countries in Asia and Pacific region, it is particularly difficult in countries which have proclaimed themselves as Islamic countries. The complaint that in trade unions the male counterparts do to pay adequate attention to the task of involving women workers in trade union activity and organisation was almost universal as far as Asia and Pacific region is concerned.

## Declaration

Draft of a declaration prepared by a committee appointed for the purpose was presented for discussion in the final plenary session. There was lively debate on several important points where after a modified draft embodying consensus of views were adopted. main thrust of the Kathmandu Declaration was struggle against the new imperialist offensive in the form of IMF-WB liberalisation and globalisation policies.

## GREETINGS

**The CITU sends its greetings and congratulations to the people of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka for roundly defeating in the recent elections the political forces representing championing and executing the so-called new economic and industrial policy. These victories will surely give a fillip to the on-going struggles against these disastrous policies.**

**The CITU hope, the people of AP and Karnataka will carry the struggle forward in the days ahead.**

**BOOK POST**