



THE WORKING WOMAN

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50 P.

Support the Working Women Welfare Bill

COM. Susheela Gopalan M.P. and General Secretary, All India Democratic Women's Association has moved a private member Bill in the Lok Sabha (Bill No. 131 of 1982). The statement of objects and reasons in the Bill says that "The number of Working Women in industries and establishments is substantial and their living conditions need amelioration. Welfare facilities, which are at present being made available to and enjoyed by the working women in various industries and establishments are not adequate and satisfactory. These measures have limited coverage in as much as they prescribe some measures to improve the working conditions of the working women in industrial premises only, such as cleanliness, ventilation, first aid, canteen, working hours, weekly holidays etc. In so far as the field of labour welfare is concerned, the existing enactments do not provide for proper medical, educational, recreational facilities for them as well as for the children of the working women. Regarding security, transport, accommodation, special facilities for difficult days and some special problems peculiar to women, no enactment has been made. There are enough loopholes for the employers to escape the provisions of the existing enactments. Hence it is felt that the burden to give reasonable working conditions and other facilities to the working women must fall upon the Government. A Common fund for the welfare of the working women in all the industries and establishments will considerably reduce the administrative expenditure as well as the gap between the need and availability of welfare measures for the working women. This Bill is intended to supplement

the efforts of the employers or the Government in ameliorating the living conditions of the Working Women.

Accordingly, Sec (3) of the Bill requires "The Central Government shall constitute a Fund to be called the Working Women Welfare Fund "and that "The Government and the employers of Women employees each shall contribute separately to the Fund at the rate of ten per cent of wages payable to each of the women employed by an employer" and "The women employees shall not be required to contribute anything to the Fund.

The purposes of the Fund shall be in particular, to ensure, right to work for the women employees in any industry or establishment, equal wages to women employees, steady and definite increase of the women employees in total work force, proper application of the existing labour laws for the benefit of the women employees, child care facilities for the women employees with minimum needs like milk, tiffin, clothes, toys and trained ayahs to look after the children, mobile child care facilities for agricultural women employees, retiring rooms with adequate facilities like bathrooms, latrines etc at the work-site for the women employees, residential accommodation for the women employees nearest to the place of work, recreational facilities for the kids of the women employees at the child care centres, proper and adequate security arrangements for the women employees at the work-site as well as to and from their residential places, improved and conducive working con-

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Begum Bhutto

IT is very unfortunate that the Government of Pakistan is not allowing Begum N. Bhutto, widow of the executed Pakistan Prime Minister, L. Bhutto, to go for treatment abroad. She is reported to be suffering from cancer of the lung and an immediate operation may be necessary. She has requested President Zia that she should be allowed to go abroad accompanied by her daughter to any country where treatment can be given to her. As yet, despite the fact that Begum Bhutto is ready to give an undertaking that she will not indulge in any political activity, and that her demand to go abroad is being supported by various organisations in Pakistan, the President has still not consented. This is very revengeful indeed.

Various women's organisations in India including the AIDWA, the NFIW and the All-India Co-ordinating Committee of Working Women, and including Aruna Asaf Ali, had in a latter requested Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to take up this matter when she met the President of Pakistan during his stopover in Delhi on November 1.

Anti Martial Law Demonstrations by Women

Two hundred women participated in a demonstration in Karachi on November 10, observed as 'Democracy Day' by the seven-party 'Movement for Restoration of Democracy'. Apart from the slogans of 'end martial law' and 'hold elections' some placards carried by the demonstrators demanded "allow Mrs Bhutto to go abroad".

Police broke the demonstrations and the women were loaded on police trucks and freed on the outskirts of the city.

The protests coincided with the day marking the fifth anniversary of the Supreme Court ruling which said President Zia-Ul-Haq who had taken control of the country in a coup, should eventually lift martial law.

While in Press

Begum Bhutto has since been allowed by the martial law authorities to go abroad for medical treatment.

On the Question of Transfers and Promotions

KIRAN PARWANNA and Ranjan Uboveya, are two teachers working in schools in Delhi, run by the Delhi Administration. The husbands of both of them work in the Syndicate Bank and were recently given notice of transfer to places outside Delhi. The two lady teachers represented unsuccessfully with the Syndicate Bank management, for reconsideration of the posting, in view of the fact that both are working women, and would therefore either have to give up their jobs, or the families — there are children in both the cases — would have to live separately. Their representation was turned down.

This of course, is not a lone instance. Any number of such cases are constantly coming up in banks, the LIC, Government offices, etc., wherever women are working. Linked with this also is the question of promotion to a higher post, carrying with it not only better pay scales but often involving transfer to another town. In fact, both for the married as well as the unmarried woman, in the cities and towns, this is proving to be one of the more important problems with which they are faced at some time or other in their working life.

For any working person, promotion to a higher post, whether for a man or woman is, always a matter of welcome. The problem arises when both husband and wife are working, and the promotion, as often happens, entails, a shift. The family has two options: one the wife — in our society it is the woman who is always called upon to make the adjustment — must resign her job, as in the case of Kiran and Ranjan, and hope to find another wherever her husband may be posted. Or two, she stays back, alone, with her children, *taking up the whole responsibility of bringing up the children*, (may be also looking after old parents), while continuing her job, this placing a double burden on her.

The choice is made even more difficult by the fact that in these days when the price of everything — food, rent, clothes, education, etc. — is sky-rocketing, even the two incomes of husband and wife combined are in most

cases not sufficient to satisfy the minimum needs of the family. But the physical, mental and emotional strain, in a society which looks down upon women and will not come forward in the slightest degree to ease the burden, is proving to be very heavy indeed.

An equally difficult situation arises in the case of her own promotion, when the latter again entails transfer. The choice here again is either breaking up the family, or refusing the promotion.

In the majority of cases the management already consciously or unconsciously, biased against the working woman, is unsympathetic and unhelpful — as in the case cited above — and regrettably the unions and often the male colleagues will not support her request for promotion within the same unit or at least any other unit in the same city.

Unmarried Working Women

While the unmarried woman does not face these same dilemmas, in her case too, accepting a transfer is not a simple matter either. Given the state of society today, the growing attacks on women, the deplorable attitude which the majority of men carry with them towards women in general — where any young girl, even married, is considered fair game for harassment and even assault — transfer to any new place, and particularly in rural areas, carries great dangers. She has no form of personal or social protection. Promotion with transfer under these circumstances is tantamount to no promotion at all.

All these cases, involving promotion of husband, working wife, or the unmarried working woman, as well as the whole question of transfers are questions which of course affect men as well as women workers, and will have to be solved in consultation and cooperation with them, through the concerned unions.

The All India Coordination Committee of Working Women has raised these questions of promotion and transfer a number of times, both in general and in the individual cases. Its

approach is that prime consideration should be to avoid the break-up and separation of the family. It is of the opinion that in the vast majority of cases, compromise solution can be found, if there is sympathy and consideration on the part of managements. It, therefore, has called on trade unions to take special interest in these cases and help the managements to a greater awareness of the specific and difficult conditions which working women have to face.

Training Programmes for Women Inadequate

The Working Women should be given better promotion facilities and also be given training for higher positions and for skilled jobs. But what we found, and now confirmed by the report published in the press, that, in almost every sector women workers and employees are discriminated of one kind or another.

The continued lack of enough job opportunities for women and the inadequate facilities to train them in skills has been brought out in the report of working group on reorganization of the Directorate-General of Employ-

ment and Training of the Ministry of Labour. The report was that "this potential is under-utilized due to discriminatory practices arising out of prejudices, traditions, attitudes and misunderstandings of the role of women in society". In the Apprenticeship Training Programme, of the 1,14,260 apprentices, women total a meagre 3,884 as on January 1981.

Experience has shown that the working women in India are capable of doing sophisticated and skilled jobs and also work as good administrators. If proper training is given, they will make further advancement. But they are given training only in, "cutting and tailoring". The training programmes for women in the Industrial Training Institutes could have provided a lot of new jobs opportunities for women. But they are given training and also jobs in the "women preferred Industries", like tailoring, electronics, embroidery cutting and so on.

This ITI training system is more than 25 years old and a thorough change is required so that women can get training in skilled jobs and get better positions in the industries.

States Told to Ban Child Labour in Building Units

THE Centre has directed the states to take immediate steps for the enactment of laws banning employment of children under 14 in the hazardous building construction industry.

According to official sources, the directives have been issued following a recent Supreme Court judgement on a writ petition filed by the People's Union for Civil Liberties and others expressing concern at the absence of such a provision.

The Centre wants the states to take action under Section 3A of the Employment of children Act to include building construction industry in the schedule under Section 3(3) of the Act.

Under the aforesaid section "no child who is below 14 years shall be employed or permitted to work where any of the (following) processes set in motion".

The Act specifically mentions ten such industries—Bidi-making, carpet-weaving, cement manufacturing including bagging of cement,

dyeing and weaving manufacturing matches, explosives and fire-works, mica-cutting and splitting, soap manufacturing, tanning and wool-cleaning.

The Centre now desires that the building construction should be included in the list of hazardous industries.

Mr Justice P.N. Bhagwati of the Supreme Court, in his judgement, observed that non-inclusion of employment in construction work in the employment of children Act is a "sad and deplorable omission" which must be set right immediately by every state government.

The Central Government in its directive to the states had also sent extracts of the Supreme Court judgement.

It is unfortunate, that despite the banning of employment in the above mentioned industries, small children in fireworks, carpet, matches, mica and other industries do work violating the clauses of the Act. The management instructs the boys to hide somewhere as soon as the Factory Inspector visits the places!

SIET STRUGGLE

IT is well known that in the last four or five years, teachers, from various colleges have been actively participating in struggles demanding UGC pay scale; better working conditions, job-security, etc. The Association of University Teachers (AUT) is keen to preserve the democratic rights of teachers.

The conditions of teachers in all colleges, are deplorable. This is particularly so in the case of the privately owned minority colleges. These colleges, taking protection under the constitutional provisions, mismanage and exploit their teachers and students. They are run not as educational institutions but as commercial enterprises, with a view to making money. Hence far from the philanthropic and noble character which they claim every action of the management is unfavourable both to teaching as well as the teaching and student communities.

A fact often missed about these minority colleges is that the first to be exploited by them are members of their own community—witness the struggle of the teachers of Holy Cross College, Tiruchi, in 1977-78, when not less than 27 teachers, the majority of them Christians, were summarily sacked; or St. Joseph's College also in Tiruchi, which dismissed one of its teachers, also a Catholic. This of course is not to say that teachers in non-minority colleges are in a better position. Non minority institutions like Sarada College Salem, Avinashilingam Home Science College, Coimbatore, are examples of mismanaged non-minority institutions. Now, it is the turn of SIET College, Madras, a Muslim minority institution.

SIET College

SIET College, Madras was started with the idea of promoting the uplift of the Muslim downtrodden. The teachers, however, were not to be given UGC pay scales, nor were they to have job security.

Agitation first began in July 1979, when a memorandum spelling out demands such as UGC pay scales, job security, no termination without proper reasons, etc., presented. A second joint memorandum of teachers, students and non-teaching staff was given in early August 1979. The management promptly responded by closing down the college indefinitely from the very next day. Demanding re-opening of the College, the teachers went on relay fast and demonstrations and four teachers, two non-teaching staff and two students went on indefinite fast. The Government and the University pressurised the management. On 18th Sept. '79 an agreement was reached between the Govt. and SIET management. The SIET management was brought under the grants in aid code. Finally college re-opened, on 6th Feb., 1980.

But the systematic attack on and victimisation of AUT members started when, they were not in the campus, two windows had been broken for which AUT members were made responsible. Meanwhile, students were pressurised to take their T.C. and leave the college. This was followed by picketing and arrest of teachers for a period of 2 weeks. The AUT members, arranged the 'Pandal' classes in side and out-side the campus to help the students. There was no Government and the bureaucrats were not co-operative. They pressurised teachers to sign agreements which were one sided.

Prime Minister at last intervened and the college re-opened on March 19, 1980. Another agreement was signed by the parents, teachers, Govt. and the management. The management is planning to close down the college and convert it into a 5 star Hotel. As a first step the management admitted only 400 students for the academic year 1981-82 whereas they are entitled to admit 1200 students. The motive is to declare as many teachers as possible, as surplus and throw them out. But each depart-
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The October Revolution and Women

On the occasion of the sixty-fifth anniversary of the Russian October Revolution, the working women in our country salute the path-breaking people of the Soviet Union, workers and peasants, intellectuals and students, men, women and youth, who made the first workers' revolution in the world, and set up the first workers' State. At the cost of tremendous sacrifices and for many their lives, they defeated the imperialist conspiracies and internal class enemies.

Condition of Women, Pre-Revolution

The condition of women in pre-revolutionary Russia was worse than even that of Indian women to-day. This is how women textile workers described it. "Bus lines were as black and chambers as the grave. A wooden plank in a makeshift house, was all the housing we had. Back-breaking work for a few paise, fines, the constant threat of being fixed, and the sadism of the foremen, were our daily lot". Another woman said, "We bore our children beside our machines. The terrible threat of being thrown out of work and starving to death hung over us constantly. Words cannot express the bottomless pit of our misery".

Returning after 12-14 hour day, the women would lie on their cots in exhaustion.

If a wife tried to escape from the bondage of her husband's home, the husband had the right to bring her back by force. Always directors of the mills forced their odious attention on pretty women workers, others kept harems.

This terrible misery at work and at home naturally totally undermined the health of the women workers, and child mortality reached ghastly proportions.

The lot of peasant women was no better, toiling for landlords with no hope of ever escaping their hunger. They, therefore, flocked to the towns to work as millhands, domestic servants, or to swell the army of unemployed.

The Most Oppressed

But it was the women in the Eastern provinces of the Russian Empire who suffered the most. Patriarchal, feudal and traditional customs and practices held sway. The systems of *Shariat* and *Adat*, legalised polygamy, the purchase and sale of brides, child-marriage, and other customs humiliated and enslaved women.

Strict laws enforced seclusion behind high walls in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan. From mountainous Daghestan, women lived "the stern life of the mountaineers, the unwritten law of the mountains (*Adat*) and the cruel code of the religious laws (*Shariat*), guarded by the Khans, Beks, Mullahs and Kulaks, and supported by the Tsarist rulers.

A woman "never ate nor even drank water in the presence of her husband and never exchanged a word with her father-in-law, for such was the custom laid down by the *Adat*." Women paid with their lives for the least deviation from these barbarous customs. Even the death of her 'lord' did not deliver the woman from the oppression because '*Adat*' laid down that the widow becomes the wife of the brother or a cousin of the deceased husband".

Work among these women was therefore, very difficult since they were all in purdah and forced to wear the long horse hair 'Yashka'. In Azerbaijan, the trade unionists used to meet them at the public baths where they used to come once in a week. The question of language also created problems. At the First Congress of Women of Azerbaijan, held in Baku in February 1921, one of the main demands of delegates was that banning of child marriages. Another obnoxious practice was the system of '*Kamzol*', the leather bodice that was put on girls of 10 and 11 years, sewn tight, and never taken off until the wedding night. Unhealthy and obstructing natural development, it disfigured the girls. After the revolution the women decided to start a campaign among the people and at the schools to show the harm done by the *Kamzol* and popularise a new national dress for women.

Women began discarding the veils, though some of the men protested, but they were given rebuff by the women.

The first women's club was started in Baku Samarkand, in 1922. Wall posters for women were started to give education on health, women's rights etc. in the backward areas of Azerbaijan. There was an astounding custom in the northern part of Russia where a woman in the childbirth would be locked into a cold "unclean" hut. In the hut it was cold and damp, with soot, smoke, and dirt in every corner. In such conditions the women's clubs were of great help in educating women after the revolution. Women's clubs of various types thus became one of the principle vehicles for the emancipation of women of the Soviet East.

Reforms resisted tooth and nail

These reforms concerning women were strongly resisted by the forces of the old world like the kulaks, mullahs etc. They intimidated the women's organisers of murdering them, hacking them to death, while they were on their way to the clubs. It was, therefore, vital to combat the survivals of the past in the minds of men. Kazakhstan, for instance, abolished the system of "Kalym" (Bride's money), polygamy and the inheritance of wives. The marriage age of a girl in Turkestan was raised to 18 from 9 to 11, and the laws directed against patriarchal survivals in the attitude towards women were adopted by the Central Asian Republics through the new experience achieved.

The land was taken from the exploiters and distributed to the landless including women. It was custom in pre-revolutionary days a custom called 'Nika-su' by which only married men had the right to use water for irrigation. The landlords therefore made sons marry at the age of 9-10 in order to obtain an extra share of water. The labourer or poor peasant had no money to buy a bridge and remained without land and without water. The decree on the water and the land reform gave women equal rights to land and water.

On one of the International Women's Day, in the rally of 10,000 in Tashkent, one woman in a yashmak climbed to the rostrum, bared her face and said a few words of greetings. Thousands of women then made piles of

their yashmaks and set them on fire. In every town this took place, so great was the enthusiasm among Muslim women to get rid of those "travelling prisons" as they called them.

In Uzbekistan 90,000 women stopped wearing the yashmak in the period March to May, 1927.

But change was not easy. Women who discarded the yashmak were persecuted by fanatics. A total of 226 cases of kidnapping and murder of women were registered in Uzbekistan in 1928. Women were terrorised by these reactionary fanatics. Special laws had to be passed to protect women who discarded the yashmaks, and assistance given to these victims. Courts were instructed to make show trials of cases where women were insulted.

Against this background, the present changes concerning women under the socialist soviet system are almost incredible.

The building of socialism could not succeed without the participation in it of working women.

"The work that Soviet power has begun can only make progress when instead of a few hundreds, millions and millions of women throughout Russia take part in it. We are sure that the cause of Socialist development will then become sound" their leader, Lenin said. The State tried to draw women into socially useful work. This was very difficult since the past heritage left women illiterate, backward, non-skilled. Not more than two per cent were in the engineering industry. Vocational training for women workers started in right earnest everywhere. In those years one of the seriously discussed question was whether a woman could be a machine-tool operator.

Full Employment

Soviet power put an end to unemployment. In 1928-32 the economy employed 4,000,000 people of whom 1,400,000 were women who had never worked in industry before. A Five Year Plan of enlisting women into industry was drawn up by the State Planning Committee. It called for the employment of
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Rajpura Women Workers Fight Back

IN the B.C.I. at Rajpura, Punjab 4000 workers among whom 500 are women have been pushed on the brink of starvation, due to declaration of lockout by the management. The police are acting hand in glove with the management. It has joined in every act of suppression of workers' legitimate rights by the management and is a party to all the conspiracies against workers. All this is happening just because the workers are demanding Rs. 340/ per month which has been declared as the minimum wage by the Punjab Government.

The CITU union in the factory had submitted a demands charter in this connection to the management on 1st January 1982. In the absence of any response from the management side, the workers continued to hold gate meetings etc. to highlight their demands consequently. There were some discussions with the management but the demands for minimum wages was turned down. In view of the growing angry mood and unity of workers due to their legitimate demands being turned down, the management resorted to new methods of suppressing the workers on August 17, 1982. The supply of the raw materials to the workers was stopped and on 14.9.1982 the Punjab police and CRP suddenly entered the mill and attacked the workers. There are about five hundred women working in the mill. It was during the shift of women workers that CRP and police entered the mill. The union leaders requested the police to stop this unwarranted attack on the women workers. They were told that this step had been taken to get the premises of the mill vacated. However, without giving a chance to the women to go out of the mill, they were kicked with boots, and pushed by lathis, many were knocked down to be dragged out of the factory gate. The police used filthy and obscene language while deliberately hitting the private parts of women workers. This detestable beastly action went on for a full one hour.

When the injured workers were taken to the Government hospital at Rajpura, the doctors refused the treatment, pleading help-

lessness as it might endanger their jobs. As a result the injured workers were taken to Patiala to be treated in a small dispensary. When the CITU leaders went to the police station to lodge a complaint, the S.H.O. refused to register it. On the other hand many false cases such as, police-encountered, robbery, kidnapping, sabotage etc. were framed to implicate the CITU leaders.

The workers thrown out of jobs are being constantly compelled to give up the demands for minimum wages, demand for Bonus and to quit CITU in order to get back their jobs. Armed guards follow the workers day and night. They threaten them and at times when found alone they even attack the workers. Police protect the goondas and management. These goondas have been brought from Sonapat, Panipat and Rohtak. Living inside the factory they even pelt stones at workers. However, the undaunted courage of workers and their steel-like unity is defeating the conspiracies of Birla management. They are now spreading all kinds of lies and are now unleashing baseless propaganda against the leaders of the union. At times they get any third person attacked by their paid goondas and pass on the blame to the union leaders.

The Punjab State Committee of CITU asked the State Government to intervene and to force the management to reopen the mill and to do justice to the workers. On 27.9.1982, 1st October, 1982, 5th October 1982 and 18th October 1982 in the presence of Labour Commissioner of Punjab union leaders talked to the mill-owners. Still the owners did not concede any of the demands. Even the Government representatives took sides with the mill-owners. The management is now refusing to negotiate with the union in order to seek vengeance after all its attempts to win over the union leaders have failed.

Not only in Rajpura, but in the entire State all the fraternal organisations of workers, peasants, students, youth and women are solidly backing the struggle of the B.C.I. workers. Funds have been raised to render
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Stringent Action urged to check Dowry Deaths

DESPITE rising tide of movement by the women's organisations during last two years or so against the Dowry Deaths and molestation of women, the news appears daily of one or two murders, or suicides of women due to dowry or harassment for bringing more dowry from the girl's parents. During the month of October, three deaths of young girls in Haryana due to Dowry brought men, women, young girls and boys from the college together with other sections of the people to campaign.

While women are being burnt, women members of Parliament, belonging to all political parties raised their voices in Parliament on 14th of October demanding a stop of such atrocities on young girls. Com. Susheela Gopalan, M.P. (CPM) the General Secretary of AIDWA, Smt. Kaur, Pramila Dandavate, (Janata) and Geeta Mukherjee (CPI) jointly called the attention of the Home Minister to several gruesome dowry deaths in the capital and demanded action by the Government.

This was the day for women in Parliament and they dominated the discussions according to the press reports. Women MPs point blank told the Home Minister that police officials are apathetic or "found wanting" in vigorous investigations of the cases. "Cutting across party lines" women members expressed grave concern at the increasing dowry deaths and urged the Government to give deterrent punishment for these ghastly crimes. Some suggested the ban on ostentatious marriages and compulsory registration and listing of items given in dowry or presents. Susheela Gopalan suggested that more stringent legislative measures were needed to eradicate the dowry system. Pramila Dandavate pleaded that let the members of Parliament at least declare that they would not celebrate or participate in ostentatious marriage. Mrs. Brar (Congress-I) suggested that all political parties and youth organisations should be involved to create social awareness against dowry. Geeta Mukherjee suggested that the Bill be brought in the current session for amendments.

All these suggestions were already made

by women's organisations to the Dowry Committee. Family courts, association of women's organisations with the inquiry, the appointment of women magistrates and a number of other suggestions were made. Bitter attack on the police department who connive at the dowry deaths, not registering the dying declaration of the victims, not registering the cases and so on was made by the MPs and also women's organisations.

Dowry deaths, suicides by burning etc. of women in various form have become an order of the day, in Delhi and that too under Smt. Indira Gandhi, a woman, Prime Minister. Unless, the democratic opinion is roused against this, unless women themselves come forward to fight against this, atrocities will continue. This is a challenge for our women, and we must take it up whatever be the consequences.

Crimes Against S.C. Women on the Rise

There has been an increase in the number of crimes against the scheduled caste in 1982 in 10 States compared to last year's position, Minister of State for Home Affairs N.R. Lakshkar told the Rajya Sabha on 21.10.1982. He said 244 cases of rape of scheduled caste women and 70 cases of scheduled tribe women had been reported during March-August, i.e. within 6 months period. He said the State Governments had been instructed that except in unavoidable circumstances, no women should be arrested between sunset and sunrise.

Forest Department Nursery Labour Union, Jaipur

In the grass farm nursery of Khatipura, Jaipur, an officer, Narpal Singh, along with four forest guards and one watchman, went to the house of Radhabai and her young daughter Lali Bai, both working in the nursery, around midnight on September 23, 1982, and tried forcibly to rape the two women.

Early next morning when the workers reported for duty and learnt about this ghastly (on page 12)

The Second Conference of Women in Punjab-AIDWA

THE Second Conference of Punjab Janvadi Istri Sabha was held successfully with the call to strengthen unity and to organise the units of Janavadi Istri Sabha in every village and muhalla in Punjab.

The Conference was held under the Chairmanship of Com. Saminder Kaur at the historic village Longowal (Sangrur) in which 120 delegates and observers participated representing 12200 members,

Delegate session was held in Mata Gulab Kaur Nagar, the city was decorated with flags and festoons on the road, gates were erected and they were named after Com. Harnam Singh, Com. Bhagwan Singh and Jathedar Singh Bathal.

The flag hoisting was done by veteran Mata Parshin Kaur. All the delegates paid homage to the martyrs by offering flowers at Sahid Minar. Homage was paid to Com. Pankaj Acharya with two minutes silence, when the delegates' session began.

While inaugurating the conference Com. Susheela Gopalan, the General Secretary, All India Democratic Women's Association said that we achieved our independence 35 years ago but still women are suffering from social inequalities and economic dependence, they are also culturally backward. Social injustice and atrocities, as rape, dowry deaths, marriages against their will, child marriage, continues. The employment for women is decreasing, wages are unequal. Position of

majority of Indian women in our country is still humiliating.

In our country every year there are 15 thousands women who commit suicide after suffering insults in houses and in society. Women are being sold to the Arab countries. They allure them to get them married and after some time they abandon them without any protection.

She said that there are so many rules to protect women against the unequal status of women but they are only on papers. We have to struggle to get these acts to be implemented to provide some limited security to women.

Comrade Susheela Gopalan said, that in the Socialist countries where economic ex-

ploitation has been abolished and jobs are guaranteed to men and to women, inequality is abolished. These countries have shown a great progress. These women are in every field. They are on the highest posts. Today they are flying in the sky.

Comrade Susheela said that the bourgeois-feudal structure, the rule of Congress is advancing towards the capitalist development, is responsible for this down-graded and disgraceful place of women.

Congress (I) and its administration and their leader Smt. Indira Gandhi is responsible for the present state of women. She said, that, though Smt. Indira Gandhi is a woman, she is not the real representative of ordinary women.



A view of the Dias



Sushan addressing the conference

A view of the conference

She added that there is a need to raise the voice against the inequalities, dowry and rape etc. For education, and employment for women, for child-care facilities our organisation should fight organising the united movement with others.

Comrade Susheela said that the women can not be impartial towards the secessionist movement which is a danger to the integrity of the country. We should fight for the defence and integrity of our country and against the war danger all over the world.

She expressed happiness for the 4th October peace rally, where a good number of women took part from Punjab.

Comrade Susheela ended her speech calling the delegates to strengthen the Janavadi Istri Sabha and work on the basis of village level units.

Com. Nirmal Kaur presented the report.

On 18th October the following comrades spoke on the report. Harbhajan Kaur, Ravinder Kaur, Balbir Kaur, Kawaljit Kaur, Surinder Gill, Nirmal Kaur, Narinder Kaur, Jaswant Kaur, Bhupinder Kaur, and Jeevan Preet.

The resolutions were passed on "Dowry Deaths" on increasing prices, on maternity facility, child care centres and medical facilities for women, on communal, separatist and fissiparous tendencies. The conference called upon the women of Punjab to take part with great interest in the struggle with other democratic and progressive organisations.

Condemning the atrocities on the workers of Dhaga Mill Rajpura, specially women workers, the conference assured them its full support.

After passing the above resolutions, following office-bearers were elected unanimously, with 9 members for the executive committee:—

Com. Samindar Kaur-President

Com. Surjeet Kaur-Vice President

Com. Rajinder Kaur Chohaka-General Secretary

Com. Asha Rani-Treasurer.

Greeting the delegates session of Punjab Janavadi Istri Sabha, Com. Vimala Ranadive, Vice-President of the All India Democratic Women's Association appealed to the delegates to struggle to achieve the social, economic and political equality, and organise the women for their democratic rights.

Com. Vimal specifically paid tributes to West Bengal and Tripura Governments for the steps they have taken for the betterment of women.

Com. Saminder Kaur, the President appealed the delegates to implement these decisions. With thanks to the delegates and slogans shouting the conference ended.

An open rally was organised under the Chairmanship of Com. Saminder Kaur in which about one thousand men and women participated. Com. Rajinder Kaur Chohaka, General Secretary reported on the decision of the conference. Coms. Susheela Gopalan and Vimala Ranadive addressed the rally.

Forest Department Nursery Labour Union

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incident, they organised a protest meeting at the gate. A delegation of women workers also met the Chief Conservator of Forests, asking for removal of the persons involved. Assured by the C.C.F of due action, the workers went back to work.

However, instead of action against the rapists, complaints were lodged at the police station against seven workers, four women and three men, and all seven were simultaneously removed from their jobs. The union moved the labour court, which changed the termination orders into suspension orders. But the officer involved in the case has not been proceeded against and is still very much employed in the nursery. The women working there feel insecure and are naturally terror-struck. Amongst the workers removed is Anup Bai, secretary of the union and one of the leading activists of the AIDWA.

T.U. International—Seventh Conference of Unions in Textile, Clothing, Leather Industries

THE Seventh Trade Unions International Conference of Textile, Clothing and Leather Workers, held in Berlin, in the German Democratic Republic, from September 20 to 24, 1982, was attended by representatives from 59 countries. Of the 140 delegates, 30 were women.

Delegates reported on conditions of work prevailing in their countries in the textile and clothing industry. In a larger number of countries, women workers form a substantial if not the greater part of the work force in these industries. It was natural therefore that the conference paid particular attention to the problems of working women in these industries, adopting guidelines (given below) for action in the various countries.

Another remarkable feature which stood out was the vastly different conditions that the women workers face in Socialist as opposed to the capitalist countries.

In the Socialist World

In the Socialist countries, especially in the U.S.S.R., where 80 per cent of the workers in the textile and clothing industries are women, there is no problem of unemployment. Efforts are constantly being made to improve the living conditions of workers, especially of women and children. New technology is utilized to reduce the work-load without any deduction in pay. Medical care has been speeded up to prevent the ill-effect of noise as well as chemicals which are a part of the new technology. Extra vitamins are given during autumn and winter; regular medical check-ups and holidays in the sanatoria are given, and extra meals for those requiring it. Holidays are arranged for the whole family, maternity leave is given for 26 weeks with full pay, and after the second child the mother can stay at home for a year on full pay to devote more time to the children. A change in jobs is arranged to avoid monotony, and higher training provided so that they can improve

their work-grading. Women are very active in the trade union.

It is only the arms race and the threat of war which is slowing down the social progress in these countries.

In Capitalist Countries

In France, several textile industries have been closed down leading to unemployment. The present Government is pledged to restart the closed mills. In Italy there is large-scale unemployment in the textile industry. In Greece women workers have no maternity benefits, creche or medical insurance facilities. Trade union rights are also denied. In Turkey the textile industry employs 50 per cent women workers. They are socially and economically exploited. Here again there are no creches and nurses.

In Japan the majority of workers in the textile industry are women. They are affected by the improved technology through increased work-load, and unemployment. Many textile mills have been shifted outside Japan as labour there is cheaper. The retirement age of women is also very low. Trade unions are agitating to have 60 years as the retirement age. In the Philippines the biggest industry is clothing and textile. These are mostly controlled by foreign multi-nationals. A lot of work is carried out in rural areas as a cottage industry. These workers are not organised in trade unions, are very poorly paid and have not the benefit of health, insurance, paid holidays and maternity benefits. In Thailand, again most of the textile industry is in the hands of multi-nationals.

Latin American workers also suffer from the nefarious activities of multinationals. African countries face the same problem as other developing countries. However some newly independent countries have been able to gain some economic independence along with political independence like Ghana. In Upper

Volta, pregnant women are given light work which does not require too much standing and they do not lose their pay. They get 14 weeks maternity leave, one hour off during the shift for nursing mothers, one and a half months paid holiday for women with minor children. Men workers living outside of the work site are given two days per week with full wages to go and visit their families.

The Conference adopted the following guidelines, concerning working women :—

- (1) There should be no discrimination against women workers.
- (2) Reduction in working hours should not lead to any wage reduction.
- (3) Conditions for working in homes should be the same as in factories and workers should get all the benefits.
- (4) Technological improvement while increasing productivity, should not lead to (i) mental or physical strain, (ii) unemployment (iii) increase in industrial illness.

Having experienced the devastation of the Second World War and faced with the arms race and nuclear holocaust, the Conference resolution on Peace and Disarmament was very meaningful. The horrors of the treacherous attacks by the Israelis armed with the latest U.S. weapons on the PLO and the eviction of people of Lebanon was brought home to us by the impassioned speech of the delegate from Lebanon. He spoke at a meeting organised by the workers of a shoe factory. Most of the workers were women, many of whom can still remember the horrors of the world war. The resolution adopted at the Conference noted that the question of war and peace has become the most crucial question in international politics.

Laxmi Sehgal,
President, All-India Jute
Worker's Federation

October Revolution and Women

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1,600,000 women under the slogan, "from the household to the machine tool". Women were found working in all industries, establishments, and offices.

During the World War II, under the slogan of the Socialist emulation movement "All for the Front, all for the Victory", women worked side by side with men to defeat the Nazi Germany.

Today Soviet are making great contributions to the women in building of Communism. Their political and cultural level has risen to a great extent, and they have become skilled organisers of industry. They are engineers, technicians, foremen, team leaders, directors of the factories and cosmonauts. Every third engineer in Soviet Union is a woman and in all, there are 5,44,000 women engineers and 1,197,000 women technicians. There is no unemployment and every person is guaranteed the right to work. All professions except those harmful to the female organism, are open to Soviet women. Equal pay for equal work, social insurance, labour protective laws, a five-day working week, concern for children by the society and the State, all create the conditions for productive work. The threat of an insecure old age does not hang over them. After 20 years of work they are eligible for a pension at the age of 55, the rate of pensions ranging from 50 to 100 per cent of the average wage. Women occupied in work requiring intensive labour, particularly in some of the textile industries, are eligible for pension five to ten years earlier. Women are granted four weeks paid leave before and six weeks leave, after child birth; creches exist in all factories, men inspectors have been replaced by women inspectors in industries employing female labour.

Work gives women greater independence and enriches their political understanding and Soviet Women have utilised the rights obtained by them as a result of the October Revolution. The whole history of the women's movement is closely associated with the name, Lenin. He regarded the women's question as a part and parcel of the general tasks of the proletarian revolution, saying that "the proletariat cannot achieve complete liberty until it has won complete liberty for women".

International

Mexico : Experience of Employment Counsellors

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in Mexico analysed the experience of Employment Counsellors in finding jobs for women in the urban labour market. The principal reasons deduced from their interviews with employers for not hiring women were the following :

- there are more job offers for men than for women;
- women are not willing to accept night work or shift work;
- the jobs are arduous and cannot be done by women;
- there are only men in the undertaking and women would create problems;
- women do not adjust to work;
- more extensive benefits have to be granted to women;
- they would be absent more often when their children fall ill;
- they are not willing to work overtime; and
- there is opposition from the trade union.

The findings also show that the jobs for which there continues to be a frequent demand are typists, telephone operators, receptionists, packers, operators and cashiers. The most usual "requirements" seem to be good appearance, single or married status without children and work experience. The analysis of jobseekers shows that the majority of them are in the 16 to 35 age group, have completed primary and secondary school and will accept employment on condition that "the job is for fixed hours and not too far from their home." It was also noticed that women qualified as clinical psychologists, dentists, chartered accountants or business administrators frequently accept work of a lower level than their qualification. Another finding indicates that in times of shortage of labour (specially in 1980/81) in certain sectors such as construction, some undertakings were willing to hire women in jobs previously held by men.

Madam Beguin, ILO Assistant Director meets Women's Representatives

A small gathering of the representatives of various organisations was held at the International Labour Office (ILO) on 22nd of Oct '82, to meet Madam Antoinette Beguin, Assistant Director General of the ILO who arrived in India on the 17th Oct. The AIWC, NFIW, Co-ordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) and a number of other representatives working on different women's projects attended and discussed various problems concerning women. The ILO representative is the Chief of the Promotion of Equality Department which includes the Office for women workers' questions, International Migration for employment and Equality of Rights Branch. Madam Beguin narrated her object of visiting our country as to work for promoting equality among all sections of the people, removing discrimination against women and try to implement the conventions and recommendations. She told the meeting, that a number of countries, do not act, even after ratifying the conventions and the ILO has repeatedly to inform the countries about it. In her talks she mentioned about the question of migrant workers and apartheid.

In the meeting various questions were raised about technical changes and the effects on working women, the non-implementation of the Equal Remuneration Act, the meagre facilities of training for women, women workers in construction and in unorganised industries, and so on. It was conveyed, that the acute poverty of the masses, large number of unemployment among men and women, economic crisis and rising prices etc. are the main reasons, for the present situation in our country. The request was made by the representatives that the ILO should try to intervene whenever possible where working women's problems are involved. Com. Vimal Ranadive attended the meeting on invitation by ILO office.

USA: Get Ready Now

The assertion of women's rights in the USA has added some inelegant words to the English
(on page 18)

Problems Facing Working Women

Madhya Pradesh

Harda Ginning Factory

There are three ginning factories in Harda with a capacity of 64 charkhis to 810 charkhis. There is another ginning factory at Kasha Kairakia, near Harda. These factories operate only eight months in a year and they press about 19,000 cotton loads. Women have been working in these factories for years under the contract system. Unorganised, illiterate, unaware of their rights or labour laws, and ignored by the authorities, they are subjected to all types of exploitation. They have to work from four in the morning till ten in the night with only one break for half an hour at 11.30, for lunch. Wages much below the minimum are given to them but thumb impressions are taken from them for the full amount. A woman contractor (Muqaddamani) gets 10 paise per woman worker and all the women are at her mercy. No compensation is ever given in the event of an accident and hardly ever does any labour inspector visit the factories. Altogether around 4000 women between the ages of 12 to 60 are employed in these factories.

Young women workers are called to the factory at all odd hours and are frequently subjected to indecent behaviour, and molested. One unmarried girl working in a factory was used by the owner and became pregnant. He advised her to have the baby, but when she gave birth to the child he insisted on her killing it. She and her mother, coerced into killing the baby, then buried it in the courtyard of their house. The owner then turned on the women and had them arrested for murder and now a case against them is going on in the court. Widowed women also suffer from the same plight and the situation for unmarried mothers and widows is extremely bad.

Beedi Worker-Women - Gwalior

Most of the beedi workers of Gwalior, both men and women are Muslims. In the two

beedi factories in this town, only men are employed. The women are handed out raw materials to make beedis in their homes. While the men get Rs. 10 per 1000 beedis the women get only Rs. 7.50 per 1000 beedis. At the time of handing out the leaves to the women workers, many stained leaves are given but while taking back the finished beedis the stained leaves are put aside as *chhant* and rejected. Not only is no payment made for the beedis kept aside in *chhant*, the women have sometimes to buy fresh leaves from their own pocket to make up the shortage. Finished beedis are also kept aside as *chhant* for which the women get no payment, although they are actually sold off later at slightly lower prices in the market. An experienced woman worker is able to roll about a thousand beedis per day, but most times to fulfil her quota, she has to take help from another poor woman for cutting the leaves, paying at the rate of 30 paise for a thousand pieces.

No medical benefits are extended to the beedi worker women, ESI is not conceded, and there is no provision for Provident Fund. No loans of any kind are made available, even when they are secured loans. And of course no bonus or gratuity is ever given. Housing conditions are deplorable and a number of women suffer from T.B. Schooling for children is out of the question, rather, 'children as young as six years have to be put to work and many go to the trader's shop to sort out potatoes and onions.

Agricultural Workers and the Rural Poor

Some women work as *Goharwalis* collecting cowdung to make its cakes to be used as fuel. In return they get a paltry one kunda of wheat *monthly* for every five animals. Some women pick cotton in the fields which is a time-consuming job. However payment is made according to the weight of cotton. Here they are cheated, as stones are used in place of weighing measures.

The incidence of rape is much higher in the rural areas. Cases are registered but the accused is invariably set free and the victims of rape are unable to get any work for a long period. They resort to all kinds of odd jobs such as collecting leaves for beedi rolling, but here again a lot of exploitation takes place in the job of making bundles of leaves.

Women working as A.N.M.s in primary health centres also suffer. The village sarpanches want to use them, and if they do not agree, then they are declared as bad characters. Some prefer to commit suicide to escape from the clutches of such men. Village people on the whole have a very scornful attitude towards A.N.M.s., most of whom are around twenty years of age. The young women teachers in village schools prefer to come and go back for duty every day in order to avoid the risk of living alone in the village.

Bhilai

Women and Children Lathi charged and Arrested

The day was Oct 10th. Hundreds of police with guns entered the factory, Cold Pig Yard Blast furnace, Bhilai. They just started lathi-charging men, women and children of construction workers who were sitting peacefully inside demanding wages for their work. 134 altogether were arrested including women and children, 106 were casual workers and children among them, have been sent to Durg Jail.

Who was behind this attack? The Contractor Shyam Sunder Soni and leader of INTUC. The workers were resting after their work was over, some were preparing their meals and were just to go to sleep, when the police entered and started throwing all the belongings of the workers helter skelter. While arresting women and putting them in the van their children were left behind in the yard crying after their mothers.

These 500 workers were fighting for their demands. Out of these 500 about 150 workers belong to INTUC. The wages for the last 2 months were given to INTUC workers but not to those workers who belong to CITU. Not only that they were threatened with dismissals on 12th August. 350 CITU workers were shouting slogans demanding wages inside

factory. This is their fault and for that the police, contractor, management and INTUC got together to attack the workers, women and children. A protest meeting was held on 13th Oct. to demand release of the workers and pay them whatever is due to them.

According to the latest report, all the women and children were released on 15th of Oct. Since then, hundreds of women, with their children are holding a Dharna in front of the office of the steel authorities. The struggle will continue till all the workers get their wages, gatepasses and withdrawal of the notices of discharged workers.

West Bengal

Employment for Women Demanded

IN Malda a huge procession of women was taken out on 2nd Sept. to demand employment for women. Women joined the procession from villages and nearby towns. The procession started at 10 in the morning and ended near Town Hall. Bela Basak the secretary of district committee, Mumtaz Begum vice president spoke in the meeting explaining the object of the All-India Democratic Women's call for the women. Later on 400 women went in a procession to SDO to submit a Charter of Demands.

A Women's Convention at Dum Dum

A women's convention was held on 14th Oct on behalf of Dum Dum Committee of Ganatantrik Mahila Samiti West Bengal. It was inaugurated by Manjuri Roy. A new committee was formed with Com. Shefali Mukherjee as a convenor.

A Peace March in Howrah

500 women went in a procession demanding peace and prohibition of nuclear weapons in Howrah on 5th Oct. The procession was led by Prabha Chatterjee, Jayanti Goswami, Jyosna Dutta, Savitri Mazumdar etc. A number of peace processions were taken out at different places in Howrah Dist. on this day.

Women's meeting at Cooch-Bihar

A meeting of hundreds was held on 18th Sept. to demand peace and against war at Tufanagar where Jaya Pal and Deben Burman

M.P. spoke condemning American imperialism for preparation of war.

Delhi

Women Workers' Procession

Women workers of Anganwaris (a social welfare project of the Ministry of Social Welfare) took out a procession from Turkman Gate to Shastri Bhavan on Saturday to press their demands for rise in wages.

A five-member delegation of the workers handed over a memorandum of demands to an official of the ministry.

SIET Struggle

(Contd. from page 3)

ment is under staffed and only 3 teachers were surplus. In 1981, 35 teachers were declared surplus. But in 1982-June, 123 out of 185 staff have been declared surplus, with the closure of the 1st year under graduate courses. The 3 redeployed teachers were also sent back to SIET by the Govt.

From 26th July, 1982 onwards SIET staff are protesting against the misuse of minority rights and demanding the re-opening of the college, with full strength. In this connection they have collected 15,000 signatures, out of which 10,000 signatures are from Muslim Community. This was given to the Chief Secretary, Tamilnadu. Teachers all over Tamilnadu are striking work in sympathy with SIET. The efforts of teachers to pressurise Govt. are on. Will the teachers be given justice? Will the Govt. intervene and punish the management?

Rajpura Women

(Contd. from page 8)

help to the victimised workers. The Democratic Women's Association of Patiala District is also actively involved in this struggle of workers. Com. Ashadi, the President of the Patiala District Committee of A.I.D.W.A. is actively participating and helping the women workers to fight against the atrocities of the police and goondas of the management. Com. Susheela Gopalan, the General Secretary of AIDWA and Com. Vimal Ranadive, Secretary of Co-ordination Committee addressed the workers on the 9th of October supporting their demands and condemning the police for their rude behaviour towards women workers.

USA: Get ready now

(Contd. from page 15)

language—chairperson, to name one. But there is no mistaking the fervour of those who promote the cause. An impressive gathering of women marched through the streets of Manhattan the other evening demanding action against harassment, particularly rape. New York has a telephone "rape hotline".

Despite the victories won by women in recent years in the United States, it is still a man's world. The biggest setback for women activists came last June with the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment—a defeat annual convention of the largest women's rights organisation, the National Organisation for Women (NOW).

NOW elected 43-year-old Judy Goldsmith, a former professor of English literature, its new president, and among the resolutions passed by the convention were campaigns for outlawing sex discrimination in insurance, against a Federal amendment that would restrict abortions and for eradicating inequitable treatment of lesbians.

Of greater import, however, was NOW's resolve to take to the most effective political arena, the electoral field. The outgoing president, Eleanor Smeal, made no bones about the organisation's thrust against Republicans, who defeated the Equal Rights Amendment. Thus NOW is supporting Democratic men candidates against Republican women opponents in some constituencies in the elections to be held in the USA in November to the US Congress.

NOW's target is to have one million members before the 1984 Presidential election and the organisation has already formed political committees for Federal and State elections, with a chest of more than two million dollars.

This will make politicians sit up and take notice indeed, judging by some claims, it is already happening. Denise Fuge, President of NOW, New York City was quoted as saying: "NOW women have been used to work in campaigns before, but we were like little brown field mice, nobody knew we were there, now candidates are coming to us".

AIDWA Meet at Calcutta

THE executive meeting of AIDWA was held at Calcutta with Com. Manju Gupta presiding. Com. Susheela Gopalan, the General Secretary, presented the report of the period between the last meeting held in April 1982 and this meeting. The following comrades were present from the States: Ahilya Rangnekar and Subhasini Ali (Maharashtra) Tushita Dahutia, Sukumali Devbarman, Geeta Paul (Assam) Ila Bhattacharya. Rama Das (Tripura) Mythily Shivraman, Kunjitham Bharati Mohan from Tamilnadu, Laxmi Sahagal (U.P.), M. Swarajyam and M. Udayam (Andhra), Damyanti Parikh and Niruben Pald (Gujrat) Sudha Bindu Mitra and Damyanti Saha (Bihar), Bonari Vishwas Vibha Ghosh, Shyamali Gupta, Madhuri Dasgupta, Shipra Chakrabarti and Kanak Mukherjee (West Bengal) and Vimala Ranadive. The meeting was held at yuv kendra Sealdha.

Before the meeting started, garlands were put by all assembled on the photo of Com. Pankaj Acharya who died a few days back. A resolution was passed on Com. Pankaj and two minutes silence observed. In the report submitted by the General Secretary main points were the danger of war and the brutal aggression on Lebanon by Israil supported by USA; the heroic resistance given by PLO, the massacre of women and children in Lebanon; the aggravation of economic crises and its effects on the Indian people, specially on women and children, the repressive measures like Bihar Press Bill, Hospital and Education Bill curtailing the rights of the people, and increasing attacks on women. She said in the first week of July, there were 11 dowry deaths in Delhi itself and so-called suicides by young women were around 15 to 16 thousands a year, indicates the seriousness of the situation. She also reported the trafficking in women and also the adoption of laws being used to traffic in children. She appealed that women have to fight not only for the specific demands of women but also the policies of the Congress rulers which pauperise the major sections of our people.

Comrades from states discussed the report and suggested a few amendments. From the

reports from the states it was found a number of activities have taken place on the question of Women's Employment Day and Children's Day. From the Central Office too a few activities like campaign on dowry, sex determination tests and others took place with joint efforts of various women's and Trade Union organisations. Our work in Parliamentary Committees like Dowry Bill was very effective and we could intervene effectively on the issues concerning dowry, property rights, common civil code etc. The work of the criminal law committee also is going to finish its work and their suggestions also would come soon to women's organisations.

During discussions on the report some suggestions were made by comrades. Com. Niruben Pald suggested that the conditions of the IMF loan and World Bank resulting in price hike in Municipal rates should also be mentioned in the report. She also suggested a call should be given by AIDWA to help in the natural calamities. Mythily Shivraman suggested that the role of women in PLO's resistance should be covered in the report. She also said that obscenity in films is increasing in southern films and the producers are fighting censors to increase sex violence. Not only that, but the director of the regional Censor Board was transferred on the alleged offence of being too strict. Com. Swarajyam suggested classes for women and also the grant for orphanage should be utilised by our organisations. After discussion in detail, the report was adopted. The following important resolutions among others were moved and passed with a few amendments. War Danger and Peace, Bihar Press Bill, Atrocities on women, on adopted children and its misuse for commercial purposes etc.

There was a discussion on Marriage Amendments Act among the comrades. It was doubtful whether in a male-dominated society any liberalisation of divorce law would help women. It is necessary to have a common civil code for all. It was decided that a note prepared by Com. Vibha Ghosh and Manju Gupta be sent to all states for discussion for their suggestions.

The following programme for the states branches of AIDWA was accepted after discussion and adopted unanimously.

1. Anti War Campaign
2. Anti Price Rise Campaign
3. Atrocities on Women
4. Bihar Press Bill
5. Child Abuse
6. Common Civil Code
7. Adult literacy classes

A public meeting was held on 12th Sep. '82 presided over by Com. Manju Gupta where Coms. Shusheela Gopalan, Ahilya Rangnekar, Ila Bhattacharya, Kanak Mukherjee, Shymali-Gupta and others spoke. The meeting ended with a drama and songs by IPTA.

Working Women Welfare Bill

(Contd. from 1st cover)

ditions for the women employees, reservation of beds in the hospitals, proper and adequate maternity facilities, equality for married and unmarried women employees in the employment as well as in service conditions and wages etc.

The Bill further seeks to provide for the administration of the Fund by advisory committees consisting of equal number of representatives from the Government, the employers and the trade unions who shall preferably be women. The Committees shall be formed from city level to state level and there shall be a Central Advisory Committee at all India level, and the appropriate Government may appoint as many officers as it may deem necessary for proper enforcement of these provisions.

The problems faced by Working Women have been raised many times in many forums and unless an Act is passed by Parliament, the Working Women can not force the employers and Government to solve their problems. The

Com. Sipra Bhowmik

Com. Sipra Bhowmik, working committee member of All India Democratic Women's Association died at Calcutta on September 16. It was a premature death caused by pulmonary edema which suddenly developed due to anasthetic reaction after her tonsil operation. Com. Shipra was also the Joint Secretary of the W. Bengal Unit of AIDWA and a member of the Calcutta District Committee of CPI(M). Starting from the students' movement she came in the fore-front of the women's democratic movement in W. Bengal. She became a member of CPI(M) and later on by dint of her sincerity and devotion she became a member of the Calcutta District Committee of the party. She was arrested in 1965 under the Defence of India Rules and kept in jail custody for four months without trial. She passed M.A. in 1971 and the same year was married to Com. Shyamal Chakravarty, a member of the State Committee of CPI(M). She has left behind a five year old daughter, Ushasi. The All India Democratic Women's Association has expressed condolence at her untimely death. Vimala Ranadive, Secretary, All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women visited her residence on September 19 to pay homage. Ahilya Rangnekar and Subashini from the Maharashtra Unit of AIDWA, Brinda Karat from Delhi Unit, Mridula Ghosh from Bihar Unit and many other organisation sent messages of condolence.

Paying rich tributes to Com. Sipra Bhowmik in a condolence meeting organised by the W. Bengal Unit of AIDWA at Calcutta on September 25, Com. Jyoti Basu, Chief Minister of W. Bengal urged upon the women workers to emulate the hard and sincere work done by Com. Sipra Bhowmik and build up cadres like her. Failing this the women's democratic movement will become weak. Among others who spoke was Com. Kanak Mukherjee, M.P.

Working Women should struggle hard for enactment of such an Act. Let the Working Women all over the country raise their voices in support of the Bill.