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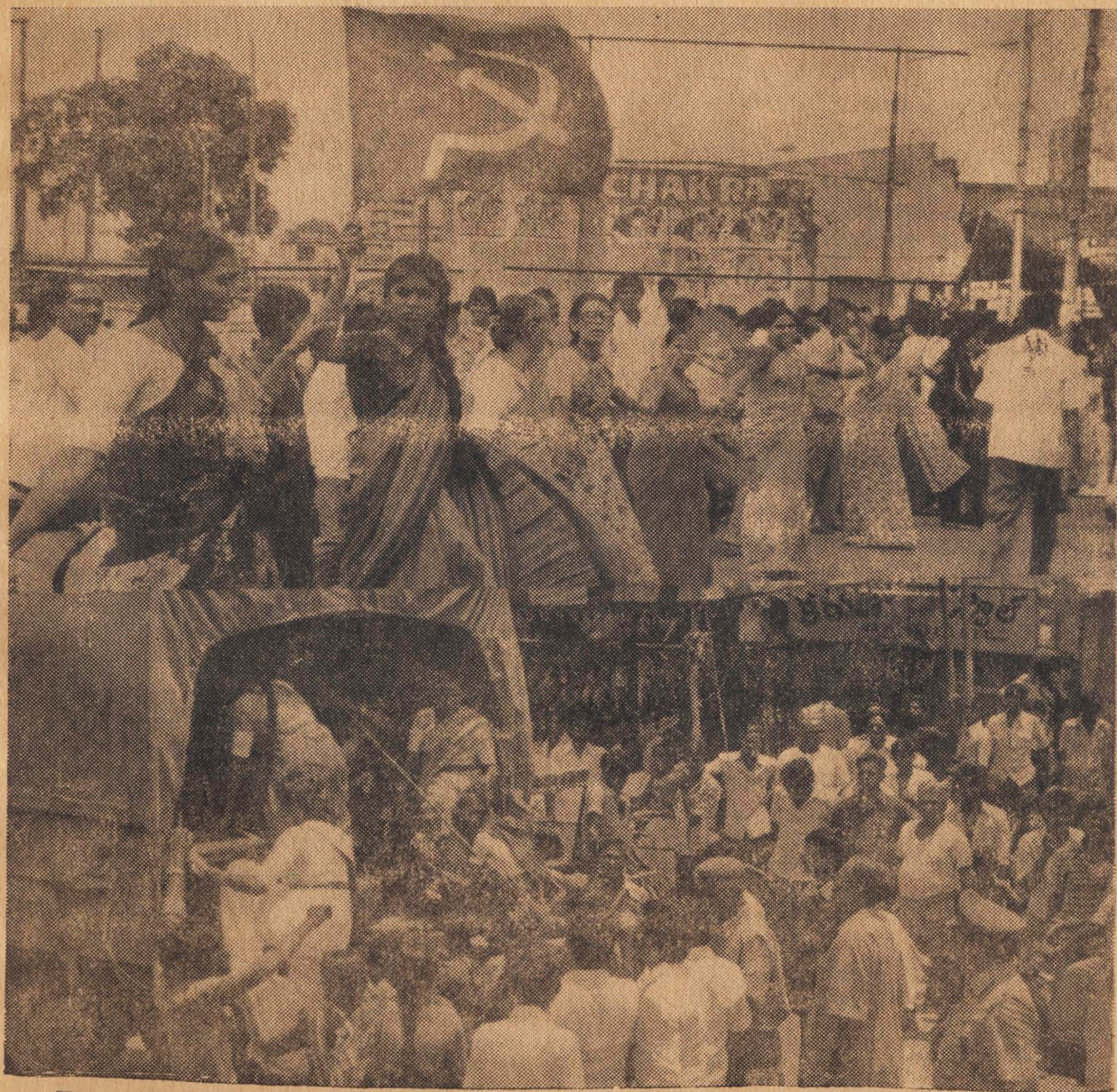
THE WORKING WOMAN



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Women in Andhra Pradesh Courting Arrest, protesting Against dismissal of NTR Ministry

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"Rasta Roko" by Women In Andhra

THE "Rasta Roko" programme was launched on the 1st of Sept. as a part of the agitation programme launched by the all-Party Action Committee of Telugu Desam (NTR) and its allies demanding reinstallation of Mr. N.T. Rama Rao as the Chief Minister. The women belonging to all parties observed it as a "Mahila day". More than 700 women belonging to CPM, CPI, Janata Party, BJP, and Telugu Desam demonstrated outside the General Post office at Abid Road and courted arrests.

The demonstrators today did not split themselves in batches, but they were more effective than their male counterparts who demonstrated yesterday. Heavy peak hour traffic from Bashirbag, Manpalley, Koti Majamjahi Market areas were jammed up for nearly two hours at the busy junction at Abid Road as the women refused to move away.

Finally a strong contingent of police women arrived and took into custody about 250 of the more spirited women demonstrators.

GRAND VICTORY FOR THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE

The sustained movement of the Andhra people and people all over India including women compelled the authoritarian forces to dismiss the Benami Bhaskar Rao Government of Andhra Pradesh and restoring a Government elected by the people and thus the democratic people in our country secured a big victory by inflicting an ignominious defeat on the Congress Party.

Tradition Of Militant Struggle Of Women In Coir Industry

V. MEERA

Women In The 1938 General Strike

IT has to be remembered that the major part of the present Kerala state was at the time under princely rule. Thus, while movements elsewhere in British India could be directed simply against the colonial regime, in Kerala there was an added dimension—the authority of the princely state.

The general strike by the coir workers in Alleppey in October 1938 marked the radicalisation of the working class movement. Until then the trade union movement was focussed on demands against wage cuts, fines and retrenchment. Occassionly, the specific need of women workers for maternity benefits had also been included. But there were no organised struggles of women workers. The radicalisation of the working class during the 1938 general strike was evident if we look at the wide-ranging nature of the strike demands. In addition to an end to wage cuts, fines and retrenchments, the workers demanded payment in cash, a minimum wage of Rs. 30 a month, unemployment allowance, educational facilities for themselves, free education up to class 10 for their children, medical aid and recognition of their union. Maternity benefit was included as a special demand of women workers. This strike which lasted four weeks, brought the Alleppey working class into a pre-eminent position in the political movement against the autocratic rule of the Maharaja and his Dewan in Travancore.

It was during the period of repression that women and children played an important role. Letters of the strike committees, circulars,

statements were distributed through women and children and they formed the base of a crucial communication network. During the third week of the strike, the picketing of factory gates began. The pickets were brutally attacked. Women workers "cried aloud and took the vow that they would not enter the factory until the strike ended". The strike ended when certain demands were conceded. The immediate political gain of the workers was the right to organise and bargain.

It was the large-scale participation of women in this struggle that made the Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union (TCFWU) realise the need to organise women through their own forums. The forms of organisation thrown up by this strike had their impact on women. The activities of the factory committees politicised women within the factory while the ward committees based in the residential areas of workers, became the instruments of revolutionary propaganda and gave a political direction to their lives outside the factories. The growth of the working class women's movement in the coir industry in the early 1940's is linked with the conscious efforts made by the Communist unit leading the TCFWU to develop women activists and cadres at the trade union and political level.

Some Struggles of The 1940's

A leading women activist emerged during the struggle by women workers in 1941 at the Kazhke Darragh Smail company for 'Onam' festival advance. She was a 13-year old girl, K Meenakshi, involved in ratt spinning at this factory. The TCFWU activists reached the

factory gates to guide this struggle. The women refused to leave the factory without Onam advance. It was well after midnight that the demands of the women workers were accepted. Soon after this successful struggle the TCFWU contacted Meenakshi and she became its active member. After this struggle she was often harassed by her employers who attempted to find fault with her work. To this she would retort, "Why find fault with my work, come straight to the point. However, Meenakshi soon became a full-time activist of the TCFWU on Rs. 4⁰ per month.

Soon after, a study camp was held in Alleppey. Apart from discussions on the political situation, the emphasis was on organisation, trade union movement, office functioning. It was at this camp that the decision was taken to divide the areas of organisational work by women activists. Earlier, a larger study camp was held at Kottayam and 208 women had taken part in it. It was in 1941 that the women's factory committees began to be organised. The issues concerning women were arbitrary dismissal from work, wage cut, maternity benefit and creche facilities, harassment by the moopans (contractors)

Among the early struggles conducted by women were those on the issue of maternity benefit. In Darragh Smail Company, the employer argued that women became pregnant at home and so the management was not responsible for any payment. The women got organised under Meenakshi's leadership and told the employer that they did not work to please the management but to give themselves and their children a dignified life. Their demands were conceded. *During 1944-45 about 288 cases of maternity benefits were taken up by the TCFWU and all were paid Rs. 0.49 per day for two months.*

Women Workers and Class Struggles

In 1942, struggles were conducted by women

workers on the issue of dismissal of workers in Goodacre Company, and against the abusive language used by the moopans. In the former struggle women shouted slogans though a police van was brought to intimidate them, and in the latter struggle women workers decided to use a novel method—they filled their small vetla (betel) boxes with stones and threw stones at the moopans when they abused any women. The practice of such abuse was reduced considerably after this.

Factory Committees and Other Organisations

In 1943, the issue of equal wages was taken up in a factory. Struggles conducted within the factories led to the formation of women's factory committees. The factory committees consisted of representatives of each department of the factory—or representatives of the entire work process-headed by a convener elected from the committee. The factory committees negotiated disputes with the departmental superintendents and if that failed, directly with the management. These committees took over the functions which were earlier being performed by the caste organisations. So, now apart from the issues concerning their work, the women's factory committees took up the problems of wife-beating, desertion, and husband's preventing wives' participation in political activities.

During 1943-45, three conferences of women workers were held along with the annual conference of the TCFWU. The reports of these conferences were destroyed during police raids on the union office in 1946. The varied roles that women activists performed is evident from the following two incidents. Preceding the Punnapra-Vayalar armed actions, the state had let loose its repression on the Communists and union activists. Several office-bearers of the union had to go underground. For a brief period K. Meenakshi was the acting general

secretary of the TCFWU. Once, while she was preparing to circulate secret letters to activists who were underground, the police suddenly arrived at the union office. She quietly rolled her long black hair into a bun and hid the letters. The police officer allowed her to go to the toilet where she promptly flushed the letters down the latrine !

There was a week-long struggle outside a factory against the retrenchment of women workers. The women workers started picketing at the gates. The demands included restoration of their jobs, leave with pay, maternity benefit and bonus. Meenakshi organised women into batches of 15 each. When one batch of women workers was arrested, another batch would appear at the gate. The women were released and also taken back to work.

Another development linked with the general growth of mass organisations in the 1940's was the building up of a broad-based women's organisation. It was women activists from the coir factories who organised women outside on the basis of general demands of workers, such as resistance to wage cuts and arbitrary dismissals, and the special demands of women for maternity benefits, against discrimination in jobs and in educational institutions and against male domination. The first taluk level demonstration of women in 1943 raised these demands. The demonstrators faced hostile responses from men in particular and comments were made such as "All of you men better go home and cook your own food, the women are now taking to demonstrations".

Another demonstration of women in 1943 was attacked by a goonda force organised by the coir employers. This incident had a lightening impact on women and they participated in struggle with more vigour. The large scale and militant participation of women, and women coir workers in particular, in this struggle could be explained by the special organisation of women since the early 1940's. Women

activists were arrested, tortured, raped by the military and police during house-to-house raids. Many activists of the women's organisation and the union went underground. Women activists from the coir factories also went to other sections of women workers-agricultural workers, spice workers, etc and helped to draw out women activists from them to bring them into the general working class movement. In 1948, two women and trade union activists from the women's factory committee, P. K. Mary and P. J. Aleamma, along with two male colleagues, entered the newly built Legislative Assembly building, raised protest slogans, against Dewan's rule and his draft constitution modelled on the United States, and demanded adult franchise and responsible government. The women were arrested.

Following the armed struggle in Punnappara Vayalar in 1946 there was a ban on mass organisations, including the Mahila Sangham and the trade unions, and affected the struggles of all workers. From the 1950's onwards also began the move by the factory owners to decentralise production into smaller units to contain the growing militancy of the workers. These structural changes dispersed the women workers in particular. Women's occupations were relegated to those of helpers, among whom self-employment is of course the highest.

The Emerging Issues and Conclusions

This story of the struggles of women coir workers destroys many myths. The widely prevalent idea of women's passivity in the face of oppressive situations or their reluctance to participate in collective protests or trade union activities cannot be maintained in the face of the militant struggles of these women.

**TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE
NEXT ISSUE**

Worst Exploitation in Tobacco Industry in Gujarat

By NIRU PATEL, GUJARAT

KHEDA district of Gujarat is considered as the green garden of Gujarat. It is tobacco producing area. The richness of Kheda district is due to tobacco industry. Nearly 50,000 workers are engaged in this industry, out of which 40,000 are women.

Working Condition

The place where processing of tobacco is done is called Khate in Gujarat. This Khate is always full of tobacco dust. It seems there is always fog of tobacco. This tobacco dust goes in the lungs of workers, and they fall easy pray to T.B., Cancer and asthma. Spitting is prohibited in this Khate, so anyhow they have to swallow it, and this results in vomiting. Sometimes it causes miscarriage to pregnant women. Ordinary people cannot go near this Khate, because of its terrible smell.

The workers work for 9 to 10 hours, and no overtime is paid. There is no paid holiday, no bonus, no provident scheme. Government has fixed Rs. 14/40 as the minimum wage, but there is no application of the law. Workers are getting only Rs. 5/- per day. Government machinery of Factory inspector office and labour office is under the influence of these tobacco masters. And hence no Act ever applied in this industry. Every Khate has minimum 50 workers, but all are not enrolled on the register.

Novel exploitation of women

Women are working in night shift also. In night shift they are morally exploited. Unmarried girls are forced to keep illegal relations with masters. Due to poverty and no alternative employment, women are helpless.

Huge Profit

There are nearly 900 Khates, all over district, mainly in villages. Production cost per package is nearly Rs. 400/- and this package is sold at Rs. 2000/- or Rs. 2500/-. What a huge profit, and what a terrible exploitation of the workers. Richness of these tobacco masters are due to the extreme exploitation of workers, specially women workers.

Mechanisation

But just now these tobacco masters are thinking to mechanise this process, on the line of Karnataka and Andhra. New machines are already fixed in two villages, and more new mechanised machines will be working in few months. Because of huge profits, these tobacco masters, do not need any government help, loan or subsidy. If then new machineries will be fixed, as in case of Karnataka, the strength of 50,000 workers will be reduced to nearly 9000 workers. Women will be the first victims of this mechanisation. Sword of unemployment is hanging on their heads.

Protest to Minister

Niruben Patel, Secretary of Janwadi Mahila Sangh, Gujarat Committee, in a deputation to the Minister of Industry, Gujarat State Mr. Sanat Mehta, put forward the following demands:

1. Stop night shift for women.
2. Apply all labour laws.
3. Strict application on minimum wages Act.
4. Protection for the health of workers.
5. Protection against retrenchment due to mechanisation.

Women In Madras Protest

ABOUT 100 women held a spirited demonstration on 6-9-84 lasting for 2 hours in protest against personal vilification and slanders to which Syhamali Gupta, a prominent leader of the All India Democratic Women's Association has been subjected to by the Illustrated Weekly of India. The demonstration took place in front of the office where a meeting was held and the following resolution was passed.

"This is to register our strong protest and sense of indignation at the meanest kind of personal vilification and slanders to which Syamali Gupta, a prominent leader of the All India Democratic Women's Association, who has been in the forefront of the struggle for women's liberation and democratic rights, has been subjected to by the Illustrated Weekly of India, in an article titled The Gang of Six in its August 4th issue.

We protest the filthy exercise in mud-slinging, and maligning, bordering on yellow journalism, indulged in by the writer of the article and its publication in the Weekly. By choosing as its target for levelling blatantly false accusations, women social activists of high standing and calibre like Shyamali Gupta, the Weekly has declared that it is on the side of those forces of reaction opposed to women rising to positions of prominence.

We demand that an apology for the obscene comments made about Shyamali Gupta, be printed in the Weekly's next issue and urge that at least in future, the Weekly is restrained from colluding with slanders and is made to adhere to the norms of journalism of the responsible and decent sort. We also demand that this letter of protest be published in the weekly".

Protest Against The Bankers Association

MYTHILY Sivraman, Convenor, Working Women's Co-ordination Committee, Tamilnadu has written a letter to The Editor of Financial Express on 23-8-84 condemning the moves of Bankers Association of reducing the Maternity leave of women. Following is the gist of the letter.

The news item of an agreement reached between the Bank managements and two unions to cut the maternity leave facility of women employees, reported in your paper (10/8/84) is truly shocking. Equally incredible is the report that the leadership of the unions, having a substantial number of women members, has agreed to a reduction a 50% cut—in an existing facility as basic and essential as maternity leave. The proposed move deserves to be condemned unequivocally.

It is relevant to point out here that while a good deal is said and heard about the 'high' wages and service conditions of bank employees, the balance of a rudimentary facility like provision of creches in banks, is little known. This, despite the increasing recruitment of women in banks, a trend referred to in the news report.

This retrograde move cannot be justified on the pretext of the need for population control. Such a punitive approach to birth control—lacking in an appreciation of the complexities involved in the issue—and treating women employees as the chief culprits, cannot be supported by any right thinking person.

At a time when there is rising consciousness about the problems of working women and a

growing belief that these should be treated as social concerns and not as private responsibilities of concerned individuals, it is to be hoped that the unions will not yield to the pressure of the managements and that the blatantly anti-women proposal will be met with stiff resistance by the women employees forcing the former to revoke it.

Muslim Women's Protest Against Polygamy

IT was an unusual sight to watch Muslim women clad in their traditional burquas, carrying effigies and demonstrating outside the house of Yunus, a resident of Azad Market, to protest against his "outrageous" action in divorcing his third wife who could not meet her in-laws dowry demands.

Out on the street, the group of Muslim women along with their sisters from other communities were voicing for the first time their concern against the Muslim personal law which enabled the men to deny the women status befitting the fair sex. A large number of people including the passersby saw in the demonstration and burning of the effigies of Yunus and his parents a new awakening among the women of the community.

The women, marched through the congested streets of the locality carrying placards and banners with anti-dowry slogans written on them.

According to a pamphlet issued, Shahana was married to Yunus on October 10, 1982. This was his third marriage.

The pamphlet, distributed by the demonstrators, alleged that she was made to work the whole day and in the end used to be 'kicked'. Whenever she protested, she was silenced with threats that she would be divorced.

In a state of illness, she went to stay with her mother and delivered a child on July 13,

1983. The insults, threats and abuses continued.

It was further alleged in the pamphlet that as and when Shahana's parents approached the in-laws for the return of their daughter to her houses the mother-in-law countered them with threat of divorce. Ultimately, a letter was sent to Shahana on August 7, conveying that she had been divorced.

Kalyani a welfare Organisation in the evening organised a public meeting at Darya Ganj where the problem was discussed. A number of leading members of the Muslim community, legal experts and sociologists participated.

Women In Gwalior Submit Memorandum

THERE were a number of activities during last 3-4 months by Gwalior, JMS. In the absence of the Tube lights in the streets it was difficult to walk in the streets specially for women. In this connection about 150 women went in demonstrations to give a memorandum to the Mayor, on 28th April '84, Again in the month of June, a week was observed to demand the clearance of Vala Swaru Rekha Dam. For this hundreds of signatures were collected and submitted to Municipal Corporation. Com. Jaswinder Singh the president of Gwalior SFI was beaten by the police, without any provocation. In protest against the beating a demonstration of about 100 women went to the Inder Gunj police station on 7th August to demand the resignation of the constable with the result the constable was immediately transferred. The election of the local committees are going on so that new militant women could come on the committee to take up more responsibilities of the JMS.

'SEWA' Works For Unorganised Women

THE self-employed Women's Association has recently published their Annual report in Ahmedabad (1983) a copy of which is sent to us, on their activities, the struggles they launched for their demands and the weaknesses found while working. The "SEWA" was born in 1972 as a women's wing of Textile Labour Association Ahmedabad and functioned within it till 1981. "Gandhian thinking is the source of inspiration for "SEWA", the report states. In spite of that the 'Sewa' was thrown out from their parent body TLA with their leader Smt. Ila Bhatt due to some reasons, one of which was according to the sources the feudal outlook of the bosses of TLA. The readers of the Voice of the Working Women will remember that AICCWW took up the issue of expulsion of Smt. Ila Bhatt by holding a public meeting with women's and other trade union organisations, to condemn the TLA leadership for throwing the SEWA office out of the TLA and expelling the women's leader and organiser of SEWA. We are giving a brief summary of the report.

"Sewa members being self employed, and not covered by protective legislations, they do not find a specific employer to fight against. They have to struggle mainly against contractors, middlemen, rules regulations and policies of the Govt., and often certain social values. Sometimes the struggle is on the trade union style, sometimes of sheer defence,"

Bidi Workers

"This year the membership of Bidi workers was 400. Their problem is that they do not receive minimum wages, there is a high rate of rejects, for example about 100 to 400 rejects out of 1000 bidis. Another problem is that their work is given via contractors by the

employer. The recent development is that the employers have been adopting the sale purchase system. These ways, the principal employers get away from the existing legal obligations. "This year, the Ahmedabad and Novasari Bidi workers got an increase of Rs. 2 in their wages. However, still this is below the minimum wages as per law. "After mentioning the number of scholarships for their children and other social benefits the report further states, "A demonstration was staged in Patna. This was a protest against the closure of a Bidi factory. A production unit for 10 victimised workers was temporarily started until they were reinstated... An All India Convention of Bidi workers was called at Ahmadabad where 800 women had participated, addressed by the Labour Minister Mr. Sanat Meheta. The outcome of it was the Gujarat Govt's decision to set up the co-operatives.

"*Waste Paper Pickers* work from early morning picking papers from the streets and selling the stuff at a throw away price to a local dealer. This is how 470 women are engaged in collecting scrap. 200 women have formed their co-operatives called 'Sujata'...34 women who were collecting waste paper from the textile mills lost their work because of the intervention of the Textile Labour Association, A protest was made against TLA... women feel frustrated often, fighting constantly with the vested interests in this business...waste picking women are all Harijans...

"**HANDCART PULLERS** and **HEAD LOADERS** are casual labourers in the whole sale commodity market. They are still casual inspite of working for 2 or 3 generations with the same firms. The wages of the women workers in the city cloth market are very low. Their work is uncertain. They are dependent

on the mercy of the contractors. The Gujarat Govt. has set up a board of Unprotected Labour of the city cloth market. 88 women have registered their names with the Board but so far no benefit has reached them. The workers are very much agitated against the inactivity of the Board.

"Garment Workers stitch for the garment merchants. They work on piece rates and are paid very low. The minimum wages for Garment workers are yet not fixed by the Government. The garment workers in Shahapur headed a strike, with a small success. The petty coat stitchers of Khokra Mechmedabad participated in a workers' Education class which resulted into an agitation against the employer demanding wage-rise. They were successful in getting 80% rise in their wages. The struggle for wage rise of the quilt makers is still on... The quilt makers and garment workers successfully opposed the employers using to the poor women's name in getting exemption from sales tax.

"The life of *fire wood pickers* is very hard. 1300 fire wood pickers have been organised in SEWA. They have to climb up and walk deep into the forest on the mountain to collect one head load of fire wood and sell it at Rs 6 or 7 to the timber merchant...

"Because of mass production of screen printers, hand block printers, all women are being displaced from their work...

"As there is hardly any legal protection for the self employed, they have to create their own body to survive against exploitation of the outside forces of the vested interests and some time anti-poor policies of the Government."

After mentioning the number of co-opera-

tives and child labour centres, the report further takes up the question of Rural wing demanding minimum wages for the agricultural workers. It was found "the root cause of exploitation is lack of bargaining power of the workers due to high rate of unemployment in the area"...The SEWA conduct 15 crechse where about 800 children are looked after for day care while mothers are at work.

The Annual General Body meeting of SEWA attended by 2200 members. a resolution was passed on their demands, expressing concern on the problems of the unorganised labour who have to work "under tough conditions of lack of work place, lack of market, insecurity and inequality of returns of our labour"... "There is no fixed time of our work. In spite of hard labour of ten hours, our wage earnings are ridiculously low. We are not sure whether we get work for tomorrow or not. We have to house our homes in the city slums synonymous to hell...though our contribution to the economic prosperity of the nation and our status is enormous, our children remain half starved. Indebtedness has become an inseparable part of our life. Looking to the rising prices, we doubt whether we will be ever relieved from indebtedness in our life time... In cities, it has become extremely difficult for our young daughters to retain their self-dignity. Abortion and mortality have become most common..."

Under such circumstances, the meeting demanded suitable legislations to provide protection against exploitation. The SEWA requested the Govt. to appoint a commission for self-employed.

Implement The Minimum Wage as Notified By the Government

Left Front Government's Unprecedented Success in the Expansion of Education and Healthy Cultural Activities

Education : The achievements of the Left Front Government in the field of education are unprecedented indeed. Recognising the priority for universal education the budget provision for education this year has been boosted upto the highest ever amount of Rs. 459 crores as against Rs. 129 crores in 1976-77. Anarchy in the academic world has been removed and active steps have been taken to democratise the academic atmosphere. Free education upto class XII has been introduced and text books are being distributed free of cost among students upto class V. Free distribution of tiffin among 31 lakhs of children is going on in full swing. As a result of the establishment of 8000 new primary and 2000 secondary schools, the number of students at the primary level has increased by 15 lakhs and by 18 lakhs in the secondary stage. New syllabuses and subjects at the degrees and post-graduate levels are going to be introduced. Arrangements for the functioning of Vidyasagar University Midnapur and the two Government colleges at Haldia and Salt Lake have been almost completed and 23 colleges have already been set up in backward areas.

Rabindra Vidyasagar and Bankim awards are being given every year for remarkable contributions to literature. Benefits at par with the staff of secondary schools are being extended to those of Madrasa. The number of Non Formal Education Centres has gone up to 16,000. The financial grants for the libraries in the State have increased to Rs. 4.50 crores and the number of libraries has increased from 753 to 2411.

The Government has accepted full financial responsibilities for regular payment of salaries in the revised scales to the teachers and the non-teaching staff of educational institutions.

Culture : Stemming the tide of degenerate culture, the present Government have put in best efforts for the promotion and propagation of healthy life-centric culture. Publication grants to authors, patronisation of group theatres and various cultural organisations, production of films under the direction of established and young film makers the building of two theatre halls, the colour film laboratory and the art film complex under construction in Calcutta speak for the Left Front Governments genuine interest in the promotion of cultural activities.

Youth : The efforts of the left front Government despite their limited resources for promotion of youth welfare are commendable. Youth offices have been set up in 331 blocks and 4000 youths have benefited from different employment programmes involving Government investment of Rs. 4.80 crores. Vocational training was imparted to 17,000 youths belonging to scheduled castes and tribes. Another achievement of the Left Front Government is the establishment of a commodious well-equipped state Youth Centre in Calcutta.

No: 5789—ICA
Government Of West Bengal

NSA—For Whose Security ?

**Kanak Mukharjee M.P. Indicts Govt. in Parliament
On 22.8.84. The Text of the speech is given below**

MR. Vice-Chairman, I rise to oppose the Disapproval Motion. We from our party had always opposed any kind of preventive detention without trial. It is against the democratic rights of the people and against the main spirit of our Constitution. The fundamental rights given to us by the Constitution are taken away by this autocratic, authoritarian Govt. on some plea or other. The NSA is already repressive and draconian in character, and you want to make it more stringent by the two proposed amendments. What are the main things in the proposed amendment Bill? The first is to prevent the invalidation of detention if one of the grounds given for detention is found to be infirm, as it has already been explained by the honourable Minister himself. Hitherto the court could invalidate such detention. Secondly, the expiry or revocation of the detention order shall not bar another detention order against the same person. That is, you want to provide for such frequent or continuous detention of a person without any trial. Although you say that these are necessary for curbing the terrorist and separatist activities or anti-social activities, etc. especially in Punjab, we know for certain that these are mainly intended for suppressing the political opponents, all democratic movements, all sections of the toiling masses, the workers, the peasants, employees, students, women, youth, etc. This is our experience. These draconian laws are used mostly against the political opponents. What is the history of the application of laws like the P.D. Act, the MISA, etc.? You misused them on the political opponents. It is a constitutional weapon in your hands to suppress and oppress the democratic people. These

tyrannical laws are meant for suppressing civil liberties and political freedom of the people. What is the real problem now? The real problem is that the Congress-I Govt. is not able to solve the problems of the people. Therefore, they want to rule by special emergency powers. It is due to the political and economic policies of the Central Govt. that all round crises are being precipitated—there is price rise, inflation, unemployment, moral degeneration. All sorts of crises are being precipitated involving men, women, all sections of the people. This Govt. is in league with all sorts of anti-social, communal, disruptive and reactionary forces. They are encouraging even divisive forces to suppress the democratic people. The examples are, Tripura, Assam and Punjab.

This Govt. is creating disunity among the people. The glaring example are Andhra Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Karnataka. They are doing it for their own partisan interests. This Govt. is not doing anything against the foreign imperialist forces acting here, trying to destabilise our country aided by the American imperialists. When they are destabilising this country and precipitating all sorts of crises, this Govt. wants to apply NSA, MISA and ESMA against the people. West Bengal Govt. did not apply MISA and NSA on the people, but the law and order situation there is far, far better than at least in any Congress(I) Govt. in the states. This shows that this Govt. cannot rule with the normal law. They always need some such preventive detention law or emergency law except when in 1969 having lost the majority the Govt. did not extend the P.D. Act and the Janata Govt. also did not renew it. Otherwise since 1950 the P.D. Act conti-

nued in one form or another. I know from my own experience in 1960 what happened when I was put behind the bars along with my colleagues some of whom were school girls, mothers and sisters. All were detained without trial for months in the Presidency and other jails in West Bengal and other States. Can I forget the 27th April, 1949 when the Mahila Samity held a demonstration supporting the cause of the detenus in the Presidency and Dum Dum Jails in West Bengal? They were shot dead by the then Congress(I) Govt. and thus they became martyrs. Can we forget the names of Latika, Pratima, Amiya and Geetha who became martyrs to the P.D. Act at that time?

You will be astonished to know what sorts of charge-sheets were given at that time? The same mockery of charge-sheets and detention is going to take place again. One astonishing example of this I can give you. I had a co-prisoner who was then only a school girl, though now she is an Hon'ble Minister of the Left Front Govt. When I was myself given the charge-sheet for murder, arson, this and that, you will be astonished to know what charge-sheet was given to this girl? She was given the charge-sheet for murder, robbery, arson and rape also. She was a school girl then and now she is an Hon'ble Minister of West Bengal.

Bombay women Lathicharged

Thousands of people belonging to all Left Parties, including CPI (M), CPI, Janata, Congress (S), Peasants and Workers Party, Republican Party (Gawai and Khobragade) and Maharashtra Muslim League, including large sections of women went in a huge procession from Grant Road station on 19th August '84 in protest against the dismissal of the N. T. Rama Rao Ministry in Andhra Pradesh.

The Trade Unions belonging to Dr. Samant and B. J. P. also joined in. Despite the peaceful demonstration, the police lathicharged severely beating the women leaders who were in front. Ahilya Rangnekar (CPI M), Mrunal Gore (Janata), Tara Reddy (CPI) were all injured seriously. Kalpana Karhade, one of the

The charge-sheets were printed and kept at the disposal of the jail authorities. On a fine morning they used to distribute them to anyone, just like that.

The intention of these amendments is to suppress the people's democratic movements in the country. But the world has advanced far in civil liberties and human rights since 1950. The International Commission of Jurists has said that "the use of the Preventive Detention Act in peacetime is inconsistent with the normal rule of law". But then we are always under some sorts of emergency or preventive detention law. Why? What was the meaning of the Indian Independence then? What was the meaning of democracy and economic independence? We got nothing. Where is the pledge for Independence? The monopolists have gained more and more all these years and the rich have become richer and the poor poorer. We have been victims under the British rule and the victims of all kinds of PD Acts under Congress Rule. They are saying that this is the National Security Act. But for whose security? Is it for the security of the nation? No. Then it is for whose security? It is for the security of the Congress(I). It is against the democratically-minded people of our country, against the toiling masses of our country, and it is against the workers, peasants, students, youth and women of our country.

demonstrators fell down in the melee while policemen crushed her under their feet. Ahilya Rangnekar was beaten with lathis and injured. A number of people were hospitalised later. In fact, there were a number of police including women police who could have arrested the leaders if they chose to do so. But the lathicharge made by the police was intentional which was rightly condemned by the leaders in a meeting held later.

The President of AIDWA Manju Gupta and the General Secretary of West Bengal Ganatantrik Mahila Samiti condemned the lathicharge on women leaders in a statement issued from Calcutta.

Women Against Yellow Journalism

THE Janwadi Mahila Samiti, Delhi, an affiliate of the All India Democratic Women's Association, held a demonstration in front of the Office of the Bennet Coleman & Co. publishers of the Illustrated Weekly of India on August 10 to register their protest against the yellow journalism practiced by the paper. In a protest note handed over to the Business Manager of the group in Delhi, the demonstrators condemned the publication of an article by the weekly in which the author has made a vicious and slanderous attack on the General Secretary of the West Bengal unit of the AIDWA, Shyamali Gupta.

The protest note says: "It is shocking that you should permit your magazine to publish such filthy and obscene language in relation to a prominent women's leader. Violating basic journalistic ethics, the article stooped to the lowest form of yellow journalism".

The note signed by Indu Agnihotri, President and Rita Karat, General Secretary of JMS further says: "We can only conclude from this that it is a deliberate policy of the management

to use the column at its disposal to denigrate and slander such individuals who are in the forefront of the battle against oppression. By making such wild and obscene comments the weekly promotes those interests that do not like to see women in prominent positions of public life".

The demonstrators demanded of the publishers of the weekly to print an apology in their next issue and to take suitable action against those responsible for printing and publishing such an article. JMS also has called upon all those connected with the media to condemn the use of the press to personally slander and denigrate women like Shyamali who are in the thick of struggles against oppression.

Women under West Bangal Gantantrik Mahila Samiti held a huge demonstration against the slandering of the General Secretary Shymali Gupta, Full report in the next issue.

Lightening Strike By Nurses In the Capital

OVER 1500 nurses working in various Delhi Administration-run hospitals went on indefinite strike enmass on 5th September for the demands of impementation of the recommendations of the 3rd Pay Commission. The recommendations of 3rd Pay Commission included the uniform allowance, operation theatre allowance, house rent, overtime allowance, family accomodation and better promotional avenues for nurses. The striking nurses have asked the support and co-operation from nurses working in other Govt. hospitals. The nur-

ses were complaining that though nursing care was an important factor, they are the most neglected lot. The question of ratio of nurses to patients was always ridiculously low and the nursing staff was always over burdened. Even though, they used to work overtime, no monetary compensation for overtime was paid.

The strike was called off in the evening following negotiations between the Chief Secretary of Delhi Administration and the representatives of Delhi Prantiya Hospital

Nurses Sabha. The Chief Secretary said that the nursing staff would be entitled to uniform allowance from December, 1982. He also assured the delegation that the facilities extended to them are at least comparable to the other staff of Delhi Administration. It was decided to set up a high powered committee under the

Chairmanship of the Medical Superintendent of J.P. Hospital, which will submit its recommendations within two months.

The nurses said that the strike could have been averted had the administration conceded the just and genuine demands of the nurses !

JMS In The Struggle For Democracy

The blatant attack by the ruling party on democracy in Andhra Pradesh produced a wave of revolution in the Capital which was amply reflected in the demonstration and meetings held in the Capital between August 20 and August 25.

Even though there was hardly any time to campaign and mobilise the membership, the Janawadi Mahila Samity units in Delhi, enthusiastically participated in the Struggle. On August 20 at the call of the CPI (M), CPI and RSP women joined in the courting arrest programme to demand the immediate dismissal of the Bhaskar Rao Ministry and reinstatement of NTR as their Minister. In spite of the pouring rain women many with children in their arms courted arrests. The following day a huge rally was organised by the Opposition parties at Ramlila Maidan.

On August 25 Women protesters were back in the picture. The Opposition parties had given an All India call to observe the day as "Save Democracy Day". In Delhi unfortuna-

tely united action with other women's organisation did not materialize, so the Janwadi Mahila Samity decided to join the programme initiated by SFI and DYFI and jointly sponsored by 16 youths and student organisations. On that day militant and determined women joined students and youths in taking a pledge at the Amar Jyoti at India Gate. Then with Hannan Molla, DYFI, General Secretary carrying the torch in front, women marched down Rajpath, arms linked, heads held high shouting slogans against the authoritarian Congress (I) and demanding the reinstatement of the NTR Government. The plan of the demonstrators to march to Raj Bhavan and give a memorandum to President Zail Singh was however prevented by the police who arrested all the demonstrators, including the women at Boat Club. All were released later.

On September 1 the JMS State Committee met and decided to independently and jointly continue to mobilise women in the Struggle for democracy.

Andhra Pradesh Mahila Sangham Conference

The Conference of the A.P. M. Sangham (AIDWA) will be held on 14-15 of Oct. 1984 at Miryalgundum in Telangana Dist. The hectic preparations are going on. A huge procession

of thousands of Volunteers with Uniform sarees is planned. The highlight of the Conference is the honouring of women heroines in Telangana struggle.

Reduction of Maternity Leave of Bank Women

Vimala Ranadive, Secretary, All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women issued the following statement to the press on 10th Sept. 84.

The All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) strongly pretests against the attempts of the Indian Bankers Association to reduce the maximum Maternity Leave from twelve to six months and pre and post natal leave to below 3 months for women Bank Employees.

During the last five years, nearly 70% of the new employees taken in the urban centres in Bank are women. It was surprising therefore that the All India Bank Employees Association and the Independent National Confederation of Bank Employees in their negotiations with Bankers have accepted the condition to reduce the maternity leave to half without considering the opinion of over 60,000 women employees. While the women's decade is coming to an end, and protection of motherhood has been accepted as sacred in the Constitution of India by the Ruling Party, the Indian Bank Association has taken the step bypassing the ILO Convention and the existing Maternity Benefit Act in our country. The All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) condemns the action of the unions and calls upon the working women to raise their voice against this injustice and to compel the Indian Bankers Association to withdraw the provision.

The following telegram was sent to the Chairman of India Banks Association on 18.9.84

ALL INDIA CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE OF WORKING WOMAN—CITU STRONGLY PROTESTS AGAINST REPOR-

TED ATTEMPT TO REDUCE MAXIMUM MATERNITY LEAVE FROM TWELVE TO SIX MONTHS AND PRE AND POST NATAL LEAVE TO BELOW THREE MONTHS FOR WOMEN BANK EMPLOYEES STOP ANY AGREEMENT WITH ANY UNION ON THIS ITEM WOULD NOT BE BINDING STOP.

**—VIMALA RANADIVE,
SECRETARY.**

Without Comment

BOMBAY, Sept 3—The Life Insurance Corporation of India has liberalized its rules towards women, doing away with the discrimination against pregnant women who were not being insured hitherto.

It has now decided to entertain proposals for life insurance from women who are pregnant. Proposals would be entertained during the first four months of pregnancy provided they are in regular employment of Government of quasi-Government organizations or reputed commercial firms the LIC announced today.

Women employed in professions such as medicine, legal jobs and teaching will also be entitled to life insurance on exactly the same terms as men, provided their medical reports are satisfactory and there has been no past history of complications during pregnancy of delivery.

Indian Express, 4-9-1984.

Lillian Hellman-Consistent Fighter During Anti-fascist war

LILLIAN Hellman, 79, a consistent anti-fascist during the period of early fifties when Mccarthyit's witchhunt of communists and leftists was continuing, died in USA, in the month of June 1984. She was a courageous woman, an anti-fascist writer and playwright, never bowed before the Imperialist rulers. She came under a severe attack for writing a letter in 1952 to the Home Committee on "On American Activities" when it was investigating links between American leftists and communist Party in America and abroad. She was not afraid to come before the Committee to testify about her honest opinions which she boldly preached. For this, she was black listed and risked imprisonment. The Mccarthyites tried to put her into trouble so that she starved, her income dropping to almost nothing. She had to pay dearly because of her strong convictions. Despite the CIA badgering in various ways she managed to get a job in a departmental store.

Lillian Hellman was famous for writing a number of anti-fascist plays and scripts during the anti-fascist period. People loved to watch them and got inspiration to fight against the menace of fascism in the world. When U.S. declared war against the Axis in 1941, then it was possible for Lillian and others to express themselves without fear of the authorities. The "Watch on the Rhine" was a superb play about the antifascist operations in Europe and in U.S. She married a writer Dashicell Hammat who was also a confirmed anti-fascist. He was sent to prison for refusing to reveal the names of the members of the Communist Party with whom he was connected. Amongst a number of novels and plays, one memorable

film was 'Julia' which was shown during the period before the rise of Hitler in Germany, when street fighting between Nazis and communists in Berlin had already started.

Throughout her life, Lillian continued to raise her voice for civil rights and peace. She filed a suit with others which won a court ruling that the Nixon White House tapes were a public property !

Lillian Hellman, a courageous, undaunted and consistent fighter against injustice, and autocratic rule will be remembered for ever all over the World. It is all the more necessary to follow her footsteps when the U S A and other imperialist countries are unleashing the most inhuman Nuclear war against the peaceful people, including the people of Socialist countries. The voice of the working woman pays its great tribute to this militant fighter !

NEW LAW ON WOMEN'S EQUALITY

By a majority of votes the Greek Parliament passed a law guaranteeing women wage equality with men. The new law, tabled by the PASOK government, also provides other gains for women, plus the introduction of a special amendment dealing with management found guilty of violating labour legislation concerning women. One year ago, the Greek parliament pushed through a family law reform which extends women's rights in the settlement of various family problems.

Woman In Pakistan Challenge The Military Rule

A joint platform of major women's organisations in Pakistan was formed in August 1984 at the women's meeting called under the auspicious of the All-Pakistan Women's Association with the object to campaign and fight against the discriminatory laws enforced by the Pakistan Military rulers. This confirms the increasing strength and maturity of women's movement in Pakistan. It is no wonder, therefore, some of the laws passed by the Government could not be enforced due to the pressure from below. Another important point also to be noted here is the General Elections are reportedly going to be held in March 1985.

The biggest demonstrations of women all over Pakistan were held against the judgement of ordering lashing of a blind girl, Safia, a victim of rape, and punishment of hard labour in jail. Ordinary men and women, lawyers, students, trade unionists, political and social personalities gathered in Lahore under the banner of Women's Action Forum to voice their protests and indignation at public flogging of women including the blind girl charged of adultery when men were totally left out. This also raised anger among women outside Pakistan, and the International public opinion has stated that this was the violation of the declaration of human rights to which Pakistan was a signatory.

The Draft law giving only half or no weight to female witnesses, making the testimony of one man equal to that of two women, not allowing women to appear in public without veils, raised a loud protest among the public with the result the authorities were compelled to withdraw certain measures though they were passed. The 200 women lawyers in Lahore when protested against the draft law in 1983

were lathicharged, the high court judges and prominent personalities came out openly in protest demanding justice. The students marched in hundreds against the Draft law of one man equal to two women. The lathicharge was so harsh that even the council member of Majlis-e Shoorā, the nominated body of the Govt. Begum Inmar Ispahani condemned it outright in the following words "Unparalleled and shameful incident! you don't even beat donkeys like that..."

Three former judges of Lahore high court took the orthodox Ulemas to task who were bent upon to give inferior treatment to women under the name of Islam, Koran etc. The unequal inferior treatment is being given in the name of Islam which is now being challenged by women themselves. To counteract the increasing force of women's movement, the obscurantist Islamic fundamentalists and communal Jamet-e-Islami Party has now mobilised their women and students wings to condemn the progressive women lawyers and leaders of women's movement. This only confirms the increasing strength of the women's movement.

The progressive women in Pakistan received another shock recently when the nominated Majlis-i-Shora approved the bill "Dissas and Diyyat" which in effect, "gives only half the blood money paid to the heirs of a murdered man if a woman or a member of the minority community is murdered", when the Bill was passed, the women and the minority members of the Majlis walked out. The Bill was before the Majlis for two years, was amended following sharp protests from women's organisations. The President himself has not yet endorsed the Bill. In a mass meeting held in Lahore on behalf of women's organisations and supported

by high court Bar Association, a demand was made an immediate withdrawal of this bill which is "reactionary, unislamic and aimed at upsurging the women's rights". It is also a fact such suggestions are coming now from "Islamic Ideology Council". Women demand the dissolution of this council.

Ordinary women simply enquire as to why the women advisers to General Zia, with the rank of Minister of state and others who occupy high position in the Government, the nominated women in Majlis-e-shora, and so on do not observe veil when ordinary women are compelled to join their duties in offices in Burgua? They are told to vacate their positions if they do not observe Islamic rules.

The present position of women in Pakistan is not only unequal, degrading, but they are treated inferior under the name of Islam, Kuran. Even those who accept the rights given by Islam contend that what was offered to them under the progress of Islamisation is far less than what was given and enjoyed by women in the days of Prophet Mohammed. "They argue that while Islam was the first religion to give the right to divorce and inheritance of property to women, and proclaim women and men equal now they are being denied those legitimate rights in the name of Islam".

Women cannot be cheated for a long time and now they started arguing in the language of Moulvis. Now, these moulvis again have come forward to state that only those women candidates approved by the election commission can contest the general elections. For that, a sanction from their husbands also was necessary. General Zia has been requested by some Majlis-e-Shoora, 'to exclude women from voting' to prevent election malpractices" and so on. This shows the strength of the women's movement, and the fear of Islamic fundamentalists, protected by the Military rule of women's vote.

If at all the General Elections are held in March 1985, the democratic movement of the

people under various opposition parties will surely challenge the Military rule of Pakistan. Women too have joined in the main stream, fighting against the inequality and discrimination, inhuman treatment and indignation towards them. They need full support from our Indian sisters which will not be lacking.

Ranchi Women's Solidarity With HEC Strike

Working women and housewives in HEC township played a notable role in the recent three week strike of HEC workers on 19 point Charter of Demands.

Immediately after commencement of the strike on 9th August 1984 about 3000 women with babies in arms demonstrated before the office of Chairman of HEC Shri S.R. Jain and demanded settlement of the Charter of Demands. Shri Jain had to come out of his office and meet the women workers who explained their grievances to the Chairman.

Bad maintenance of housing quarters, acute scarcity of water in the colonies have been agitating in the minds of womenfolk for a considerable period of time. The commencement of the strike gave an opportunity to these women to ventilate their grievances.

The womenfolk also were campaigning against the blacklegs and prevented them from joining duties. They also helped in foiling the game of the INTUC leaders who repeatedly assured the management to reopen the factory within a short time. Women were largely attending the rallies of the strikers held almost daily. Some processions of women also helped in keeping morale of the workers during the strike.

One good feature is that a large number of women came to the forefront as activists and campaigned from house to house maintain the unity of the striking workers.

Hatia Mazdoor Union is taking initiative in forming a unit of AIDWA so that these women are brought in an organisation and the movement of toiling women is further strengthened in the HEC township.

Women's Demonstration Of Solidarity In London Miners Strike

AS the miners' strike enters its sixth month, the conference of National Union of Mineworkers meeting in Sheffield has decided to continue the strike action. The conference also launched an appeal to the railway unions, dockers and transport workers urging them to support the striking miners.

Over 20,000 women from the mining regions—wives and mothers of miners—took part in a solidarity demonstration on August 11, against plans to close pits which put the jobs of around 40,000 workers in jeopardy.

Participants in this demonstration, one of the largest of its kind ever organized, demanded that mass redundancy plans be rejected, called for an end to police brutality against miners, and appealed to the Queen to intervene on behalf of the miners.

Heading the demonstration were representatives of the trade unions, the Labour Party and peace movements, and included the wives of the leaders of the miners' union. The march went through the streets of London to finish in an impressive solidarity demonstration in one of the capital's parks. The women passed by No. 10 Downing Street, the official residence of the Prime Minister Mrs. Thatcher, and laid wreaths as a protest against the government's attitude to the miners and, in particular, as a tribute to the miners who have died and the 5,500 arrests which have taken place since the beginning of the dispute.

Before the demonstration, a group of women took a petition with over 20,000 signatures on it to Buckingham Palace. This petition stressed that the aim of the movement is to preserve the British coal mining industry and jobs, and ensure the survival of mining communities.

The petition demands that the Queen take a public stand in favour of this cause.

Nevertheless, Her Majesty's Government has shown no signs of changing its tactics which remain the same, i.e. intensifying confrontation. A recent example of this is the declaration made by the Secretary of State for Energy Mr. Peter Walker on the eve of the women's demonstration. Launching a ferocious attack against the miners, he "revealed" that the strike is being led by the "mob". At the same time, the National Coal Board has stepped up its threats of reprisals against miners and has let it be known that there is no way it will accept a compromise.

The large-scale women's demonstration in London is a new expression of the mobilisation of the trade union movement for the miners' demands. It is a resounding retort to the government's attempts to discredit and break up the movement.

Speaking during the demonstration, Arthur Scargil, President of the National Union of Mineworkers, welcomed the class approach to the strike and urged the entire trade union movement to support the miners' struggle against mass redundancies.

THE VOICE OF WORKING WOMAN

(Bi-Monthly Journal of All India
Co-ordination Committee of
Working Women CITU—English)

Price : Re. 1/- each

African Women Called Upon To Play Greater Role

Nairobi, August 3. An African trade union women's conference which ended here today appealed for a more positive role for African women in their national development programs.

Women trade unionists from 21 African countries took part in the five-day conference, which was making preparation for the world conference of women to be held in Nairobi next July.

Reviewing the progress since the world women's conference in Mexico in 1975, delegates pointed out that there are still much more to be desired in the implementation of the "Mexico plan of action for the integration of women in development" adopted at the Mexico conference. Practices of discrimination against women in education, vocational training, employment, health and political activities remain to be eliminated in many African countries, they said.

Co-ordinator of the 1985 world women's conference Pamela Mboya pointed out that it is the women who suffer the most during the current economic difficulties and widespread drought in many parts of Africa. Calling for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, she said that the question of prejudices in employment, education and other basic rights against women should be discussed at the world conference next year, to ensure that women can participate fully in the economic, social and political life of their countries.

Kenyan woman member of parliament Phoebe Asiyo noted that overlooking and underestimation of women's role in society could lead to underdevelopment.

The Secretary-general of the organization of African trade union unity, Dennis Akumu, commended African women trade unionists for their contributions to the trade union movement in Africa.

Working Women In Viet Nam

Women workers work summed up

The total membership of trade union in the whole country: is 3,187,000 of which 1,717,000 are women.

In two days, 21 and 22 of February 1984, the women workers' department of the Vietnam Federation of Trade Unions held a conference in Hanoi for summing up the women workers' work for 1983. 50 delegates, representing various women workers' sections of the provincial trade union federations, attended the conference.

The conference passed, in review of the situation of the women workers' movement and its past activities in 1983 and laid down the orientation and tasks for the women workers in 1984.

On this occasion, the Secretariat of the Vietnam Federation of Trade Unions presented certificates of merit to Haiphong city and the Thai Binh province which were credited with outstanding successes in carrying out the women workers movement.

Dowry Amendments and Family Courts Bills Passed

Amidst shouting and walk out in both the Parliaments against the dismissal of N. T. Rama Rao Ministry in Andhra, both the bills were passed, the Rajyasabha passing it on 24.8.84. The Rajyasabha passed the legislation seeking to establish family courts to expeditiously deal with disputes concerning marriages and other family affairs. Kanak Mukherjee in her speech expressed dissatisfaction since the recommendations made by Women's organi-

sations were not incorporated in the legislations.

The Law Minister while replying on both the Bills said, in most cases of dowry deaths, the villain was the mother-in-law. It seemed, these remarks coming from the responsible person like the law Minister Mr. Jaganath Kaushal, evoked strong protests from women members in Parliament!

On Statutory Commission On Women

Unstarred question No. 3510, August 16, 1984 :

Shri Amarsingh Rathawa

Will the Minister of Social Welfare be pleased to state :

- a) Whether it is a fact that a women delegation has submitted a memorandum to Government for the appointment of a statutory commission for the protection of women and for the solution of their problems and if so, when this memorandum was submitted to the Govt. and what are the details of the demands contained in the memorandum; and
- b) What action Govt. have taken in this regard?

ANSWER

The Deputy Minister in the Ministries of Education and Culture and Social Welfare :

(Shri P. K. Thungon)

- a) Yes, Sir. The memorandum was submitted to the Govt. on 30th November, 1982. One of the demands made by the delegation was to establish a national commission on women with Statutory powers.
- b) There is already a national machinery for planning, monitoring and reviewing Women's Development Programmes which comprises a National Committee, a Steering Committee, Coordination Committees and Women's Development Bureau. In the circumstances it is not found advisable to have another parallel organisational structure with similar functions.

AIDWA Tamilnadu Marches Ahead

PAPPA UMANATH, TAMILNADU

Our State Committee met at Virudhunagar, Ramnad District on 20th and 21st of August. Out of 41 members, 31 attended. Com. K.P. Janakiammal presided over the meeting.

After our 4th State Conference which was held at Pudukottai on May 18, 19, 20 the following state-wide agitations/campaigns took place as per the decisions taken in the conference.

June 1-International Children's Day

It was decided to observe the day as the *Day for Child Labour* along with CITU on June 4th. But we could do it only in 4 districts. In North Arcot and Salem, procession and demonstrations were arranged. In Madurai, seminars were held at two places. In Kovilpatty, a deputation went and presented a memorandum to the officials concerned. Totally 503 women and children participated throughout the state. 2000 notices were distributed in Madurai.

June 11-Telegram to Chief Minister, Tamilnadu regarding Kichipalayam rape case

Last year, Deivamani, a 16 years old Harijan girl was arrested at Kichipalayam, Salem District on theft charges and was raped and murdered in the Police Station by the police constables. But it was posed as if she committed suicide by hanging herself. Due to heavy pressure exercised by the democratic section of the public including our organisation, the Chief Minister was forced to set up an enquiry committee under a retired High Court judge, Nanjappan. Nanjappan committee submitted its report where in he has clearly stated that it is a plain case of murder. Even six months after

the submission of the report, no action has been taken on the culprits. So, 26 telegrams were sent from all district asking the Chief Minister to arrest the guilty policemen and prosecute them.

June 12-Demonstration demanding the Govt. to take over nursery schools

- Abolish donation system in Nursery Schools.
- Govt. should take over all Nursery Schools.
- The teachers should be paid higher wages.

Demonstrations were conducted at 26 places demanding the Govt. not to allow the functioning of private nursery schools which are highly corrupt and the Govt. should take up the responsibility of running the nursery schools. 1903 women participated. 150 posters were displayed at Trichy and 23000 notices were distributed throughout the state. Deputations and presentation of memorandums were arranged at 6 centres. In Madurai, the demands were propagated with mike for 3 days. In Ramnad 12 street corner meetings were conducted.

Communal Harmony Week

Our stand regarding communal harmony and the recent happenings at Bhiwandi etc. were explained to women at 26 places. A hall meetings was arranged at Chengalpat which was addressed by Com. Mythily Sivaraman. Street corner meetings were arranged in Salem and Trichy. In Madurai, a group of 30 women went on padyatra and mike propaganda was carried on for 5 days and on the last day, a public meetings was arranged. There was good response in Muslim areas. 100 posters and 9500 notices were printed.

Nutritious Meal Schemes— Signature Campaign

Signature campaign was conducted throughout the State on the following demands :

- * Higher wages for employees of the above scheme (they are very poorly paid)
- * Presentation of statement of Income and Expenditure to the public
- * Setting up of vigilance committees consisting of representatives from recognised political parties and women's organisations.

Throughout the month of July, signatures were collected in all districts. Totally, we gathered 1,13,555 signatures. (Nearly 10000 signatures still remain with districts since they were delayed from areas) 250 posters were displayed at Tanjore and 38500 notices were distributed throughout the State. On 30th of July, demonstrations were conducted at 57 centres in front of Panchayat Union Offices and memorandums were presented. On 1st of August, the bundle of signatures were handed over to the minister who is in charge of the scheme by a deputation at Madras. 6955 women participated in the demonstrations. In Ramnad District, street corner meetings were arranged at 23 places.

August 14—Picketting

- * 20 kilos rice per month for all ration cards
- * All essential commodities to be distributed through Fair Price Shops.

Emphasizing the above demands, 3116 women and 124 children picketted in front of Central/State Govt. offices and courted arrest. Later in the evening they were released. Picketting took place in 50 centres. 34500 posters and 53000 notices were printed. In Madras, Coimbatore and Madurai, Auto-Mike propaganda was carried on covering about 48 areas.

Street corner meetings were held at many districts. In Ramnad and Tanjore, badges were printed for volunteers who participated in the pickettings.

Conference Reporting

The decisions taken in our 4th State Conference (Pudukottai) were reported to 9452 women at 194 centres. Nearly 50 of our cadres did the reporting at various places.

Anti Dowry Act—Signature Campaign

As per the call given by the AIDWA committee, 5264 signatures were collected demanding the Govt. to bring out an anti dowry amendment act which includes the proposals of Parliament Select Committee. In spite of all our hectic programmes, we managed to do this, though not to our full satisfaction. Mostly middle class women in offices and colleges students were approached.

The following decisions were taken in the State Committee :

1. To complete the membership enrolment for the year 1984 before October 31st. The target has been fixed as 1,13,000.
2. To arrange political classes for about 1000 cadres of our organisation at all districts.
3. The need for 'common civil code' has been explained in the latest circular of AIDWA. That portion has been translated, cyclo-styled and distributed to all district committees.
4. To bring out a 'News Letter' once in 2 months which would give useful information regarding the AIDWA decisions.
5. We have decided to donate Rs. 101/-to Ashok Latha Jain Trust founded by our Delhi Committee.