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PRESIDENT CITU



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Comrades,

I take the liberty to depart from the printed text of my speech.

At the outset, on behalf of all of you, I hail the magnificent historic victory of the Vietnamese people, of the people of Cambodia, against American imperialism. This final triumph of the entire Indo-Chinese people constitutes a great turning point in the world fight against imperialism.

Words fail to convey our admiration for the death-defying and indomitable courage of the people of Vietnam who, for more than three decades were engaged in a life and death struggle, first against French imperialism and then against American imperialism. Our sense of triumph, joy and happiness cannot be matched by any words. We tell the people of Vietnam, Comrades, you have fought the battle of Asian freedom, you have fought the battle of the world working class, of the freedom of the peoples of the world. Posterity will always remember you as the vanguard fighters of freedom and socialism, who delivered a mortal blow against the foe of all mankind — American Imperialism.

We can never forget the inhuman ordeal through which the people of Vietnam had to pass for decades.

The American Imperialists were armed with the most devastating weapons of destruction. They had complete supremacy in modern sophisticated arms, economy sinews and man-power. At one time there were half a million U.S. troops on the soil of Vietnam.

The enemy rained 10 million tons of bombs on the land of Vietnam which was three times the tonnage dropped during the World War II in Europe, the Pacific and North Africa

combined. It resorted to poison gas, it made use of bacteriological warfare, it resorted to defoliation operations to destroy food production. It used near-nuclear bombs, but nothing could soften the granite will of the people; nothing could stop the onward march of the freedom fighters.

The death toll and toll of injured exceeded 3 millions. In the last few weeks, more than one lakh people were killed, while the number of wounded and maimed was incalculable. Lakhs of people have been incapacitated by American bombing or by the tortures and attacks of the puppet army. The U.S.A. lost more than 50 thousand soldiers during the entire war.

Never before in the history of any struggle were the people called upon to sacrifice so much at every step as in the great battle of Vietnam; never before were the two parties to a combat so unequal in their strength and resources, to start with. Never was the defeat of a well armed aggressor so ignominious and full of shame as in this epic battle of all times.

Comrades, the victory of the Vietnamese struggle is the biggest world event, the biggest triumph of the working class after the Great Chinese Revolution of 1949. It is the fourth biggest triumph of the world working class against the system of world imperialism and capitalism. The first was the 1917 November Revolution led by the Great Lenin; the second was the victory of the Red Army and the people of the USSR headed by Stalin and the CPSU against the Nazi hordes of Hitler. The third was the Great Chinese Revolution led by the Communist Party of China headed by Mao Tse-tung.

The mighty victory was facilitated and rendered inevitable by the vital help rendered by all Socialist countries, especially by the USSR and the People China — help in materials, equipments, economic resources — and by the

mobilisation of the entire world working class behind the cause of the Vietnam people. The meaning of the vital help is that the Socialist camp when united has enough strength to counter-act the gangster attacks of the American aggressor.

The cause of the people of Vietnam became the cause of the International Proletariat, the flaming symbol of internationalism. Vietnam refurbished the great concept of proletarian brotherhood of workers of all countries and rebuffed those who were counting on nationalist tendencies corroding the fine metal of proletarian internationalism.

Vietnam became the symbol of progressive humanity all over the world. All progressive governments and progressive sections in all countries lent their moral and political support to the fighters for freedom and socialism. The progressive sections of the people of the USA, the soldiers who refused the army draft, the students and workers who organised anti-war rallies, played an important role in cornering U.S. imperialism. The defeat of American Army in Vietnam is no defeat of the freedom-loving American people. On the other hand, it is a tribute to their loyalty to the principles of human freedom all over the world.

Comrades, it is a matter of deep shame and ignominy that the Government of India refused to recognize the Provisional Revolutionary Government till the last, till victory was almost certain. In the dark days of American attacks and offensive, when a number of non-aligned countries were rallying round Vietnam and recognising the P.R.G., the Government of India distinguished itself by refusing recognition.

Comrades, it is a matter of great pride to us of the working class that the victory of the people of Vietnam was achieved under the leadership of the Workers Party, of the working class of Vietnam who firmly held aloft the banner of Maxism-Leninism. We congratulate the Workers Party

which gave unerring guidance to the national liberation war, while defending the socialist revolution in the North; we congratulate the revolutionary working class which gave consistent leadership to the struggle; we hail the heroic officers and men of the National Liberation Forces, Gen. Giap and his colleagues whose military science wedded to the people, defeated the anti-people military science of the U.S.A. We hail the P.R.G. and the people of South Vietnam for their revolutionary courage and consistent struggle against the U.S.A.

We are confident that the people of Vietnam will succeed in achieving their cherished dream of unifying their Motherland, of establishing only one Vietnam and rapidly taking it forward to socialism, bypassing the capitalist path. The millions of hands and minds that forged victory against the world aggressor will soon be able to re-fashion a united, democratic, peaceful, socialist Vietnam.

We wish them peace, unity and prosperity in socialism.

Comrades,

In the period between our last and present session we have lost some of our most valued and esteemed comrades.

I salute the memory of Comrade Muzaffar Ahmed of imperishable memory, founder of the Communist movement in India, founder of the trade union and kisan movement of Bengal. I salute the memory of Comrade Harekrishna Konar, member of the Central Committee of the CPI(M), General Secretary of the Kisan Sabha, an outstanding revolutionary.

I pay homage to the memory of Com. K. G. Bose, that indefatigable champion of the Central employees, the leader of their all-India movement and active leader of the CPI(M).

We deeply mourn the death of our esteemed Comrade Rajan member of our General Council, leader of the Kerala plantation workers and member of Kerala Assembly.

We salute the memory of hundreds of martyrs of our movement who have fallen victims of gangster terror in West Bengal and Kerala—sons of working class and leaders of the trade union movement—sons of toilers and working people and leaders of democratic movements. We remember Com. Ramaswamy who fell fighting for the cause of revolutionary workers.

They came from the ranks of the working classes, the students, teachers, peasants, employees—all of whom were martyrs to the same cause for the cause of democracy and socialism.

We dip our red banner in the name of our fighting workers and cadres in all States—Rajasthan, Tamilnadu, Maharashtra, who fell fighting for the cause of the workers.

We send our Warm message of solidarity to the hundreds of our comrades, trade union leaders, leaders of the democratic and kisan movements, and political prisoners languishing in the prisons of West Bengal, Kerala and other States.

Hundreds have been arrested during the course of strikes in States and are undergoing prolonged persecution.

We assure all of them that the CITU will work for the release of all irrespective of their organisational and political affiliations.

Comrades, above all, we assure our Kota comrades who have been recently sentenced to transportation for life that we will not rest till justice is done to them and they are released.

We denounce the savage sentences passed on our fighting trade union and kisan comrades of Burdwan and 24-Parganas in West Bengal. Recently, thirty comrades have been sentenced to transportation for life and Comrade Monoj Paul of Burdwan has been sentenced to death.

We demand an end to this terror, we demand that the death sentence on Com. Paul be set aside. We demand the withdrawal of life sentences passed against others.

Comrades, on behalf of all of you, I offer our warm greetings to the fighting people of Vietnam and Cambodia for their epochal victories against American imperialism. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam and the National Liberation Front of Vietnam and the National Liberation Front of Cambodia have fought the battle of Asian humanity inflicting this mortal defeat on the foe of all peoples.

Comrades, these two historic victories of the Indo-Chinese people inspire the entire fighting millions of the world with great confidence. They are victories scored for the entire peoples of the world. Future generations will be grateful to these two peoples for paying the way for the final rout of U. S. imperialism.

Never before a people shall in number, ill-equipped and working in the midst of backward conditions, inflict such a defeat on a world power armed with the latest devices of destruction. But then we are living in an epoch which is the turning point in world history—an epoch is destined to see the final exit of imperialism and the triumph of socialism.

Comrades, the victory has been won by the people of Vietnam, the people of Cambodia by shedding their blood, by undergoing unheard of sacrifices, by preparedness to sacrifice everything for the cause of freedom. It has been won in open battle.

It shows detente or no detente, American imperialism does not forget its murderous mission and the fighting people cannot be victorious unless they vanquish the enemy with arms.

The victory of the people of Vietnam and Cambodia is a victory of the international working class, of the world people. The help rendered by the Socialist countries to these struggle of Vietnam, the help rendered by Socialist countries; especially People's Republic of China to the struggle of Cambodian people have played a vital role in facilitating the rout of American arms.

Secondly, the political and moral support of the working class all over the world, and the democratic forces in the USA who opposed the contribution of war have made a significant contribution towards it.

Comrades, let us also not forget the emergence of New Portugal which recently overthrew the fascist dictatorship and ushered in a democratic regime. We are confident that the complexities of the situation inherent in a transitional power will be soon over and the people of Portugal will firmly march forward safe-guarding and expanding democracy.

Comrades, we send our warm fraternal greetings to the working class and the people of the USSR, People's China and other Socialist countries. We send our greetings to the working class of the USA, Britain, Italy, France and Japan who are waging a battle against the burdens of the capitalist crisis.

We express our deep sympathy and solidarity with the working class and people of Chile and Indonesia. the victims of fascism. We send our greetings of solidarity to the Arab peoples fighting against Israeli imperialism to the courageous fighters for Palestinian freedom.

The situation in Pakistan and Bangladesh must cause deep concern to us. We are vitally concerned with the working class and democratic movement in these two neighbouring countries of ours. In Pakistan, American imperialism is again arming the ruling class the direct effect of which is the suppression of the democratic movement of the country and the popular movements of the country and the popular movements in Baluchistan and Frontier Province. The working class of Pakistan stands suppressed. We express our solidarity with it and the democratic movement. It is the common task of the working class of all these three countries to see that USA imperialism does not interfere with the affairs of the Sub-Continent; and see that it does not carry out its policy of making Asians fight each other. The supply of arms to Paktstan is intended to pressurise India to toe the American line. It also helps the military warhawks and Bhutto in Pakistan to divert attention from the internal problem and suppress democracy.

Comrades, the developments in Bangladesh are equally alarming. The one party system introduced by Mujibur Rahaman constitutes a frontal attack on the democratic aspirations of the people and lays the foundation of an authoritarian regime. It is a betrayal of the people of Bangladesh who will have to go through fresh trials and ordeals to reach the goal of democracy and socialism. There is no doubt that reactionary forces have raised their head and constitute a challenge in Bangladesh. To defeat these pro-imperialist forces it was necessary to take the people into confidence and mobilise them for a fight. But the reliance on corrupt bureaucrats and vested interests has compelled Mujibar Rahaman to attend democracy and the people. This was inevitable because the ruling bourgeoisie are unable to solve the problems posed by the economic crisis without suppressing the liberties of the people.

The developments in the three countries show that the bourgeois landlord classes in underdeveloped countries are unable to maintain parliamentary democracy, even the facade of

democracy with formal freedom to opposition parties. The process in India is moving in the same direction and it is no surprise that Mrs. Indira Gandhi should have congratulated Mujibur Rahaman on his assuming dictatorial powers.

These developments together with the growing intervention of the USA in the Sub-Continent must be taken note of by the working class. They represent a danger to the democracy of the people and the freedom of our country. Especially full of danger is the USA's determination to build its bases in Diego Garcia and transform the Indian Ocean into an American controlled area. This together with the unhindered supply of huge arms to Iran reveal the American designs clearly. If the working class does not warn the people against the danger and fight it will be failing to discharge its duty.

Recent disclosures have revealed how the American Intelligence Agency, the CIA organises murders, uses traitors to upset democratic regimes and enslave countries. The machinations of this agency in our country go on without interruption. Indira Gandhi's Government mentions the CIA only for political advantage but does not take any real steps against it.

Comrades, it is pertinent to ask the question how far our unions are aware of this danger and how far they are rousing the workers against it. We regard American imperialism as the common foe of all peoples, of the world working class. Today when our country is in the middle of an economic crisis, when because of the pro-landlord policy of the Government we are compelled to import food from abroad under PL-480, the danger of American machinations and pressures is immense. If our unions and the working class do not take a lead in rousing the country against it, who else will? In every country where the battle against imperialism is being successfully fought the working class has taken the lead.

In our country many central trade union organisations turn a blind eye to this growing menace. The AITUC leaders dominated by Right C. P. policies sing the virtues of detente

and assure us of a new era of peaceful relations has opened. Under this circumstance any laxity on our part will be a grievous and criminal failure.

Comrades, before I turn to the economic and trade union situation facing us, I must draw your attention to the perilous political situation, the continuation of the emergency under one pretext or another, (the new excuse is arming of Pakistan and American moves in Diego Garcia), the use of DIR and the MISA against democratic movements, the shameless abuse of the powers vested under the Constitution, the use of armed goondas gangs against the trade union and democratic movements and the complete rigging of the last Assembly elections in W. Bengal clearly show that the ruling party is determined to establish a one-party dictatorship in India. It is not accidental that Indira Gandhi should congratulate Mujibur Rahaman on the assumption of dictatorial powers.

Our CITU had seen the danger earlier, but many other central trade union organisations and political parties had failed to see it recently. The ruthless repression directed against the Gujarat movement, the repression against the Bihar agitation led by Shri J. P. and the rigging and terror during some of the recent bye-elections are all leading several parties to realise the danger of one party dictatorship.

The shadow of this danger is already there as pointed out later on the trade union movement. Unless the working class takes the lead in fighting it, unless it rallies all other sections, it cannot be met. Experience of all countries show that democracy cannot be saved unless the working class heads the struggle. And unless this is done there is no hope for ending capitalism and taking state power and bringing in socialism. The working class will continue to remain a slave if it fails to plunge into the battle against the drive for one party dictatorship in our country. Our CITU unions while fighting for the economic demands, for food and against high prices, against attacks on trade union rights must ceaselessly try to mobilise

all democratic elements and forces against the Congress rule—the most important being the peasant and agricultural workers. Our unions must ceaselessly bring together all left and democratic parties and forces to meet the onslaught of the Congress regime. The organised trade union movement can neglect this task at its own peril. It will itself be defenceless unless it has the backing of its powerful ally, the peasant and the agricultural worker.

Comrades, the present economic situation enables the trade unions to merge as the champions of the interests of the common people. The collapse of rationing, the shortage of food, the high prices affect all sections and enables the working class to champion their interests. Our actions bring under one umbrella varied sections of the people—workers, students, teachers, employees, agricultural workers, etc. Similarly, comrades, our championing of the demands of the peasantry, of land to the tiller is bound to attract other sections, as every one will soon realise that abolition of landlordism and land to the tiller will expand the market for industrial goods and be an effective weapon of meeting the crisis. And our demand that in the present dire economic situation, the foreign monopoly concerns should be confiscated will definitely find acceptance as a measure of national salvation.

Comrades, while concentrating on the present, we must re-assert our devotion and loyalty to our fundamental goal Socialism, end of the capitalist-landlord system. We want present democracy to be expanded into People's Democracy. We struggle for state power, we fight for ending exploitation and ushering in Socialism. For us, there is no Socialism unless the working class and its allies hold state power and unless all means of production, distribution and exchange are socialised private property in the means of production is abolished. Without this, there is no end to our property and exploitation. All our sufferings, privations, jails and tortures, our martyrdom will be for nothing if we forget inspiring goal of ours.

Comrades, the economic situation in our country runs almost parallel with the crisis situation in the advanced countries, revealing almost the same characteristics and feature.

During the last three years, and especially during the last year, the working class had to face repeated economic attacks accompanied by repression and atrocities. The attacks on trade union rights, the wage freeze Act, the lay offs and closures all were instruments to pass on the burdens of the crisis to the working class.

Unprecedented unity was forged in the course of this battle ; new milestones in united resistance were reached. At the same time, there were certain lacuna in organisation due to certain lags in comprehending the full nature of the economic and ideological offensive unleashed by the ruling classes. The offensive was not realised as a full fledged class offensive of the exploiting class, each incident and step during the struggle was not understood as a battle against the main class policies pursued by the Congress Government. Each issue was fought as it arose but full realisation that we have entered a period of fighting the basic policies was not there. It is partly because of this that the reformist and revisionist leaders are often able to create confusion, oppose criticism of official policies, plead an alibi for the Indira Government and pass on the responsibility to the bureaucracy only.

The Characteristics of the Crisis

The same characteristics that we have witnessed in connection with the world capitalist crisis are to be found in India. There are an inflationary situation with prices continuously rising, unemployment rising rapidly to monstrous proportions, chronic under-production in industries, stagnant or falling production and continuous attacks against the wages of the working class and incomes of all toilers while growing concentration of capital and wealth directly and indirectly helped

through State policies. There is a difference also. The agrarian masses suffering under the double yoke of feudal relations and capitalist market are reduced to complete destitution.

Stagnant production with some small spurt in between in the midst of rising prices has been a continuing feature of the capitalist path in our country for a few years now.

These are having disastrous effects on our living standards, on job security. And we have not seen the end of all this. Economic portents point out to bigger assaults and greater trials in the near future. Every measure of the Government from wage freeze to budget proposals, from credit squeeze to taxation is intended to throw the burden of the crisis on the working class and the people. None except the top sections of exploiters and the rich owners including the landlords escape it. Workers, employees, lawyers, doctors, engineers, peasants and agricultural workers, shop-keepers and small producers and small industry owners all alike are forced to accept new burdens to enable the monopolies and big capitalists to reap new profits,

It is not realised by the organised trade union movement how jobs of the workers have been attacked ; under one pretext or another tens of thousands have either been laid off or sent home with factories ordering closure. And this has happened because high prices have affected demand ; at the same time, prices are not coming down.

While Indira Gandhi assures the country that there are no recessionary tendencies, thousands of workers lose their earnings just because there is recession in demand.

Since November last, the organised textile industry as well as the powerloom and handloom industry are going through a period of temporary closures or lay-off. The real situation in organised industry would have been laid bare completely had the electricity cut not come to its rescue in certain centres. Otherwise, the employers would have had to resort to a general lay off for want of demand.

In October, Ahmedabad mills closed their night shift throwing out of jobs 5,000 workers. At about the same time, Buckingham Carnatic Mills of Madras announced a 25 per cent reduction in their production. In Ahmedabad, the closure lasted for two months, i. e. till the accumulated stocks were cleared by reducing the prices by 25 to 40 per cent.

It should be noted that the Government had permitted the millowners to raise cloth prices by 40 per cent only a few months back while it attacked the wages of the workers and employees.

The west Bengal press reported on 5/11, lay-off and retrenchment have already been started both in organised and unorganised industries in the State particularly in cotton textile units. A large number of workers are rendered jobless in this industry.

In Nadia and other districts, where powerloom industries have been concentrated several powerloom units were either locked out or closed, throwing thousands of workers out of employment. The credit restrictions which penalise the small producers undermined their capacity for holding on large stocks as well as continuing production. In the same month, in Ichalkaranji a centre of powerloom production in Maharashtra about 45 per cent of the 5,000 powerloom workers were laid off. The output of powerloom fabrics which was already reduced by 40 per cent following a crisis in the industry was cut further by 10 per cent, on account of sustained fall in prices and poor off-take.

Large-scale accumulation of handloom cloth was reported in November from several centres. Hundreds of handloom workers were thrown out of employment in Kerala. In Andhra, in March handloom cloth stocks worth Rs. 17 crores were reported to have accumulated. The powerloom crisis continues. In April powerloom owners of Bhiwandi, biggest powerloom centre near Bombay were unable to sell their products though they were working only one shift in place of three. They were thinking closing all the shifts till the stocks are cleared. This means unemployment for thousands.

It is no wonder that with high prices, famine and destitution in the country both the urban and rural masses are incapable of purchasing enough cloth. The cry of no purchase appears bizare when three-fourths of India goes naked.

Government's 'anti-inflationary' cut in expenditure on purchase of railway wagons portends to affect the jobs of hundreds of people. It is now feared that the reduction of railway wagon purchase will result in the closure of smaller manufacturing units and a drop in production of 25 per cent of the installed capacity in the larger ones. This will lead to large-scale lay-off by the wagon building units.

In West Bengal 50,000 bidi workers have been affected by Government's new excise order and in the U.P. 50,000 brass workers of Moradabad were affected by the slump in the exports to the USA. Small units have closed down and most of the workers have taken to rickshaw pulling. Add to this tens of thousands who were laid off because of electricity shortage. In U.P., Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, West Bengal, tens of thousands have had to forego their earnings because of electricity rationing. The shortage is not just due to natural causes, but mostly due to corruption of the bureaucrats, failure of maintenance etc. Corruption is an integral part of the capitalist-bureaucratic set-up.

The situation continues to deteriorate and as late as the end of March West Bengal was witnessing lay-off of about 10,000 workers on an average per day. Many units have already intimated to the State Government under the existing law that they have to go in for heavy retrenchment.

Engineering and textile industries are more affected than others. Hind Motors is reported to be planning retrenchment of 5,000 workers while it has been easily laying off three to four thousand workers in rotation. This may have a chain reaction on ancillary units many of which have already resorted to long lay-offs.

In the textile mills also a similar situation prevails consequent on lack of demand for clothings in the market.

The wage-freeze has done its jobs. It has not brought down prices, but only incapacitated the workers from purchasing necessities like cloth. It has accelerated the crisis and the recession.

Comrades, in the month of April the crisis has deepened further and it now appears that we are face to face with the worst recession since 1939 crisis—with mass closures and retranchment in the offing and mass ruination of peasant producers due to sudden fall in prices. The situation is further compounded by the power shortage or power famine which is directly due to capitalistic bureaucratic planning and bungling. But the workers, the small employers and small producers are its main victims.

By April several thousand textile workers in Kanpur were laid off due to electricity shortage. But press message said that even if the power availability was increased to two shifts as had been demanded by the mills the chances were that more textile mills in U. P. would fall sick. It was feared that out of 27 organised textile mills in the other towns of U. P. as many as 10 would fall sick if the demand for fine and medium cloth did not improve. They were unable to keep up even one shift working and most of them had accumulated outstanding arrears.

The drastic reduction of the purchasing power of the people led to a sharp decline in the sale of shoes and other leather products, exercise books for students and other items of common consumption.

If there is still some doubt about who is affected it should be removed by the fact that bidi sales went down by 20 per cent in U.P., daily labour wage rates went down from Rs. 5 to Rs. 3.50, there are now lakhs applying for menial jobs and hundreds of families are shifting from pucca houses to mudhut tenements.

The correspondent adds, "Sharp drop in the demand for mill-made cloth has also spread to the handloom and power-

loom sector and even to the khadi sector which has resulted in a sharp decline in the demand for years”.

In Tamilnadu, the virtual shutdown of power brought industrial production to a standstill with 1.5 million workers laid off. The closure due to electricity screen the closures consequent on lack of demand in many cases.

In Bombay, thousands of silk mills workers are threatened with unemployment.

In the jute industry, mills have already started reducing production by 15 per cent. This may be the general rule leading to mass retrenchment. Many jute mills are likely to close down for lack of export orders. The result is that the equipment for production of carpet-backing installed in the late sixties at an estimated cost of Rs. 100 crores is rendered practically idle.

Comrades, This indeed is a serious situation. The working class of India had not faced a similar situation for years. We all should know what it means in the context of the mounting figures of unemployment and the fact that employment in private organised non-agricultural industries showed an absolute decline in 1974 compared with 1973. The employers and the Govt. both are trying to reap the maximum benefit out of it. The employers often talk of wholesale closure of factories to extort financial concessions from the Govt. at the expense of the people. (demand for abolition of export duty on jute goods or at the expense of the workers' retrenchment, wage-cuts, etc.) The Govt. spokesman especially in W. Bengal pretend to play the role of mediators and using the scare of wholesale closures ask the workers to accept retrenchment or by rotation, i. e. distribution of unemployment. These are the usual tricks of capitalist Government which has not been forced to accept the responsibility for unemployment wage. The working class should not fall a victim to the false proposal of Congress Labour Minister.

It is reported that at a recent meeting of the trade unions

convened by the West Bengal Labour Dept, to discuss the jute situation, the Govt. spokesman made suggestions for more production, working of night shift without additional remuneration, working all the seven days without additional wage, less pay more work was the formula. When he was asked why he was asking for more production when foreign orders were low and stocks had accumulated he explained that more production and less pay would reduce the cost of production enabling the employees to sell in the foreign market. The meaning is plain. The capitalists want their guaranteed high profits at the expenses of the workers. They are not prepared to lower their profit to make the jute goods competitive abroad.

Possibility of further deterioration

In October the Iron and Steel Controller complained even when we make allocations they are not lifted. Soon it was advertised that stocks have been lifted and everything was alright. All that seems to have happened was that the stocks have been transferred to different stockyards. In January, it was reported that the Hindustan Steel Limited stockyard in Delhi was holding stocks of about 30,000 tonnes almost double of what it possessed normally. Similarly, the Delhi Small Scale Industries Corporation had 4,000 tonnes of steel stock which was much more than the normal holding. Similar was the position in several cities.

While the Government was advertising that there is no slackening of the demand, the Bokaro Steel Plant decided to reduce production of pig iron and steel ingots following heavy accumulation of stocks. Official reason given for accumulation is just shortage of rail wagons.

At the end of February, press reports showed that the wagon industry had 25,000 wagons, nearly two years production on hand. This coupled with the drastically reduced

railway expenditure for wagon purchases was feared to result in closure of small units and 25 per cent reduction in the production of big units. In Chittaranjan, over 20 per cent of its capacity is lying idle.

In his speech to the Central Advisory Council of Industries at the end of march, Mr. Pai, Minister of Industries and Civil Supplies said that a recent study had revealed that in only ten industries capacity utilisation was above 70 per cent and about 12 industries showed utilisation between 50 per cent and 70 per cent.

Such is the economic situation the recessionary climate which foreshadows further assaults on our jobs and living standards.

Are there prospects of improving the situation in the near future? Present trends and facts belie such expectations. The stagnation—recession trends will continue and deceleration may gather speed notwithstanding Indira Gandhi's assurances to the contrary.

The Government itself does not seem to have much confidence in what it preaches. It has to admit that at best the situation will continue to stagnate. The Economic Survey for 1974-75 says, "Thus far there is no evidence that the highly unsatisfactory trend of industrial production since 1966 is to be succeeded by a new more dynamic phase."

Exports and World Capitalist Crisis

Comrades, all these years, our movement has confined itself mostly to wage questions and other issues directly affect us. We have not gone beyond these and tried to understand how Government's policies regarding exports and imports affect our jobs and emoluments, now the Government manipulates its exports policy in the interests of the capitalist class describing it as defence of national interests.

When the foreign market is flourishing, the capitalists are

enabled to make huge profits without of course any compulsion to improve the conditions of the working class. When the foreign market is in doldrums the capitalists are subsidised at the expense of the taxpayer for their exports and are encouraged to attack the living standards of the workers. All this is prescribed as meeting a national need to earn foreign exchange.

The inflationary conditions in the Western world boosted India's exports in the midst of a declining production trend. Now that the Western world is getting deep in depression and the demand for Indian exports facing drastic curtailment, Indian economy will be faced with big upsets.

Now these conditions are fast disappearing. The Finance Ministry is preparing to subsidise some of these exports, expecting a fall in some of them in 1975-76. Jute, cotton textiles and several other goods are likely to face stiff competition and show fall in exports. The Economic Survey admitted, "Of course, one cannot rule out the possibility that a severe recession in industrial countries may have some adverse effect on the growth of our exporters and hence industrial production. The OECD has predicted that, for the second successive year, major industrial countries will not experience any substantial growth in 1975,

This means that there will be hectic activity to promote exports and the cry is already being raised to make our exports competitive on the world market which means cut down the working class wage and emoluments to the maximum possible or reduce the number of employed workers by including modern sophisticated machinery.

The trade union movement must insist that this pampering of the capitalists must end and they must be made to reduce their profits and disgorge some of their huge profits of recent times to subsidise exports if necessary.

This dependence on exports is an expression of the dependence of our economy on the Western countries. We are forced

to export necessities of life to meet our import obligation and foreign payments.

The working class must also realise that the policy of the Congress Government to keep our economy linked with the recession-ridden western world is dangerous to its interests. The demand must come that we should have stronger trade relations with the socialist economies, including the economy of people's China. The stable economies of the Socialist world free from crisis offer a guaranteed and developing market.

Public Investment

Comrades, it is not realised that official deliberate measures of checking inflation has resulted in a slow growth of employment and increased unemployment. In an underdeveloped country the rate of increase in employment depends to a very large extent on increased planned investment of the Government. The working class and democratic opinion have repeatedly demanded that the Government should stop useless expenditure and deficit financing and exercise control over economy and prices. But at the same time, they have demanded that through proper taxation of the monopolists the big capitalists and the landlords production activity should be enhanced and public sector role in expanding production should be further expanded.

To confiscate the resources belonging to these sectors and turn them to public purpose would have served to check inflation as well as promote employment and production. The Government not wanting to offend these classes drastically reduced its own investment in the name of fighting inflation.

The country's capital outlays and other investments totalled only Rs. 859 crores in terms of 1965-66 prices as against Rs. 1404 crores in 1972-73. The result has been that industries dependent directly on Government departmental expenditure,

wagons etc. have been crippled because of reduced purchases. Industries contributing to the implementation of different projects private industries connected with them have also been affected. That is partly the reason for several lay-offs.

The budget for 1975-76 does hardly improve the situation. The total (Central and State) plan size for 1975-76 will be Rs. 5060 crores which in financial terms represents an increase of 23 per cent over the 1974-75 plan of Rs- 4844 crores. Considering that prices have risen by more than 25 per cent last year, the increased expenditure does not represent any advance on the previous year when public investment had reached the lowest level in recent years.

This is how matters regarding employment and unemployment are decided behind the backs of the workers by budgetting allotments. The time has come for the working class to raise its voice of protest, for the trade unions to unmask before the workers this story of deception and cheating. The time has come to demand the nationalisation of all foreign and monopoly concerns, and utilisation of their resources for extending planned public production. Of course, it is clear that no good will come out of the public sector if it continues to remain the hunting ground of the corrupt bureaucrats and ministerial lackeys. Measures will have to be taken to see that it functions as a genuine public sector in the service of the people and not in the service of the capitalists as at present.

Monopolies Thrive

The policy of the Government is all along to foster the interests of the monopolists and big capitalists. Nothing could be more devastating than this tribute to the Indira Government from G. D. Birla, one of the notorious top monopolists. A PTI message dated 18th March from Gwalior said, "Eminent industrialist G. D. Birla ridiculed the habit of the business community to criticise the Government for the sake of

criticism only. Appreciating the present policy of the Government, Mr. Birla said that he did not feel that the Government in practice was tough towards monopoly houses which he said were criticised only in speeches. Both big and small sections continued to get equal treatment in respect of licenses."

Will the leaders of the Right C. P. who head the AITUC revise their opinion about Indira Gandhi. It is more likely that they will revise their opinion about Mr. G. D. Birla and include him among the progressive forces.

Mr. Birla of course was speaking the truth. The anti-monopoly outbursts of the Indira Gandhi spokesmen are the facade to promote the interests of the monopolies. They are being asked to invest in all spheres under the excuse that there is paucity of capital. Every device is used to open new avenues to them.

Besides why shouldn't Mr. Birla be pleased? Between 1951 and 1970, the assets of Birlas rose from Rs. 51 crores to Rs. 617 crores, the assets of Tatas rose during the same period from Rs. 95 crores to Rs. 711 crores. (This of course did not prevent Mr. J. R. D. Tata from complaining at a recent meeting that the private sector was being gheraoed.) While during the year 1973-74 people were passing through harrowing conditions, the working class had to fight for every naya paise, how were the capitalists faring? Profits of 353 non-Governmental non-financial companies during 1973-74 recorded a significant rise of Rs. 56 crores to Rs. 280 crores after tax against a fall of Rs. 14 crores in the previous year according to Reserve Bank Bulletin, December 1974. Taking into consideration the rise in tax and interest charges, the actual increase would be of the order of Rs. 94 crores.

Gross profits i. e. total surplus value or unpaid labour increased by Rs. 100 crores from Rs. 596 crores to Rs. 690 crores, while salaries and wages of lakhs of workers etc. increased by Rs- 91 crores

New Freedom

This Government is now giving up the pretence of controlling monopolists or private capitalists. It is opening new avenues to the monopolists. The most blatant advocates of monopoly capital are Mr. Pai and Mr. Ray, West Bengal Chief Minister. Both are echoing the desire of Indira Gandhi. It is now being decided to sell the public sector to the private tycoons in the name of securing public participation in the public sector. Through Mr. Pai besides the Government is promising to the capitalists decontrol of prices, a guaranteed high profit rate—at least 16 per cent—which means barbarous exploitation of the workers. Here the Garabi Hatao has turned full circle. Instead of a guaranteed minimum wage to the workers, they are giving a guaranteed high profits to the capitalists. Congress Socialism is marching ahead.

Soft Pedalling Foreign Capital

The Fifth Five Year plan announced Govt.'s determination to develop our country's self-reliance. Where is that cry gone? The mixed economy is in need of more and more foreign debts. Besides, the Govt. is accepting food imports under the American PL-480. The dependence of the country's economy on foreign debts increases and with it the danger to our economic freedom.

What is most dangerous is that multinational corporations—the biggest foe of democracy, national independence and working class are also being shamelessly wooed. It seems there are more than 200 branches of these corporations which are not industrial concerns but economic empires. They bring down governments, instal puppets to ensure their own designs. The Allende Government in Chile was overthrown by conspiracy of these corporations. The Indira Government while talking now and then about CIA activities is permitting

this important agency of the CIA and American imperialism to endanger the freedom of our country.

Let me quote what a writer in a well-known daily wrote recently : "It has been revealed that a CIA research report written in August 1974 on the world grain shortage stated that the situation in developing countries like India could give the U. S. a measure of power it has never had before, possibly an economic and political domination greater than that of the immediate post-world war two years. Washington could acquire virtual life and death power over the fate of the multitudes of the needy." (J. D. Sethi, Amrit Bazar Patrika).

The working class in its own and national interest denounce the Congress policy of wooing the multinational corporations and warn the people against it.

No Relief from High Prices

Ten months back the Government introduced the notorious wage-freeze Act in the name of countering inflation and high prices.

What are the results of this policy of attacking the workers, salary earners and professionals ? What is the result of taking away more than Rs. 500 crores from the workers' and employees' pockets.

The Government is advocating that prices have started falling. But do the people know about it ? Have they got any relief ? Are food and other necessities of life within easy reach of the workers and other toilers ?

The fact is that food articles have registered a decline in wholesale prices of 7 per cent between the end of September 1974 and February 15, 1975. The decline in general price index also comes to about 5 per cent.

Notwithstanding this fall prices are higher by 18.8 per cent in December 1974 than what they were a year ago. The Economic Survey also does not promise a halt in price rise, it only promises a slowing down of the rate of growth of prices :

“Taking all these factors into account, one can expect that in the coming months the rate of growth of prices will slow down as compared to the corresponding period of the last year.” The wage freeze was just an instrument of robbing the workers, passing on the crisis burden to their shoulders.

Against the Landlords

However there will be no lasting and permanent relief from the chronic food famine and blackmarket prices unless the working class directs its fire against the pro-landlord policies of the Indira Government and defeats them. In alliance with the vast mass of agricultural workers and peasants the working class must demand a smashing of the land monopoly of the landlords and redistribution of land to the tiller. Without this agrarian revolution there is no salvation either from high prices or from food famine, from the peasants' impoverishment. Immediately the demand should be put for the commandeering of landlords stocks at prescribed prices, attracting small peasants' produce by offering attractive price and bonus and complete state trading in wholesale foodgrains trade. It should be the task of the trade unions to educate the working class and rouse it to fight the landlord domination of our economy.

High Taxation

Comrades, it is not only through high prices that we, the workers and the people are made to bear the burdens of the crisis. The enormous taxation of the Congress Government which escalates the prices of all commodities is another weapon of the unscrupulous rulers. We witness the same phenomenon in advanced capitalist States. In 1974-75 alone total additional taxation of Rs. 935 crores (in a full year) was levied by the Central Government.

The most significant feature of these taxation burdens is that they rely mainly on commodity taxation which gives a boost to the price spiral.

This levies a heavy burden on the people raising the price of every commodity and service. The taxes and duties on petrol form 375 per cent of the basic import price of crude, raising the cost of transport. It has been estimated in 1972 that the indirect taxes of the Central Government formed 50 per cent to 75 per cent of the total ex-factory cost of several commodities of daily use. They formed 50% to 75% of the price cost of cloth ; 75% of the cost of sugar ; 60% to 70% of cement and 50% to 60% of steel.

The taxation of the Central and State Governments constitutes robbery of the people, again helps in transferring value from the poorer to the richer classes and their state and intensifies inflation.

Wage Freeze

The first step which the Government took to fight inflation was to curb the purchasing power of the workers. But this time the attack had to be broadened and crisis burdens had to be directly placed on a vaster section of the people. Employees, doctors, teachers, professors, engineers all who earned their bread by their honest efforts were drawn into the net. To make it appear that the Government was impartial, some restriction was placed on declaration of dividends also. But in this year's budget this fig leaf has been removed and the wage freeze measures stand out as class measures of the capitalist class to attack all its employees—all whom it exploits.

This has for the first time, made all these sections realise that they are being ground down in the same capitalist mill. It has led to widespread joint actions and protests of the workers and employees about which we have read in the general report. The Delhi Convention of September was an unprece-

dented demonstration of unity. The CITU unions must carry forward this unity and invite all other sections—the professors, teachers, doctors to join together in a common battle. We must all hope soon we all—workers, employees, professors and teachers, Central and State Government employees will come together in a common organisation to wage our battle against the policies of the capitalist-landlord Government. The present organisational division between workers and employees and others is an artificial division created by the ruling classes and the sooner it ends the better. The wage Freeze Act and other accompanying measures affect a vast section of urban people who must be directly drawn into the movement and the entire struggle has to be turned into a huge demonstration of protest against official policies.

Credit Squeeze

One of the important sections which is threatened with is the section of small industries who are being completely ruined under the Government's Credit squeeze policy. This spells disaster for tens of thousands of workers because the small scale industries employ 40 per cent of the total labour force engaged in organised industries. From these sections voices are being raised against credit squeeze of the Government which is paraded as an anti-inflationary measure.

Comrades, The so-called anti-inflationary measures of the Govt. have fallen heavily on the peasant producer. Like the working class he has become the direct victim of the crisis and the official measures to pass on its burdens to the people.

The credit squeeze and several other measures of the Govt. have brought disaster to the countryside. In the first place, the so-called graded levy of foodgrains has become a refined instrument of extorting the produce from the small peasants leaving the landlord safe. Secondly, the credit squeeze and manipulations of the cotton and jute purchasing corporations have ruined

the small cotton and jute growers,—in some months, prices crashing down by 40 per cent. This disastrous fall while it ruined the cotton peasant did not benefit the people or the poor man's cloth. It added only to the profits of the traders, the speculator and the millowner,

And finally, Govt.'s discriminatory taxation and excise against Khandsari producer have ruined them and led to unemployment of thousands of workers.

Discrimination Against Central Employees

Comrades, our CITU must take special note of the fact that the Central and State Government employees, our valiant railway workers and defence workers have been made the special victims of the Freeze Act. They were entitled to get in cash at least half additional D. A. due to them under the terms of the Pay Commission. But though four to six increases in D. A. are due, since July 1974, the employees have received almost nothing. Neither cash nor deposit. The Central and various State Governments are illegally trying to impound the entire D. A.—an act of high way robbery. Some State Governments like the West Bengal Government have offered miserable amounts of Rs. 4 to 8 adding insult to injury. The Government of India recently offered a bogus and defrauding compromise which the fighting leaders were justified in refusing.

We solidly stand by the Central and State Government employees, by the railway and defence employees in their just struggle. We demand that the Central and State Governments desist from the illegal withdrawal of the DA. We send our warm congratulation to the fighting 30,000 State employees of Tripura who waged a heroic strike in March.

Comrades, many workers are anxiously inquiring whether their deposited DA is safe in the hands of the Government, whether they will get them back. We cannot say. It seems no proper accounts are kept either by the management or by the

Government authorities. We should not be surprised if a fraud is committed on thousands of workers. Considering the level of morality of the Congress Ministers and Congress regimes, anything is possible.

Comrades, shall we presume that the wage freeze Act will cease to exist by the end of July as promised, that henceforth our DA will be freed and our accumulated deposits will be available to us to meet our daily needs ?

We should not entertain this dream. The wage freeze Act is not a temporary measure. It is a permanent enactment and will continue to remain so unless the working class succeeds in getting it revoked. Like the Emergency which was specially proclaimed during the Indo-Pak War, it will continue to remain as a permanent fixture. The economic conditions I have described, the need of the capitalists and landlords to throw burdens on us, the recessionary conditions, the Government's partiality for the capitalists and landlords, all these make it clear that Indira Government will not give up its vicious grip over our earnings. The freeze Act or some other substitutes will be found to defraud us of our DA, our wages.

We must from now on demand that the Freeze Act and other accompanying legislations must be withdrawn and should not be allowed to continue. That demand must be voiced from every platform. If the Government is ill advised to continue the Acts, it must be resisted by the full strength of the united workers, employees and professionals.

Unorganised Industries

Comrades, here I must remind you of our duty towards the workers in small industries one of the most heavily exploited sections. There are thousands of small concerns and factories all over the country. Perhaps in Maharashtra alone more than a lakh of engineering workers work in concerns which are not registered as factories. Calcutta may boast of many

more. Thousands of workers in such factories have either been laid off or retrenched due to the crisis. There is no lay-off compensation for them nor retrenchment benefit for them. Their wages often are not more than Rs. 3 per day without any DA and hours of work not regulated. Recently the Maharashtra Government laid down new minimum rates for engineering industries but the employers refuse to implement them.

Comrades, the workers in these unorganised industries must be organised, to secure their legitimate demands ; the State must be compelled to accept its responsibility in subsidising lay-off and retrenchment compensation where necessary and the ESI services.

Conditions are still more horrible in the scheduled employments under the Minimum Wages Act. These include industries like bidi industry which employ nearly 2 million workers of which only 2 lakhs are covered under the Factory Act. Wage rates in these employments range from Rs. 1.50 to Rs. 3 per day, only a small section through its organised strength being able to secure higher rates. The Congress Government have betrayed these workers. The Minimum Wages Act authorises them to revise the wages at an interval not exceeding five years. But the Tripura Government did not raise the wages of the bidi workers for 21 years ; in West Bengal there was no revision for 13 years. It is officially admitted that among the employments carried under the Act minimum wages have not been revised for more than five years in 94 employments and for more than ten years in 34 employments.

The Congress Governments use the Minimum Wages Act to protect the employers. When the workers through their struggle as in Calcutta and Gujarat are able to secure Rs. 7 and Rs. 9 respectively per 1000 bidis, the Congress State Labour Ministers solemnly fix the national minimum at Rs. 5/-.

Facts however reveal that a large number of concerns some of them the biggest are working below capacity. That the overall rate of surplus has hardly increased Compared

with last year. And that perhaps a major part of the surplus has been ensured by raising the price of the product and by reducing the real emoluments of the workers.

The CITU unions must help organise those sections who are often closely linked with the agricultural workers and peasants. Their struggle will galvanise the rural masses and help found their movement.

The Public Sector

Comrades, perhaps in no other country has the Public Sector been so discredited as in India. It has become a synonym for inefficiency, corruption, anti-national deals with foreigners, waste of public money and low production and enormous losses. It is only this year that the Government has started announcing that some concerns are utilising more than 70 per cent of the capacity and profits for a number of them. How far these profits are genuine and how far they have been arrived at by just inflating the prices one cannot say.

But one can easily understand the lack of public spirit in the sector considering the treatment given to the workers. Had the workers been invited to participate on terms of equality the public sector would have given a different story. But then bribery, corruption and favouritism would have had to end.

The vital condition for proper functioning of the Public Sector is the integrity of the officials and the confidence of the workers. In India, both are lacking. The workers are treated as slaves, as feudal retainees. One has only to look to the standing orders which seem to have been prepared on the model of a prison code rather than a public sector undertaking. The workers can be dismissed at will by the management without any procedure. The standing orders of the Bhilai Steel Plant which is run with the technical and financial aid of the Soviet Union lays down "Where a worker has been convicted of a criminal offence in a court of law or where the General

Manager is satisfied, for reasons to be recorded in writing, that it is inexpedient or against the interest of security to employ the workman. the workman may be removed or dismissed from service without following the procedure laid down in Standing Order No. 31." Even if the manager thinks it is just inexpedient to employ the workman he can be dismissed. Here it is really a mixed economy. Technical help from Socialism with standing orders from capitalism. What advance have trade union rights under these orders ?

The Bhilai Standing Order 28 asks the employees to avoid habitual indebtedness, adding insult to the injury when the wage is miserable and DA is frozen.

How much freedom of organisation ? Standing Order No. 29 considers holding of meeting within the premises owned by the company without the permission of the management as misconduct which is punishable.

Collection or canvassing for the collection of any moneys within the works premises without the written permission of the Management or distributing or exhibiting in or about the works premises any newspapers, pamphlets, handbills, posters without the written permission of the management is misconduct.

This is a charter for only stooge unions. No union not liked by the management can collect funds, subscription, issue leaflets or posters. Fundamental rights are alright in the Constitution book but not in the Socialist aided Bhilai Plant.

The Standing Orders of some other undertakings do not allow a worker to act as election agent in the Assembly or Parliamently elections ; do not permit him to contribute to any periodical without the permission of the management. (It seems if you feel like writing poetry, you must seek the permission of the management.) How can the workers feel that they were working for the Public Sector with these atrocious standing orders ? The only way to run the public sector efficiently is to do away with the prison-house conditions, ensure minimum economic guarantees, end the bureaucratic set-up

and establish over-all control and supervision of workers over its functions.

Comrades,

The working class realises that in the present bureaucratic and capitalist set up the public sector concept becomes a mockery. We cannot support this idea of public sector. We stand for public sector with complete trade union rights for the working class, free from bureaucratic management and functioning against monopoly.

Discrimination against Women

Comrades, in our last Conference we decided to fight against the wage and other discrimination in relation to women workers. Our plantation and bidi unions have already taken up the question.

The discrimination against women must be taken as a serious challenge to our movement. It violates the basic principles of equal pay for equal work.

There is a woman Prime Minister at the Centre. There is a woman Chief Minister in Orissa. But the discrimination continues. The bond of common womanhood stands paralysed before the bond of class interests.

To mention only a few wage discriminations in 1972-73 in the Kerala Tea Plantations men were sanctioned a daily wage of Rs. 3.44 whereas women were given only Rs. 3 per day. In Assam, men got Rs. 2.95 whereas women got Rs. 2.75. In coir industry, men got Rs. 4.46 while women got Rs. 3.10 only.

In the bidi industry, in Calcutta, men were paid Rs. 5 per 1,000 bidis in 1972-73 whereas women were paid only Rs. 1.75. After the 1974 strike men got Rs. 7 per thousand whereas women are paid only Rs. 3.50 per 1,000 bidis.

The Government of India ratified the ILO Convention No. 100 concerning equal remuneration for men and women in 1958

Though sixteen years have passed since then, women workers continue to get less wages than men for the same type of work. The CITU reported this violation of the Convention to the Director General of International Labour Organisation.

We also pointed out that it is the Indira Government's deliberate policy to fix lower wages for women. Wage Fixation Committees appointed by the Government have recommended unequal wages for women in plantations, building and construction and other industries. In the Central Public Works Department of the Indian Government the principle of equal remuneration is violated. The minimum wage Advisory Committees in States and at the Centre have also recommended unequal wages and the Governments concerned have accepted them.

The Labour Ministry of the Government of India has no qualms in admitting that the Indian Government does not formally accept the principle of equal wage. Justifying the unequal treatment of women it says in a communication : "The traditional pattern is a differentiation of wage rates for men, women and children." What happens to the Convention solemnly signed ? What happens to the equality among sexes proclaimed in the Constitution ? They are just show pieces for foreigners to look at. No civilised Government will repudiate the principle in this shameless fashion. But everything is possible for the Garibi Hatao mountebanks.

It seems our exposure of the Indira Government before the ILO has compelled it to advertise a legislation promising equality of wages to women. Considering our experience regarding Congress promises, we cannot believe that any progressive legislation is likely to emerge. Most probably it is an advertisement for the International Women's Year, to be forgotten after the year is over. In any case, our agitation and strength to enforce equality must continue.

Unemployment

Comrades, in our last Conference, we had warned that unemployment in our country was not a passing phenomenon,

that situation would continue to deteriorate so long as the Congress continues to impose the capitalist path on our people. I have already referred to the vast number of retrenched and laid-off.

The tortuous growth of the economy is converting a large mass of people into destitutes. The growth of employment in the organised sector, public and private, was only 1.5 per cent between April and December 1973. What else can one expect with the economy crawling at the rate of 0.7%? The last year will show further deterioration with an expected rate of growth of only 3.5 per cent. We have already seen how thousands have been thrown out on the streets.

The number of applicants on live register has therefore continued to swell. Within a year our last Conference, the number of unemployed rose by 10 per cent and reached the staggering figure of 83.55 lakhs by June 1974. The Economic Survey seems to derive some satisfaction from the fact that the rate of unemployment grown was not as high as between July 1972 and 1973 when it reached 33%.

By August 1974, the number of registered unemployed had reached 8.7 million.

In recent months since then, the number must have mounted rapidly. But through change in designation and other devices the authorities are artificially keeping it down.

By June 1974 the number of educated job seekers increased by 5 lakhs to 40.32 lakhs. The bulk of increase in the number of educated job seekers was accounted for by Bihar (1.27 lakhs): West Bengal (0.7 lakhs), Tamilnadu (0.6 lakhs) and Maharashtra (0.5 lakhs.)

Comrades, this quest for a scientific national wage policy was started in the name of doing justice to the lowest 30 per cent of our poverty-stricken population. You all remember that was great watchword with which the Fifth Five Year Plan started. Now-a-days, you do not hear about improving the conditions of the unfortunate 30 per cent for they have been

the first victims of the crisis and plan-holiday. All that remains is an attack on the earnings of the other sections.

According to the estimates made by eminent economists the figure for rural unemployment including under-employed will reach 40 million. Thus the total unemployment in India including under-employed may reach 50 millions. This means 25 per cent of the working population of 183.6 million according to the 1971 census is without employment. This is just breakdown of the social order and not a mere passing unemployment problems.

Aware of the rising anger among the unemployed, the Congress State Governments and the capitalists seek to divert it into fratricidal channels. Instead of granting relief and assuring the citizens the right to work, the Congress ministers raise the slogan of jobs only for the sons of the soil, a demand for the expulsion of workers from other States. Bengali workers to be thrown out from Assam ; Oriyas to be thrown out of Bengal, Tamil and Kerala workers to be thrown out from Bombay and so on. Not only the Shiv Sena in Bombay but Congressmen elsewhere also raise this reactionary slogan. If India is attacked is it the duty only of the workers in the border States to defend it? It only shows that the capitalist-landlord Government despite the glib Congress talk about national integration is unable to protect the unity of the country.

Comrades, the trade union movement has hitherto neglected the question of unemployed. And there is every danger of the unemployed youth being used against the working class a la Adolf Hitler. West Bengal already shows that the danger is real.

To move millions of our rural and urban unemployed, from the pangs of hunger and the infamy of destitution we must demand immediate unemployment relief and the right to work to be inscribed in the constitution as a fundamental right. A government which is unable to guarantee employment has no

right to exist. We must mobilise the entire strength of the employed workers in defence of the unemployed.

Government Schemes to Relieve Unemployment

Comrades, to attack the minds of the educated and rural unemployed, the Central and State Governments announced fantastic relief schemes claiming to produce equally fantastic results. With the parliamentary elections approaching, the number of such schemes go on multiplying. While the CITU supports every genuine measure of help to the unemployed, it cannot but observe that most of the schemes have ended in cheating the unemployed, in feathering the nest of a few contractors and bureaucrats. They have also shown utter callousness of the Government towards the question.

This is seen from official figures. Official statistics presented to the Lok Sabha reveal that while the Government had advertised a target of half a million jobs it claimed less than 20 per cent achievement. The employment generated was only 92,000, after spending nearly 50 per cent of the planned outlay of Rs. 70 crores. Under another employment promotion scheme, it is estimated to have created jobs for 68,159 people. Compare this figure with the figure of 40 lakhs educated unemployed and millions in the rural areas.

The audit of the Rural employment scheme of Orissa also reveals corruption, cheating, falsification of accounts and looting of the public funds. Though the scheme (1971-72 and 1972-73) involving an expenditure of Rs. 3 crores was supposed to give jobs for at least 1,000 persons in each district for ten months in a year for a period of three years. Employment however was provided only for a brief period.

Works which were reported finished were found to be hardly finished. Works were treated as complete when the allotted money was squandered. The volume of work done was less than reported and funds were not used for the purpose intended.

Names of labours did not appear on the muster rolls. Only names of their leaders, i. e. the contractor and the number of labours. So one can imagine who got the money. Only those leaders signed the receipts of payments.

This is the usual story in almost all States and this is how rural unemployment schemes work.

Nonetheless, the rural landlords and Congress Government make demagogic use of these schemes and seem to rouse the sympathy of the rural masses. They often play the village against the city and drive a wedge between the working class, the city toilers and the mass of oppressed agricultural labourers and peasantry,

In Maharashtra, emboldened by the neglect of the peasantry by the trade union movement, they have announced a scheme whose main burden is to be borne by the city's poorer sections, the sections of the working class and the middle classes. The Congress Government alien to all sense of shame virtually exempts the big capitalists farms and landlords with an income upto Rs. 36,000 from the tax but catches the income-tax paying city clerk or worker to impose the new tax. Even those in the cities who are not liable to pay income tax have to pay the new professional tax as it starts operating with salaries of Rs. 400 per month.

The class bias is quite clear. The State Ministry packed with landlord interests has seen to it that the rich farmers, capitalists and landlords have virtually to pay nothing. These forces are virtually exempt from all income tax. They have been the main beneficiaries of the more than Rs. 1,500 crores spent on agriculture. Yet, they are exempted. The city industrialists and monopolists are also allowed to escape lightly. Thus the two main agencies that are responsible for rural destitution and unemployment have got scot free. Make the toilers fight each other—that is the line of the Congress bourgeois-landlord clique.

The CITU must denounce the move to tax the toiling city masses with new burdens. But the trade unions and the work-

ing class must realise that an effective fight cannot be put up without an understanding and support of the rural masses. The Government is emboldened to attack us because of our neglect of the rural masses. This is the price of self-centred economism. Our agitation must make it clear that we stand for relief to the rural masses at the expense of their rural exploiters. There is no doubt that the money raised for the new unemployment guarantee scheme is only an election fund of the rural rich for the next elections and the masses will remain cheated as before.

The Workers' Resistance

Comrades, on an average more than a million and a half workers are engaged in strike action since 1966, a whole decade. No other section of the Indian population has been waging such a persistent struggle against economic conditions against the misdeeds of Congress rule.

Comrades, last three years have been years of continuous struggle. In 1972, the loss of mandays in strikes and lockouts was 20.5 million ; in 1973, when we met last it was 20.6 million; in 1974, the year of the valiant fight of the railway workers it was 31.2 million. the highest on record, the railways contribution is 4. 5 million days.

This increasing resistance was the reply of the working class to continuous attacks on its standard of living inflationary price spiral, fraudulent cost of living index and pilferings in the market with its shortage of commodities.

The railway workers, the Central and State Government employees the L.I.C. and other employees, the valiant jute workers of West Bengal, the cotton textile workers of Tamilnadu and Bombay and Delhi, the heroic mine workers of Raniganj, Dhanbad, the workers of Durgapur, the plantation and industrial workers of Kerala, the workers of Bharatpur, Kota and Jaipur all have played a valiant role in this great fight. Comrades, behind these strikes is the story of courageous fight

against police persecution, victimisation, goonda terror and hi reling murder gangs. Several have laid down their lives in this struggle.

These struggles have often enabled us to defeat the offensive and even advance our interests. In spite of the crisis, many sections have won important victories and advanced the cause of unionism.

Comrades, even then because of inflation our real wages have gone down considerably. It is known that between 1961-71 there was hardly any increase in real wage even according to official statistics. The rising strike wave mainly tried to restore the fall in the intervening years. The wages of workers in unorganised industries are estimated to have fallen at least by 30 per cent.

However, the situation that we are facing now, we will be facing henceforth is something different than what we are accustomed to. The question of defence of our wage and living standard have got directly linked with momentous political questions and political developments. The political developments that are shaking India, the manoeuvrings of the exploiting classes are now directly affecting the conduct of our daily struggles and if we miss this, we will be completely outmanoeuvred.

What is the political significance of the Wage Freeze Act? Is it just a temporary legislation to be withdrawn and forgotten? The Wage Freeze Act was followed by the fixation of the Jute workers' DA by DIR order. Legislation, executive order to fix the wage or DA, to give it in part or to withdraw it completely at the sweet will of the Government—this is something new. This is the beginning of the end of trade unionism, of collective bargaining, and suppression of class struggle of the working class. This is the policy of policing of the workers wages—the beginning of open authoritarianism in the trade union movement.

The right of collective bargaining and struggle was being already taken away. This was already seen in the Air Lines

strike, in the Air India International strike where open demands have been made for the liquidation of trade union organisation.

The Wage Freeze Act however is a crude measure. It is going to be soon replaced by a national wage policy—an enactment which will place all demands regarding wages in the hands of a Government appointed authority.

Mr. Ramanujam INTUC General Secretary has made it clear that the National Wage Commission would act as a watch dog to restrict workers' wages rather than do justice to them. "All agreements and awards in industrial units and industries governing wages and all contracts ensuring the workers of higher wages should become final only after securing the clearance of such a national wages/Income Commissioner. The Commissioner's function would be both supervisory and correctional so that unjustified disparities in wages of workmen demonstrably for the same kind of work as well as disproportionately high wages are reduced," The emphasis on restrictions and reduction of wages—the strike breaking stooge has spoken his master's mind.

The new policy is called an Income and Wages Policy but as is the experience of all capitalist countries, it will only be a wage control policy. It is being given a thin scientific veneer with talk about national incomes, differentials, etc. Under it, the minimum wage in industries will not be more than Rs. 200. With this minimum the Government will consider that it has discharged its responsibilities and any further increase will be made dependent on so many factors including the state of national income and the wages of workers who are unable to organise and defend themselves. Wage increase will be reduced to a farce. Neither workers' needs, nor the profits of the industry nor the quality of the work put by the worker will decide it. The principle of full neutralisation of rise in cost of living, will not be accepted. It will be denied to the majority of the workers who will have to bear the full blast of official inflationary policies. In the name of relating wage incomes to

productivity, intense exploitation of workers will be ensured before miniscule increases are granted. All this is being done in the name of reducing the inequalities as if the basic inequality of present-day society is the difference in the earnings of workers and not between the earnings of classes, not the differences between wage of the worker and the monopoly profits of Tatas, and Birlas.

The Sukhamoy Chakrabarty's report which is the basis of the so-called wage policy is a weapon to divide different sections of the workers, fool the public with the claims to introduce a scientific system of wage payment. It resorts to the usual trick of talking about the low income in the country-side and the income of the workers in unorganised industries and paints the workers in organised industries as a favoured class whose emoluments must be curtailed and brought in line with the level of the most ill-paid section in India.

These mountebanks do not talk about raising the wages of the low paid workers to reduce disparities. They only talk of reducing existing levels.

A scientific wage system can be based on the minimum need-based guaranteed wage—if this is not possible of immediate attainment everywhere, a time-bound period can be prescribed for reaching the minimum level. Only on the basis of this minimum can there be fruitful discussion about differentials based on skills, etc. This will of course mean that the profits of the capitalists must be at the disposal of society.

New Industrial Relations Bill

The third weapon being forged in the armoury of authoritarianism is the new Industrial Relations Bill. It intends to provide for a virtual banning of strikes and foist compulsory arbitration on the workers. But there is more to it than the restriction or banning of strikes.

The Bill will be mainly concerned with laying provisions for choosing the bargaining agent, i. e. who should represent the workers in negotiations with the employers—the question of trade union recognition. It does not strike these hypocritical democrats, those who manage the Government and their yesmen the INTUC and AITUC leaders that the democratic way of choosing the bargaining agent is to take a ballot of the workers in case of dispute. That is precisely what they want to avoid to see that their stooges are given the status of recognised unions.

The ground is being prepared both by the employers and Central Ministers including Mrs. Gandhi by their propaganda talk about multiplicity of unions. Growth of strikes, it is alleged, is not due to the worsening of workers' conditions but because of multiple unions. The workers are of course considered to be cattle prepared to undergo privations for months without any grievances. It is now being hypocritically argued that negotiations cannot be successfully carried on unless only one union is given the exclusive right to represent the workers. Is the Government really concerned with the multiplicity of unions? Then it must denounce itself the policy it has pursued and denounce the capitalist class. Had it not been for continuous repression of the fighting unions and patronage extended to corrupt leaders and organisations, there would have been no cause to complain about multiplicity of unions. But the ruling party followed a systematic policy through grant of recognition, of encouraging its own party unions. The multiplicity of unions today arises mainly from this policy of the Congress party, its refusal to recognise genuine fighting unions. Under these conditions the propaganda against multiplicity of unions has only one objective to secure by law for the Congress party and its allies the sole monopoly of running the trade unions and illegalising all others.

Comrades, this is the main purpose of the new proposed legislation diabolical design. The cry for one union, one

bargaining agent in the mouth of the Prime Minister is but one step short of the cry for one political party in the country. It is a preparation for that authoritarian development a la Mujibur Rahaman whose exploits have been praised by the Prime Minister.

It cannot be said that our CITU unions or our allies have realised the danger being prepared for them in secret by the Government in collusion with the opportunist leaders of the AITUC and INTUC. The utter treachery of which the AITUC leaders are preparing for the working class must be denounced internationally. It is a matter of infinite shame and revulsion that the WFTU consisting of fighting workers' organisations from France and Italy, from the Socialist countries, should allow their affiliate in India to act as a traitor to the cause of the trade union movement and collaborate with the capitalist landlord classes.

Comrades, we have stated that cases do occur when conflicts seem to arise from inter-union differences. But these generally occur when the Government and the management sign anti-working class agreements with servile union leaders behind the back of the workers, bypassing the genuine representative organisations. At the same time, is it not known that of late there has been a growing trend for unity, that on several occasions, the CITU, AITUC and INTUC, HMS, UTUC all have joined hands in common cause. Did the attitude of the Government or the management change when all the unions stood together? What happened in the last jute strike of West Bengal when all unions stood together is well known. The Government and the management joined hands to starve out the workers and break the solidarity of the workers by organising the defection of the INTUC leaders. What happened during the railway strike, more than 100 railway unions stood together. Why does the Government continue to refuse the NCCRS which includes all railway unions?

Comrades, we have made our position repeatedly clear. We stand for one union in one industry; freely chosen by the workers and not imposed by the exploiting classes or their Government. Till such time as the mass of workers come to have faith in one union functioning, democratically with Committees elected democratically, we continue to cooperate with all other genuine organisations. The CITU stands for recognition of unions on the basis of secret ballot and also demands that all agreements entered with the leadership should be endorsed by the mass of workers.

Comrades, the two years since our last Session have witnessed a tremendous growth of authoritarian trends in official policies towards the trade union movement. One Official union one official wage, no strike—these are the watchwords of the new trend. The instrument of execution is the goonda gang.

This trend is a reflection of what is taking place in the country, what is happening to the country's democracy.

Political Repression

The weakness of the peasant movement in rural areas, and the weakness in the political consciousness of the working class have enabled the ruling party to deal with the democratic movement in a ruthless way and perpetrate every kind of atrocity on the fighting people. I have already referred to the large-scale repression against the trade union movement which was also shared by all sections of the people including the students, the peasants, the agricultural workers, the teachers and the mass of untouchables. A Government which is ruthless to them in their struggle is equally cruel to them when they are arrested and jailed. The treatment of political prisoners in India has become an international scandal and it is no surprise that the Government of India did not vote in the U. N. for a resolution demanding the release of all political prisoners kept

by Chilean fascist Junta. Beatings, shootings, tortures all have reached such a height that in the end the Supreme Court had to warn the Government that even prisoners in jails possessed certain fundamental rights which no bureaucracy could override. And to this the statement made by responsible leaders in Bihar that in certain jails of Bihar, women prisoners are virtually kept naked, the authorities refusing to supply them with clothes, according to jail rules.

It is against this regime of starvation, high prices and political repression accompanied by the most widespread corruption that the people have started fighting, demanding immediate redress to their grievance.

The mighty movement in Kerala against the anti-popular policies of the Achutha Menon Ministry in which our CITU is taking a prominent part, is a part of this developing protest. Against it, the Congress-Right Communist Ministry has unleashed unheard of repression arresting thousands, beating hundreds, raping women in police lock-up. More than 130 of cadres belonging to CITU and other democratic organisations have been murdered in Kerala by hirelings of the Ministry. The people are demanding resignation of the ministry and dissolution of the Assembly.

The movement in Bihar against corruption, for dissolution of the Bihar Assembly, for release of all arrested people, for electoral reform, for withdrawal of MISA, DIR and Emergency forms part of this angry protest which people are trying to launch in several States. The electoral reform has come into the forefront because the utter corrupt character of bourgeois democracy is being exposed before the eyes of the people, under the Congress regime. As you know in Bengal, the elections have been completely rigged and the same attempt to spirit away the people's right to elect may be made in the forthcoming elections in many States. Against these legitimate demands raised in Bihar under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan, the Government has come down with ruthless

repression, arresting thousands and shooting many. Leaders of political parties have been externed from Bihar, those who led the movement have been jailed and interned, a reign of terror has been established in the State.

There is no doubt that the association of reactionary parties like Jana Sangh with the movement not only supplies a handle to the Government and its ally, the Right C. P. but also befuddles the mind of the people and constitutes a source of danger to the advance of the democratic movement. For the whole purpose of the movement will be lost if those who are manifestly opposed to democracy and struggle against landlord and capitalist exploitation get the upper hand and get themselves elected in place of the Congress. This danger, the trade union movement and the working class can never forget and in its vigilance it must warn the people against it. At the same time, the organised trade union movement must throw its weight behind the democratic demands and lend its support to them.

Comrades, the working class and the trade union movement has been facing a growing attack against its liberties for a longtime. Our movement in West Bengal has been facing a semi-fascist terror with complete extinction of all liberties in some parts of West Bengal. Recently, it was the turn of Sri Jayaprakash Narayan to face the Congress goonda gangs aided by the revisionist collaborators. It is clear that unless all the democratic organisation join together for civil liberties the Congress Government will extinguish them in no time. The CITU and its unions must take initiative in organising this fight for the protection of civil liberties.

Fully supporting all democratic causes and movements the CITU unions can never forget that only the growing unity of left and democratic forces can defeat the Congress oppressors. Our entire efforts must be concentrated in this direction.

To be able to do this, we must persistently wage a battle against the alarming economic situation that faces the working

class and the trade union movement. It pressages closures loss of jobs and wage reductions.

It is a menace which faces the entire working class and employees and it threatens all sections of our toilers—the agricultural labourers, poor peasants. It is due to the capitalist-landlord policies of the Government, the policies which protect the profits of the foreign and Indian monopolists, of the landlords and attacks the incomes of the workers and the toilers.

It calls the entire working class, all trade unions to unite to resist this offensive more all-pervading and pernicious than the wage freeze. The workers and employees have achieved unprecedented unity at the August Convention in Delhi and carried forth the battle in various Conventions and above all, strike and bundhs. This unity in action has to be further strengthened to ward off the coming attack. Against the threat of unemployment the workers must unitedly raise the demand for right to work, unemployment benefit. They must again raise their voice against rising prices, wage freeze and demand drastic reduction in profits, nationalisation of monopoly concerns, confiscation of food stocks of landlords to distribute them among the people at prices within their reach. Raising the demand for need-based wage they must demand better living conditions for the agricultural labourers, fair price to the peasant for his produce and drastic increase in taxation against the monopolists, big capitalists and the landlords. They must demand elimination of black market and its operations and confiscation of all wealth earned in blackmarket transactions.

It is only with this programme that the workers can fight the attempts of the capitalists and landlords to make them along with the people the scape-goats of the crisis ; of the ruling party to introduce one-party authoritarian rule in the country.

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