

No 9 May 1982 One



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU



WORKERS OF THE WORKING CLASS

NOW IN TRIPURA

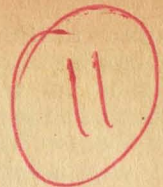
- * Village Panchayats, constituted for the first time through secret ballot, are engaged in the upliftment of village life economically, socially and culturally.
- * Block Panchayat Samities determine priorities and process of development in Block areas.
- * All working people including police and Government employees have Trade Union rights.
- * Employment policy of the Left Front Government is guarantee of priority to the poor and to the minority.
- * Labourers working in the field or in factories or in plantation or on road, get wages at enhanced rate.
- * Small farmers have exemption of land revenue upto two standard acres.
- * Small and marginal cultivators are free from clutches of village money-lender and relieved of all debts
- * Small farmers have protection of law, to establish share croppers' right on the land.
- * Tribesmen have obtained their much needed Autonomous District Council.
- * Tribesmen have their mother-tongue recognised as the second language of the State.
- * Candidates belonging to Tribal Communities have their quota in Government Service ensured.
- * Students have facilities of free education upto Class XII Standard.
- * School children get mid-day meals for those reading in Classes I to V.
- * Students belonging to scheduled caste communities have enhanced rate of stipends.

In the midst of tremendous problems of mass poverty, unemployment, glaring inequalities of income all over the the Left Front Government of Tripura is pledged to strive united, democratic and self-reliant society, free from all nation.

Directorate of Information, Cultural affairs & Tourism,
Government of Tripura).

MAY DAY 1982

B.T. Ranadive



The day of the international solidarity and unity of the working class is a day of assessment of past activities and the progress of the world army of proletarians in its class struggle, for improved living standards, for peace, freedom, democracy and Socialism.

May Day this year sees the workers of capitalist countries locked in a grim combat against the attacks of rising prices, inflation, attacks on wages and against monstrous rise in unemployment. All the capitalist countries are in the grip of the economic crisis with the ruling classes intent on passing its burden to the backs of the workers.

Imperialist War Mongering

In the midst of the crisis hang the dangerous threat of nuclear war contrived by the U.S. imperialists. A war which is threatened to wipe out millions from the face of the earth to satisfy the money making appetites of the USA imperialists.

The war plans are directed against the successful socialist revolutions, against the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. They are also intended to bring the entire world under the domination of the imperialists and reimpose slavery on the newly liberated countries.

The entire working class, the workers of socialist countries, of capitalist countries and of the newly liberated countries will raise on this day their voice against the diabolical plan of nuclear war and will announce the determination of the proletarian army to frustrate the U.S. plans of annihilation.

This May Day both in India and elsewhere must become the day of international protest against the war plans of U.S. imperialism.

Genocidal Character

The devastating character of the war can be seen from the fact that minimum casualties in a limited European war are likely to be 1018 million dead, 160 million wounded with the survivors envying the fate of the dead. This is just a peep into the genocidal character of a full scale nuclear war. To prepare for this carnage, U.S. imperialists and their allies are spending millions of dollars on so-called defence budgets and armaments perfecting nuclear weapons of mass destruction. For 1982 the U.S. defence budget was raised to 220 billion dollars by Reagan. For 1986 it will approach 400 billion dollars. In the period between 1981-86 the USA has budgeted to spend 1500 billion dollars for military purpose. These burdens of military expenditure in the midst of a fall in real wages and loss of jobs announces the thoroughly anti-social character of the imperialist capitalist system.

Inhuman Anti-Social System

The total number of unemployed in the advanced capitalist world is over 20 million. Millions have no job in the underdeveloped countries. In India itself, over 50 million people are estimated to be unemployed.

But the ruling classes of imperialist countries find no other way of expending public money than for preparing for massive massacre. These huge sums spent for productive purposes would have given jobs to millions of people. But this is precisely what goes against the profiteering interests of the monopolies and multinationals who rule in the capitalist countries. All this only shows that the imperialist-capitalist system has become an inhuman anti-social system and the sooner it is ended the better for the mankind.

Strengthen Peace Movement

In contrast to the policies of the capitalist world, the Socialist world pursue the policy of peace, avoidance of war and concentration on the economic development and well-being of people. The superiority of the Socialist system is exactly seen in the fact that it neither requires war for its advance nor does it consider war as a way for saving itself. That is why the socialist countries are not affected by any economic crisis. That is why during the last decade when the capitalist world is facing recession, the Socialist world is forging ahead with speedy rates of production. In the capitalist world, in the last five years unemployment mounted by leaps and bounds while the socialist world continued to be free from unemployment.

At the same time it is noted that because of the war preparations of the imperialists against the socialist countries, the latter also have to divert part of their productive resources for defence which to a certain extent is the cause of the slower rates of economic advance in these countries. The pernicious existence of the imperialist system not only forces unemployment in the advanced capitalist countries but also slows down the rate of progress in socialist countries.

The entire working class and the progressive forces of the world welcome the peace proposals of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries to save the world from a war crisis. Repeatedly the Soviet Union has offered to put limitations on conventional and nuclear armaments, has given assurance, that it will not be the first to start nuclear war and has called for negotiations to end present arms race and gradually eliminate all nuclear weapons.

The war danger has shaken the progressive forces of the world. Huge popular movements for peace

have developed in Europe, men, women, workers and others coming from different walks of life are drawn together in massive demonstrations to demand peace for Europe and elsewhere and limitation on armaments. That fraternal voice for peace and against war is massively raised in the U.S. where common men are ardently expressing their desire for peace.

Vital Significance for India

The working class of India on this day of international solidarity must fully support the peace movement of the world and join its voice with that of his brethren across the seas. At the same time the working class of India must realise that the trade union movement here has not done its minimum duty to discharge its international responsibility. It has failed to rouse India's industrial workers and employees to the danger of a nuclear war and the imperialist conspiracies behind it. This year there must be firm determination to overcome this lag and streamline India's working class with the rest of the world workers in the fight against war, in the fight for world peace.

The fight against war has assumed vital significance for India's workers because it is now connected with the very free existence of the countries of this sub-continent. U.S. imperialism is pouring arms into Pakistan to help the military dictator of that country and create tensions between India and Pakistan. The military regime in Bangladesh, the pro-imperialist regime in Sri Lanka — all constitute a threat to the democracy and freedom of the people in these countries and, as is known, all anti-democratic regimes can easily become the instruments of imperialist policies. On May Day, therefore, the working class of India must send fraternal greetings to the oppressed workers and peoples of Pakistan, to the oppressed workers and peoples of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka and express its determination to prevent hostilities between the neighbouring countries.

Greetings to Workers of Socialist Countries

The working class of India greets the workers and peoples of Soviet Union, Peoples China and other socialist countries on their achievement, their great success in economic progress during the last year. The trade unions in these countries have played their part in building and advancing socialist economy and training their workers as builders of socialism and communism. Simultaneously they have waged a determined struggle for peace and amity among the nations of the world, exposing imperialist plans for war.

A great victory has been scored by the socialist working class and the international movement in defeating the counter-revolutionary conspiracy in Poland and reasserting the authority of the Socialist State. This was a serious challenge behind which stood the world of imperialist and capitalist who wanted to bring down the socialist system in Poland.

Greetings to the Workers of Capitalist World

In the capitalist world, a great fight is going on between the working class and the ruling capitalist circles. The working class of these countries is insistently fighting against attacks on its living standards through inflation, wage reduction, dismissal and unemployment. It is also fighting against intensification of labour, for effecting mass safety technology at industrial enterprises, for improved medical care and pension security. It has refused to accept wage-freeze in the name of fighting inflation.

Inflation in 1981-82 reached an annual rate of 12 to 15 per cent. Some 20 million people were looking for jobs in the industrialised capitalist countries alone. The official underestimated figure in the USA showed about 8 million unemployed; their number was over three million in Great Britain. In FRG, France, Italy it exceeded two millions.

This year not only the factory workers but white-collar workers and other intellectuals were increasingly involved in the fight against the burdens of the crisis. The mounting wave of strike in Great Britain, in the first eight months of the year involved 1.1 million people and there were pitched class battles. The number of those participating in strikes was double that in 1980. Key branches of British industries like electro-technical industry besides transport and publication were involved. In Italy in the first five months of the year, there were more than 1000 strikes involving 6.3 million participants and 60 per cent of these strikes were connected with key economic sectors. In the United States more than 600,000 postal workers struck work in 1981 and this was followed by strikes of miners and air-traffic controllers. The strike of U.S. coal miners which involved 1,60,000 workers lasted for 73 days from March 27 to June 7. The strike of air-traffic controllers which involved 15,500 workers was crushed by the authorities. Large number of trade union leaders and members were arrested, unions were fined, and their assets in the banks and the strike funds were confiscated. This strike of the air-traffic controllers evoked tremendous international solidarity and there was the demand for withdrawal of all repressive actions against the workers.

Rising consciousness from these struggles is reflected in increased scale of action; at actions on national and international scale; in the merger of working class action, in general democratic actions, in defence of peace, against racialism, terrorism and for the rights of general people and women. Organised workers in their strikes are putting forward demands which go beyond the purely economic framework and contain elements of democratic alternative to the social economic policies of the ruling classes. In recent times trade unions in a number of advanced countries are devoting special attention to the question of women workers and their rights. The advanced trade unions are making every efforts to ensure equal pay for equal work, equal opportunity for work and also equal opportunity for women to secure participation in the organised trade union movement.

The economic instability of the last ten years has

led to political instability and there have been 80 governmental dissolutions in advanced capitalist countries, the governments were unable to run their full term under the constitution.

This resistance of the workers was the direct result of the policies pursued by the ruling classes in the last decade as the C.P.S.U's Organ *Pravda* put it: "In the latter half of the 1970's and the beginning of the 1980's the monopolies and the State in a number of monopoly capitalist countries launched a new organised offensive on the economic rights of the working people and made a demand to abridge the social legislation won by the people in persistent struggle. The former Government of France, the conservative cabinet of Britain and the Reagan Administration in the United States were particularly zealous. The latter proclaimed an economic programme and set out to cut food aid to the poor, reduce allowance for the jobless and the invalids and curtailed expenses on the provisions of medicare and on education health and other programmes". In Washington there was a gigantic demonstration to protest against Reagan's policies.

The mood of the working class and the masses was seen in the socialist victory in France. Mitterand's Government supported by the trade unions has now extended state control to about 40 per cent of industrial output.

The fight against multinationals is getting intensified in these countries and there have been strikes embracing workers of the multinationals in different countries.

The trade unions of Western Europe constitute a very powerful force commanding of allegiance of millions of workers. They are in a position to make and unmake Governments. A Government hostile to them cannot be stable. Yet it cannot be said that they are using this power to enable the society to make quick transition to socialism. The leadership deeply steeped in bourgeois parliamentarism is unable to break the vicious circle of strikes, elections and again strikes and elections. It does not bid for real power in the hands of the working class.

In all the western countries there is a strong urge for trade union and international solidarity. The intensified struggle against multinationals has added to this urge. The trade union's struggle against monopolies of these countries is having widespread political repercussion and helping the mass of people to join in common combination to fight the rule of State monopoly capitalism.

Greetings to the Workers of Third World Countries

The working class of India greets on this day the workers of the Third World countries who are fighting their battle against heavy odds. Many liberated countries are ruled by dictators and consequently there is widespread repression and terror against the working class movement. In many of these countries — Asian and African — legislation forbids strikes, and regards participation in them as a punishable offence. In Egypt under Sadat, a law was promulgated in 1977 prescribed hard labour

for life for participation in strike, rallies or demonstrations. In Pakistan workers are flogged or sent to imprisonment for 14 days for participation in strikes. In India, the Indira Government has passed the Essential Services Maintenance Act which prescribes two years imprisonment for participation in illegal strikes. Almost every productive activity is included under these essential services.

Despite these, thousands continue to participate in strikes. India contributes the largest number of strikes and participants.

In the course of the class struggle, the working class adopts varying methods and forms of struggles. Along with the traditional forms of struggles and demonstrations, the workers adopt gherao and seizure of factories, chess-board strikes when the work is ceased in various sections of the industry in accordance to a definite rule, work-to-rule and so on. A large number of strikes takes place despite official ban.

Inevitably the trade union movement of all Third World countries has to take up the fight against imperialist designs and multinational penetration of their countries. The workers find their living standards blocked by imperialist exploitation, neo-colonialist designs and penetration of multinationals. In a number of countries the policies of the ruling circles and classes help imperialist penetration. The working class and the trade union movement are therefore called upon to oppose these policies and come into conflict with the Government of their country. In India now there is a near unanimity among trade unions to fight the multinationals and official policies favouring them. The Bombay Convention gave a clear expression to trade union opinion on this issue. The IMF loan and the conditions attached to it have also drawn widespread protest from the trade unions.

In all Third World countries the trade unions are waging an incessant struggle to end the colonial wage system and improve the living standards of the working class. And many of them are realising that without liberating the peasantry of their country from pre-capitalist forms of exploitation, the working class cannot radically change its own living conditions.

The trade union movement in all countries has become a component part of the struggle for democracy, freedom and socialism in these countries. In some countries it is coming to the forefront as the steadiest fighter and initiative often lies with it. Anti-imperialist in its outlook the trade union movement of these countries develops fraternal feelings and relations with the Socialist countries and workers for peace and against war. It develops warm fraternal feelings for the working class of Third World countries and is a staunch supporter of non-alignment.

The three sections of the world trade union movement are coming together in the common fight against war for international solidarity of the working class, and the fight for freedom, peace, democracy and socialism.

Growing Struggles

A review of the last year's activities in India shows rapid progress as well as certain inhabitant weaknesses inherited from the past.

The failure of the trade union movement in the relation to the struggle for peace has already been pointed out. In the struggle for defence of standard of living of the workers the trade union movement have registered important advances. The illusions following the return of Indira are shattered and workers' actions and strikes which went down in 1980, increased in 1981. The number of mandays lost went beyond 25 million, 4 million above 1980 figure, though much less than the 1979 figure. The number of mandays lost in the public sector almost doubled since the preceding year.

But the most outstanding feature of the year that has gone is the achievement of united action and trade union unity. There was a break with the morose conditions of the earlier year when some central trade unions reeling from the defeat that their political leaders had suffered in the 1980 elections were chary of mass actions.

The CITU has steadfastly worked for the united action and helped by others was successful in giving a push forward to trade union unity.

The Bombay Convention was a very important step in the direction of unity.

Never before so many organisations covering different industries, central trade unions and federations together with the organisations of employees had come together to voice their common protest against the anti-labour policies of the Government; and champion the demands of the people, the peasant and the agricultural labourer.

The massive unity demonstrated on 23rd November when lakhs of workers gathered in the Capital to voice their protest and the demands raised on behalf of the people and the call for strike marked yet another step in the unity and consciousness of the trade union movement. The demonstration included hundreds of working women coming over a long distance to the Capital and reflected the new awakening among women workers which was made possible by CITU unions devoting special attention to their problems.

The unity demonstrated on 19th January to implement the call for strike was unprecedented in trade union history. With the support of major opposition parties the strike became a complete bandh in many places drawing tens of thousands of shopkeepers, hoteliers, lawyers and professionals.

The demands raised by the strike were significant and conformed to the international trend of merging of working class demand with the demands of democracy and defence of living standards of all sections of the downtrodden.

On 19th January the working class demanded sale of essential commodities to our people at subsidised prices, remunerative prices to the peasant, minimum living wage and job security to agricultural workers, measures against blackmarketeers, repeal of National Security Act 1980 and the Essential Services Maintenance Act which was

enacted to satisfy the conditions attached to the IMF loan; recognition of trade unions on the basis of secret ballot and full guarantee of collective bargaining and trade union rights; ban on retrenchment and closure, unemployment allowance to the unemployed; withdrawal of all victimisation measures, need-based wage and full neutralisation of the rise in the cost of living and bonus for all.

By combining the demands of the workers with the pressing demands of the peasants and the agricultural workers, with the demands of the suffering people against fleecing prices, the trade union movement is taking steps to unite all sections opposed to the exploiting rule of the bourgeois-landlord class, and the authoritarian party and seeks to discharge the historic responsibility of the working class to the people.

The strike protest against the NSA and ESMA give expression to the working class protest against the authoritarian regime and the determination to defend the democratic rights of the people.

No wonder the authoritarian Government came down with a heavy hand against the workers. More than 60,000 workers — 20,000 in Kerala alone — including trade union office-bearers were arrested and put behind the bars. The INTUC leaders were active in breaking the strike and attacks of anti-socials against the workers were common. More than ten workers fell victims of brutal police firings.

But the strike was a success and its lessons and heritage have to be carried forward.

Organisationally the weakest part of the strike was the railway and Central Government organisations including Defence organisation. The reformist leaders of these organisations could not make up their mind to join the strike though many of them have earlier supported the call and also decided to join it. In West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura however the employees joined the common action in a big way.

Among the State Government employees the strike evoked magnificent response in West Bengal, Kerala, Maharashtra and Tripura. In other States there was hardly any response.

Overcome Weaknesses

These weaknesses have to be removed. Unless this is done they are likely to prove extremely dangerous to future growth and encourage the Government to launch a general attack on the present gains of the workers.

The Government is already at the game. Exploiting the weakness and meakness of the leaders the Government has enforced compulsory deposit scheme of arrears of dearness allowance on the Central employees. This will be soon used as the precedent first in the relation to the central employees and then in the relation to all sections of employees and workers. It is the same leaders that let down the workers by agreeing to link bonus with productivity and now the Government is intent on introducing this principle in all industries.

It is necessary that the Central trade unions and federations hold a dialogue with these leaders

making them aware of the great harm done to the trade union movement by their policies. Above all, it is necessary to make an ardent appeal for unity and common action to the masses of Central Government, State Government, railway and defence employees to fight for their demands shoulder to shoulder with the rest of the working class, to fight unitedly for the common demands of the workers and the people.

Notwithstanding these weaknesses the 19th January strike was an unprecedented event and showed the rising consciousness of the trade union movement.

The unity that led to the 19th January strike, was the result of repression and attacks against the living standards of workers. The repression launched against the LRSA and public sector workers' strike, the offensive against the LIC employees, the growing illegalisation of strikes demanded united protests and activities from the working class.

Harness Class Strength

It may now be safely assumed that through the united protests the trade unions and federations are realising that they are now face to face with definite economic and political policies of the Government which can be combated only on the basis of their class strength. Questions of rising prices, inflation, deficit financing, imports and exports policy, IMF loan or ESMA and NSA are not matters that can be remedied by a section of the working class. To combat them the working class should face the Government unitedly as a class. This is the realisation that is seeping to the movement through the experience of common action, especially the historic 19th January strike.

This consciousness has to be carried forward — the process of trade union demands merging with general democratic demands, the process of trade unions coming out as champions of the peasantry has to be carried forward. If carried forward consistently it will result in important political developments, placing initiative in the fight against authoritarianism with the working class.

The 19th January strike itself revealed the possibilities of united working class action broadening into people's actions against the authoritarian regime. The decision of the organised trade union movement to go into united action, the certainty that the action will embrace lakhs of workers evoked support from the opposition political parties and led to the participation of wide sections of the people including the peasantry.

The championing by the trade unions of the demands of the peasants, agricultural workers and the people immensely widened the scope of the action.

Carry Forward the Heritage

On May day, there must be firm resolve to carry forward this heritage of the 19th January. The working class if it is to be true to itself and its people must courageously face the immediate prob-

lems that confront the country. At the centre is the grim fight against the authoritarian regime.

Certain sections of the working class, the working class of West Bengal, of Kerala and Tripura have been in the forefront of this struggle defending the Left Ministries and frustrating the designs of the Congress(I) Government against them and protecting these advanced outposts of democracy.

Defeat Authoritarianism

Today all over India the challenge of Congress (I) its arbitrary and corrupt rule with its collapsed law and order, with its attacks on judiciary and designs for Presidential form of Government continues to spread. It has to be combated at each step in cooperation with other democratic forces. The cooperation established between the trade union movement and political parties opposed to the authoritarian party has to be carried forward. In particular, the trade union movement should establish strong bonds of cooperation with Left parties who are consistently fighting against the authoritarian Government.

The coming elections in West Bengal and Kerala call upon the working class in these States and the entire working class of India to do everything to defeat the Congress(I) and ensure the victory of the Left forces and their allies.

The performance of the Left-led ministries in these states is now well-known to the Indian people. They loyally stood by their electoral promises, protected workers' rights to strike, refused to employ police in industrial dispute or any democratic and economic agitations of the masses and condemned both the NSA and the ESMA. These acts of theirs made them advance outposts of democracy fighting against the attacks of the authoritarian party.

They did not protect democracy in the abstract. They gave a concrete meaning to it by protecting the workers, agricultural workers, sharecroppers, Government employees, teachers, the unemployed and others against the ravaging exploitation of vested interests and high prices. The West Bengal ruling front openly supported the 19th January strike and identified itself completely with the struggle of the working class.

These achievements of the Left ministries would not have been possible had they not been headed by the CPI (M), the trusted party of the working class which inside the ministry or outside does not hesitate to carry on this struggle against the authoritarian party and the bourgeois-landlord rule. It is not accidental that the CITU guided by the same party is in the forefront of the workers' struggle, leading its battle for unity and its class struggle. The official reports of Indira Government concede that the CITU has led the largest number of strikes and workers' agitations in the recent years.

The West Bengal election come in the wake of the defeat of the Congress (I) plot of sabotage them through court appeals. The people and the working class of West Bengal are now getting another opportunity to rout the Congress (I) once again and

give a lead to the democratic forces in the country. The complete rout of Congress(I) will advance democratic movement in India by ten leagues and place the initiative in the hands of the working class and the Left forces. Let the working class of West Bengal, creator and inheritor of rich revolutionary traditions fulfil its role in the coming battle.

The working class of Kerala has to play a similar role and give a lead to the country. Here the Congress (I) cornered from all sides is relying on the forces of sectionalism, communalism and reaction to win the election. The working class of Kerala has broken these barriers several times. It knows the Congress (I) ministry in Kerala means a reign of terror, corruption and murders in police custody. The working class of Kerala headed by the CPI (M) lead the election battle to rout the authoritarian party and its communal allies like BJP and Koya Muslim League.

The working class of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh will throw all their weight to defeat the Congress (I) and strengthen the representation of Left forces in the legislature.

The working class in all states must propagate for the victory of the Left forces of West Bengal and Kerala.

Defend National Integration

This May Day calls upon the working class to attend to other challenges also.

The imperialists are at their old game of disintegrating the country's unity. In Assam they are promoting secessionist movements, exploiting the economic backwardness of the people; in the Adivasi areas they are doing the same with the help of some foreign Christian missions; inside the country they are financing Hindu communal organisations to cause the resurgence of Hindu orthodox. The RSS plays the same game and the Jamait-e-Islami proponent of Islamic fundamentalism also helps the imperialists' game to divide the country on communal lines. The oppression of harijans also contributes to this disintegrating process in a big way.

This disintegration of the struggle of the common man and the disintegration of national unity are intended to help the imperialist plot to re-enslave the country. The working class has to fight against this danger by fighting the communal and casteist forces as it has to fight the danger to country's freedom from outside emanating from the feverish arming of Pakistan.

The working class is best suited to serve the nation because the class organisations can unite all communities and castes. Only they should learn to pay more attention to the demands of the oppressed communities and castes.

Hold High the Banner of Peace, Democracy and Socialism

Protecting the unity of the country, fighting against disintegration, protecting its freedom from

the attacks of the imperialists, the working class must raise high the banner of Socialism. It must direct all its energies to hasten progress towards the high aim of abolition of exploitation and installing people's power headed by the working class. It knows that its slavery and the economic exploitation of the Indian people will not end unless the rule of the bourgeois-landlord classes is ended.

It should know that neither the unity of the country nor its freedom can be protected longer under the bourgeois landlord rule. The pace of disintegration under this class rule is bound to increase. That is why it is absolutely necessary that the working class forces organise behind them sufficient support of all democratic elements and especially the peasantry to change this social order and its state power. The working class, therefore, hails the great awakening among India's peasants and agricultural workers. The recent struggles of these sections, have created history and added to the boiling cauldron of discontent. By supporting their struggle the working class has taken an important step towards the alliance of workers and peasants.

This May Day must proclaim its firm resolve to work for the workers and peasants alliance.

Raising high the banner of proletarian internationalism the working class of India joins other contingents in the fight against war, against imperialist plots against the Soviet Union and other Socialist countries, against the freedom of newly liberated countries, for peace, freedom, democracy and Socialism.

Hungarian TU Delegation Visits CITU Office

A three member Trade Union delegation led by Jozsef Timmer, Deputy Secretary General, Central Council of Hungarian Trade Unions visited the Central Office of CITU on April 8. They were received by Mohd Ismail M.P. Vice President and M.K. Pandhe and Nrisingha Chakrabarty both Secretaries of CITU.

Jozsef Timmer, conveying greetings from the Central Council of Hungarian Trade Unions expressed keen desire to know the situation in India and establish fraternal relations with CITU. The situation in which the CITU had to be organised and the efforts made for forging united struggle was explained to him. The delegation was also apprised of the deepening economic crisis and growing authoritarian attack on trade union and democratic rights in India and the developing united resistance against this. Both the sides expressed desire for strengthening fraternal relations.

May Day Manifesto of the CITU—1982

On the occasion of May Day, 1982, the CITU draws pointed attention of the working class to the growing danger of war created by the Reagan administration of USA under the fictitious plea of Soviet threat. The CITU denounces the Reagan administration for its hysteric bid to spiral the most incredible arms race history has ever recorded and converting the world into an arsenal of nuclear arms including the Neutron Bomb, which threatens humanity with total extermination. The immediate target of attack is the Soviet Union and other socialist countries who have been advancing the cause of peace, democracy and socialism. The CITU calls upon the working class and all revolutionary forces to wake up to a class conscious life, as Lenin put it, raise the banner of proletarian internationalism and defend the socialist camp against war and for peace.

The Working Class must not forget that the history of monopoly capitalism and imperialism is replete with violence and war. In a short span of 25 years they plunged humanity in two world wars and slaughtered forty million people with a colossal destruction of wealth created through the toil of the working class. These aggressive plans have their origin in the desperate conditions of the capitalist economy which is enmeshed in a severe crisis, worst since the 1930s. Inflation in the capitalist countries in 1981-82 reached the annual rate of 12 to 15 per cent. Unemployment in advanced capitalist countries rose to 24 millions. According to AFL-CIO, inflation has shot up to 26 per cent between August 1978 and August, 1980 and unemployment has reached ten millions in USA.

Production of more and more arms by the military-industrial complex which was considered a necessity for the sustenance of monopoly capitalism has only resulted in throwing the teeming millions into poverty, hunger, unemployment and insecurity. Having failed to contain the crisis, the USA is feverishly continuing its preparation for global domination and has become the foremost leader of the imperialist aggression today.

In sharp contrast, the socialist countries are continuing socialist construction for betterment of the living standards of their people and firmly pursuing for peace. So far India is concerned, the feverish arming of the military rulers of Pakistan by America has brought the war danger to its door steps. Furthermore, the expansion of the US military base at Diego Garcia has heightened this danger. The CITU calls upon the working class of India to denounce and defeat the nefarious designs of the US to make Asians fight Asians in cooperation with the working class and people of Pakistan.

The struggle for peace as against these imperialist war mongering is gaining ground throughout the world. Massive demonstrations against the war preparations were held in various cities including in USA, with the common slogans: "peace and not war" and "down with the Neutron Bomb". On the occasion of May Day CITU extends its solidarity with the working class and peace loving people of the advanced capitalist countries particularly of USA for calling a halt to war preparations and greets them for their consistent struggles against monopoly capital braving repression.

The CITU greets the working class of the Latin American countries for their determined struggle against the reactionary Governments supported by the US imperialists. CITU denounces the aggressive designs of the United States against the Socialist Cuba and proclaims its solidarity with the working class and the people of Cuba.

The CITU greets the working class and the toiling people of the underdeveloped countries for their unrelenting struggles against poverty, hunger and repression by their ruling capitalist class and against the imperialist thrust for neo-colonialisation.

The CITU greets the working class of Socialist countries for carrying forward the struggle for peace, for the spectacular advances made in socialist constructions inspite of being compelled to divert substantial funds for defence against war preparations by the imperialist countries led by the USA, and for effectively combating the attempted counter revolution and subversion of Socialism in Poland by the agents of US imperialists.

The Indian Situation : Fleecing the People

Following the bankrupt path of capitalist development and linked to the capitalist world India is in the throes of a deep economic crisis. Price rise and inflation are going on unabated. The Consumer Price Index number of industrial workers (base 1960-100) which stood at 411 in January, 1981-rose to 460 in December, 1981. Inflation was at 15.9 per cent in Jan. 1981. In such a situation the Government has inflicted a burden of Rs. 1300 crores on the people. The railway budget has put a further burden of Rs. 400 crores as increase in freight and fare and the postal rates have further been pushed up.

Not content with these imposts, the Government have embarked on a policy of wage-freeze and impounding the DA of the employees. The Finance Ministry has instructed the Bureau of Public Enterprises not to increase the wages of the workers without increase in productivity. The Democles' Sword

is now hanging over all the workers especially in the Steel and Coal industries.

Dependence on external assistance has become a permanent feature of the Indian economy. Foreign loan would be to the tune of Rs. 13,000 crores in the Sixth Plan. The huge indebtedness and the conditionalities of the World Bank/IMF loans have trapped the country in the brutal vicious circle of debt service payments with growing interest rates and more debts, from which the country will never be able to come out.

More exports are being forced on the country to pay back foreign debts, diverting goods from the internal to the external market. To satisfy the demands of the World Bank/IMF subsidies are being reduced, service charges are being increased and concessions to the multinationals are being given without any let or hindrance. FERA and MRTP Acts are being amended to allow the tentacles of imperialism to ravage the resources of our country and heaping miseries on the people under international capitalist racketeering.

Unemployment

The Employment Exchanges have already recorded the number of job seekers at over 17 millions. The total figure with the rural unemployment is estimated at over 50 millions at the end of 1981. The CITU greets the students, youth and various sections of workers for launching a struggle for right to work and unemployment relief and extends full support to their cause.

Growing Authoritarianism

Indira Government, in pursuance of its pro-multinational and pro-landlord policies, has taken recourse to pass on the burdens of the crisis to the working class and the toiling people. One after another authoritarian measures are being adopted to discipline all sections of the working people by curbing their democratic and trade union rights. The attacks have sharpened after the last May Day. To subvert the fundamental right of strike of the workers, it has armed itself with the ESMA, banning strikes and notified sixteen industries as essential services under the NSA. The principle of collective bargaining and trade union rights are being trampled underfoot. Patronising its stooge union, the INTUC, the Government is ruthlessly suppressing the joint struggles by all trade unions, particularly by the CITU, with the help of the police and the anti-socials. Attempts to make judiciary subservient to its anti-labour policies and foist a Presidential form of Government continue unabated.

Intolerance to Left-led Governments

The struggle between the forces of democracy and the forces of dictatorship sharpened during the period. The forces of dictatorship led by Congress

(I) escalated the nefarious designs to destabilise the left-led Governments and manoeuvred to foist a minority Government in Kerala. But all its acrobatics failed to stabilise the "casting vote" Government in Kerala and fresh elections had to be ordered conceding to the demands of the democratic forces. Similar attacks against the Left-front Government of West Bengal were launched and ultimately all its attempts to postpone the democratic elections turned into a fiasco.

Divisive and Secessionist Forces

The CITU calls upon the working class to remain vigilant and struggle against the divisive and secessionist forces which have posed a challenge to the unity and integrity of the nation. The working class must understand that imperialist agencies are taking full advantage of the uneven and tardy developments of the various regions, backward tribes and the castes under the capitalist path, to divert their genuine demands to the path of secessionism and tear apart the united fabric of the nation. Divisive slogans and communal passions are being raised at various parts of the country. The CITU greets the people of Assam, Tripura and other places for waging a stubborn fight to defeat these separatist forces and keep the integration of the nation intact. The working class must fight for the cause of the minority communities and the backward tribes and castes without which it can not play its vanguard role.

Rising Struggles

The CITU greets the working class for unleashing militant and united struggles against the authoritarian and anti-labour policies of the Government. The last one year has seen massive struggles in various industries in Maharashtra, UP, Bihar, Haryana, Karnataka and other states. Bitter long drawn struggles are continuing in Bombay, Kanpur and other places of the country.

On the occasion of May Day the CITU greets the State Committees, its affiliated unions and activists for conducting protracted struggles facing ruthless repression by the police and the INTUC hoodlums in the Assam Tea Gardens, in Kanpur J.K. Rayons and Jute, and at different centres in Haryana. The CITU also warmly greets the Government employees and other salaried employees for their determined struggle in Bihar, Rajasthan, UP and elsewhere in the country.

The constant rise in prices and fall in real wages, ruthless suppression of democratic and trade union rights, firings and killings by the police and employers' thugs, arrests, closures and lock-outs, — all the ills of the capitalist path of development — have led the working class to take to the path of united struggles to change the pro-capitalist and pro-landlord policies of the Government. The CITU noted that realisation was growing among the organised trade union movement that the remedy lies in

rousing the united might of the toiling people and did its best to foster broadest possible unity. The Bombay Convention of June 4, 1981 successfully led to the formation of the National Campaign Committee and paved the way for launching an united struggle against price rise and anti-labour policies of the Govt., on demands which not only raised the immediate economic demands of the workers, peasants and agricultural labour but also included demands of the people including democratic rights. The historic march to Parliament on November 23 by half a million of workers, peasants, agricultural labourers, students, youth and women exhibited their determination to forge ahead.

The countrywide industrial general strike of January 19 created a new chapter in the annals of the working class struggles in India. Facing unprecedented repression the twelve million creators of history demanded a change in the policies of the Govt. The subsequent struggles and the anti-victimisation day agitations on February 23 forced various employers to withdraw some of the victimisations imposed on the workers for participating in the strike.

Worker-Peasant Alliance

On the occasion of May Day the CITU calls upon the working class to realise that the peasantry and rural poor are coming out in the arena of struggles and it must make common cause with them.

The working class cannot fulfil their vanguard role unless it champions their cause, supports their struggle and takes the peasantry along with them in the struggle for changing the order of society and banishing exploitation of man by man. The Bombay Convention has initiated a good step. Let May Day inspire the working class to fight for the demands of the peasants and the agricultural labourers and establish firm alliance with them through unity in action.

Consolidate the Left & Democratic Forces

On the occasion of May Day, the CITU proclaims the fact boldly that the Governments of West Bengal and Kerala led by the CPI(M) served as beacon lights by translating in practice the real meaning of democracy by protecting the workers, peasants, agricultural labourers and all sections of the toiling people from the exploitation by vested interests and the authoritarian onslaught of the Indira regime. While they stopped the interference of the police in the democratic struggles of the people and workers, they gave the right to form associations to the police itself. CITU calls upon the working class and the people of West Bengal and Kerala to once again utilise the opportunity in the coming election on May 19 and defeat the forces of dictatorship led by Congress(I). They must realise that victory of democratic forces led by CPI(M) means carrying forward the fight against authoritarianism and championing the cause of the have-nots. They should, therefore, strengthen the left forces particularly the CPI(M) in the coming elections all over the country.

The CITU calls upon the working class to consolidate the unity achieved through the struggles and draw in still larger sections of the backward masses into the vortex of future struggles. Let the call of May Day instill the determination of the working class to march together with the peasantry and the agricultural labourers and unleash militant mass actions championing the cause of the entire toiling people. Let the mass actions unite the forces of democracy against the authoritarian regime and enthuse the people to fight for an alternative economic policy in India. Let May Day imbibe the working class with the historic task of fighting for peace, democracy and socialism, upholding the banner of proletarian internationalism.

Long Live May Day
Long Live CITU
Workers of the World Unite.

TAMIL NADU STATE COMMITTEE MEETS

The Tamilnadu State Committee of CITU decided to build up mass movements in all districts with the demands of the workers and the peasants. In its meeting at Erode from March 26 to 28, it decided to hold district-wise conventions against increasing retrenchments, lay-offs, closures, lock-outs, against productivity-linked wages, police repressions and attacks on the peasantry and the agricultural labourers. It also decided to build up struggles making common cause with the women's demands and mobilise large sections of the working women in women's conventions to be held in Madras, Madurai, Nilgiri, Kanyakumari and Salem.

In a resolution, the committee condemned the role of the R.S.S., Hindu Munnani and other communal organisations for inciting communal disturbances in Kanyakumari and other parts of the state. Conveying its condolences to the bereaved

families, the resolution called upon all democratic and secular forces to defeat their communal conspiracies, foster unity amongst the toiling people and the working class and fight for the cause of the minority communities.

In another resolution, the Committee denounced the State Government for the new anti-labour bill brought in the assembly for banning strikes and demanded withdrawal of the bill. Other resolutions adopted, demanded withdrawal of all victimisations for participating in the January 19 strike, judicial enquiry in the firings in Tanjore District on January 19, against increased taxes in the budget proposals, against the State Government's new policy of allowing entry of private sector in electricity and sugar industry etc. The Committee also decided to raise Rs. 50,000/- towards the "Tanjore District January 19 Martyrs' Fund.

Rally Against Imperialist War Danger

Nripen Chakrabarty

Chief Minister

Govt. of Tripura

May Day is a day of international solidarity and action of the working class. This year, faced with unprecedented economic crisis, imperialism, and American imperialism in particular, has resorted to building up of war bases for stock piling of nuclear arms, not only in Asian and Latin American countries but also in Europe. This has made war danger real. In capitalist countries, the entire burden of the crisis is being shifted on the shoulders of the working people, and, wherever the working people refuse to shoulder it, repression of semi-fascist character is let loose and democracy becomes the first casualty. This is as much true for India as it is for any other capitalist country.

American Conspiracy

American imperialism knows that India is a vast country having a glorious tradition of united democratic struggle. Though a multi-national country, it was possible for the Indian people to come together in the long-drawn fight against British imperialists who knew that without weakening India from within, making a section of the people fight another, it may not be possible to gain their hold on our country.

Smt. Gandhi and her Govt. at the centre, are well-aware of this war danger. The arming of Pakistan, building-up of nuclear bases at Diego-Garcia, have rightly been identified as places from which real threat to Indian Sovereignty, may come. The recent developments in Bangladesh, the political instability created there by the military dictator, are potential dangers for us. Smt. Gandhi is also aware that, in our difficult days, Soviet Union was alone our most reliable ally, and, our treaty of friendship with Soviet Union has been tested in all critical moments. But while speaking of War-danger, she is not unequivocal. She puts two 'super-powers' at par, as if both are dangers to world peace.

Indira Govt's Surrender

Similarly, the Prime Minister, while rightly emphasising that the country should be defended at all costs, seems to forget that it is not the arms, however sophisticated and modern they may be, that can defend the country, if the people are forgotten. Her acceptance of IMF loans on the shameful conditions, her taxation and fiscal policies, her wooing of big business and black money, her refusal to put the burden of the defence expenditure on monopolists, all go to show that she is not serious

about the danger ahead. She talks of observing the year 1982 as 'Productivity Year' while refusing to look after the welfare of the working people, without whose active role no production is possible. Similarly, in the interest of big-business, she refuses to pay remunerative prices to the agriculturists for their produce. Not only that, in order to suppress their legitimate demands and lawful trade union activities, she uses draconian laws like NSA, ESMA etc.

Role of the Toiling Masses

Therefore, on this May Day, the working people of our country alone can genuinely make our people conscious about the war danger. They alone can mobilise all forces of peace against imperialism and American imperialism in the main; they alone can fight against the big-business-landlord onslaught, and, for improving the living conditions which are constantly under attack. The working people alone can play the leading role in mobilising all anti-authoritarian forces in defence of democracy without which resistance to imperialism could not be imagined.

Defend National Integration

Similarly, Smt. Gandhi and her Govt. at the centre are seemingly very vocal in defence of national integration. But in practice, her party has hardly any scruples in the matter of making alliance with communal, secessionist and other divisive forces who are tools in the hands of imperialist-reaction. The working people, as true internationalists, can alone fight for national integration, for amity among different national groups. Without fighting for national integration, it is idle to talk of national defence.

Tripura Experience

We in Tripura, since our Left Front Govt. has come to the Ministry, have had varied and rich experiences in all these matters. While a section of the tribal minorities, being misled by a section of the Church, raised slogans for an 'Independent-Tribal State' for the tribals, a section of the Bengalis, who formed a formidable majority, under the leadership of Ananda Margis, raised the slogan for a 'Bengalistan' (A separate greater Bengali State). The party led by Smt. Gandhi, in their last-ditch-battle for survival, allied themselves with both these disruptive forces to halt the advance of the democratic forces. It was no easy task for the Left Front Govt.

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War and Women

Vimala Ranadive

It is a fact to be acknowledged by every person that the danger of war was never so great as it is today. The people all over the world including the people in USA, are raising their voice to put a stop to this madness of the American imperialists and their allies who have decided to use the neutron bombs and other weapons which threaten annihilation of the whole people. In the first world war of 1914, 10 million lives were lost. The Second World War of 1939, took the toll of 55 million people. If any nuclear war is started now the toll would be 10,000 times more.

Women and Children are the First Victims

Women and the children in particular are the first victims of wars and suffer tremendously. This has been amply proved from the experience of the two world wars, Vietnam, Kampuchea, as well the present wars in Palestine, Chile, Nicaragua, South Africa and in a number of places where attacks are continuing by imperialist countries and the reactionary rulers. Thousands of women are killed by bombing, tens of thousands are turned into widows, and children become orphans. Women are raped and molested and indignities are heaped by soldiers. When the special commission on "Protection of Women and Children living under extremely harsh conditions" met at Prague, Women delegates facing atrocities by American imperialism, South African Apartheid Government and the reactionary rulers, narrated the sad stories which brought tears and anger to the listeners. Where does the UNO stand in the events of so many atrocities, the question was raised.

Arms race is a heavy burden placed on working women resulting in their unemployment and low wages. According to ILO statistics there are 575 million women engaged to work, that is, 35 per cent of the world's labour force. Though they represent a little over 1/3 of the total force, they receive only one-tenth of the world's revenue. Under the heavy blow of economic crises, inflation, housing drudgery, and so on, they suffer most due to preparation of wars. Unfortunately, a large section of women are compelled to lead the life of prostitution.

Schools, Education, Hospitals instead of Arms

Even before wars break out, the women and children start to suffer because of increased military expenditure which causes inflation and almost invariably follows curtailment of social expenditure.

It is a fact that 700 to 750 million barrels of oil are being used in the world annually for military

needs. To feed all the famished children in the world it would be enough to spend only 10 per cent of the means annually going into the arms race today. The WHO spent \$ 83 million in ten years to eradicate smallpox to some extent. This money would buy only one modern strategic bomber. We are aware that the programme of eradicating malaria by WHO has stalled for lack of funds. Complete nuclear disarmament would release more than 20,000 scientists and engineers and they could take part in peaceful nuclear programme, in developing countries.

According to UN Food and Agriculture Organisation half the earth population are undernourished and by 1985 the world will be short of 85 million tons of grain. In India, this will mean a shortage of 11 per cent of the required amount.

Indian Situation no Exception

Our experience in India also confirms the same.

The Defence outlay has increased sharply from Rs. 2,563 crores in 1976-77 to Rs. 4,500 crores in 1981-82. This year, the defence expenditure is Rs. 5,684 crores, i.e. 11 per cent more than the last, and about 10 times more than the total outlay for social welfare in the annual plan for 1981-82.

The total outlay on social welfare, for welfare of backward areas, for housing and regional development, for water supply and sanitation and for health amounts to Rs. 1986.9 crores in 1981-82 which is less than half of the total defence outlay in 1981-82.

The total amount on the welfare amenities gradually came down in 1981-82, the second year of the Sixth Plan when the amount spent on social welfare was only 0.32 per cent of the total annual plan outlay. The amount spent on welfare of backward areas came to 2.91 per cent while on housing for urban and regional development, it was only 2.47 per cent. The expenditure on water supply and sanitation the amount allotted was 3.66 per cent and on health, it was 2.15 per cent of the total annual plan outlay for 1981-82. The total subsidy on food in 1981-82 amounted to less than one-sixth of the total defence outlay for that year.

Peace Movement Gains Momentum

The countries in Latin America, Europe, West Asia, South Africa and other places in which people have experienced the atrocities perpetrated by the imperialists have taken up the challenge. The common men and women in Europe have realised the

immediate threat of neutron bomb in their country and so they are raising their voice against the Reagan Administration and NATO countries. According to the latest reports, US is planning a major naval exercise in the Carribean region making Cuba their main target.

British Women Say "They shall Not Pass"

One of the important point is the participation of British women in this campaign. They are playing a major role by organising demonstrations at military bases, keeping vigil outside Parliament. They are bringing out literature on the war materials and its effects on the people rousing the consciousness of people against the imperialist policy.

The first protest against the setting up of first cruise missile came from British women in a small township, Greenham Common, in Southern England. Last summer 40 women set out from Cardiff in Wales to walk the 110 miles to Greenham Common with the banners, "Reject the cruise and deadly US weapons".

In a few days, bulldozers arrived at the sight and women sat down in the path and obstructed the work. But women were firm. On December 28th a camp was set up by women at Noleworth, near Cambridge, where another sight for cruise missiles was scheduled. The protesters are again in Caravan. Their moto is "They shall not pass".

The leader of the peace march, Wenche Soranger who travelled with her 200 women delegates from Copenhagen to Europe was welcomed by thousands of men and women. They became heroines of peace-loving people of Europe rousing the just anger against the NATO countries.

Let US Fight for Peace

In India, we have to rouse our women in towns

and countryside, by whatever means available to explain the real character of imperialism, and how the women and children in Vietnam and Kampuchea and other places suffered. This has to be done by Trade Unions, Women's Organisations, students, youth and so on. In the movement of peace against war, all sections of women belonging to any political party, social organisations etc. can join. The decision of arming Pakistan with sophisticated arms by the US imperialists and their strengthening of Diego Garcia naval base has brought the danger of war to our door steps.

Indian women together with women in Pakistan and other neighbours should jointly fight this war danger, work for peace and friendship between the countries of this continent and prevent diversion of resources for destructive purposes. We should fight for peace and economic advance in cooperation with each other.

The organiser and leader of the Copenhagen Peace March, Winche Soranger expressed the sentiments and feelings of all women of the world when she spoke in open session of Prague World Congress of Women:

"We are wielding great power in this struggle because we are defending the interest of our children, the mother cannot sit with folded hands and look on as her children are suffering in war. I myself am afraid of war, especially of nuclear war. That is why I have decided that we must do something. We feel we are strong enough and that we shall make it".

The message of the Congress for all of us is "Let us raise our voices and make ourselves heard, even by those who pretend to be deaf. Let us act together. United we can save our people and the whole humanity". Let us carry forward the message to every household in the country on this May Day and build up a powerful movement for peace.

RALLY AGAINST IMPERIALIST WAR DANGER

(From page twelve)

to contain the mass-killing of June, 1980, to restore normalcy and amity between tribals and non-tribals, within a very short time. The working people of Tripura can legitimately claim credit for holding the election of the Autonomous District Council in the tribal compact areas of the State, in a very peaceful atmosphere, where more than 70 p.c. of the voters, both tribals and non-tribals rallied for voting, defying the 'boycott' slogan of Congress(I) and Amra Bengalis.

Defeat all Conspiracies

This May Day is of historical significance, because the working people, all over the world have a big

role to play in raising the banner of patriotism high, a banner which is being trampled under foot by the traitors of the bourgeois-landlord parties. It is the working class who carry forward the best traditions of the nation today. It is the working class, who are unflinching in their fight for democracy. It is the working class who are the best model for strengthening national integration. As war is not inevitable, peace also cannot be taken for granted. As authoritarianism is not inevitable, democracy also cannot be taken for granted. Only by making millions of toiling people active in fields and factories, we can shape the future of our people, defeating all conspiracies of the international war-mongers and their national lackeys.

Problems of Construction and Contract Labour

Nrisingha Chakrabarty

The ghastly incident of collapse of a fly-over in Delhi in which several contract labour lost their lives brought the problems of contract labour to the forefront. M.M. Lawrence M.P., President, Water Transport Workers Federation of India and a leader of CITU moved a resolution on Welfare of Construction workers which came up for discussion on February 26. Members from both the sides, ruling and opposition, forcefully pleaded that the Govt. should take immediate action to remedy the situation. Even the Speaker asked the Minister of Labour whether there should not be some sort of a compulsory accident insurance scheme for these workers. Thus attacked from all sides, the Minister stated that various laws have already been enacted and if they are not being implemented, steps would be taken to implement them. He however assured that a separate legislation for safety of the workers engaged in Building and Construction industry will be brought as early as possible. On the basis of this assurance, the resolution was withdrawn.

The extent of the Problem

To day about 4 million workers are engaged in construction industry alone. The total number of contract labour would be somewhere in the region of 6 million and increasing every passing day with the employers resorting to contract system in cases where the work was carried on by departmental labour earlier. The traditional fields of use of contract labour were generally loading & unloading, brick kilns, road and building construction. With the advent of new technology in the programme of industrialisation during second Five Year Plan, the field of use of contract labour widened. New type of expertise was needed. At the sametime efforts to check cost escalation due to delay in construction had to be made. Hence came public sector undertakings in the field of construction. HSCL, NBCC, NPCC, HUDCO, NTPC and others came into the field. These companies had three groups of workers viz Regular, Work-charged and NMR, each group having different scales of pay and service conditions. Then firming out of jobs to contractors had started and now these public sector construction companies have become the hunting grounds for contractors and corrupt officers, who taking advantage of the huge unemployment in the country, particularly the pauperisation of the rural poor are exploiting them by denying even elementary rights as provided for in law to these workers.

Violation of Laws

The Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act 1970 provides for prohibition of use of contract

labour in work of perennial nature. But the issue of notification is tagged to Contract Labour Advisory Boards. The debate in Lok Sabha revealed that in *Seven States and three Union territories such Boards have not been set up* and in three states and three union territories *the Boards have not met for a long time*. Even when the Board meets and decisions are taken, they are not implemented. For example the Central Advisory Board, decided to investigate into a case of work of perennial nature in Salem Magnesite Mines. The team visited Salem in 1979 but no decision has yet been taken. The Central Board had also taken a decision to issue notification prohibiting use of contract labour in loading and unloading of Coal in locosheds and yards, which could not be implemented due to opposition by the railway ministry.

Uneven level of remuneration in various zones in the country has prompted various managements particularly the multinationals to firm out jobs to contractors in various parts of the country. One instance would be enough to show how the companies operate. HMM Ltd (Horlicks) have their own packaging plants at Calcutta and Bangalore. These are regular workers. With the increase in business, they opened another plant at Faridabad under a Contractor (A.K. Packaging). As soon as a demand was placed that the workmen should be treated as regular workmen, the management closed down the plant and opened a new plant at Gurgaon. The workers of Faridabad are conducting a struggle for the last 14 months against this and the Govt. has not taken appropriate steps in the matter. The management have been paying much less to the workers at Faridabad compared to those at Calcutta or Bangalore. They are now paying still lesser to the workers at Gurgaon. This violates section 25 (2) (v) (a) of Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Central Rules.

Under Section 17 and 18 of the Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act, the contractor is required to provide rest-rooms and alternative accommodation, wholesome drinking water, latrines, urinals and washing facilities. No contractor provides these and there is no machinery to check and implement them.

Work of perennial nature still continues to be given on contract basis. For example the Steel Stockyards are manned by contract labour. Loading, unloading and transhipment of railway goods and parcels are given on contract basis. Even construction of new railway lines is being given to contractors.

Lawrence had drawn pointed attention to section 12(b) (1), Chapter 4 of the Industrial (Migrant Workmen) Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service Act 1979, which provides for issue of pass books to each workmen detailing the period of employment, wages, displacement allowance and other particulars. This provision is not maintained at all. He related his experience in the following terms:

“The migrant workers from Orissa and Rajasthan are working at the construction sites of the private owner, the Pure Drinks. There also, the workers are being paid very low wages. When I was talking with some workers, men and women workers, with the help of an interpreter, one Chaudhuri came there, screwed his eyes in a threatening manner and asked the workers to go back. Immediately, they went back. I told him that I was a Member of Parliament and I wanted to discuss something with the workers. But he did not allow me”.

Terrorisation of Contract Labour

Denial of the dues to the contract labour, particularly the migrant labour in construction work is achieved through terrorisation of the workers. Every Khatadar who brings in the labour from rural areas has a bunch of musclemen who prevent all attempts to organise them. The management and the police under the Congress(I) rule help them by harassing and beating the workers who form unions or those who make attempts to organise them. This was seen in the struggle of the Simplix workers at Durg, where the police went to the extent of concocting a false FIR in order to keep P.K. Moitra, Vice-President, MP — CITU behind the bars for over six months. If the workers organise themselves despite such repression, the Principal employer and the Contractor terminates the contract as was done in a NTPC project in Rajasthan.

Special problem of Construction Workers

Construction workers have a special problem of job security. The system drives the contractors to secure cheap labour for profit. Hence all contractors terminate the services of workers after completion of a job and recruit new workmen at new sites of work. Sometimes efforts to transfer the surplus workmen from one construction site to another is resisted on the slogan of jobs for “Sons of the Soil”. Some of the Congress (I) Govts in the states lend full support to such divisive slogans. They fail to take into account that transfer of construction personnel is now accepted as an international practice and conclusion no: 70 concerning Regularisation of Employment in the Construction Industry adopted by the Building, Civil Engineering and Public Works Committee of the International Labour Organisation has called upon the member states to consider the question of stabilisation of jobs in construction with some urgency. Govt of India has taken no step in this regard, because they also from their narrow parochial interest support

the ‘sons of the soil’ slogan. The Union Labour Minister callously asks what he can do if the workers move out after the work is over disregarding the fact that they are not offered stable employment at the completion of one work.

Urgent Need for Action

The Govt have set up a Committee for Contract Labour in which the CITU is represented by Jagjit Singh Lyallpuri. But no seriousness is shown to the functioning of the committee. Even if the Union Labour Minister brings in a Bill to cover Safety of the Construction Labour, the question of implementation will still remain a problem. The contract labour in Kalta iron ore mines, Varanasi gravity yard and elsewhere in the country are fighting bitter long drawn struggles for implementation of the existing laws and the Govt have shown extreme callousness to these struggles of the Contract Workers. The struggle of Contractor’s workers in Alloy Steel Plant for nearly a month gives a pointer to the problem. In 1973 the contractors’ workers’ in Durgapur Steel Plant used to receive the same wages like other steel workers. But those in Alloy Steel Plant at Durgapur were paid less. Even when the wages under Minimum Wages Act were revised they were not paid the same. Under Rule 25(2)(v)(a) of Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Central Rules these workers are due the same rate of wages and other benefits like the steel workers. This has been the principal demand. But the Govt of India refused to recognise this aspect and as a result only some meagre benefits could be secured. In Punjab & Sind Bank, the authorities diverted the work of sweeping and dusting of the Bank premises in Delhi to a Contractor and a dispute has been raised which is pending conciliation for over six months though this is a very simple case.

If the organised labour, i.e., the unions covering the bulk of permanent employees in the industry take up the question of the Contract Labour, there is a possibility of some solution. Our comrades in the Steel industry have taken up this question. Others in various industrial undertakings would also have to take up the demand of abolition of Contract labour and/or payment of equal wages and other benefits under section 25(2)(v)(a) of the Rules.

But for the bulk of the labour in the Construction industry, a concerted effort by the Kisan Sabha as well as the CITU unions is necessary. Kisan Sabha can take up the campaign for implementation of laws for migrant labour and insist on pass books for each workmen as provided in the law. The CITU unions functioning in and around the sites of construction can help in organising the workers and secure them the meagre benefits which exist under the law now and take up further campaign for broadening the benefits.

As the construction and contract labour generally come from the poorest strata of our society in the

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Land Reforms in West Bengal

Benoy Chowdhury

*Minister-in-charge
Land and Land Reforms Deptt.
Government of West Bengal*

The Left Front Government of West Bengal has now completed almost its full term and facing a fresh election. So an objective evaluation of its performance in the field of land reform will be of much help for correctly understanding the significance of the measures taken by the Left Front Government and the new possibility created for building up workers peasant unity to change the correlation of forces in the State of West Bengal.

At the outset, it should be made quite clear that the objective of the Left Front Government, is not to complete the tasks of the agrarian revolution, or for that matter, to eliminate completely feudal and semi-feudal production relations in agriculture. Because that is not at all possible within the framework of the present Constitution and with the very limited power that the State Government enjoys. That objective can only be achieved through a thorough-going agrarian revolution as an integral part of the Peoples Democratic Revolution.

Under the circumstances, taking a pragmatic view, the Left Front Government is taking such measures which will help in enthusing and organising the agricultural workers, bargadars (sharecroppers) and small peasants who constitute nearly 75 per cent of the peasantry and who are the real force which can bring about radical changes in the countryside in favour of real land reform. Along with this key task, the Left Front Government is endeavouring to build up a firm alliance with the middle peasantry and is trying to win over a good chunk of the rich peasants so that the class enemies in the countryside can be effectively isolated and contained.

With the above objectives, the Left Front Government has selected target groups for which appropriate measures are to be taken.

Agricultural Workers

The first target group is agricultural workers. Three urgent problems of this section have been taken up for immediate solution; (1) minimum wage for the agricultural workers, (2) to provide work during the lean months through the food-for work scheme, (3) to provide house site-land to them. The Government had fixed Rs. 8.10 as minimum wage. Administrative measures have been taken for the implementation of the minimum wage and the agricultural workers are also conducting movement and struggles for getting their dues. As a result wages increased by Rs. two to Rs. three everywhere

and in many places the agricultural workers could get Rs. 8.10 as wage. Recently the minimum wage has been increased to Rs. 9.56.

The food-for-work scheme, implemented through the elected panchayats, created over 20 crores of mandays up to March, 1981 and went a long way to free them from age-old bondage and to ameliorate the condition of the agricultural workers. This also helped to keep food prices stable. These measures created enthusiasm amongst them and helped to organise them in large numbers. They are increasingly realising that the Left Front Government is their own Government and an identity of interest is growing. Among over 46 lakhs Kisan Sabha members in West Bengal over 20 lakhs are agricultural labourers.

For the Sharecroppers

The second target group is bargadar (sharecropper). Their main problems are (1) eviction, (2) protection of rights, (3) institutional finance to free them from the age-old bondage of usury. The Left Front Government has taken measures to tackle all these three problems.

To stop illegal eviction suitable amendments have been made in the Land Reforms Act. From experience, we know that eviction is done mainly by invoking the clause on resumption for self-cultivation. So, in the definition of 'self-cultivation' three conditions have been introduced; (1) if one intends to resume land for self-cultivation, he will have to prove that his main source of livelihood is from that land, (2) he will have to live within eight kilometres for the greater part of the year where the land is situated, (3) after resuming land he will have to cultivate the land himself or by the labour of his family members. These conditions will go a long way to stop eviction.

So that the bargadars can enjoy the rights conferred by the law, their names should be legally recorded in the record of rights. For this a time-bound programme in the name of "Operation Barga" has been taken up by the Left Front Government. The main features of this "Operation Barga" are to identify the areas where bargadars are concentrated, then to hold evening meetings to encourage and convince them about the necessity and usefulness of recording their names and then to legally record their names by sending a team of officers, who will finish the job of recording within

three or four days by concentrated activities with the help of the local panchayats. This method proved to be most effective. Where during the last 30 years, only 275,000 bargadars could be recorded, by adopting this method it has been possible to record up till now over eleven lakhs of bargadars during the last three years even though the operation could not be continued uninterruptedly due to the devastating flood in 1978, the panchayat election and the Lok Sabha election.

Previously, bargadars were subjected to severe exploitation due to consumption and input loans by the jotedars. To free them from this bondage, the Left Front Government has introduced institutional finance for the bargadars. The interest on the loan is only four per cent whereas previously they had to pay interest at the rate of 100 per cent to 150 per cent. If the bargadars pay up their loan within March 31 next year, the interest will be reimbursed by the Left Front Government and the bargadars' loan will be interest free. All these measures have a salutary effect on the bargadars and they have become firm supporters of the Left Front Government.

Small and Middle Peasants

The third target group is the small and middle peasantry. For this group the Left Front Government has introduced schemes to give relief in the matter of rent and debt burden. The Left Front Government, soon after its installation, exempted rent for holdings upto four acres in irrigated areas upto six acres in non-irrigated areas and rent of others were reduced to half of what they were paying. This measure went a long way to win over all sections of the peasants, even the rich.

Subsequently, last year an Act was passed abolishing the rent system and introducing landholding levy above landed property worth Rs. 50,000. The concept of rent is not compatible with the concept of peasant proprietorship, because rent is a tribute paid by the tiller of the land to the lord of the land. By this scheme 80 per cent of the landholdings is free from any levy. Imposition of levy being on a progressive basis—less on lower slabs and more on higher slabs—it is more equitable in principle. This scheme is based on the Raj Committee report though it has been adopted in a modified form. The Left Front Government can rightfully claim to be a pioneer in this matter in the whole of India.

To benefit all peasants, including the rich, the Left Front Government is trying to see that the peasants get remunerative prices for their produce, specially commercial crops such as jute, potato, etc., whenever there is a precipitate fall in the prices of these products. The Left Front Government comes forward to buy such produce at a price announced by the Government.

Besides the measures mentioned above, the Left Front Government has been able to vest over 12 lakh acres of agricultural land and is currently disturbing 345,000 acres of vested land amongst the landless agricultural workers and land-poor peasants. So, adding up the previous distribution of 614,000 acres, the total land distributed in the State will be nearly 10 lakh acres, nearly half of what has been distributed in the whole of India.

The Left Front Government is also recording house-sites up to eight decimals for landless agricultural workers, artisans and fishermen who lived there on and from June 26, 1975. The measures will give security of their house-sites. They will also be provided with house-building loan.

The Left Front Government is also trying to organise service cooperatives for the allottees of vested land and bargadars. This can go a long way to boost up rural production.

A comprehensive amendment of the Land Reforms Act had been passed on 9th April, 1981 by the West Bengal Assembly. This will go a long way to plug all the loopholes in the Act in the matter of detecting and taking possession of the ceiling surplus land. Uptill now Government could take possession of over 12 lakh acres of agricultural land, nearly half of what has been taken possession in the whole of India. The amended Bill will help the Government to take possession of at least another 10 to 15 lakh acres. This is indeed a serious and sincere attempt to implement ceiling law in true spirit.

We are passing through very critical time. Due to unprecedented crisis in capitalist countries foreign imperialists and the monopolists of our country are trying to shift the burden of the crisis on to the shoulders of the working class and the peasants. So the need to build up broad based movement against this is of supreme importance. The kisans under the leadership of the working class will have to play a historical role in this juncture. The kisans of West Bengal are forging ahead to write another glorious chapter in history.

Problems of Construction Labour

(From page sixteen)

rural area, who being evicted from their lands and finding no job in the village side come to the cities for eking out a livelihood, the organised labour must pay more attention to their problems. The Tenth Session of Building, Civil Engineering and Public Works Committee of ILO is going to meet in April 1983 at Geneva. A questionnaire has been circulated by the Govt of India for preparation of a report. Facts about the same should be sent to the Central office as early as possible and the campaign taken up in right earnest, so that effective protection could be given to the workmen in these industries.

The Year of Productivity—An Attack on Workers

M.K. Pandhe

In a meeting of the Planning Commission, held on 28 December, 1981 the Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi announced that 1982 would be observed as the year of Productivity. She stated in the meeting that the objective was to make co-ordinated efforts to maximise the capacity utilisation in all sectors and achieve greater efficiency in the implementations of projects. Though she noted in the meeting that productivity should not come to mean the holding of more conferences and seminars, it is exactly what is being done since she made the announcement.

Smt. Gandhi did not feel it necessary to consult her cabinet colleagues before making this announcement. She did not feel it necessary even to get a formal approval of Parliament despite her party having a sizeable majority. The call is treated as purely her personal call and is being used to boost her personal image. The slogan of "Shram Eva Jayate" is replacing "Satyameva Jyate" everywhere, at least during this year of productivity.

Nearly four months have passed after the call was given by the Prime Minister. However she did not bother to convene a meeting of the Central Trade Unions to discuss the question with them and seek their opinion on the question. It is but natural that except the INTUC leadership no central trade union has responded to the call of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister clearly wanted to fully rely on the bureaucracy and the sychophant national T.U. Centre to implement her year.

She perhaps has not taken into account the dismal performance of the public sector. During 1980-81, 42 public sector undertakings were running below 50 per cent capacity indicating sheer waste of half the investment. In 40 other undertakings the utilisation of the capacity is between 50 to 75 per cent, highlighting on an average 35 per cent of utilised capacity. Only in 69 undertakings capacity utilisation has exceeded 75 per cent. On an average 40 per cent capacity in public sector remained utilised. In its attempt to explain the low utilisation of capacity the Bureau of Public Enterprises has given the reason of inadequate power supply, shortage of raw materials, equipment failure, inadequacy of demand and industrial relations problems. Prime Minister has yet to clarify what she is going to do to overcome these problems.

The conditions are actually deteriorating though attempts are made to show a rosy picture through statistical manipulations. The units where capacity utilisation was less than 50 per cent were 21 per cent of the total units during 1978-79 while the percentage of such units rose to 28 per cent during 1980-81. The BPE had to admit, "The picture emerging from the statistical presentation is that

compared to 1979-80 the overall performance of public enterprises shows deterioration". Considering that about Rs. 20,000 crores are invested in central public sector undertakings one can imagine the colossal loss of investment in the economy as a result of the bankruptcy in planning of the Government.

Smt. Gandhi has not uttered a word about these aspects while talking about the year of productivity. She has not taken any tangible step so far to ensure adequate supply of power to the economy. Thousands of crores of rupees worth production has been lost every year due to inadequate supply of power. Partial closure of department has become a matter of common occurrence. A shut down of 4 hours a day in several undertakings has thrown out of gear the entire production plan of several undertakings and even employers have said that under these circumstances any talk of productivity was meaningless.

Though Coal India has claimed higher production during last year much of the rise is also ascribed to high ash content of coal. Complaints from industrialists that the supply of coal contains large quantity of shells which is also calculated as coal production. Several power houses have complained that the refractory lining of the boilers had been spoiled because of high shell content in coal. Steel plants have complained about substantially higher consumption of coal due to high ash content. The rise of coal production in the country is thus illusory and the energy crisis is becoming deeper and deeper. Mere verbal assurances of higher supply of coal will thus not solve the problem.

The Thirtieth Report of the Committee on Public Undertakings on Coal India Ltd. (1982) has presented a shocking picture. It states, "Concern has been voiced in different quarters about corrupt practices in the coal companies. An in-depth survey of malpractices in the Dhanbad Coalfield area by CBI teams has brought to light several malpractices in sale and movement of coal, award of contracts and purchase orders, reporting of stocks etc. Involvement of senior officials of coal companies is clearly indicated. It further notes, "Although admittedly several cases of pilferage of coal by dealers had come to notice and coal was recovered, prosecution does not appear to have been launched in any case so far Secretary to the Department of Coal highlighted the complaint about reporting of production and the managerial dishonesty involved in it".

Smt. Gandhi's Government has done nothing to improve the matters in the coal sector. As a matter of fact her party is deeply involved in the corrupt practices and the Government is protecting the

culprits shamelessly. Cong(I) hoodlums are openly acting as mafia gangs and are not allowing any growth of coal sector unless they have their share of booty.

The substantial rise in fuel costs have placed several obstacles in increasing production. 75 per cent of India's export earnings are eaten up by the imports of oil alone. The Government's emphasis on further mechanisation is adding to the dependence on imported oil and this has created further bottlenecks in import of intermediary goods. The conditionalities of IMF loans has led to liberalising imports of some items which are being produced indigenously. The production of such item is now under serious threat due to IMF loans and the Government has ignored this aspect while deciding the new import policy. Thus on the one hand shortage of some intermediary goods would continue to dog the economy on the other hand "liberal" imports of certain items would adversely affect the indigenous production of these items. Smt. Gandhi's Government had not taken any cognizance of this phenomena while talking about the productivity year.

The Government has been always planning industrial relations policy as one of the causes of under utilisation of capacities and the BPE has again repeated it while explaining the failure of the Government on this count. In practice it is the anti-working class policies of the public sector managements which has been mainly responsible for the strained industrial relations in public sector undertakings. The non-implementation of the agreements signed with the trade unions by the public sector managements, keeping pending several burning problem of the working class without making any serious efforts to settlement vindictive action against the trade union activists and the official patronage given to the INTUC union have been primarily responsible for the growing agitations of public sector employees. However instead of taking measures to change the policy the Government is trying to blame the workers in public sector for low productivity and concealing its miserable failure. The term "labour trouble" is being frequently used in explaining the difficulties in boosting production in public sector and the trade union movement has to counteract the slanderous accusations against it.

The attitude of the Government of Maharashtra during the three month old strike of two and a half lakh workers in Bombay textile strike causing a loss of production of nearly Rs. 400 crores and mandays of 25 millions has exposed the false concern of the Government for production. The economy is allowed to suffer just to boost the scab union which has lost all support among the workers. The Govt's refusal to negotiate with the striking workers on the plea of the provisions of the notorious B.I.R. Act has only highlighted its bankruptcy in dealing with this strike. The Bombay strike which commenced only 18 days after commencement of the so called "Year of Productivity" may prove 1982 to be an

year of non-productivity" both in public and private sectors.

The announcement of the Prime Minister further coincides with the directive of the BPE to the public sector undertakings that all wage negotiations would be linked with productivity. As the directive indicates, that according to the BPE, at present level of productivity wages in public sector undertakings are adequate and no wage rise be given. If only the workers agree to increase the productivity by a certain percentage the workers can claim a corresponding rise in wages. If in a particular month the norm of production was not achieved the workers would be denied the increased quantum of wages. The BPE directive also has categorically asserted that there would be no retrospective effect to the agreement. All these clearly mean that there would be a complete wage freeze at the present level of productivity. The trade union movement has been justly demanding increase in wages of workers at the present level of productivity. Hence all the Central Trade Unions including the INTUC have opposed the BPE directive and demanded its withdrawal.

The study of the BPE shows that wage costs as percentage of the total cost of production has declined during the last 4 years. To quote the example of steel industry the wage costs stood at 20 per cent of the total cost of production in 1977-78 which came down to 13.4 per cent in 1980-81. The real wages of the steel workers have declined by 12 per cent at the minimum level and by 19 per cent at the maximum level of earnings during the same period. These statistics succinctly point out the need for a wage rise to the steel workers but the Government is denying them this legitimate demands. This leads to a policy of confrontation. Since the wage negotiations in Steel, Coal, BHEL and several other public sector undertakings are due this year the managements have been pressing the trade unions on the plea of the call of the Prime Minister relating to the year of Productivity. This game cannot succeed if trade union movement unitedly resist the offensive with all their might.

The Year of Productivity is sought to be used by the employers to increase the workload on the workers while they are free to indulge in mismanagement and misappropriation. The National Productivity Council has been specially made active to suggest several methods of imposing heavier workload on the workers. Most of the public sector undertakings have been directed to popularise the 20 point programme and the Year of Productivity during the current year. Crores of rupees have already been spent on it and many crores are in the pipeline.

The employers, organisations and chambers are busy talking about the virtues of the Year of Productivity because it is their class that would reap maximum benefit from the slogan.

(on page thirtysix)

All India Protest Day on June 4

To coincide with the date of the Bombay Convention of last year which set the beginning of united struggles by the working class in India against price-rise and the anti-labour policies of the Government, the National Campaign Committee has called upon all sections of the working people to observe June 4 as the All India Protest Day. This will be observed by holding joint rallies, demonstrations, processions and by wearing badges throughout the country. The decision was taken in its meeting with the national federations at New Delhi on April 16, which was presided over by Parvati Krishnan of AITUC. The first phase of movement was planned in the Bombay Convention itself. The last year saw successful implementation of the first phase of movement which included the massive rally at Boat Club on November 23 and the historic All India Strike of January 19. The unity achieved through the struggles fortified the National Campaign Committee and the trade unions. Growing attacks by the employers and the successive authoritarian actions of the Government during the period embraced larger sections of the workers to join the mainstream. The meeting of April 16 drew the maximum number of federations till date. The deliberations covered a wide range of problems faced by the working class. The ESMA, the NSA and the notification of sixteen industries under it, the IMF Loan, the productivity linked wages and its application in steel, coal etc., the anti-people budget, the hike in railway freight and fare, the postal hikes, the wage-freeze and the D.A. impound of the Central Government employees, the proposed LIC split, the demands of the peasants and the agricultural labourers, fraudulent consumer price index, growing attacks on trade union and democratic rights, increasing retrenchments, closures and lockouts and victimisations for participating in the January 19 strike-all came under the deliberations by over thirty speakers representing various federations.

Indrajit Gupta, General Secretary of AITUC in his introductory speech said that the National Campaign Committee in its next phase of movement would not only carry forward the struggles with the demands of the Bombay Convention, but also would make common cause with the struggles of the workers in the Public Sector Undertakings like in Steel, and Coal industries and in BHEL where fresh wage agreement are due and the Finance Ministry has directed the Bureau of Public Enterprise to implement the scheme of productivity linked wages.

The leaders of various sections of the Central

Government employees like railways, defence, postal etc. also participated and expressed their urge to put more efforts to coordinate all categories of the employees so that they can join the mainstream of the countrywide joint struggles in future.

Apart from deciding to observe June 4 as the All India Protest Day, the meeting adopted several resolutions on some immediate burning problems.

The meeting condemned the recent notification on NSA, bringing sixteen industries under its purview. It further condemned the impounding of the DA of the Central Government employees and urged upon them to wage united struggles in defence of their interests.

The meeting denounced the directive of the BPE regarding linking future wage increases with increased productivity and called upon the workers in the public sector undertakings to resist it squarely. It decided to make efforts to organise a convention of the workers in Steel, Coal, BHEL etc. for bringing them together in a programme of united movement against the scheme which is already hanging over them.

By another resolution the meeting condemned the increasing attacks on trade union rights and demanded immediate withdrawal of all vindictive actions against the workers for participating in the January 19 strike.

The meeting also expressed solidarity with the two and half lakh striking workers of the textile industry in Bombay and resolved to observe April 27 as All India Solidarity Day in support of their struggle. It also decided to meet the Prime Minister in a delegation on April 22 and demand a negotiated settlement with the striking unions.

Summing up the deliberations, P. Ramamurti, General Secretary of CITU explained that the significance of the rising struggles is that ever broader sections of the working people are experiencing the brunt of the anti-labour and pro-monopolist policies of the Government of India and converging on the common platform to put a strong wall of resistance. He urged upon all to mobilise still larger sections, the unorganised sections, the peasantry and the agricultural labourers, the women, youth and the students and to consolidate the forces of democracy to resist the authoritarian onslaught of the Congress (I) Government which is growing with the deepening economic crisis in the country.

Successful Maharashtra Bundh Textile Strike Enters Fourth Month

It was another massive show of unity amongst the working class that stopped the wheels of the giant industrial complex in Greater Bombay and other parts of Maharashtra on April 19 in support of the historical strike of the textile workers. The call for Maharashtra Bundh was given by the Central Trade Unions and other organisations opposed to INTUC under the banner of Trade Union Joint Action Committee.

Despite massive arrests of activists, numbering over two thousands and despite the disruptive activities of INTUC aided by the Shiv Sena forces, the overwhelming and spontaneous response of all sections of the working people stunned the bustling metropolis into silence. The shops were closed, trades paralysed, commuters abstented and the streets were deserted. Similar reports were received from other parts of the state. Among others who were arrested, were Ahilya Rangnekar and Prabhakar Sansgiri of CPI(M).

The strike of the textile workers of all the 60 mills, which has been complete and entered its fourth month on April 20, breaking all previous records of continuous strikes in the textile industry, in fact, threw the so-called "recognised" Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh of INTUC into the dustbin. Coupled with it, the solidarity expressed by all other sections of the working class exhibited through the bundh, has put the Congress(I) Government's bogey of "recognition" into a straight jacket. The shameless patronisation of the INTUC unions by the Government against the realities was exposed to the skin and further confirmed its authoritarian attitude.

The Demands

In retrospect, the strike had its breeding of the workers' discontent since the last fifteen years, during which the demands of the workers were never satisfied. The INTUC affiliated RMMS got its recognition in 1949 and continued to enjoy the same under the Bombay Industrial Relations Act. Under the patronisation of the Government it is still clinging to this act inspite of the fact that it has almost no force behind it. Although the strike was led by the Maharashtra Girni Kamgarh Union, a series of struggles and strike actions occurred during the period. CITU and other Central Trade Unions have been a growing force and the last one day successful strike observed on September 27, 1981 at the call of a Lal Bavta Mill Mazdoor Union (CITU) alongwith AITUC and others was a precursor for the greater struggle. The main three demands of the workers are wage increase of Rs. 300/- per month, abolition of temporary (Badli) workers, the number being more than sixty thousands and repeal

of the Bombay Industrial Relations Act and withdrawal of the recognition of the INTUC union. But apart from these immediate demands, the other long pending demands are connected with the appalling working and living conditions which have been constantly deteriorating since the last thirty years.

TUJAC

CITU, AITUC and other trade unions opposed to INTUC combined and formed the Trade Union Joint Action Committee which is now conducting the struggle. On March 11, i.e., on the opening day of the State Assembly, a massive morcha of over one lakh workers marched to the Vidhan Sabha. A delegation consisting of P.K. Kurane, Ahilya Rangnekar (CPI-M) G.V. Chitnis (CPI) Yashavant Chavan, Datta Samant, Prabhakar More and S.P. Borde met the Chief Minister, Baba Sahib Bhosale, who could not give any reply as he openly acknowledged that all the decisions were coming from Delhi.

A mammoth mass rally of over three lakh workers was called by the TUJAC to observe the 75th day of the strike on April 2 at Shivaji Park. The rally was presided over by P.K. Kurane, General Secretary of Maharashtra State Committee of CITU and addressed among others, by Datta Samant, the leader of the Maharashtra Girni Kamgarh Union, G.V. Chitnis (AITUC), Yashawant Chavan (Sarva Shramik Sangh), Puspa Mehta (UTUC), Karambelkar (BMS), K.K. Theckedath (MFUCTO) and Acharekar (State Govt. Employees). The call for Maharashtra Bundh on April 19 was given from this platform.

Greeting the Maharashtra State Committee of CITU, B.T. Ranadive, President of CITU has sent the following letter to P.K. Kurane on April—

“Dear Comrade,

I Warmly greet the Maharashtra State Committee of CITU, its leaders and thousands of active cadres, who have played a significant role in the strike of over 2 lakh textile workers, which is going to complete three months very soon. Our leaders and workers, unitedly with others, have been rousing the masses of workers in the textile industry itself without which such a sustained struggle might not have been possible. They have made untiring efforts to mobilise other sections of workers behind the struggling textile workers as a result of which it has been possible to give a call for Maharashtra Bundh on April 19.

(on page Thirty Five)

LEFT FRONT GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE

The Left Front Government of West Bengal completed its tenure of full five years. These five years constitute a chapter of tireless and continuous struggle to strengthen the democratic values in the State against all the manoeuvrings of Congress (I) Government at the Centre to destabilise it.

The Left-Front Government came into existence through a travail of the people defeating monstrous moves by the Congress (I) gangsters who tried to trample democracy, playing havoc with the lives of the people. Having experienced the horrors of the rigged election in 1972, the people had to struggle against a semi-fascist terror upto 1977, many lives were lost thousands became homeless and hundreds of CITU and other non-congress unions were captured by the agents of the Indira Government, professing a "Socialistic pattern of Society". The working class and the toiling people of West Bengal however refused to accept the things lying down, and the outcome was the Left Front Government in 1977, led by CPI (M).

Strengthening Democratic Values

Naturally, the Left Front Government was pledged to safeguard all the democratic rights of the people,—right of assembly, right of association, right of expression, right to free exercise of franchise, and the right to strike. At a time when the dark clouds of authoritarianism have been mustering over the country, the Left Front Government of West Bengal were resolved to hold high the banner of democracy and lead the people in their struggle against it. The firm attitude of the Government against all the anti-labour and anti-people policies of the Centre supported by the people of the state, created a tremendous sensation among the people in the entire country, even abroad.

It refused to enforce the National Security Act and the Essential Services Maintenance Act in the State of West Bengal.

Stability

As the Governor, Sri Bhairav Datt Pande said in the last session of the Assembly on March 6, the administration in West Bengal presented a picture of stability while the political affairs of the country were marked by considerable turbulence during the period.

Unity

Even after thirty five years of independence when the integrity of the nation is threatened by the violent forces of separatism and communalism and

the people in various parts are caught in a morass of disunity and mutual suspicion, often leading to clashes and riots, the Left Front Government of West Bengal preserved the unity and amity among the various religious sects, castes and communities in the state to march forward and consolidate the forces of democracy for national integration and against disruption. Through their struggles, the people of the state came to recognise their friends and distinguish them from the foes. Workers in the factories, employees, teachers, students, youth and the women—all have found a new sense of unity, and a guarantee to assert civil liberties and democratic rights to struggle for a better future.

Trade Union Rights

Within the limits set by the Constitution, the Government tried to extend to the toiling sections the benefits of the administrative, legislative and financial measures.

Making a sharp departure from the legacies of the past, the Government ensured freedom of trade union activities to all, irrespective of any political affiliation or ideology, free from any interference by police or anti-social hirelings of the management. The forces of law and order were not allowed to come to favour the propertied classes to the detriment of the interests of the deprived sections. The right of association of these forces was also fully honoured. The system of police verification for political antecedents and service conduct rules of Govt. employees which have been continuing from the colonial days, have either been scrapped altogether or drastically revised. When during 1979, the agitations of the police forces were ruthlessly being suppressed in other places, in West Bengal negotiated settlements were arrived at peacefully. Organised industrywise settlements were reached in all major industries like Engineering, Jute, Cotton Textile, Tea Plantation, etc. with active intervention of the Govt. in favour of workers. It was established that collective bargaining was the most effective measure to bring about settlements of disputes.

Emergency Victims Reinstated

Thousands of workers who were victimised during the emergency were all reinstated in their services. Those who could not report to duties because of Congress(I) gangsterism since 1972 and were retrenched, were also reinstated. The Government also successfully interceded with the Central Govt. to reinstate the Central Govt. employees.

(on page Thirty Nine)

Achievements of Left-Front Govt in West Bengal

(Small Scale and Cottage Industries)

Although easy flow of capital and raw materials and adequate support from a stable market are the essential prerequisites for industrial growth in a country, the small-scale industry of West Bengal, in particular, is always at a disadvantage owing mainly to Centre's policies regarding allocation of raw materials, rather preferential treatment of the larger industries, unequal competition from the monopoly and large houses, advancing policies of banks etc.

But inspite of those constraints, the Left Front Government of this State during its tenure for the last five years has recorded a remarkable achievement in the development of cottage and small-scale industries.

The number of registered S.S.I. units in this State is 1,52,738. Of these, as many as 52,719 units, i.e., 34.5% of the total were registered during the past five years. This has opened up new employment potential for 3,70,855 persons. Of the newly registered units as many as 42,626, i.e., 80-85% are situated outside Calcutta which means that there has been a deliberate shift from the policies pursued by the previous Governments by spreading out the industries in the rural areas as far as practicable.

During the past five years the D.I.Cs processed and forwarded to the banks as many as 15,134 loan proposals and mostly due to the planned and sustained efforts of the D.I.Cs a total of 10,043 such proposals involving a net amount of Rs. 97.936 crores were sanctioned by the banks during the period 1979-82. Sanction of such a huge amount for the small units in the districts within such a short period has never been possible any time before. This has generated employment to the tune of 75,800 in the districts.

In addition to this the D.I.Cs have succeeded during the last five years in ensuring bank loans to the tune of Rs. 2,23, 44,000 for 30,850 artisan families at 4% under the D.R.I. Scheme.

During the relevant period 9394 small units have received a total loan of Rs. 2,37,73,381 out of the departmental budget which has ensured employment for 28,182 persons. During the five years immediately preceding the installation of the Left Front Government the amount of loan under this head was only Rs. 46,38,711 which means that this Government has been able to increase the loan benefit 5.3 times.

The Left Front Government has been able to reach to the weaker and poorer sections in the districts through the loans and grants of the Khadi & Village Industries Board. The total loan and grant distributed by K.V.I.B. during the five year period 1972-77 was only Rs. 34.88 lakhs but the same during the period 1977-82 comes to Rs. 238.93 lakhs, i.e., a seven-fold increase. This has ensured employment to 58,885 persons. The total number of full-time and part time employees of the institutions aided by K.V.I.B. now stands at 105,600. Of them 37% were engaged during the last five years.

These efforts of the Left Front Government during the last five years has seen establishment of 11,873 new small-scale units, employing 62,642 persons, in the districts with the help of bank loans and State Government loans (excluding Khadi loans).

Handloom, the principal cottage industry of West Bengal, was in a moribund state owing to shortage of capital, raw materials and marketing facilities. In 1976-77, the aggregate loan limit of the primary and apex handloom cooperatives stood at Rs. 23 lakhs. Now in 1981-82 this stands at Rs. 6.3 crores.

While the total equity participation of the Government in the primary handloom cooperatives during the period 1972-77 was only Rs. 3 lakhs, the same during 1977-82 amounts to Rs. 1.79 crores — more than fifty fold rise.

In 1976-77 there were only 4 economically viable primary handloom cooperatives and 150 potentially viable, the corresponding figures at the end of 1981-82 are 100 and 500 respectively. In 1976-77 the handloom sector produced 207 million metres of cloth. In 1980-81 it produced 305 million metres. During the same period the total production of the cooperative societies showed an increase from 66.3 million metre to 128 million metre. In 1976-77 the total production of "Janata" cloth was 4.5 lakh sq. metres. In 1981-82, 255 lakh sq. metres of "Janata" cloth was produced, that is the increase is more than fifty six times.

Two raw schemes to assist the weaker sections of the handloom weavers have been introduced. 102 cooperative societies have already been formed with the marginal weavers and 83 of them have gone into production; 29 cooperatives of loanless weavers have also been formed; a provident fund scheme for the weaver members of profitable handloom cooperatives has been introduced.

Upto 1976-77 sericulture was confined to the districts of Murshidabad, Malda and Birbhum and the Ranaghat sub-division of Nadia district. Now sericulture has been extended to all areas of the State barring Calcutta, Howrah and Hooghly districts. 26, 983 acres of land is now under mulberry cultivation. 32% of this, i.e., 8, 523 acres were brought under mulberry during the last five years. This has given employment to 68, 148 persons. During 1981-82 alone the quantum of additional employment was 12, 000 and the total production of raw silk six lakhs kgs. In the immediately preceding four year period the net addition to mulberry acreage amounted to only 4657 acres.

Several new schemes have been introduced for improving the quality of silk. Establishment of Dry Chambers, Reeling Units, Chowki Rearing Centres, Cocoon Trading Centres, Multiplication Farms, Twisting Plants, etc., are some of these schemes. Besides, schemes for the benefit of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are being implemented at Jhargram, Bolpur, Naxalbari and Chalsa. These steps have succeeded in making sericulture a profitable and popular vocation. The State Government had in the past no role in the manufacture of tassar.

The present Government has come forward to play an important part in this area also.

Considerable success has been recorded in the field of marketing too. The total sales of Tantaju-Tantushree and Manjusha in 1976-77 stood at Rs. 3 crore and Rs. 21,000/-. In 1981-82 these figures stand at Rs. 25,41,14,000/- and Rs. 1.20 crores. 48 retail marketing outlets are procuring their merchandise exclusively from the cottage and small-scale sector. This scheme has, on the one hand, expanded the market for the cottage and small-scale units and on the other, has helped them to free themselves from exploitation by the middlemen.

To help the cottage and small-scale sector to expand its market the Left Front Government has laid emphasis on diversification rather than on stereo-typed modernisation. Lot of success has already been noticed in this regard.

All these facts would undeniably lead to the conclusion that in spite of its limited powers the Left Front Government has come forward in the aid of cottage and small-scale industry in a manner which has never been seen before. □

P.K. Moitra Acquitted

P.K. Moitra, Vice-President of Madhya Pradesh State Committee of CITU and President of Simplex Employees' Union, who was involved in a false "Simplex Bomb Case", was completely acquitted by the Durg District Court on February 25.

It may be recalled that led by P.K. Moitra, six hundred workers of Simplex Engineering have been on strike since April 21, 1981 demanding reinstatement of five dismissed employees. Unprecedented repression was let loose on the workers by the police aided by the hoodlums of the Congress (I). Having failed to contain the growing resistance of the workers, the so-called 'bomb case' was created by the anti-socials, helped by the police. P.K. Moitra along with Idhnath and Hesuram was arrested and the false case was instituted against them. To harass the leaders and the workers even bails were refused and they were remanded into jail for six months. But the workers who had developed hatred against the management and the police and continued the grim struggle undauntedly. Even their children died of starvation, but they did not bow before the management without getting their leaders released. Support came from all other sections of workers and massive rallies were held demanding release of the leaders and reinstatement of the victimised workers. Ultimately as there was no evidence against P.K. Moitra and others, they were acquitted. The workers held a victory rally.

But the evil designs of the Congress (I) rulers

continued to make attempts to trap P.K. Moitra and get him arrested under NSA immediately after his release. Another false case was cooked up. Even the Home Minister of Madhya Pradesh Govt. while replying to a call attention motion in the assembly on March 3 on a police firing, misled the house by giving a totally false statement that P.K. Moitra had instigated the public to demolish the boundary walls of the police station; tried to set fire on the police station and to loot the arms.

In a letter written to the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Samar Mukherjee, leader of the CPI (M) group in Lok Sabha and treasurer of CITU said that the allegations against P.K. Moitra were deliberately being made to justify the unprovoked police firing on the public at Bhilai. He made it clear that evidences by three advocates had proved that P.K. Moitra was not present at all in the said movement on February 8, which was a demonstration of the peoples legitimate and genuine grievances against the inefficient police administration. To bring the real picture, Samar Mukherjee enclosed with his letter photostat copies of the press statement issued by the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police which accuse one Dr. Avasthy belonging to Congress (I) for the incident. Samar Mukherjee said that the name of P.K. Moitra was mentioned by the Home Minister to concentrate the attack on him and give a political colour to the movement. He also referred to the
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NATIONALISATION OF JUTE INDUSTRY

Despite repeated demands made by the All India Jute Workers' Federation, Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union (CITU) and other unions in W. Bengal and elsewhere and despite the unanimous resolution taken by the W. Bengal Legislative Assembly demanding nationalisation of the jute industry including raw jute trade, the Central Government has refused to take any move in this direction for the benefit of the workers and the people. The stand of the Central Govt has given filip to the jute barons to harness more and more profits and push the jute industry into a veritable crisis.

A joint statement was issued in this respect on April 20 by Niren Ghosh, M.P. (CPI-M), President and Kamal Sarkar, General Secretary of Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union (CITU); Bhowani Roy Chowdhury, Working President and Tarun Maitra, General Secretary of Federation of Chatkal Mazdoor Unions (AITUC); Matish Roy, Working President of Bengal Provincial Chatkal Mazdoor Union (UTUC) Saral Deb, General Secretary, Paschim Banga Chatkal Mazdoor Federation (TUCC) and Bibhas Ghosh, General Secretary, All India Jute Textile Workers' Federation (HMS).

The statement said that the millowners have launched serious attacks on the workers violating the terms of the tripartite agreement, refusing to pay bonus as per last year and increasing the workload arbitrarily. They have been keeping 13 or 14 mills under lock-out in a cyclic order, while the total production in the existing mills have shown a sharp upward trend, they have, by manipulating productions and refusing to purchase raw jute during seasons, pushed the jute growers to destitution. The millowners have been depriving the jute growers of even the statutory minimum, not to speak of giving remunerative prices.

The jute barons have even violated the Supreme Court judgement in respect of introducing grades and scales of pay and refused to reinstate 46,000 workers, violating the decision of the W. Bengal Labour Minister in terms of the tripartite settlement of 1979 and misappropriated Rs. 10 crores of the provident fund amount of the workers.

The statement said that considering the past history and the behaviour of the jute barons, it is obvious that nationalisation is the only measure which can save the industry, the workers, the growers and the economy of the country. Without a continuous general strike no major demands can be settled in the industry. The statement however said that precisely at this time a call for strike was

unwise, as was done by some unions, as it would have gone to benefit the employers only. They called upon all the jute workers to get ready for such united action when it will really hit the jute barons.

J.K. Jute Workers' Strike Enters Third Month

The strike of the J.K. Jute Workers, Kanpur entered the third month on April 14. Addressing a mass rally at Kanpur in support of the striking workers, Mohd. Amin of CPI (M) and Transport Minister of the Government of W. Bengal said that the strike of the J.K. Jute Workers cannot be crushed by repression as has been let loose by the Congress (I) Govt. of U.P. The workers have become disillusioned with the hypocritic promises by the Congress (I) Govt. and steeled with their own experience are fighting tooth and nail against its pro-employer and authoritarian policies. He denounced the managements' propoganda that the Kanpur Jute Workers get higher wages than those of W. Bengal and so their demands for parity with the W. Bengal Jute Workers are meaningless. He said that the Govt. of W. Bengal is prepared to produce the wage structure of the jute workers and asked whether the Govt. of U.P. and the employers are prepared to increase the wages in U.P. to be in parity with those in W. Bengal. He called upon the workers to carry forward their struggle with determination till the management bends down to settle their demands.

To express solidarity with the striking workers, various other sections of workers from Syntex Tube Works, Annapurna Biscuit, Kanpur Jute Udyog, etc. came in processions to join the rally. Besides Mohd. Amin, the rally was also addressed by Laxmi Sehgal, President of All India Jute Workers' Federation, Daulat Ram, General Secretary of U.P. State Committee of CITU, Arvind Kumar, General Secretary of I.L. Employees' Union, G.P. Pandey, Secretary of Kanpur Division Insurance Employees' Association, Kamal Ramani, Convenor of U.P. Bank Workers' Federation, Shyam Sundar, President of Suti Mill Mazdoor Sabha, Chakrapani Dixit of D.Y.F.I., etc. The rally demanded of the Government to prevail upon the management for a negotiated settlement.

The Kanpur Jute Mill Workers also decided to go on strike on April 16 on wage demands. □

ENGINEERING WORKERS MOVE FOR NEED BASED MINIMUM WAGE

In a convention of the engineering workers of W. Bengal, held at Muslim Institute Hall, Calcutta on April 8, a common charter of demands was formulated, demanding a minimum wage of Rs. 900/- p.m. for workers. The convention was jointly sponsored by five organisations, viz., Federation of Metal and Engineering Workers' Unions, United Metal and Engineering Workers' Federation, W. Bengal Federation of Metal and Engineering Unions, W. Bengal Engineering and Metal Mazdoor Federation and All Bengal Engineering and Metal Workers' Union. The charter of demands has been submitted to all associations of the employees, as well as to the Central and State Government on April 16 and to all the individual factory employers/managements between April 23 to 26.

One of the important features of the charter is that the workers have unitedly voiced the demand for a need based wage to which the Government of India is committed through the 15th Indian Labour Conference of 1957, but has never honoured it. The conference took into account the food norms as recommended by Dr. Akroyd, and the minimum clothing, house accommodation, etc. for a worker with a family of four. Calculating the same on the current prices the engineering workers have demanded Rs. 900/- as the need based minimum wage for unskilled workers in all engineering factories, units, establishments and offices employing 250 or more workers. For semi-skilled, skilled and highly skilled workers the minimum demands are naturally higher,—upto Rs. 1350/- p.m. For factories employing 10 to 49 workers, the minimum, wage demands of the different categories of workers are between Rs. 576/- to Rs. 864/- and it is between Rs. 720 and Rs. 1080/- for the units employing 50 to 249 workers.

The other demands include bonus for all workers without any pre-condition and ceiling, incentive/production bonus, full neutralisation of the rise in cost of living, adequate night allowance, modification of the standing orders, permanency after six months, regularisation of the casual/contract/temporary workers and abolition of the contract system, etc. The Charter also demanded that workers engaged in construction, erection and servicing jobs are to be treated as engineering workmen and included in the wage settlement. It also demanded that canteen employees should also be regarded as regular employees and contract system in canteen should go. For all casual, temporary and contractors' workers it demanded compensation for accident injury.

E.S.I.—Medical

The workers demanded that the ESI Scheme should be non-contributory for workers and

adequate supplies of all types of medicines must be guaranteed. Benefits of all medical treatment including hospitalisation must also be extended to the family members of the insured workers. State Governments should be given more powers to operate the scheme and the Central Government must contribute to meet the expenses. Against defaulting employers the Central Govt. must institute criminal proceedings.

Closed and Locked-out Concerns

The Charter demanded immediate reopening of all closed and locked-out units with full complements and full rights and privileges to workers which they enjoyed before such lock-outs and closures.

Lay-off Benefits

The employers' right to retrench after 45 days' lay-off must be abolished and payment of full wages for the period of lay-off without any restriction must be guaranteed.

Malpractices by Employers

The charter further demanded that all malpractices and dubious methods practised by the employers against the workers like coercing the workers to forego lay-off, closure and other legal benefits, to go on leave without pay, premature retirement, forced resignations, imposing extra work-loads, etc. must be stopped forthwith.

General Demands

Among the general demands, the charter included demands for employment and security of job, unemployment allowance, full wages during the period of closures and lock-outs, full utilisation of the installed capacities of the units etc.

Repeal of NSA and ESMA

The charter further demanded repeal of NSA, ESMA and other repressive and anti labour laws which curb the democratic and trade union rights of the workers. It demanded to give effect to the demands made in the charter with retrospective effect from January 1, 1982.

All India Move

While making moves for campaign for the demands amongst the workers in W. Bengal, the Federation of Metal and Engineering Workers' Unions has already sent its report and the charter to the All India Coordination Committee of Engineering Workers' Unions. The Coordination

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Anti Working Class Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Bill Introduced in Lok Sabha

Amidst stubborn opposition of members of Parliament—Indrajit Gupta, Satya Sadhan Chakrabarty, Sunil Moitra, Ajoy Biswas, Madhu Dandavate and others, which lasted for nearly an hour and after a division at the introductory stage, Minister of State for Labour, introduced Bill No: 47 of 1982, Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Bill in Lok Sabha on February 23.

The Bill contained almost all the anti-working class provisions of the notorious Industrial Relations Bill and rather went beyond the same. The MPs were only representing the anger of the working class which was recorded in the Convention against the Industrial Relations Bill on November 19, 1978 and the workers' march to Parliament on the following day when a petition with two million signatures was presented to the Lok Sabha then.

This Bill was still more retrograde in that by (clause 21) provision of a fresh inclusion of section 36 B in the principal Act has been made, through which, all industries under public sector could be taken out of the purview of the Industrial Disputes Act. This would affect a wide range of industries like Railways, P&T, Defence, Banking, Insurance and may be stretched to Steel, Coal, BHEL and other Public Sector undertakings.

Apart from the reactionary character of the Bill, the MPs contended that introduction of the same without consulting the Central Trade Unions, about which the then Labour Minister N.D. Tiwari had assured the Lok Sabha, tantamounts to breach of assurances. They also said that invidious discrimination made in the Bill makes it bad in law.

It is worth mentioning that within a week of the decision of the National Campaign Committee of Trade Unions to hold joint conventions in Coal, Steel and BHEL and also jointly for all public sector undertakings, this Bill has been introduced.

Statement Issued by CITU

B.T. Ranadive, President and P. Ramamurti, General Secretary of Centre of Indian Trade Unions have issued the following statement on April 23:

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions strongly denounces the anti-working class provisions of the Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Bill 1982 which has been moved in the Parliament today by the Govt. of India, in utter disregard of the considered opinion of the organised working class of the coun-

try including the INTUC, expressed more than 3 years back in the context of the Industrial Relations Bill moved at that time. The Govt. have not only taken out hospitals, dispensaries, educational, scientific, research or training institutions etc. from the definition of industry, but have also assumed powers to suspend the application of the Industrial Disputes Act in establishments under the control of the Govt. by issue of notification on the specious plea of alternative grievance procedure being in force there. Thus quite a large chunk of industrial workers are going to be deprived of the elementary right of raising industrial disputes for amelioration of their grievances and against attacks on their serving and living conditions.

The Govt. of India have proposed some lengthy process of conciliation, adjudication, arbitration etc. without following which all strikes would be considered illegal. Thus the right to strike which the workers have secured through bitter struggles over decades is being sought to be taken away from them. The nefarious design is manifest when one looks at the provisions of unfair labour practice incorporated in the bill in which even picketing has been termed as unfair labour practice. The Bill, in one word, seeks to ban strikes in all fields.

The CITU warns the Govt. of India not to proceed with the enactment of the Bill as the working class would never allow these provisions to be imposed upon them and shall do everything in their power to defeat the attempt of taking away their fundamental right — right to strike.

The CITU appeals to all Central Trade Unions to come together and rouse the united might of the working class to frustrate the evil designs of the Govt. and defend their rights earned through decades of sacrifice, blood and travail. □

P.K. Moitra Acquitted

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letter written by four opposition parties to the Chief Minister which gave the real picture. He urged upon the Chief Minister to prevail upon the Home Minister to correct his statement and express regret in the House as otherwise it would corrode the democratic values and the people would loose faith in the system of Government by law.

The struggle of the Simplex Workers still continues against police repression and for reinstatement of the victimised workers. □

RESERVE BANK EMPLOYEES' STRIKE

Eighteen thousand Reserve Bank employees all over the country observed one day's strike on April 12. The call for the strike was given by the All India Reserve Bank Employees' Association against increased workload, computerisation and mechanisation.

It is to be recalled that the Reserve Bank employees were in a long drawn struggle since 1968 against increasing workload and introduction of labour displacing machines and electronic computers. Despite repeated protests, crores of currency notes are being burnt, skipping over the normal procedure of counting and examination, thus destroying the job potential and endangering the country's currency system.

Though a separate settlement on the economic demands of the employees was arrived at, the Government foisted a National Tribunal (Dighe Tribunal) on the workers, where the management's demands for computerisation, mechanisation and increased workload were referred to. The Dighe Tribunal gave its award bestowing full rights to the management to computerise the departmental works, introduction of machines wherever the authorities liked them to be used and 15 per cent increase in work load in note/coin/verification sections. At the same time the tribunal rejected most of the legitimate demands of the employees including the pension scheme jointly worked out and signed by a study group composed of representatives both from the management and the employees. As demanded by the management, the tribunal also steeply raised the interest rate on housing loan and other advances made to the employees. The proposals made by the employees for promotional avenues were also rejected totally.

Armed with this award, the management announced its decision to implement the award by increasing 15 per cent work load on the employees from April 12.

In pursuance of the unanimous decision of the General Council of the All India Reserve Bank Employees' Association taken at Calcutta on April 2 and 3, the employees in the 21 offices of the bank launched its struggle also from April 12 with the one day's strike. Thereafter they will continue to resist extra work load and transfer of manual work to machines and computer in every office of the bank.

In a statement, Ashis Sen, the General Secretary of the All India Reserve Bank Employees Association

called upon the employees to prepare for a protracted struggle and build up a strong resistance movement against the anti-labour moves of the management which will not only severely affect the job security of the existing employees but also close the doors as for future employment in the Bank.

The Bank Employees' Federation, W. Bengal called upon all its units in all the districts to hold rallies on April 12 expressing solidarity with the struggle of the Reserve Bank employees.

The employees drew out programme of relay hunger strike at the Madras office from March 22 to 25 and then to Head Office of the bank at Karur from March 29.

CITU Opposes Automation and Increased Workload in Reserve Bank

B.T. Ranadive, President, Centre of Indian Trade Unions has issued the following statement on April 9:

The CITU opposes the Govt's decision to introduce computers and increase workload on the staff in Reserve Bank of India in utter disregard of the protest lodged by the employees and their representative organisation viz. All India Reserve Bank Employees Association. The increased workload on clerical staff would naturally increase the workload on sub-staff who were not a party to this dispute earlier. This has forced the Association to take a decision for one day protest action on April 12.

At a time when the unemployment in the country particularly in the field of educated unemployment has reached an all time high causing serious concern amongst the people, the Govt's decision to introduce computer and increase the workload on staff is, to say the least, most ill advised and would lead to further deterioration in employment potential in the country. The policy of confrontation with the employees, unless reversed, may cause serious dislocation in banking industry.

The CITU, therefore, demands that the Govt should negotiate the issues with the leaders of the Association and bring about a settlement.

The CITU also appeals to all the trade union centres and the democratic mass organisations to raise their powerful voice of protest against automation and confrontation with the employees so that

these anti-people, anti-working class policies of the Govt could be halted and reversed.

Developments in RBI

The resistance to increased work-load in the note-examination sections began by returning the extra work at the close of office hours. Soon after, the management demanded written undertaking that the normal as well as the additional quota would be accepted and completed within scheduled hours. Employees rejected this. Therefore, they were not given any work. Employees of other departments went in mass deputation to management in protest and demanded work for the concerned colleagues. Jobs allotted to them were also withdrawn when they returned from deputation. Thus, virtually some sort of an undeclared-lock-out prevails at a number of centres. Demonstrations, mass deputations and frequent walk-outs are taking place. Two or three full day strikes at some centres like Calcutta and others have been observed. The management instead of negotiating a settlement, have taken recourse to victimisation. Leaders of the Associations at Hyderabad, New Delhi, Bangalore, Kanpur, etc. have been suspended and threatened with dismissal. Series of show cause memos for dismissal have been issued. But, the employees are fighting against this offensive with determination.

In a memorandum submitted to the Union Finance Minister, various members of the Parliament urged upon the Government to direct the management of the RBI to start negotiation with the All India Reserve Bank Employees' Association, the representative body of the employees, to settle the dispute amicably. The signatories were Sushil Bhattacharjee, E. Balanandan, Sushila Gopalan, Mohd. Ismail (CPI-M), Ram Avtar Sastri, Geeta Mukherjee (CPI), Madhu Dandavata, Pramila Dandavate (Janata), Ram Bilas Paswan, Mani Ram Bagri (Lok Dal) and others.

Agitation in Lakshmi Vilas Bank, Madras

The employees of the Lakshmi Vilas Bank, Madras have been compelled to take recourse to the path of struggles against the victimisation policy of the management which has started ordering malafide transfers, suspensions and issuing chargesheets on fictitious grounds. These victimisations are coupled with non-implementation of previous agreements.

The employees drew out programme of relay hunger strike at the Madras Office from March, 22 to 25 and then to Head Office of the Bank at Karur from March, 29.

Stay out strike in Vijaya Bank

The employees of the Vijaya Bank, in the eastern region have decided to observe one day's stay out strike on April 30 against victimisations of union

leaders and activists. Continuing its vindictive plans the management has suspended three employees at Gauhati. The Bank Employee's Federation, West Bengal called upon its units to rally behind the struggle of the employees of Vijaya Bank by mobilising the employees of all its affiliated units in the branches and districts and demonstrate in front of the premises of the Vijaya Bank demanding withdrawal of the punitive measures.

Strike in Bank of India

Continued anti labour moves by the management of Bank of India sparked off agitation by the employees since the last four months. Despite protests and repeated representations made by the employees, the management escalated its attacks on them and suspended two employees at the Champdani and Asansol branches respectively. Further, the management of the Mission Row Branch, at Calcutta has taken a move to dismiss one suspended employee. Left with no other alternatives, the employees decided to go on for one day's strike on April 2 in all the branches in W. Bengal.

The Bank Employees Federation, W. Bengal organised a programme of massive rally in front of the Bank of India at Netaji Subhas Road, Calcutta in support of the employees' struggle.

Engineering Workers Demand Need Based Minimum Wage

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Committee has asked all the units to submit detailed reports regarding the service and working conditions of the workers, their demands and other matters concerning the state of the industry to enable the Committee to prepare a draft all India report in its next meeting under the guidance of CITU. CITU has taken the initiative to organise an all India convention of the engineering workers and prepare the ground for a countrywide joint movement of the workers in the engineering industry.

Movement in Kanpur

In the meantime, led by CITU, the engineering workers in Kanpur have already started agitations for fixation of minimum wage. About one thousand workers led by the CITU affiliated unions, viz., Engineering Udyog Workers' Union, Truck Parts of India Mazdoor Sabha, Bharat Electricals Group Mazdoor Union, Syntex Tube Workers' Karmachari Union, Avery Mazdoor Union and Blue Star Workers' Union, held a rally before the Additional Labour Commissioner on March 30 and submitted a copy of the 17-Point Common Charter of Demands to him. Among others who spoke were Anjani Kumar, Shiv Shankar Kushwa, Jai Pratap Singh, Dil Raj Yadav, M.P. Chaturvedi, Rajendra Singh, Jagdish Prasad Vishwakarma, etc. □

Govt's Labour Policy Assailed

Mohd. Ismail M.P., Vice-President CITU while speaking on Demands for Grants of Labour Ministry said that this ministry does not function, it has no control over the employer ministries. This ministry does not take action against the Public Sector Undertakings who are resorting to unfair labour practices. As an example he said that in terms of Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act, no contract labour should be employed in work of permanent nature. But this is being violated and more and more work is being transferred to contract labour, and the Labour Ministry does not intervene. In collieries, use of contract labour is on the increase. He also quoted the struggle of the workers of Bangalore based public sector undertakings in which, the ministry could not intervene.

He said that the Consultative Committee of MPs for Labour Ministry meets and some suggestions are also made. But there is no implementation.

The Govt. claims that the production hampers because of indiscipline among the workers. In reality the management takes loan from financial institutions, divert the funds and then makes the industries sick which hampers production.

Referring to the unanimous recommendation of the Rath Committee for correction of Consumer Price Index numbers (base 1960=100) by 7 points, the labour ministry is keeping quiet for over two years, while the workers are losing a lot of money due to them, on an average Rs. ten per month.

He also charged the Labour Ministry for its failure to force the managements to pay the P.F. and ESIC, the money which is due to them. In some cases even the money deducted from the salary of the workers are not credited. No action, however, is taken against the management.

He also charged the Govt for not convening the Indian Labour Conference.

Referring to B.P.E., he said, that it is now acting as a parallel ministry and in the name of giving guidance to wage negotiations, is actually blocking all negotiations. This policy is bound to cause resentment amongst the workers.

He said that Govt's policy of bringing in new automatic devices, machines etc is contributing to increase in unemployment in the country. As an example he quoted the container system introduced in ports and docks.

He said that the slogan of 'The Year of Productivity' is bound to come to grief, because there is no electricity or raw materials.

Referring to the textile workers' strike in Bombay, he said that the daily loss is over Rs. 4 crores. But the Govt does not step in for a solution only to protect the minority INTUC union.

In the end he referred to the condition of lakhs of Beedi workers who are living in deplorable conditions. There must be a central wage board for them. He concluded by saying that the working class throughout the country struck work on January 19 to change these anti-labour policies of the Govt and the Govt must pay heed to it and reverse its policies. □

News Paper Employees' Struggle Against Automation

Having hardly emerged out from the struggle for implementation of the Palekar Award, the news paper and news agency employees have launched another bitter struggle against automation in the printing industry. The Government and the private employers have taken a sudden move to introduce automation and computer technology in the news paper industry completely replacing the conventional system of production.

In a note circulated to all trade unions and Members of the Parliament, the National Confederation of Newspaper and News Agency Employees' Organisation has pointed out that even when the recommendations of the Palekar Award were under deliberation, the newspaper barons were preparing for computerisation in secret and at a tremendous speed. In fact, they have deceived the employees in some concerns by tagging automation with implementation of the award. The move is to introduce the new technology within a year or so for which the Government has already permitted the press barons to import under Open General Licence not only old and discarded second and third generation machineries but also spare parts and foreign technologies. Machines like Visual Display Terminal, Photo-type-setter, Composing/Edit machines etc., are to be inducted to do away with the hot metal type production of composing and printing newspapers. Type setting may be done in computer graphics and computer image processing via digital methods and photo processing work with computerised colour scanner. Paper can be printed and assembled in remote plants with the help of satellite communication system or by facsimile transmission system by wire link or microwave; information processing will be highly computerised and micro computer will monitor and control printing, binding and distribution. The data processing bank together with the photo composing
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CITU's Memorandum on Sick Industrial Undertakings

Reserve Bank of India had set up a Committee on sick industrial undertakings under the Chairmanship of Shri T. Tiwari, which formulated certain broad issues in order to elicit the opinion of Trade Union organisations about measures like exemption from the operation of various wage awards and obligation of payment of minimum bonus, reduction in wages, postponement of annual increment etc., for a limited period and also modification of service conditions, rationalisation, automation, termination of employment by payment of terminal benefits etc., and invited CITU for a discussion on April 12.

The CITU submitted a detailed memorandum on the subject in which it was stated that:

"An indepth analysis carried out by the Reserve Bank of India for the period ended December, 1979 to identify the reasons for industrial sickness of large industrial units revealed that in the majority of such units (about 52 per cent) internal causes like management deficiencies, diversion of funds, lack of clear marketing strategy and infighting among different interests were the major causes of sickness. In the case of Jute Textiles, market recession was identified as the principal cause. Though to a lesser extent, engineering industries, iron and steel and textile industries have been also affected by similar constraint." (Para 4.28 Economic Survey 1981-82)

The Survey also admits that to a certain extent, "the persistent industrial sickness was due to the shortages of power, coal, and inadequate availability of transportation facilities" (para 4.31).

Reverse the Policy of the Government

It was pointed out that:

"The growing incidence of industrial sickness calls for a radical change in the policies of the Government. The "Industrial Policy Resolution" adopted in 1956 has been changed and now the policy of openly wooing the multinationals has been introduced. The MRTP Houses have been allowed to start industries in sectors which were exclusively reserved for small scale and medium industries. A reversal of these policies is necessary if the incidence of industrial sickness is sought to be controlled.

Effective steps are also necessary so that the

Government could intervene in case of diversion of funds and corrupt practices resorted to by the management of private sector undertakings who allow the industry to become sick and block public funds. Appropriate laws to punish the guilty owners and confiscate their properties should be enacted and strictly enforced.

The Government should also come out with the policy of exemption of excise duty and other taxes for limited period to help rehabilitation of the sick industries.

It is seen from the Economic Survey that the Government had taken over management of only 2 industrial undertakings in 1981 under Industries (Development & Regulation) Act, 1951 as against 4 in the previous year. No sick unit was nationalised in 1981 though in the year 1980, 13 such units were nationalised. This shows a shift in the policy of the Government probably under the conditionalities of the IMF Loan."

The memorandum concluded with the following:

"In fine the CITU would like to point out that the programme of rehabilitation of sick industries must be drawn up keeping in view the maximum benefit to the society. Hence such rehabilitation must ensure the job securities and maintenance of wage level of the workers who form the bigger section of the society. Any curtailment of jobs and wages of the workers would affect the well being of the society in the long run and would be counter productive. Besides the suggestions contained in the note framing broad issues for discussion in effect mean rehabilitation of management deficiencies, diversion of funds, infighting among different groups of management, corruption at the cost of labour and is in effect an apologia for the wrong industrial and fiscal policies of the Government and fiasco of its planning. The CITU unequivocally rejects all the suggestions."

Nrisingha Chakrabarty, represented CITU in the discussion. Various questions including the question of Workers' Participation in management were also raised. It was pointed out that such participation can take place only on the basis of equality.

A copy of the memorandum has been forwarded to the Finance Minister also requesting that a thorough probe be made and remedial steps taken.

Rail Budget Criticised

Basudev Acharya M.P. in Lok Sabha and Arabindo Ghosh M.P. in Rajya Sabha criticised the Govt for introducing the financial system of commercial undertaking and giving the concept of public utility service the go by. They drew pointed attention to the terms of world Bank loan for railways which demanded yearly increase in freight and fare rates. Bowing to this dictat the Govt has imposed a freight and fare increase of Rs. 1221 crores during the past two years after Smt. Gandhi came to power. The traditional concessional rates for foodgrains, pulses and other articles of daily necessities have been withdrawn and steep increase in the fares for second class passengers has been imposed causing miseries to the common man.

They also criticised for giving more emphasis on freight movement which is causing delay in the passenger service. Violation of safety rules, neglect in repair of tracks and replacement of over aged rolling stock, increased work load on staff, particularly on the Loco running staff in violation of the agreement for ten hours duty has contributed to a large number of accidents. Referring to the claim of the Govt to have achieved a record in movement of freight traffic, they sarcastically remarked that the Railway Ministry has also achieved a record in accidents, loss of lives, injury and interruption to through traffic by accidents. It has also made a record in the incidence of thefts.

They criticised the policy of computerisation in the railways for which the World Bank is insisting. This would create havoc in the field of employment as already the figure of registered unemployed has crossed 17 million mark. They also attacked the policy of changing over to Contract Labour in new railway constructions.

They scathingly attacked the situation of industrial relations citing concrete examples of going back on earlier agreements and the policy of victimisation and denial of freedom of association and right to collective bargaining in railways. Quoting a circular issued by Railway Board, they charged the Govt for having changed the policy towards the unrecognised unions and associations with a view to make their functioning almost impossible. The Railway Ministry is not honouring the Court decisions forcing the employees into protracted legal battle.

Ajit Saha M.P. speaking on the Demands for Grants drew attention to the decision of tapering down of locomotives in Chittaranjan Locomotive Works. He opposed increased demand for accident compensation and criticised more expenses in court cases. He pointed out that although the railway workers did not join the January 19 Strike, quite a

large number of workmen have been victimised. The railway authorities have become so vindictive that they chargesheeted workers for taking part in a token hunger strike at Kasganj, N.E. Railway.

All of them demanded that the policy followed by the Railway Ministry must be changed.

Victimisation Continues

The Railway authorities are continuing victimisation of railwaymen for participation in trade union activities. Loco Running Staff at Kasganj have been chargesheeted for participation in a Dharna on March 15. The President of AILRSA unit at Daund has been chargesheeted for leading a mass demonstration. Samar Mukherjee M.P., has drawn attention of the Prime Minister to such blatant denial of right of freedom of association and requested her to intervene. S.K. Dhar, Secretary General, AILRSA, has sent a further letter to the Committee on Freedom of Association ILO giving additional facts and further documents in substantiation of the earlier complaint dated January 31.

Protest Week Observed

As was decided by the 12 men Panel, Protest Week has been observed in almost all the divisions between April 8 and 14.

National Convention Oppose LIC Split

A national convention jointly sponsored by A.I. Insurance Employees' Association, A.I. Life Insurance Employees' Association, AILIC Employees' Federation and National Organisation of Insurance Workers (BMS) was held at Delhi on April 17 to mobilise opinions against the move of the Government to split the LIC into five independent corporations and against the LIC (Amendment) Act which negated the right to collective bargaining. A number of M.Ps, Central Trade Union leaders and leaders of various national federations attended the convention.

Inaugurating the convention, Jyoti Basu, Chief Minister of West Bengal and Vice-President of CITU said that all actions of the Government were against any unified trade union movement. He cited several examples of the anti-worker and anti-people moves of the Government and charged it with playing one section of the workers against another. He said that the Government was bent upon to go ahead with the path of confrontation with the

(On Page Thirtyfour)

STOP DELINKING CALCUTTA-HALDIA PORTS

The Central Government's surprise move to delink the Calcutta and Haldia Ports has given rise to agitations by the workers. Led by the Shipping Employees' Federation of India, various trade unions supported by the Central Trade Unions raised the demand to scrap the proposal of delinking the ports.

The Background

Being a riverine port, Calcutta has been facing the difficulties of navigability due to heavy siltation in the rivers Bhagirathi-Hooghly. In 1964-65 the total cargo handled in Calcutta port was 11.2 million tonnes. But now the total tonnage handled in Calcutta and Haldia ports together is only about 8 million annually. Expert opinions had confirmed long back that the navigability of the rivers cannot be maintained by dredging alone. A continuous flow of 40,000 cusecs of water through the channel was necessary to save and maintain the port of Calcutta. Trade Unions raised this demand. The West Bengal Legislative Assembly passed unanimous resolutions on the demand and the Chief Minister, Com. Jyoti Basu discussed the problem of the Calcutta port with the Prime Minister, justifying the demand. The Farakka Barrage was constructed solely with the aim of supplying 40,000 cusecs of water through the Bhagirathi-Hooghly Channel throughout the year. But because of wrong policies of the Government, with the signing of India-Bangladesh pact on sharing the Ganges water, Calcutta port does not get even less than half of its requirements in the lean months. Subsequently, the Haldia Dock Complex was constructed down the river Bhagirathi nearer to Bay of Bengal for loading and unloading special types of bulk cargo like petroleum, coal, mineral ores, etc., to facilitate entry of large ships into Calcutta, which after the delivery of the heavy cargo at Haldia become lighter and enter the Calcutta port.

Splitting Calcutta-Haldia

The entire Calcutta port complex consists of two large docks, jetties on the river side, Oil jetty at Budge Budge, five dry docks for ship repairing, ware houses, godowns, yards, dredging and piloting system and its own railway under the port authorities. This entire infra-structure is capable of handling fifteen million tonnes annually. The port has a hinterland of the entire eastern and north-eastern region of the country, rich in resources. So, the Haldia Dock Complex was in fact constructed to serve as a complementary to the Calcutta port, as its natural part and not as a separate port, for full utilisation of the Calcutta port and economise the process. But instead of this, the cargo is being transported through other ports, causing huge national wastage in the form of increased cost of railways and road transport. The move to split the Haldia port from Calcutta as per the recommendations of the Laxminarayan Committee will thus further aggravate the situation. Moreover, while the Calcutta port will lose the assistance of Haldia, Haldia also will be

deprived of the facilities of the Calcutta port complex. Thus both the ports will suffer and the economy of the entire eastern and north-eastern region will be further destabilised which in turn will affect the entire country as a whole.

Ulterior Motive

The entire move has been taken bypassing the voice of the people raised through agitations and the West Bengal assembly, ignoring the deputation led by Somnath Chatterjee, President of Shipping Employees' Federation of India and negating the representation made by the Chief Minister himself. No rational argument had been put forward by the Central Government for the split. There cannot be any reason behind the move other than to serve its narrow political end to stall the development of the Calcutta city and the state. The motive is to keep the region tardy in its development and systematically bring down the image of the left-front Government led by CPI(M), which has stood as a bulwark of defence against the authoritarian policies of the Congress(I) Government and served as a beacon light to advance the democratic process. Victimisations are already being resorted to choke the voice of the trade unions. The Shipping Employees' Federation of India has decided to carry forward the struggle to compel the Government to drop the plan. It has called upon all sections of the workers and the people to unitedly fight to defeat the designs of the Government.

CONVENTION AGAINST LIC SPLIT

(From page Thirtythree)

workers and reluctant to have any bilateral talks with their organisations, thereby negating the democratic process itself. He called upon the workers to unitedly resist the Government's move to split the LIC and fight for the restoration of the right to collective bargaining.

P. Ramamurti, General Secretary of CITU and member of the Parliament (CPI-M) said that the Government in fact had no rational argument to justify the split. The split was actually aimed at disrupting the united movement of the LIC workers. He called upon the workers to further consolidate the unity achieved through their struggles, embrace all other sections of the workers, make common cause with the demands of the people and prepare for bitter struggles against the anti-labour policies of the Government.

Indrajit Gupta, MP (CPI) and General Secretary of AITUC asked the workers not to depend on the bourgeois courts or the parliament only, but to wage militant struggles for mitigation of their demands. Among others who spoke were Madhu Dandavate, MP (Janata) and H.N. Bahuguna of the Democratic Socialist Party.

The convention unanimously adopted a declaration demanding a stop to the move of splitting the LIC, repeal of the LIC (Amendment) Act and restoration of the right to collective bargaining.

BOMBAY TEXTILE STRIKE

(From page twentytwo)

You are in the midst of hectic preparations for the success of the Maharashtra Bundh. The press reports indicate that the Government is trying to initiate police action in order to terrorise the workers and if possible to frustrate the Maharashtra Bundh through repression. I am confident that the entire Maharashtra Committee and its active cadres will make the Bundh a success braving all repressions.

The active part taken by the CITU cadres during the past three months has raised the prestige of the CITU higher and I am confident that it would leave its imprint in the minds of the workers. I am sure that you would take steps to consolidate the gains and harness the growing influence of CITU so that the increased strength gets reflected in the organisation.

Once again I warmly greet you all"

Supporting the Maharashtra bundh a statement issued by B.T. Ranadive and P. Ramamurti CITU denounced the Government's policy of patronising minority INTUC unions and directed the affiliated unions and the State Committee of Maharashtra to do every thing possible for the success of the Maharashtra Bundh and thereafter carry forward the struggle till an honourable settlement is reached.

The leaders of the constituents of TUJAC in general and the CITU leaders in particular, toured the districts of the state and addressed series of meetings for the success of the bundh and the struggle.

Significance of the Bundh

The successful bundh not only demonstrated the massive support of the people but also signified a massive opposition to the forces of authoritarianism represented by the Government of India and its denial of the rights of the working class to choose their own unions for representations within three months after the January 19 strike, the people of Maharashtra again stood up unitedly to ring the warning bell to the Congress(I) Government.

A.I. Solidarity Day by N.C.C.

The National Campaign Committee in its meeting at Delhi on April 16 supported the Bundh Call given by TUJAC and called upon all its constituents to observe April 27 as the All India Solidarity Day in support of the striking workers of the textile industry. All the trade unions opposed to INTUC will be holding joint rallies and demonstrations, wearing badges throughout the country and send telegrams to the Government demanding negotiated settlement with the unions representing the striking

workers. A delegation on behalf of the N.C.C. will also meet the Prime Minister on April 22 to demand such settlement.

CITU Congratulates the Working Class of Maharashtra

Com. B.T. Ranadive President and Com. P. Ramamurti, M.P. General Secretary, Centre of Indian Trade Unions have issued the following statement:—

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions, congratulates the working class of Maharashtra for their firm solidarity action in support of the long drawn struggle of the textile workers of Bombay through participation in the Maharashtra Bundh on April 19, which brought the industrial as well as trading activities almost to a grinding halt in various parts of the State.

The CITU denounces the Govt. of Maharashtra for their attempt to strike terror among the workers by massive 'police bandobast', clamping of prohibitory orders, and arrest of over 2000 workers including some under NSA in their vain bid to prop-up the discredited Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh by ruthless repression on those who have revolted against this organisation which has been acting as a handmaiden for the textile magnates.

The CITU condemns the hypocritical stand of Maharashtra Govt. who while stating that they would not make it a prestige issue, advises the workers to resume work unconditionally leaving the demands of the workers to be settled later on and demands that immediate negotiations should be started with the leaders of the striking textile workers in order to settle their just demands.

The CITU supports the call of the National Campaign Committee of Trade Unions to observe April 27 as 'Solidarity Day' and calls upon its State Committees and all affiliated unions throughout the country to express their solidarity and raise their powerful voice to force the Govt. to come to a negotiated settlement.

In Parliament

The voice of the Bombay Textile Workers was echoed in Lok Sabha also in a Calling Attention Motion on April 20.

Ajit Saha (CPI-M) charged the Union Labour Minister for undermining the seriousness of the situation and taking shelter under the B.I.R. Act of 1946. He said that Labour Minister was behaving

not as an Union Labour Minister, but as an INTUC Labour Minister. He demanded for a settlement and asked whether the Government was prepared for a secret ballot to judge the majority union.

Ajit Bag (CPI-M) justified the strike and the bundh and said that it was already proved that the INTUC union had no following at all. The ballot had already been cast by the prolonged and successful strike. He said that by trying to safeguard the stooge union the Government has thrown lakhs of people into starvation. Demand for repeal of the B.I.R. Act was justified as it only protects the stooge union.

Sudhir Giri (CPI-M) justified the demands of the workers for wage increase and said that the mill owners were earning huge profits and diversifying the profits to other industries.

Delhi Textile Workers Strike

To press for their thirteen point demands and expressing solidarity with the Bombay Textile Workers, twenty two thousand workers of all the five textile mills in Delhi, went on a one day's strike on April 20. The strike call was jointly given by the United Committee of Textile Unions affiliated to CITU, AITUC and BMS.

CITU Congratulates Delhi Textile Workers

B.T. Ranadive, President of the CITU has issued the following statement to the Press on April 21:

"The Centre of Indian Trade Unions congratulates the twenty two thousand textile workers of Delhi who struck work in all the five textile mills in the city in response to a one day strike call given by a united committee of textile unions affiliated to the CITU, AITUC and BMS. The workers have by this action begun their struggle for their 13 point charter of demands. It is noteworthy that the Delhi textile workers have expressed solidarity with the struggling textile workers of Bombay, through this strike.

The CITU condemns the role of the Delhi police which in Birla Mills and Swatantra Bharat Mills attacked the peaceful picketers with lathi charges and arrested a total of about 130 workers of which over hundred are from CITU unions including six office-bearers of the CITU affiliated Kapra Mazdoor Lal Jhanda Union and the Delhi District Committee of CITU. By this police action, the Delhi Administration has openly sided with the big monopoly houses of Birlas and D.C.M.

The CITU while extending greetings to the textile workers calls upon them to preserve and strengthen their unity and prepare for bigger struggles to win their just demands.

Government Totters

The glorious strike of the Bombay Textile Workers has made the condition of the Government tottering. So long it was adhering to its adamant attitude of not to talk with the striking unions at all. Having no face to justify its stand, it has asked for creating a "congenial atmosphere" by withdrawing the strike to enable the Government to talk. The workers however are experienced of the hypocrisy of the Government spokesmen. The strike therefore continues till victory.

N.B. The leaders of the National Campaign Committee could not meet the Prime Minister on April 22, as she cancelled all her appointments for the day. (April 22). □

Kanpur Annapurna Biscuit Workers on Indefinite Strike

Five hundred workers of Annapurna Biscuit Factory, led by Kanpur Biscuit Karmachari Union (CITU), went on indefinite strike from April 19, demanding settlement of their 25 point charter of demands.

Since the last two months the workers were on a bitter struggle against an unprecedented repression by the management. Instead of amicable settlement of the grievances of the workers, the management called the police to make brutal lathi charges on the workers on march 3, seriously injuring twenty. Over and above, six workers were arrested, ten office-bearers of the union were falsely involved in cases, three hunger strikers were thrown into jail and seventy five activists were suspended. But the undaunted workers fought back and went on complete and indefinite strike, putting a complete halt to the production of 150kg of biscuits per fourteen minutes in this biggest biscuit factory of U.P. Leaders of CITU and various other organisations addressed a rally of the striking workers and congratulated them for the complete strike. They called upon all sections of the workers to rally behind the striking workers. □

Year of Productivity

(from page twenty)

By this slogan, Smt. Gandhi wants to assure the aid givers in the International Monetary Fund that Indian Labour is not only cheap but also can be forced to work harder. Foreign investors also will feel reassured by this call and more foreign investment is forthcoming. The recent budget has already given substantial tax and other concessions.

However, the working class of India looks at the slogan as an attack on their working conditions. The policy of the Government will only evoke a powerful resistance from the workers all over the country. The National Campaign Committee of Trade Unions has rightly called upon the working class to rise against the new offensive so that with the help of countrywide movement the attack can be squarely repulsed. □

Kerala L.D.F.—Pledged to Serve the People

Like the Left Fronts in W. Bengal and Tripura, where the left forces, particularly the CPI(M) are powerful, the Left-democratic Front in Kerala also, not only continued its struggle against authoritarianism and ensured democratic rights and civil liberties to the people, but also it gave to the people whatever was possible within a short span of 21 months, despite all constraints and impediments put up by the Centre and its agents in the State. This was possible because the LDF was pledged to serve the people.

Betrayal of the People

The Anthony Congress and the Mani group of Kerala Congress joined the Left-Democratic Front to fight against the authoritarian policies of the Indira regime and the LDF Government was formed in January, 1980. They were a party to the call for Kerala bundh on September 5 against the ESMO. They were also parties to the declaration that the Kerala LDF Govt would not invoke NSA and ESMA. But their sympathies with the propertied class revealed itself when they betrayed the faith the people of Kerala had bestowed upon them and joined the same camp led by Congress(I) which they had promised to the people to fight against.

The 80 Days' Ordeal

Despit all this, the Karunakaran Ministry of Congress(I) could be foisted on the people only as a minority Government by the Governor, dancing to the tune of the Centre. The people however refused to be thrown into the clutches of the Congress(I) again and fought back courageously. The 80 days after which the minority Govt. collapsed, marked a period of blatant assault on democracy and torture experienced by the people. The police stations were turned into virtual torture camps. Under the patronage of Karunakaran Ministry the Congress(I) hoodlums and the RSS organised numerous murders of the Left-Democratic Front workers. Even educational institutions were converted into police camps, nakedly revealing how the police and these elements were used as instruments of torture for suppression of the democratic movement.

Welfare Measures Guillotined

The Karunakaran ministry utilised its 80 days' life to guillotine all the welfare measures adopted by the Left Democratic Front ministry. The agricultural workers' pensions were scuttled, the unemployment allowance was stopped and the development measures initiated for the traditional industries like coir, handlooms, cashew, fishing, etc.

were brought to a standstill. The insurance scheme made for the fishermen, premium being paid by the LDF Govt. was sabotaged. It further accepted the decision of the Centre to have the same size of Rs. 275 crores as last year as Kerala's plan for 1982-83 although under the conditions of inflation and price-rise, it becomes less than last year. Over and above, those seeking employment in Central Govt. services from Kerala, will now have to go through a special police verification.

While the Central Govt sat pretty over the Rath Committee Recommendations on the consumer price index, the LDF, on its own, rectified some blatant errors in the compilation of index which resulted in increased DA for the entire workers in the state. They had also introduced payment and system of periodical revision of DA linked with the price index for agricultural workers.

The Public Distribution System

To control price rise and inflation, which are the consequences of the Central Govt's policies, the LDF Govt. introduced a network of public distribution system which was hailed as one of the best in the country. Even the political opponents acknowledged the fact. Within eighty days the Karunakaran ministry has cut at the root of the public distribution system. The Maveli Stores and the Onam Fairs which had given relief to the people have now become lifeless.

Defeat the UDF

The pseudo United Democratic Front, in reality, is a Rightist Front, full of contradictions. The kingpin of the front is Congress(I) with its policy of authoritarianism and suffering from contradictions itself. Such an alliance will never deliver the goods to the people, because it is pledged to serve the vested interests. The dictatorial and anti people policies of the Congress(I) have thrown a serious challenge to the people. The people of Kerala fought it. This was the State where the people installed the first communist Govt. in 1957. This was the State where the people organised massive protest actions against the hated emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi and demanded its withdrawal. They are still fighting for consolidation of the democratic forces against those of authoritarianism and reaction. The working class, the peasantry, the toiling people and the democratic forces in the country are confident that the people of Kerala will come up again and defeat the forces of reaction represented by the UDF and reinstall the Left-Democratic Front to strengthen the democratic rights.

Hissar — Escalation of Attacks on CITU Activists

Directly in connivance with the Congress (I) Chief Minister of Haryana, the police with the help of the INTUC hoodlums have escalated the attacks on the leaders and activists of the CITU affiliated Lal Jhanda Kapra Mazdoor Ekta Union in Hissar Textile Mills.

It may be recalled that after a prolonged strike of over four months in the mill the workers joined their duties and an agreement was arrived at on December 4. But this agreement was never honoured by the management. The Labour Department instead of prevailing over the management to honour the agreement, helped them on the contrary to muster the anti-social elements and make repeated attacks on the workers in general and the CITU leaders and activists in particular. The police and the INTUC hoodlums joined the force openly. It was reported that a clandestine meeting was held by the Chief Minister himself at his native place at Mandi Adampur (Hissar) with the management to hatch up a plan to ban the entry of Tek Chand Gupta, District Committee Secretary of CITU into the mill area. But the plan failed due to united resistance by the mass of workers. In their next bid to break the CITU Union and escape the responsibility of implementing the agreement by creating rivalry among the unions, the management announced on March 15 to hold the elections for the Works Committee on March 24. During the period, the management deployed the anti-socials, led by the INTUC-hoodlums, to create confusion and division amongst the workers on the basis of caste and community. But the workers, experienced through their long drawn struggles, remained united and fought back the evil designs of the management and returned the CITU candidates in five out of the seven posts. One AITUC candidate was also returned, supported by CITU. All the nefarious means to stall the victory of the CITU union being defeated, the management-hired hoodlums directly attacked the workers' victory rally with lathis, cycle chains and daggers, seriously injuring several. The Government's open support to the management and the anti-socials was laid bare, when instead of the anti-socials, the police arrested the entire leadership of the CITU union. The hoodlums were allowed to go scot-free, assaulting the CITU activists. The General Secretary of the union was physically beaten up. They broke open the house of one winning candidate of CITU, physically assaulted him, looted the household goods and took away his cycle.

A reign of terror has been let loose and jungle-law is prevailing in the place openly before the eyes of the Government authorities. But despite the barbarous attacks the Lal Jhanda Kapra Mazdoor Ekta Union is holding high the banner of CITU, and the

steeled workers are unitedly fighting back the ravage onslaught. A mass meeting was held on April 17, which was addressed amongst others by the CPI (M) Members of Parliament, Mussaddul Hossain and Sudhir Giri.

In a letter to the Union Labour Minister, CITU has condemned the attitude of the State Labour Department and demanded implementation of the agreement and arrest of the actual criminals. □

News Papers Employees Struggle

(from page Thirtyone)

machines will eliminate the job of the journalists and the Business and Management Control Computer System will do away with the clerical, administrative, circulation, advertisement and accounts jobs. Thus the whole process will drastically eliminate the manpower needed in various stages of work in the industry, estimated to be 75 to 80 per cent, including the journalists and the non-journalists. When the foreign exchange reserve is depleting, these machines are going to be imported regardless of social necessity and cost. It is not without reason that the IMF loan conditions dictate an unrestrained import policy, for the imperialists are interested in selling these obsolete machines to our country to cope with their restricted domestic market. The issue of photo composing is all the more relevant because the IMF loan conditions have opened the opportunities to the Indian capitalists to resort to automation over the entire gamut of industrial activities in a massive way.

It is not the question of restricted market, nor a continuing loss, nor of increasing financial burdens, but the mad hunt for more and more profits is the quest behind automation. Beginning with LIC and Banks, this capitalist "rationalisation", aided by the Government, has spread to various industries, like textile, jute, mining, engineering etc.

The confederation expressed its determination to build up a resistance to automation because it drastically reduces the employment potential, drives out the workers from their jobs, increases foreign dependence, helps monopolisation and further exploitation of the workers. Having set itself to the path of direct agitation, the Confederation has also drawn out programmes of intensive campaign to educate the members on the evils of automation and build up a wall of resistance and compel the Government to call a national tripartite meeting to discuss all aspects of the problem and set up a tripartite forum for the printing industry, pending which all licences granted for importing the machines must be cancelled. As reported in the January issue, CITU has already submitted a memorandum to the Government in this regard.

Left Front Government and People

(from page twentythree)

Benefits to the workers

When workers were being refused and segregated on the right to bonus, the Left Front Government took steps to ensure bonus to all in accordance with its guidelines.

When the Congress(I) Governments in other states refused to accept the recommendations of the Pay Commissions to increase the wages of their employees and unleashed ruthless repression of agitations, giving even shoot-at-sight orders, the Left Front Govt of West Bengal accepted all major recommendations of the Pay Commission to make upward revision and restructuring of the pay and allowance of the employees.

The Industrial Disputes Act 1947 was also amended to give legislative benefits to various sections of workers who were deprived earlier.

Unemployment Allowance

It was the first Government in the country to offer unemployment allowance to the youths who remained unemployed for more than 5 years due to the socio-economic system itself. It was again the first Govt. to introduce old age pensions to agricultural labourers and small peasants and welfare measures to artists, literary men, technicians, widows, etc.

Education

The introduction of free education upto higher secondary stage has set in motion a train of developments which would go a long way to raise the consciousness of the people towards asserting their democratic prerogatives. Decision therefore was taken to impart primary education through mother tongue, retaining English at the Secondary stage. Apart from giving free education, the Government undertook to provide free meals to poor students also. Furthermore, special programmes of scholarships and stipend in addition to free books and uniforms to the scheduled castes and Adibasis were also implemented. The Govt. also recognised the 'Alchiki' language for santhals and the Nepali language. Arrangements for imparting education in these languages are being made.

Sick and Closed Units

Within the limits of its capabilities, the Government succeeded in rehabilitating a large number of closed and sick industrial units. The Centre's help in this regard however has been disappointing. Even the Governor in his address said, "with some additional cooperation from the Union Government

and the monetary authorities, even greater success is attainable in these spheres in future".

Power

It is an irony of fact that shortage of power being severest in eastern and north-eastern region, the expansion of capacity proposed in the Sixth Five Year Plan is the lowest for the region. The Left Front Government, however undertook measures to increase the net generating capacity, during the course of the next few years. While in 1976-77, the capacity was only around 1300 MW, it would amount to 4000 MW because of the new measures.

Financial Out-lay: Constraints by Centre

The scale of new activities initiated during the past five years can be gauged from the magnitude of fiscal operations. While in 1976-77 the aggregate outlay was only Rs. 766 crores, it was to the tune of Rs. 1750 crores in the current financial year, a major part having been earmarked for development. But the policies pursued by the Central Government have seriously handicapped the plan of the West Bengal Government. While the proposal of the West Bengal Government was to have its State Plan of the size around Rs. 5000 crores, it has been drastically reduced by the Centre. West Bengal is the only state for which central assistance for the 1981-82 plan has been reduced. In addition to these, the Centre has taken a number of measures to further erode the limited financial powers of a state. But inspite of these constraints and impediments, the Left Front Government has been mobilising internal resources for implementation of its development programmes without putting any extra burden on the common people who are already axed by the policy of indirect taxations of the Centre.

Impediments by the Centre are also being put against various bills passed by the State Government for the benefits of the poorer sections. Twenty such bills have still been held up awaiting President's assent since about one year. The vital Land Reforms Amendment Bill is one such.

The verdict belongs to the people

Struggling against the forces of reaction the Left Front Government throughout its tenure endeavoured to safeguard and advance the cause of the workers, the peasants, the backward, the downtrodden and the destitutes. In all its endeavours it remained close to the people. Whatever achievements have been made, were possible only because of the unstinted cooperation received from the people. But a long way is to be travelled yet. The Government successfully struggled to give the opportunity to the people to utilise the right to give the fresh mandate in time. On all these issues the final verdict of course belongs to the people.

(Achievements of the Left-Front Government in Land Reforms and Small Scale and Cottage Industries have been published elsewhere in this issue.) □

BHEL Production Policies Assailed

In a Joint Meeting of BHEL on production and productivity held at Hyderabad on 5 and 6 April representatives of the trade unions sharply criticised the production policies of BHEL management and demanded settlement of outstanding issues of the 70,000 workers employed in BHEL units.

K.L. Puri, Chairman BHEL, while reviewing the progress of the undertakings requested the workers to fulfil 110 per cent of the production targets fixed by the management for 1982-83. The representatives of the trade unions however criticised the unilateral decision of the management to fix production targets without consulting the trade unions. They further criticised the directive of the BPE to link wage rise with productivity and objected to the approach of the Government in the matter. They refused to agree with the proposal of the management to over-fulfil the target by 10 per cent.

The BHEL management endorsed the new 20 point programme and the call to observe 1982 as the year of productivity given by the Prime Minister. Since they were propaganda gimmicks to suit the requirements of the ruling party the non-INTUC unions opposed the call and stated that the joint forum was not bound to accept these slogans.

The INTUC leaders tried to press the point that they were national calls and should be implemented by all the trade unions. However the other trade unions remained firm with their position. Some of the INTUC representatives tried to interrupt the statements made by the CITU but were given good rebuff by the CITU representatives. The INTUC representatives also lost their temper when the CITU representative was criticising the Government's policies but were ultimately silenced because of the united stand taken by the entire non-INTUC representatives. They also objected to the role of Shri Ramanujam, General Secretary, INTUC to function like self-proclaimed spokesman of the workers' group in the joint forum. The CITU representatives criticised the foreign collaboration agreements with Siemens and advocated full self-reliance in the matter of building our own projects. They castigated the management for its failure to develop the R&D wing properly with the result that India was unable to develop indigenous technology in power construction projects.

When workers produced more in BHEL during the last several years the management did not reciprocate with the result that the real wages of BHEL workers have declined during the last 4 years. The CITU representatives criticised the inordinate delay in setting several pending issues of workers such as CCA, transport subsidy, house rent allowance, promotion policy and other matters. They pointed out that not a single pending issue

was settled since signing of the last agreement in January 1980, though management solemnly agreed to settle the outstanding issues through negotiations. They highlighted the victimisation policies of the management towards trade union functionaries. They charged the management for adopting a policy of double standards in dealing with INTUC and non-INTUC trade unions.

The policy about engaging contract labour in jobs of permanent and perennial nature also came in for severe criticism. The CITU representatives criticised the management's failure to reconstitute the joint forum by holding secret ballot in all the plants only because INTUC was opposed to it. The management cannot expect to get cooperation of the workers in production if they go on adopting a policy hostile to the working class.

The CITU representatives demanded the new wage agreement should be arrived at in time and negotiations should commence in right earnest. Prior to this all the pending issues should be settled without any further delay.

The representatives of non-INTUC trade unions took identical positions on almost all the issues. Some pointed out that the management was allowing freedom for some workers not to do any work inside the plant Malpractices prevalent in the organisations were also underlined by the speakers who demanded stringent action against corrupt officials.

The BHEL managements policy of paying less wages than prescribed in the last agreement to the new entrants was severely criticised by the representatives of workers. They made it clear that the rise in productivity has certain prerequisites and without these workers could not be enthused. However, they made it clear that the trade unions are interested in production and would be prepared to implement agreed norms of production.

The Chairman BHEL explained the viewpoint of the management and justified the steps being taken to run the undertaking. The trade union representatives replied that they would like to comment on the viewpoints expressed by the management but for want of time it could not be done.

On behalf of the CITU the meeting was attended by M.K. Pandhe, R. Umanath, T.K. Rangarajan, Ponmala and Rithe.

Two gate meetings at Ramchandrapuram were held on behalf of the CITU union to explain the stand of the CITU which was addressed by N.V. Bhaskara Rao, T.K. Rangarajan and M.K. Pandhe.

Successful Strike by Rajasthan Government Employees

Defying the mass arrests, a number to them under ESMA and NSA and dismissals, the four and half lakh Govt. employees of Rajasthan forced the State Government to come down to a settlement on April 9 after 23 days of complete strike. It was the second big stir among the Government employees of a state in the country within three months after the glorious strike of the Bihar Govt. employees who forced the State Govt. to a settlement, defying the shoot-at-sight orders.

Of-late, the Government has been refusing to implement the recommendations of various committees which suggest some benefits to the employees, whereas it takes a move to implement the retrograde recommendations which disrupts the unity among the workers like that of the splitting of LIC. In all the cases workers have demonstrated their urge for united struggles to defend their interests. While the Bihar Govt. employees successfully fought for implementation of the 4th Pay Revision Committee, the Rajasthan employees did so with respect to the Bery Commission.

Government in Dilemma

The strike of the Rajasthan Govt. employees gave a new dimension to the struggle when even the jail wardens joined the strike. The determination of the employees and their dogged unity coupled with the joining of almost all the wardens in different jails in the State put the Rajasthan Government into a dilemma to implement its "policies". On one hand it declared that acceptance of the Bery-Commission's recommendations was not obligatory to it, and on the other hand, in pursuance of its policies it arrested over two thousand employees and terminated or suspended over seven thousands, which failed to break the ice. Over and above about five thousand employees including a large number of women offered arrests. The Government machineries proved hopelessly inadequate to face this massive upsurge in the employees.

Strike Peaceful

As per press reports, in a hurriedly called "important" press conference on March 30, the Chief Minister himself was absent. After a while it was announced that the Chief Secretary would address the press conference. But later on the Home Secretary came to address it and preferred to confine himself to the "law and order" problem as "he would not be able to answer question relating to the strike". Regarding law and order, the Home Secretary had to acknowledge that the strike was peaceful throughout the state. He further admitted that two

battalions of CRPF and BSF were deployed to help the local police to maintain "law and order". The question then arises that when the strike was peaceful in the entire state, as per the Home Secretary's own admission, why over two thousand employees were arrested? The answer is simple — to curb the democratic and trade union rights of the workers; and the attempts to curb these rights with such vengeance, even when the strikes are peaceful, reflect the authoritarian character of the Government.

However, steeled with their experience through their growing struggles, the employees remained unprovoked and refused to be cowed down by the Government's policy of repression. While continuing the strike, they did not however close-down the doors for negotiations. Repeated representation were made by the leaders to the Government for a negotiated settlement. A delegation consisting of Arabinda Ghosh, M.P., CPI(M), the General Secretary, Sukomal Sen, M.P., CPI(M), the Secretary of the All India State Government Employees' Federation and Rajendra Raut, General Secretary, Orissa State NGO Coordination Committee, called on the Union-Finance Minister on April 3 and urged upon him to intervene for a settlement. Prior to this, the same delegation along with P.N. Sukul, Chairman of the Federation met the Chief Minister of Rajasthan, who pleaded paucity of State funds to meet the demands. The memorandum submitted by the Federation leaders to the Union Finance Minister urged upon him to provide funds to the State Government to meet the legitimate demands of the employees. All round support from all sections of the workers was received. Solidarity Day with massive rallies were held in Rajasthan on April 5, addressed by leaders of CPI(M), CPI, Lok Dal, Cong.(S) and Janata. In another statement to the press, B.T. Ranadive, President and P. Ramamurti, General Secretary of CITU condemned the wanton repression let loose by the Government on the employees and demanded of the Government of India to release sufficient funds to all State Governments for meeting the needs of the employees, for the grant of DAs and for implementation of the recommendations of wage increases by the Pay Commissions. They congratulated the employees and called upon them to carry forward the struggle unitedly. The statement appealed to all Central Trade Unions to come together and support the struggle for the legitimate demands of the employees.

Undaunted against the repression let loose, the employees continued the strike and compelled the Government to ultimately come down to a settlement.

Cement Workers to Fight Cement Barons— INTUC Conspiracy

A meeting of the CITU Unions working in Cement industry was held at Madras on 3rd April to consider the situation arising out of imposition of the arbitration on the 90,000 cement workers of India behind their back and decide the course of action. K. Ramani, Vice President, CITU presided over the meeting.

M.K. Pandhe, Secretary, CITU explained the manner in which a deal was struck between the INTUC and cement barons to refer only the INTUC Charter of Demands to arbitration giving a go by to the bipartite negotiations.

Representatives explained the local movements they have been conducting against Ramanujam Nivetia arbitration and observed that the response among the workers was encouraging. They stressed the need for a joint movement to be launched all over the country to force the cement managements to give more concessions in view of the high profits earned by the industry.

The meeting decided to approach the INTUC trade unions so that a programme of joint movements is taken up at the all India level. It is only through joint struggle that the deal struck between the INTUC—cement management can be exposed among the cement workers. It was decided to issue a common leaflet all over the country to explain to the workers the dangerous consequences of the arbitration game. It was further agreed that efforts should be made to call a meeting of non-INTUC unions to chalk out a programme of joint movements in cement factories.

The representatives of the CITU met the DMK trade union leaders who agreed to participate in the joint movements if such a programme is chalked out. They showed their readiness to attend a meeting of non-INTUC unions if called in consultation with all.

A meeting of the Tamilnadu Cement Unions belonging to CITU, AITUC and Progressive Labour Federation (DMK) was held in Trichy on 19th April to consider the question of joint movement on a state-wide basis.

The CITU is approaching other Central TUs so that an all India meeting is arranged at an early date to consider the question of countrywide movement of cement workers to press for the settlement of charter of demands submitted by several non-INTUC unions.

AGB of BHEL Workers' Union

The Annual General Body Meeting of the BHEL Workers' Union (CITU), Trichy was held on April 4 under the Presidentship of R. Umanath. Three hundred delegates attended the meeting.

Inaugurating the meeting, M.K. Pandhe, Secretary, CITU pointed to the growing attack on the working class and urged upon the workers to raise the banner of the unifying role of CITU and launch joint struggles mobilising all the democratic forces against the successive authoritarian and anti-labour actions of the Government. He explained the development of the united movements against the anti-labour policies of the Government under the banner of the National Campaign Committee of Trade Unions.

T.K. Rangarajan, General Secretary of the union placed the report on the activities of the union, in which a number of delegates participated. The reports of the General Secretary and the annual statement of accounts were adopted unanimously.

The meeting unanimously adopted several resolutions on various issues faced by the workers.

Summing up the deliberations, R. Umanath called upon the workers to consolidate unity and strengthen the organisation to play an important role in the forthcoming struggles. He was re-elected as the President alongwith T.K. Rangarajan as the General Secretary.

The workers donated a sum of Rs. 300/- to the Tamilnadu State Committee of CITU towards the Relief Fund for the martyrs in the January 19 firings in Tanjore District. A Sum of Rs. 480/- was also devoted to CITU Centre.

Teleprinters Workers to Fight Productivity Linked Wage

The workers of Hindustan Teleprinters, Madras have decided to resist the scheme of productivity-linked wages sought to be imposed by the management. A gate meeting was organised in this respect by the Hindustan Teleprinter Employees' Union (CITU) on April 3 to start the campaign against the move and mobilise all sections of workers to wage joint struggles against it. Addressing the gate meeting, M.K. Pandhe, Secretary, CITU, explained the dangerous implications of the directive. He said that the declaration of 1982 as the "Productivity Year" by the Prime Minister was a hoax only to impose more work-load on the workers and to augment the profits of the monopolists. He said that movement was developing all over the country against this pernicious attempt to further deprive the workers of the fruits of their labour. He called upon the workers to unite all sections of the employees and launch militant struggles against this anti-labour move of the Government till it is withdrawn. Among others who spoke were Chandrashekhar and Nand Gopal. The workers raised an amount of Rs. 233 and donated the same to CITU, in its customary way, in the form of a garland.

Income Tax Employees Attacked by Anti-socials

Anti-Socials led by the Gram Pradhan violently attacked a team of Income Tax employees on April 15, when in discharge of their duties they went to unearth alleged black money in the office and residential premises of two influential jewellers at Musanagar, 60 km. from Kanpur. It was reported by the Income Tax Employees Federation that the Gram Pradhan is said to belong to the ruling party.

As usual, the team had sought police protection for the search. But when it arrived at the place, led by some officers, a large group of the anti-socials directly led by the said Gram Pradhan attacked the team with lethal weapons and looted their belongings. Even one woman member who accompanied the team was not spared. The federation reports that such gangster-attacks on the search teams have become a common phenomena. It happened at Jammu and Kashmir and Delhi also. It alleges that these jewellers are in league with the dacoits and share the boot to sell them in the market. Repeated representations to the Government have brought forth no results. As a protest the employees including the officers have gone on strike from April 17. The federation has demanded arrest and prosecution of the hooligans including the jewellers and the Gram Pradhan, sufficient protection to the search teams, compensation to the members of the search party for the injuries and loss of belongings, etc.

Barbarous Lathi Charge on Workers at Ujjain

The police made a barbarous lathi charge on workers of Vinod Mills, Ujjain at the Tarana Road Railway Station on April 14, when they were coming to Bhopal to stage a demonstration to press for their demand to open the mill.

The Vinod Mill is under closure since the last six months, throwing eight thousand workers out of employment. The Labour Minister himself promised to the workers twice before that the mill would open on February 15 and secondly on April 15. Both the promises having turned out to be fake, the workers have stepped up the agitations. Despite the lathi charge and injury sustained by several workers, the Government could not deter the workers to stage a massive demonstration before the Vidhan Sabha to voice their demand.

In a statement the CITU secretariat of Madhya Pradesh strongly condemned the brutal lathi charge on the workers and demanded takeover of the mill by the Government and order judicial enquiry into the lathi charge.

TUs Oppose DA Freeze by HSCL Management

While delaying the negotiations on the Charter of Demands jointly placed by Central Trade Unions, the HSCL management has arbitrarily frozen the D.A. of workers.

M.K. Pandhe, Secretary, CITU, recorded strong protest for the arbitrary actions of the management and for deliberately delaying the negotiations on the COD. He warned the management for following the policy of confrontation with the workers and pushing them to the path of direct agitations. He put forward suggestions to fix the minimum wage, to finalise the rate of D.A. and to fix a time table for settlement of the COD. This was supported by all other TUs. The management promised to furnish their final view on the suggestions before the working group during the next meeting.

CITU Supports Textile Workers' Strike in Paraguay

Julis Reveria, journalist of Paraguay Communist Party visited the Central Office of CITU on April 8 and informed that the textile workers of Paraguay were on strike for over fifteen days, facing repression. Expressing solidarity with the striking workers CITU has sent the following letter to the President of Paraguay on April 10:

"We are shocked to learn that your Government is not taking steps to settle the 15 days old strike of the Textile Workers in your country. On the other hand repressive measures have been taken against the workers.

On behalf of 1.7 million members of our organisation and the Indian Working Class as a whole, we express our solidarity with the textile workers of your country and demand that all repressive measures should be withdrawn and the strike should be settled through negotiation with the striking workers."

Attack on CITU Union

To break the CITU Union, Ayudhya Sugar Mills' (U.P.) management personnel have started direct attack on the office-bearers of the union. On the night of March 18, the custodian of Ayudhya Sugar Mills, a Government of India Undertaking, in a drunken stage directly assaulted the Vice-President of the Union when he was on duty. Hooliganism by the management personnel and moving around the mill premises in drunken condition have become a regular feature. All protests to the authorities and Government have proved in vain. The workers have united to put up a strong resistance to the management's repressions.

Steel Workers to Fight Productivity Linked Wages

The Steel Workers' Federation of India in its meeting of the office bearers on April 13 at Durgapur decided to oppose the stand taken by the steel management to link wages with productivity as per the directives of the BPE. During the last two meetings of the NJCS the management went back on its statutory commitment of opening negotiations one year prior to the expiry of the existing agreement. While the existing agreement expires on September 30, the management's stand not to increase wages without increase in productivity has forced the steel workers to go on the path of struggles. Denouncing the proposal of productivity-linked wages, the federation pointed out that while the industry was compelled to resort to under-production for two years during 1979-81 due to acute shortage in supply of electricity, coal and wagons, a moderate supply in 1981-82 caused stock accumulation to the tune of four million tons. It further pointed out that since the last agreement in 1978 while the price index shot up by 46.8 per cent, the wages of the workers increased by 16.2 to 30.6 per cent only. Furthermore, the proportion of the labour cost to the total cost of production also came down from 19 per cent in 1970 to 10 per cent in 1980-81.

Under such circumstances, the SWFI straightaway rejected the proposal and called upon the steel workers to fight the menace along with other workers of the Public Sector Undertakings.

The federation noted that already a resistance movement had developed. Massive demonstrations were held and over seventy thousand signatures were collected against the move, demanding negotiation on the charter of demands.

The federation decided to convene a mass seminar to mobilise opinions and campaign against the scheme of productivity-linked-wages.

Attempts to Curtail ESI-Benefit

The ESI Review Committee invited CITU and other Central TUs for a discussion on March 22 on the following suggestions; 1. (i) The workers may be exempted from payment of their share of contribution or pay a nominal contribution.

(ii) Sickness benefit may be limited to period of hospitalisation or to long-term diseases for which extended sickness benefit is being paid at present.

(iii) Payment for short duration sickness may be settled by collective bargaining.

2. Alternatively sickness benefit or temporary disablement benefit may not be paid during periods of strike lockout, lay-off or closure except to those who were already entitled to them at the commencement of strike etc.

M.K. Pandhe, Nrisingha Chakrabarty and Sushil Bhattacharya, M.P. represented CITU in the discussion. At the very outset the Committee was asked to state as to who had made these suggestions and whether the item 1 was a package proposal or opinion could be expressed on each of the sub-items separately.

The Chairman of the Committee explained that sub-item no: iii) should be treated as withdrawn and the rest two are a package proposal. He also said that the source of the suggestion was immaterial.

It was pointed out that the CITU has already demanded that the ESI Scheme should be non-contributory. But pending realisation of the same, workers earning Rs. 360/- per month or less should be exempted from paying any contribution. In the memorandum already submitted, the remaining points have been opposed.

During discussion it was pointed out that withdrawal of benefits during strike would take

away the character of the social security scheme. Besides theoretically such a proposal is unacceptable, as the workers need the medical benefit most during the strike period.

The CITU opposed all such proposed curtailment and demanded that the benefit should, on the other hand, be extended still further.

CITU Nominations

1. K. Padmanabhan, Vimal Ranadive and Dhani Ram Khosla have been nominated to represent CITU in the Industrial Committee on Plantations. It may be noted that Govts of West Bengal and Tripura have also one representative each in the Committee.

2. R. Umanath has been nominated in the BHEL Negotiating Committee.

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Successful Strike by Sugar Factory Workers

Neoli Sugar Factory Karmachari Union (CITU), Eta, U.P. gave notice for indefinite strike to the management with effect from February 28 demanding settlement of its 16 point demands. The management tried to stall the strike by adopting various divisive methods. But after two days' complete strike it was forced to sign the settlement on March 1 in presence of Harsahay Singh, President of U.P. State Committee of CITU. All the demands were acceded to.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Shaifuddin Chowdhury, M.P., CPI (M) was not given permission by the District Administration to address a dharna of the Steel Foundry Workers at Gwalior on March 20. The dharna was organised by the Engineering Mazdoor Union (CITU) demanding settlement of various demands. Shaifuddin Chowdhury was asked to take the permission of INTUC first for addressing the workers. He however defied the orders and addressed the workers. In his address he drew the contrast between the Congress (I) Govt. of Madhya Pradesh and the Left Front Govt. of W. Bengal where the State Labour Minister himself comes to address workers' rallies. All sections of workers including the Democratic Women's organisation have extended support to the steel foundry workers.

Led by CITU, the casual and contract workers of the departments of Public Works, Irrigation, Public Health, Water Works, Forest and Agriculture of Madhya Pradesh Govt. staged dharnas, and demonstrations demanding regularisation of jobs. A statewide Action Committee was formed to carry forward the struggle jointly. A massive demonstration was arranged before the Legislative Assembly on April 12.

The twelfth Annual General Conference of Textile Mazdoor Union (CITU), Phulwarisharif, Bihar, was held at Patna on April 1. Presiding over the conference, Chandi Prasad, General Secretary of the Bihar State Committee of CITU warned the members, of the growing danger of authoritarianism by the Congress (I) Government and called upon them to build up united struggles in defence of their democratic and trade union rights. The Conference passed resolutions demanding repeal of

NSA and ESMA; and supply of essential commodities through fair price shops. Chandi Prasad and Ramashray Singh were re-elected President and General Secretary respectively.

Thirty six thousand textile workers of twenty three mills in Rajasthan decided to go on one day strike on April 15 demanding settlement of their charter of demands. In a joint statement issued on April 7 the leaders of CITU, AITUC, HMS, BMS and INTUC said that the employers and the Labour Department were deliberately adopting delaying tactics to negotiate the demands, compelling the workers to go on strike.

Led by CITU, over five hundred workers, peasants, students and youth held a demonstration before the Block Development Officer, Patratu, Bihar on April 7, protesting against price rise and anti-working class policies of the Government. A four-men delegation led by Rajendra Prasad Singh submitted the memorandum to the B.D.O., who promised to take steps for the redressal of the grievances.

All India BHEL Power Employees have decided to go in for an indefinite strike from May 4. Serving the notice to the Chairman and the Managing Director of BHEL at New Delhi on April 2, the General Secretary of the All India BHEL Power Employees' Union said that the union had submitted the charter of demands long back, but the management remained adamant to make any negotiated settlement. He said that the management in BHEL made discriminations amongst the workers on minimum wage even. The minimum wage of Rs 330/-for the work charged employees, inclusive of DA and other allowances, was the lowest in the Central Public Undertakings. All

other modes of agitation having failed, the union was compelled to serve the notice for indefinite strike.

Colliery Mazdoor Sabha of India (CITU) has demanded proper medical facilities for the workers in Bhurkunda Collieries in Bihar. Condition of the colliery hospital is getting worse. Even after repeated demands sanitation, water supply, electricity, supply of medicines and food are extremely unsatisfactory. Rajendra Singh Chandal, leader of CITU reported the matter to the Chief Medical officer of the Central Coal Fields Ltd., Ranchi and also demanded installation of a generator in the hospital. He said that if the authorities fail to improve the conditions, direct agitational programmes will be launched in future.

Several Harijan workers were seriously injured on April 11, when anti-socials hired by the management of UP State Mineral Development Corporation attacked them near the office of the corporation at Cora Mirzapur. Instead of recruiting the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, the management indulged in nepotism and recruited their relations only. When the leaders of the Mine Workers' Union (CITU) went to talk with the management in this matter, the hired anti-socials launched the attack. The police made no arrests even on complaints lodged by the union. The workers have waged a struggle for mitigation of their demands.

Faridabad District Conference of CITU was held on April 5, inaugurated by Shadiram, President of Delhi State Committee of CITU. 285 delegates including 20 women workers attended the conference. The open session was attended by over five thousand workers, which was addressed among others by Mohd. Ismail, M.P., Vice President of CITU and Sushil Bhattacharjee, M.P., General Secretary of Delhi State Committee of CITU. After the meeting Jana Natya Manch of

Delhi Staged two people's dramas.

* * *

Three workers died in the gas chamber of the Rourkela Steel Plant on April 12 because of the negligence and irresponsibilities of the management. It has been reported by the Steel Employees' Trade Union (CITU) that without proper purging and written clearance from the Energy and Economic Department the workers were forced to enter the Dust Catcher even without masks for the purpose of cleaning. Besides the three dead, one worker is struggling for survival and ten others are being treated for various degrees of gas poisoning. The union has demanded a judicial enquiry into the incident.

* * *

At the call of CPI (M) and Kishan Sabha, thousands of peasants, agricultural labourers, workers, students, youth and women held demonstrations throughout the State of Rajasthan on March 22 against the anti-people budget. They protested against the increase in the rates of electricity, irrigation, taxes, bus fare, etc. They also demanded remunerative price to the peasants' produce and repeal of NSA and ESMA.

* * *

Led by Suti Mill Mazdoor Sabha (CITU), more than one thousand textile workers demonstrated before the Labour Commissioner, U.P., on March 23 at Kanpur, demanding wages for the period of lay-off done by the employers during the truck workers' strike and shortage of cotton in February. In a memorandum submitted to the Labour Commissioner, they further demanded regularisation of the casual and contract workers who were turned destitutes because of the lay-off. Leaders of CITU and other unions addressed the demonstrators and asked them to continue the struggle till the wages are paid by the employers.

* * *

The Himachal Pradesh State Committee of CITU has expressed its concern at the increasing number of accidents by the

Himachal Regional Transport Corporation buses. Within one year 250 Passengers died in Himachal Pradesh in 400 bus accidents. While the authorities have been putting the blame on the workers and drivers for the accidents, it was reported that the accidents are mostly caused because of the dilapidated conditions of the bodies, bad body building, bad maintenance and over-crowding. The State Committee and the employees have demanded more buses to avoid over-crowding, proper maintenance, withdrawal of extra work load to the drivers and conductors, weekly rest, arrangement of rest rooms, stoppage of corruption in the manufacture of the bodies, etc.

ILO Workshop in Sri Lanka

CITU representative, D. Janakiraman attended the Regional Workshop on Training Methodology for Trade Union Instructors organised by ILO in collaboration with Sri Lanka Foundation Institute at Colombo from January 18 to 22. The workshop was held for evaluation of the trainees of Turin Centre (Asian Region) in the field of workers' education. Nineteen participants attended the workshop from India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore, Thailand and Sri Lanka. Papers were presented by the participants on the basis of a questionnaire sent earlier by ILO to the trade union centres. The workshop course sought continuation of permanent dialogue between Turin International Centre and the workers' educational institutions in all regions to improve the quality of training and training materials.

D. Janakiraman in his report mentioned about the workers' education classes being conducted by CITU since 1979. He also pointed out that the Central Board of Workers Education of Government of India had accepted the CITU's proposal to select the subject matters and the teaching staff as per the suggestions of CITU for its trainees. There was a general consensus in deliberations that the T. U. or-

ganisations should be involved in the education programmes to fulfil the aims effectively instead of leaving the matter to the trainees alone.

Bihar State Committee Meets

The Bihar State Committee of CITU met at Patna on March 12 and 13. Md. Ismail presided over the meeting, which was also attended by M.K. Pandhe, Secretary, CITU. The meeting condoled the sad demises of Jaipal Singh, Secretary, Delhi State Committee and C.C. Member of CPI (M), Jyotirmoy Basu, M.P., CPI (M) and Arun Kumar Verma, leader of the Coal Ash Handling Workers of Bihar.

The meeting discussed and expressed concern over the rising prices, growing unemployment, non-availability of essential commodities, hike in railway fares and freight, the postal hikes and the anti-people Union budget. The meeting condemned the police attacks on trade union movements, on the Stone Quarry Workers of Pakur, the contractors' labourers at Jamshedpur and other places.

In view of the coming expiry of the wage agreements in Coal and Steel and the Government's directive to link wages with productivity, the meeting decided to hold State Conventions of workers in both the industries to chalk out plans to meet the challenge.

The meeting adopted resolutions against non-inclusion of CITU in various sub-committees by the Bihar Labour Deptt., non implementation of Engineering Wage Board Award and against the recent Press Workers Wage Award, which is below the prevailing wages.

Supporting the struggle of the Bihar Judicial Officers, the meeting demanded of the Bihar Government to implement the recommendations of the Fourth Pay Revision Committee for them.

The meeting called upon the working class of the State to further consolidate unity and carry forward the struggles in defence of democratic and trade union rights and build up strong movements championing the cause of the common people.

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The Chariot of the Gods. Frozen in Terracotta At Vishnupur

Vishnupur is an exciting place to visit. There are many historical, religious and cultural monuments. Superb terracotta architecture Jorbangla, Raas Mancha, Malleswar Siva Temple, Radhagobinda and Radhamadhav temples. The great iron cannon 'Dalmadal'. A well stocked museum. Also local handicrafts and handlooms in the classic tradition. The Bankura horse and other folk toys. Silk, tussore, textiles, Conch-shell and bell-metal items. And the timeless cultural heritage of Vishnupur, the ancient Vishnupur Gharana or School of classical music. From Vishnupur you can easily visit nearby places like Siddheswara Siva Temple at Bahulara (25 Kms), homes of the Sainly couple Ramakrishna and Sarda Devi at Jairambati-Kamarpukur (43 Kms), Susuina Hills, Mukutmonipur (52 Kms from Bankura Town) with its giant reservoir, and may be also Panchumura (21 Kms)—where the Terracotta Bankura horse is made. Vishnupur is 201 Kms. by rail and 151 Kms. by road from Calcutta. There are regular bus services, comfortable accommodation at the Tourist lodge. Facilities for day trippers also. Tariffs range between Rs. 10 in dormitories to Rs. 72 in air-conditioned accommodation. For further information please contact :

Tourist Bureau,
3/2, Benoy-Badal Dinesh Bagh (East)
Calcutta-700 001, Phone : 238271
Gram : Traveltips.

Government of West Bengal
ICA/1890/82