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THE WORKING CLASS

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TO OPPOSE PRICE RISE

**FOR PRO-PEOPLE ECONOMIC POLICIES
TO DEFEND SECULARISM**

**ALL INDIA GENERAL STRIKE
11 DECEMBER 1998
RAIL ROKO RASTA ROKO**

**IN SUPPORT OF DEMANDS OF
WORKERS PEASANTS
RURAL POOR
WOMEN STUDENTS AND YOUTH**

JOIN ENMASSE

NATIONAL PLATFORM OF MASS ORGANISATIONS

- * **DEFEND PUBLIC SECTOR**
- * **OPPOSE DISINVESTMENT**
- * **FIGHT PRIVATISATION**

- * **DEMAND REVIVAL OF SICK UNITS**
- * **PROTECT JOBS**

JOIN ENMASSE

**TWO DAYS STRIKE
IN ALL PUBLIC SECTOR UNITS
10-11 DECEMBER 1998**

COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC SECTOR TRADE UNIONS

A BLUEPRINT FOR WHOLE SALE PRIVATISATION

The BJP Government is going ahead with the plan of privatisation of public sector undertakings in full swing. The announcement of the Union Finance Minister to divest 74% of shareholdings in major public sector undertakings will practically mean dismantling of the PSUs.

The World Bank and IMF have from time to time declared that the process of privatisation had been extremely slow in India and they wanted the privatisation programme to be expedited.

The new Finance Secretary Vijay Kelkar has planned to propitiate the desire of the IMF and he is toying with the idea of a short-shrift privatisation of public sector. The Finance Minister has already offered the public sector shares at a discount.

The Government of India is fully aware that the share market is bearish and the share prices would be on the lower side. However, the Finance Ministry is out to organise a distress sale of public sector assets in order to reduce the budgetary deficit.

The Disinvestment Commission has recommended large scale disinvestment of holdings of profit making PSUs. However, the privatisation lobby in India is not happy with the process of disinvestment and it is advocating a fast track disinvestment programme.

To meet the needs of foreign investors in India, the Finance Secretary has devised a new set-up called Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) as a non-government company for privatisation of major profit making PSUs. The Government will have minority share holding of 49% while the private sector investors will control the company. The Government will transfer the entire shareholding above 49% to the SPV so that these shareholdings are ultimately given to the private investors as quickly as possible. Though the paid-up capital of the SPV is estimated to be Rs 10,000 crores, the Government share will be mainly through handing over the shareholdings to the SPV, while the major decisions will be taken by the private shareholders.

PSUs AS NON-GOVERNMENT COMPANIES

One of the objectives of the SPV is to convert the PSUs into non-Government companies which will be completely free them from Parliamentary control.

There will be no social objective before them and they will run just like any other private sector company. All the policy decisions will be taken by the private shareholders, which means the dominant shareholding interests will be able to control the fate of the existing PSUs.

The SPV will have a Board, majority of which will be non-Government nominees. The task of this board will be to make a faster drive towards privatisation. They will have powers to take all decisions related to disinvestment of shares, viz., pricing, timing, selection of intermediaries etc. There is a big danger that the Board may misuse its position and sell away valuable assets of public sector to private investors at very cheap prices. Even the government nominees may succumb to bribes for selling shares of high profit making PSUs at a large discount. On the plea of quicker liquidation of the shares of the PSUs, the Board will act as an agency of private sector ready to garner bulk shares, to serve select Indian and foreign financial interests.

The members of the SPV Board will have a good chance of making quick money at the cost of public sector, where huge assets have been built up by the toil of workers over a period of years.

The official note on the subject is shamelessly making a point about the objective of SPV: "To expedite Government's disinvestment and privatisation programme which will help to reduce fiscal deficit by quicker flow of disinvestment proceeds." The SPV will virtually act as an agency to quickly liquidate the PSUs.

All the PSUs to be dealt with the SPV are well run undertakings making good profits. Selling them out to private hands in this manner is immensely damaging the cause of the public sector, the nation and the employees.

This state of affairs is only the first step when the Government is proposing to disinvest only 51% of its equity holding. The conditions will become worse when upto 74% of the public sector equity will be divested. Thus, the SPV is only the first step of the new drive of the government of India with the final objective of complete liquidation of public sector.

M K PANDHE

DISINVESTMENT COMMISSION STANCE

The Disinvestment Commission has raised merely technical objections to the proposal. Its complaint is that its views were not taken into account when the proposal was placed before the Core Group of Secretaries. The Disinvestment Commission goes one step further and advocates that there should be no Government nominee on the SPV Board. The Chairman of the Disinvestment Commission has noted that the "proposal is an inefficient way to privatise crown jewels and would have serious implications on public policy." The Commission wanted that it alone should have prerogative of

deciding divesting of public sector shares.

The Disinvestment Commission objection to the SPV mechanism was only it being a measure "to just cover the fiscal deficits through a complex mechanism." It advocated complete removal of Government control.

Thus, the SPV and Disinvestment Commission both in principle advocate liquidation of public sector. The only difference appears to be how to go about it.

'SCOPE' TOO FOR PRIVATISATION

What is, however, more surprising is the stand taken by the Standing Conference on Public Enterprises (SCOPE). This body of public sector companies has

The NPMO is spearheading the all India general strike on 11th December 1998. Everyone knows that the BMS is not part of the NPMO. But the BMS is none too happy with the policies and deeds of the BJP led Government at the centre as reflected in their public statements. Here we reproduce a report that appeared in the Observer of Business and Politics datelined 16 Nov. '98. It is an unexceptionable statement from the BMS General Secretary, H.B. Dave. The surging wrath of the working class, spurred by the vigorous campaign by the NPMO all over the country, has, perhaps, acted as a stimulus for the BMS. But then, why not come forward to join the fight to defeat the wrong policies?

BMS ALSO LASHES OUT AT MANIA OF PRIVATISATION

The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, a trade union affiliated to the ruling BJP, has criticised the government for according statutory powers to the Disinvestment Commission and termed it as a sell-off to multinationals.

"The Disinvestment Commission should not be given powers as its policies for divesting government shares in public sector undertakings (PSUs) is nothing but a road towards selling them to multinationals," the BMS General Secretary, Mr H B Dave, said.

Flaying what he called the government's indiscriminate policy of privatisation, Mr Dave said that blind privatisation of both Central and State public sector undertakings was being followed by BJP and the sword of disinvestment was hanging over

the profit-making PSUs. Expressing concern over the policy of opening up industries to MNCs through the medium of privatisation, he said, this would lead to large-scale retrenchment leading to huge unemployment with the advent of modernisation and computerisation by MNCs.

"This mania of privatisation has gone to such a ridiculous extent that no industry has been left out of the area of disinvestment," Mr Dave said.

Mr Dave said that the government had not been able to clarify the necessity of disinvestment, which was not in the interest of the nation and also a "bad financial management system."

About the government's recent decision to close down eight sick public sector undertakings, Mr Dave said, the proposed National

Renewal Fund (NRF) should be utilised for the revival of these sick companies rather than closing them down.

NRF was actually meant for "redeployment and retraining" workers, but the funds under the NRF were being misused, he alleged.

Closure of these sick units would lead to large-scale unemployment and "these policies are undoubtedly anti-people, detrimental to the national interests and would lead to exploitation of labour."

The BJP had bowed down in the Maruti Udyog Ltd (MUL) by accepting the hegemony of Suzuki, he said, adding allowing of 100 per cent foreign direct investment in tobacco and wine manufacturing industries was uncalled for.

openly welcomed privatisation on the ground that it will give more autonomy to public sector companies. According to SCOPE, "PSE's will get necessary freedom in day to day functioning from administrative ministries."

However, SCOPE wants complete privatisation of public sector. The SCOPE says "To ensure that SPV is non-government, only 49% of its (SPV's) equity-corporus should be contributed by the Government. But the objective should be to ensure that the public enterprises ultimately become widely held professionally managed companies."

The SCOPE has argued that even the 49% share-holding of the government in the SPV should be handed over to the SPV itself so that it would be completely under private control.

The SCOPE, as an organisation, has thus openly become a champion of privatisation and does not at

all defend the interests of the public sector.

The top management of the PSUs are thus openly opposing the concept of public sector itself. The bosses who welcomed the concepts of MOUs, navaratnas, and mini-ratnas have began advocating the cause of private sector. Most of the retired public sector chiefs have joined the private sector competing with the PSUs. Many senior executives in public sector, during their tenure of service itself, finalise their assignment after retirement. Some of the executives have shamelessly joined the contracting firms which were awarded fabulous contracts during their executive tenure.

The task of the public sector T.U. movement has been rendered more difficult due to the stance of the SCOPE. The united movement of the public sector employees should not allow the SPV proposal to come into existance.

VRS GALORE!

Become lean and fit' is the new *mantra* doing rounds amongst corporates in India. 'Corporate turnaround' - as they call it, is to recover from loss incurring bouts or even to shore up profits, through the Voluntary Retirement Schemes. The Economic Times—Investor's Guide carried out a quick study. It reveals that VRS for staff as a cost cutting measure is becoming popular among promoters. As many as 100 companies have initiated VRS at their various units. Much of these VRS were started two years back when economic recession was beginning.

The VRSs are gaining ground because core competency - and not diversification - is the new management *mantra* among promoters. Companies want to pull out of unrelated or unprofitable businesses. The

study has given some instances as well.

* Philips moved out its Colour Television (CTV) manufacturing base from Calcutta to Pune. It also decided to get work done for its electronics division on a job work basis. It reduced the work force by 1000 over the last two years at a cost of Rs 60 crore.

* Crompton Greaves had interests in ten business areas just three years back. It shed almost 1000 workers in its loss-making transformer and lamp units at Mandip and Baroda.

* Merind, which was taken over by Wockhardt from the Tatas, at its Bhandup unit, made 120 of the 240 workers to accept 'golden handshake.' It is going ahead to offer a similar package to its executives at Bhandup. The new promoters now plan to extend VRS to the 160 executives and use the 30 acre prime property

according to their plans.

* Unichem wanted to disband its Mumbai units and all the 352 workers have been offered VRS package spread over two years.

* India Cements, in South India, had sent out 961 workers on VRS.

* Apollo Tyres announced a VRS to get rid of 600 surplus workforce; 25% of the workers have accepted the offer.

* P&G offered VRS to 1000 people, to trim its workforce in August 1998; more than 20% of them have already been 'convinced' to accept it.

The study points to the fact that Philips, Indal, Apollo Tyres and some others had faced labour unrest after VRS was announced. It warns: 'Promoters, beware, a VRS is no cakewalk.' It counsels: 'Workers need to be convinced and a lot of strategic action is needed from the promoters.'

(The Economic Times, 16 Nov' 98)

REMEMBERING COMRADE B.T.R

(19th December, 1998 is the 94th birth Anniversary of Com.B.T. Ranadive, the founder President of the CITU. We are reproducing hereunder excerpts from the writings from Com.BTR on the issue of Unemployment, written between 1972 and 1990. While observing the 94th birth Anniversary of his Com. B.T.R., let us recollect his guidelines on this priority task, with introspection. - Editor)

UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE WORKING CLASS

The unemployment situation in the country has become very critical and threatens to create economic instability and impose economic suffering on those who are out of or seeking jobs. Year after year, the problem, instead of getting lesser in intensity, gets intensified and every new year adds a few lakhs or more than a million to those who have no jobs. After the announcement of every successful plan, the backlog of unemployment continues to increase despite the repeated promise of the planners that all new entrants will be absorbed and the backlog will be reduced. The full extent of this unemployment is not really seen because the Planning Commission makes fantastic claims about creating new jobs though in reality the creation of new jobs is in no way commensurate with the jobs required.

EDUCATED UNEMPLOYED

The same fate is assigned to the educated. The number of educated unemployed, matriculates, graduates and above at the beginning of 1980 was estimated at 3.87 million. Today, of course, the number is much bigger. But who will give them jobs? The Planning Commission says that they must provide jobs for themselves. It says, "The increase in employment in the organised sector from year to year has been 0.8 million. Even if it is assumed that any future increase in the organised sector is wholly taken by educated persons alone, we find that there will not be enough room for the educated persons unless they are diverted either into self-employment or the absorption capacity of the organised industry is increased substantially. The second alternative does not seem to be feasible, leaving the option of self-employment as the major mode of employment."

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT

In advanced Western countries, there is a provision for unemployment benefit which the State is bound to give so long as the unemployed person does not find an alternative job. This right of unemployment

relief has been the product of organised working class movement. Partly it is also due to the fact that some of these countries were placed in a favourable situation to exploit other countries and transfer small part of their super-profits for the benefit of the unemployed. Though the condition of the unemployed in the USA, Britain, France is certainly miserable, the unemployed are not turned on the streets immediately after loss of jobs. The State has to bear responsibility, give them doles and to a certain extent alleviate their suffering.

But in India, there is absolutely no provision for any unemployment relief. The provisions made by Kerala Government under the Nayanar Ministry and by the West Bengal Left Front Government under the leadership of Jyoti Basu could only be a small beginning and assertion of a principle. The main resources for the relief to the unemployed have to come from the Centre under Central Legislation. There is no sign of any such legislation being passed. Apart from the two States already mentioned, some other States also provide some miserable relief to the unemployed in the cities. The State's responsibility for giving relief to the people is not accepted by the present bourgeois-landlord government.

TWO ASPECTS OF UNEMPLOYMENT

The question of unemployment has two aspects. In recent years, under the stress of the economic crisis a large number of factories have been closed or have been locked out and hundreds have gone sick. Besides these sick industries, there are widespread closures and lockouts all of which have thrown tens of thousands of worker on the streets. These tens of thousands of workers who have lost their jobs form only a part of the total unemployed in the industrial centres.

But the major part of the unemployed today consists of those who have hardly ever held a permanent job.

A substantial part of these have never held a permanent job. They are a floating mass which has never experienced the privilege of a job, the inspiration of a common working class consciousness, never had any tie with any T.U. organisation. They are an exclusive mass which can be easily used by any reactionary agency to fight those who are already employed and direct their ire against the T.U. movement itself. The registered unemployed in the cities mainly consist of this mass, who live from hand to mouth in the slums, get an occasional job and a small portion of which often indulges in anti-social activities including robbery, dacoity, trafficking in the illicit liquor distillation and so on. Poverty is driving a small section of these new entrants to utter degeneration and thereby renders them easy prey to the viles of the reactionaries and to act on their behalf.

PRIVATISATION CHALLENGE

The policy of disbandment of public sector or privatisation and encouragement to multinationals to enter the Indian market is fraught with the gravest consequences for the employment situation in the country. They offer a challenge to the T.U. movement which must accept it, if it wants to protect the jobs of those who are already at work.

WEAKNESS OF T.U. MOVEMENT

In this connection, it must be stated that the T.U. movement on the whole has neglected the question of rising unemployment and left the unemployed to their fate. An organised campaign and fight was neither waged for those who are thrown out of jobs by closure of factories nor any consideration was given to the new entrants into the labour market. Much less was any consideration given to the grim unemployment situation in the rural areas where lack of jobs is leading to widespread destitution and misery in spite of all government claims to have lifted millions above the poverty line.

The failure to link TUs with the demand for relief and other demands of the unemployed has been a major weakness of our TU movement, alienating a large section of new entrants to the labour market from the organised movement of the working class. If continued, this policy will have incalculable consequences doing the biggest harm to working class unity and solidarity.

CHAMPION THE CAUSE OF UNEMPLOYED

It is high time that the organised T.U. movement undertook to organise the unemployed and prepared a charter of their demands. The T.U. should take the initiative to organise joint conventions of the employed and the unemployed to focus attention the problem and pressurise the authorities to grant immediate relief. They should unitedly move to pressurise the Government to embark upon policies to check the growth of unemployment. The TUs should come out with a document outlining the schemes of relief for the industrial and the rural unemployed and championing basic changes in Government's economic policies and measures to check unemployment in the rural areas.

At the same time, the united movement of the unemployed and the employed workers must demand that the right to work should be embodied in the Constitution as a fundamental right and the Government must accept responsibility to provide job or relief for every citizen who is prepared to work. The right to work is in fact the basis of all democratic rights and without this right many democratic rights become just formal decorative rights. **It will be worth while considering whether the united T.U. movement and the unemployed together can organise a hunger march from the various State capitals of India to the country's capital proclaiming the demands of the unemployed, the unity of the employed and unemployed workers and demanding the right to work as a basic fundamental right to be embodied in the Constitution.**

Without intense struggle and activity on the part of the employed workers, unemployed workers will not have justice done to them. If this is not done in time, this vast mass of workers unrelated to any T.U. organisation, denied of the inspiration coming from common struggle, is capable of being used for reactionary purposes against the working class movement, against the nation's interests. The responsibility will be entirely of the T.U. movement. The T.U. movement can no longer continue as the representative only of those who are having permanent jobs. This narrowing down of the T.U. movement has done the biggest harm to India's working class movement.

CLOSURE OF PSUs - SWADESHI STYLE

The so-called SWADESHI brand of Government at the centre led by the BJP is doing a striptease - gradually unclenching its anti-national design! It has announced to close down 8 central public sector undertakings, viz; Mining & Allied Machinery Corporation (MAMC), Bharat Ophthalmic Glass Ltd (BOGL), Cycle Corporation of India Ltd (CCIL), Weighbird India Ltd (WIL), Rehabilitation Industries Corporation (RIC), National Bicycle Corporation (NBC), Tannery and Footwear Corporation of India Ltd (TAFCO) and Bharat Process & Mechanical Engineers Ltd (BPMEL). The Govt. of India has also decided to close down 64 coal mines in West Bengal & Bihar. In this process over 80000 workers directly related to these industrial units and mines will lose their jobs besides several thousands more in ancillaries and supporting industries. But loss of jobs of workers is not the only issue involved. Many of the industrial units decided to be closed down are of immense importance to nation's economy. They have the potential to earn foreign exchange for the country and boost export. Still Government is desperate to close them down.

POTENTIALLY BENEFICIAL

The MAMC with its skill and expertise base can, after revamping and modernisation, cater to the increasing demand of mining machinery and material

handling equipments for Coal Sector.

BOGL is the only one of its kind in the country to produce flint button and ophthalmic blanks, used mainly for periscopic and telescopic items of tanks/submarines and other defence equipments. In its closure, the country will wholly be dependant on import for those vital defence requirements.

BPMEL has a foreign technology collaboration for water treatment and effluent treatment plant, the importance of which need hardly be emphasised in present days of environmental concerns.

Other units are also having locational importance and possess the potential to contribute to national wealth after revival.

Govt. is going in for closing down

TAPAN SEN

64 coal mines still having huge coal reserves, at a time when yearly 24 million tonnes of coal are being imported regularly. Perhaps, the Govt. of India is having greater concern for foreign coal companies than the native mining sector!

And what about these eight PSUs? None but the Prime Minister of India told the Joint Trade Union delegation on 4th November '98 that Govt. had to decide closing down those eight PSUs as they were not operational and workers are being paid idle wages. But who is responsible for that phenomenon? Viable revival packages could have been implemented in respect of all these

eight PSUs and all of them brought back to operation, if only the Govt. of India had not refused either to provide necessary funds or to source the funds through various lending agencies. It is the Govt. of India which is responsible for non-operation of these eight PSUs and it is the self same Govt. now pleading non-operation as the reason for closing them down. Hypocrisy must have a limit but this BJP led Govt. has no sense of shame to cross that even.

A COST FACTOR ANALYSIS

And what is the actual economics of it? The fact remains that the cost of closure of those eight PSUs is much more than the cost of their revival.

As per Govt. statement, Rs.517 crores will be required to dispose of, through voluntary retirement scheme route, the 11,000 strong workforce of these eight PSUs slated for closure. The sum total of additional funds required for revival of all these eight PSUs, as per the revival proposals hanging in BIFR, is well below Rs.300 crores! To cite a few company specific examples:

*BOGL required Rs.20 crores' additional investment for its revamping, whereas to close it down more than Rs.25 crores will be VRS expenditure.

Govt. did not agree for spending Rs.141 crores for revival of *MAMC, but it is now ready to pay much more than that to show the door to the 5000 strong workforce of the company.

* BPMEL required only Rs. 15 crore only for its revival. The same

amount can be generated through sale of landed property owned by the company itself and the Govt. was only required to okay that self financing revival package. Yet the Govt. prefers to close it down to make room for the foreign players in the field.

* RIC can also be revived through self-financing arrangement by sale of landed asset.

* Weighbird India requested for only Rs. 3 crores for its revival, but for its closure the govt. is now ready to spend almost double that amount. It is not ready to allow that public sector unit to survive and operate.

* The National Bicycle Corpn.

required only Rs.9.1 crore loan (not investment) returnable within three years for its revival. Govt. declined to clear the proposal and but had now proposed payment of Rs.16 Crores for closing down the viable revivable public sector unit.

DOWN THE DISASTER ROAD

The BJP Govt. is hell bent to close down public sector units although closure is costlier than revival. BJP's cost benefit analysis is based on the philosophy of benefiting foreign producers at Indian costs - thanks to their novel *Swadeshi* plank. This philosophy is the integral part of the naive design of converting a manufacturing economy of the

country as the market centre of multinational products. This is how they are pursuing their *Swadeshi* line. Perhaps, their motto for the economy is *MNCs Vanadana!*

The move of the BJP Govt. to close down eight PSUs is only the beginning and many more PSUs are waiting in the wings. The Govt. which prefers the costlier option of closing down industries than their revival at much lesser cost, will definitely lead the country's economy to disaster, if they are not compelled to retrace their policy.

The united struggle of trade unions must cry halt to such anti national designs of the BJP Govt.

COM. JADHAV PRASAD

Comrade JADHAV PRASAD, a beloved leader of the Bokaro Steel Workers and a leading functionary of CITU was brutally shot dead on 16th November, 1998. The hirelings of the contractor-authorities nexus, shot him dead when he was about to start off from his house on motor cycle.

In the Bokaro Steel Plant (BSP) of SAIL, there are around 300 contract workers. CITU has considerable influence among them. Com. Prasad was an undisputed leader of them. Hit by the anti-public sector policies of the Government, the BSP management had been taking recourse to several measures in the name of cost-cutting. The contract workers were the most affected as the management resorted to denying them employment. The CITU has, naturally, been in the forefront of struggle to safeguard their jobs. The management of BSP and the contractor-mafia were plotting to check the CITU influence in the plant. Elimination of Com. Jhadav Prasad is part of that game-plan. Hearing the news. A Dakshi, General Secretary, Steel Workers Federation, Chandi Prasad, President Bihar CITU, Jibon Roy M.P., Secretary, CITU, AK Roy and T.N. Singh, Vice Presidents, Bihar CITU and Hiral Roy

RJD MP of the area reached Bokaro.

M.K. Pandhe, General secretary, CITU, in a statement condemned the destardly murder of Com. Prasad and demanded that the real culprits be arrested and punished. He added " Com. Prasad had led several struggles of the contract workers, showing exemplary courage fighting against powerful class enemies. There have been several gangster attacks on trade union leaders in Bihar, and many had to lay down their lives at the hands of hirelings. The government of Bihar has miserably failed to book the culprits with the result that such attacks continue unabated." He express heartfelt condolences to the bereaved members of Jadhav Prasad's family.

All unions, except the INTUC, in Bokaro Steel Plant condemned the murder and a call for Bokaro Bandh on 18.11.98 was responded massively. 85% of contract workers and 70% of regular workers of the BSP struck work. More than 10000 workers participated in the funeral on 18th and a condolence meeting was addressed by the leaders of all unions. **The CITU and 'The Working Class' pay homage to the martyrdom of Com. Jadhav Prasad.**

ECONOMIC LIBERALISATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Justice B P Jeevan Reddy

"There is no automatic link between economic growth and human development, but when these links are forged with policy and determination, they can be mutually reinforcing and economic growth will effectively and rapidly improve human development. Government policies are vitally important. We now know, for example, the limits of trickle-down economics." (*The "central message" of Human Development Report, 1996, published by the UNDP.*)

Since 1991-92, the Government of India is following the new economic policy commonly known as the liberalisation policy. This constituted an almost total reversal of the policies followed till then. This reversal is, however, giving rise to several problems.

The opening up of the economy to foreign capital and integration with the global trading system called for the dismantling of the "licence-permit Raj" and all that it signified. The conditions accompanying the IMF loan also required phasing out of subsidies to the agriculture and the public sectors, encouragement of the private sector and reduction of spending on social sectors such as education and health, all with a view to *balancing* the budget. (It is another matter that these prescriptions have *unbalanced* people's lives, as observed in the Human Development Report, 1996). All these changes had to be accepted and were accepted—and are being given effect to, no doubt, in stages, mercifully. This is precisely what is meant by liberalisation.

A totally unregulated regime is found to have disastrous consequences. The spate of scandals that immediately followed the introduction of the liberalisation policies is a case in point. A culture must be developed where any misfeasance of public funds should invite the most stringent action including the confiscation of properties.

The other issue which deserves notice is the sudden entry of multi-national corporations and other giant companies. The Indian industry has suffered on that account. Industry was shielded from foreign competition and that was also the secret of its success. It is true that it had stagnated in the process. Now, it is asked to compete with the foreign corporate world—an unenviable task. Few can survive the

onslaught, and the free imports. In fact some have survived the competition while some became sick and some others were taken over by the multinationals. A few entered into joint ventures.

Many of the policies followed during 1993-96 - for example, the policies followed by the Telecom department under Mr Sukh Ram—had a pronounced tilt in favour of foreign companies and suppliers. As a result a large number of industries, mostly from the small sector, became sick.

It is a curious situation where on the one hand the government's policies are driving many industries (started and being run mostly with the aid of public funds) to sickness and on the other public funds are pumped in to keep them afloat or to restructure them. When these units are wound up, it is a case of almost total loss of public funds.

Liberalisation is also providing innumerable opportunities for corrupt elements among the ruling classes. Agreements and contracts worth hundreds and thousands of crores of rupees are signed. The unscrupulous look upon these contracts as a goldmine. India is already being rated as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Funds earmarked for development hardly achieve their objectives within the prescribed time limits and stipulated budgets and about the funds earmarked for the social sector (human development projects such as the people's welfare, health and education) the less said the better. The "central message" of the Human Development Report (1996) is in effect the same as is conveyed by the expressions "development with a human face" and "progress coupled with equity"—ideas which were in vogue in the post-independence decades but which became "unfashionable" in the course of time. "Justice social, economic and political" is the motto of our Constitution.

The constitutional goal is not mere progress but progress tempered by justice, an aspect recognised now by the economists the world over. Gandhiji had observed: "the earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not every man's greed."

(Excerpts from an article in the OPEN PAGE column. Courtesy: The Hindu dated 17-11-1998)

FOIL THE CONSPIRACY AGAINST COAL INDUSTRY

The Government of India, as a part of its master plan to dismantle the entire public sector network in the country is now out to disintegrate and dismantle the nationalised coal sector. Recently government has decided to close down 64 coal mines in West Bengal and Bihar despite there being huge coal reserve. Such a move would severely affect coal production paving way for more import of coal which has already crossed 24 million tonnes last year.

It is really surprising that a country like India having the richest coal reserves all over the country is required to import such huge quantity of coal every year. But, in the background of Govt of India's total surrender to the pressure of World Bank and IMF, and the BJP Govt's religiousness in serving their masters in Washington and New York, nobody need be surprised.

It is the well written blueprint of World Bank to facilitate privatisation in the third world countries including India, that is being faithfully followed by the Govt of India in the matter of public sector. The coal industry is no exception.

WORLD BANK BLUEPRINT

The World Bank in its document on privatisation and dismantling of public sector titled "Bureaucrats in business" has suggested, as a primary step, to disintegrate and separate the corporatised monolithic structure of giant public sector undertakings. As per that, Govt has now been separating out various units of corporatised Coal India Ltd., into different loss making and profit making units and putting restrictions on flow of funds from one unit to another. Coal India Ltd was formed as a holding company after nationalisation of various coal companies in private sector. Those coal companies in private sector had separate company entities. After nationalisation they were brought under the corporate holding structure of Coal India Ltd (CIL), rightly to bring about an integration of all coal producing centres. This helped to pool maximum benefit and overall improvement of various modes of production being developed in various coal units. But different units under Coal India Ltd continued to retain their separate company entities as subsidiaries of CIL. Now with the onset of liberalisation the opposite process of

disintegration of the erstwhile integrated structure has started in the CIL, as per design and blue print drawn by the World Bank. The legacy of separate company entities of different coal units, continued from the pre-nationalisation days, is now being utilised first to separate out the loss making units. Then they are starved of investment for modernisation and pushed towards closure, despite there being huge reserve of best quality coal.

NAIVE CONDITIONS

The World Bank has now become hyperactive in this game to dismantle the nationalised coal sector in the country. While finalising the financial aid of US \$ 1.06 billion, the World Bank along with Japan Exim Bank (JEXIM) has put a condition that no money should be transferred from the profit making coal companies to other units. Such conditionalities has thus put a virtual embargo on Coal India Ltd on making use of the surplus generated within the nationalised coal industry for much needed developmental work in other units like ECL and BCCL to make them profitable. Such naive conditionalities of World Bank, and shameless surrender of the Govt of India thereto, has set the process of dismantling the nationalised coal industry, closure of mines and opening the ground for increasing import of coal to Indian soil.

Colliery Mazdoor Sabha of India (CITU) has already protested against such design of Govt of India and the Coal India management. It demanded change of present structure of Coal India Ltd to a single unitary company with erstwhile subsidiary coal companies as divisions of Coal India Ltd and not separate companies. In practice, right from the time of nationalisation, CIL functioned as a decision making authority on all policy issues just like a unitary company. All the trade unions in the coal industry, irrespective of their affiliations, and most of the central trade unions, have also voiced the same demand.

The coal workers all over the country are unitedly preparing for countrywide struggle to resist the nefarious game of the Govt of India to destroy the nationalised coal sector of the country to serve the interests of foreign coal companies.

THREAT FROM FOREIGN FUNDED NGOs

Large scale proliferation of the so called non governmental organisations, NGOs for short, with enormous inflow of foreign funds to a sizable section of them has caused concern among many including even some non foreign funded NGOs in India. Indira Hirway and Uttara Chauhan's paper reflects this concern. Apart from fast growing number, the variety of form and sphere of activity is fast increasing.

"Several new forms of NGOs have emerged on the scene. In addition to the grass root organisations (whose relative strength is declining gradually) there are support organisations involved only in supporting small organisations; there are network organisations trying to create networking of organisations based on location or type of work; there are techno-managerial organizations that run like private corporations; and there are multi-form organisations. Also, new sectors such as consumer protection (there are about 700 consumer protection NGOs in India today), environment, drinking water, human rights, training, women, etc. are now covered by NGOs. There is also an increased "professionalism" in NGOs with professionals, technocrats, and well-educated persons joining the NGO sector in a large number. Qualified architects, planners, engineers, doctors, managers, social workers, social scientists and scientists are to be found in this sector today. As a result, many NGOs today

look for techno-managerial solutions to the problems of the weaker sections. In short, there is a huge diversity among NGOs in terms of their form, size, ideology, activities, professionalism, pattern of funding etc." This clearly shows how the North (which is an euphemism for the imperialists) is spreading its tentacle on every sphere of life in our country.

ACCOUNTABILITY

In this context the question of accountability assumes importance. To whom are these organisations accountable? The foreign funded NGOs, as the study shows, do not have any accountability either to our Government or to our people. If

Kanai Banerjee

they have at all any accountability it is only to the foreign funding agencies which are by and large committed to the political economic and ideological interest of their governments. The study, therefore, underlines the importance of control and regulation of these organisations.

CONTROL / REGULATION

The question has legitimately been raised whether this foreign funding to NGOs are controlled and regulated adequately.

Reviewing in some details the various Acts and rules for controlling and regulating the foreign funded NGOs, the study concludes that these regulations have not been able to control illegal inflows of foreign funds to the fundamentalist organisations

and terrorists. It says: "The funds coming through Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) accounts also are frequently used improperly for political purposes. As an ex-senior officer from the Ministry of Home Affairs observed, the funds coming to religious organisations suddenly jump up during the time of elections (especially in some southern states) and that restrictions on certain religious activities cannot be implemented effectively in reality. Several NGOs and scholars have also criticized the management of registratio under the FCRA. It is frequently complained that FCRA registration is bought by money, or that it is availed through political contacts."

MONITORING

Further "The monitoring of NGOs under the FCRA does not seem to be adequate due to several reasons. Firstly, the Act emphasises mainly financial accounting leaving out other kinds of accounting mainly, and secondly the audited accounts (prepared by smart accountants) frequently hide more and reveal less and, therefore does not ensure honest use of money. Rampant corruption among NGOs is a frequent criticism ... and this cannot be traced mainly through financial accounting. The recent banning of 564 NGOs by CAPART for the reason of corrupt practices suggests that NGOs are not necessarily above corruption (Times of India, June 1995).

Foreign funds which are relatively easily accessible and are in large amounts leaves considerable scope for the entry of unscrupulous elements in the NGO sector.”

The study also raises several other important questions: “do we have any mechanism to see whether (a) the foreign funds used by NGOs are used efficiently and effectively? (b) the work undertaken with the funds have yielded the desired impact/results? (c) the approach and priorities at the field level are as per the needs of the local people? (d) the behaviour and functioning of NGOs is acceptable to local people? (e) the failures of NGOs are genuine and not due to carelessness and callousness? and (f) the NGOs are prepared to learn from people and from field level situations?

NGOs try to satisfy the funding agencies on some of the above issues to an extent. But neither are funding agencies willing nor are they capable of doing this kind of monitoring. (They should also not be allowed to do this kind of close monitoring). Since NGOs are not accountable to the government and since local people/poor are not strong enough to raise these questions, NGOs are not really accountable on the crucial issues regarding their performance.”

Finally it is stated that “Legally speaking, the Indian Government perhaps has enough powers to control FFAs operating in India. But it is our feeling that in reality the controls are not adequate. For example, a recognized FFA negotiates directly with NGOs

regarding the projects, programmes and other activities. Is there any assurance that (a) the projects identified are necessary for the country and are as per the national priorities, (b) the specific region/village/city needs it the most, (c) there is no duplication with other such programmes, and (d) the intervention made by the NGO with the FFA support is something that local people want or need?

“Since we do not have any mechanism to ensure the above points, it is clear that we do not have adequate control on the functioning of FFAs in India.

“Common people do not have knowledge as well as access to the ways in which FFAs operate in India. They also do not have any forum to examine and discuss the working of FFAs. To assume that NGOs and FFAs together know what is best for the country and its people, and they also know the best ways and means of doing this, will not be very realistic.”

CONCLUSION

The Hirway-Chauhan study succeeds in making the point that foreign funding of NGOs and their functioning pose a threat to our national interest. The all too clear purpose of all sorts of funding by the official or non-official agencies of the countries of the North to countries of the South, including the NGO sector is to promote the economic, political and ideological interest of the North. But the assertion is more or less of general nature.

The study has aptly noted the “quantum jump” in the number of NGOs and inflow of foreign funds

in post-liberalisation and globalisation period. But somehow unlike the pioneering 1988 study of Prakash Karat, this study has not come out explicitly with imperialist global strategy in the neo-colonial phase. It hardly provides any concrete account of the actual NGO activities. Consequently we find one major aspect of NGO operation practically missing, i.e., the deliberate and planned effort to disseminate pernicious ideology and to disrupt the existing mass organisation and mass movement. However, another important contribution of the present study, is the exposure of the utter inadequacy of control and regulation of foreign funding to NGOs and their activities.

The totality of the findings of different studies and our own experience makes it important for the trade unions to have a clear stand about the foreign funded NGOs. We, of course, have enough prima facie case against the NGOs in general. But, all the NGOs are not working as stooges of imperialism or domestic reaction. It is necessary to identify those which are working against the interests of the nation and toiling people, and effectively counter them ideologically and other wise. This is not a simple task as the Government, based on the so-called free market philosophy, is opening up the country more and more widely to welcome foreign funds. Therefore the menace of the foreign funded NGOs can be countered only as a part of the struggle against the Government’s economic policies.

(Parsa Satyanarayana, Vice-President, represented the CITU at the 8th National Congress of Trade Unions organised by the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour held in Hanoi city on 5th & 6th November 1998. Here is a report by him. - Editor)

GREETINGS FROM CITU

On behalf of the Indian Working Class, and the Centre of Indian Trade Unions in particular, I convey my heartfelt greetings to the delegates to the 8th National Congress of Vietnam General Confederation of Labour and through you to the great Vietnamese Working Class. The Indian people and the working class in particular had all along been in close emotional attachment with the epoch making liberation struggle of Vietnamese people under the towering leadership of Comrade **Ho-Chi-Minh**. We still draw inspiration from the success of your great anti imperialist liberation struggle, and from the life and teachings of Comrade **Ho-Chi-Minh**.

We sincerely believe the close relationship of brotherhood between the people of India and Vietnam and between the working class of both the countries would get further closer.

And we are confident from your 8th National Congress, VGCL would emerge stronger to play its historic rôle in upholding socialism, building up a stronger, prosperous Vietnam and strengthening the international solidarity of working class in the struggle against imperialism and neo-liberalism.

We wish your Congress a great success.

-Parsa Satyanarayana

Photo: Parsa Satyanarayana is right at the front

8TH NATIONAL CONGRESS OF VGCL

Foreign delegates were received at Hanoi airport by VGCL, leaders. In all, 47 foreign delegates attended the Congress. Of these, 11 were from WFTU, ILO and other international organisations and 36 from National Organisations of various countries. From India while I

represented CITU, K L Mahendra, and C.Divakaran represented the AITUC. Indrajit Gupta and D K Ganguly participated as WFTU representatives. VGCL hosted a welcome dinner and arranged presentations reception ceremony at Thang Loi Hotel on 4th evening. On

5.11.1998, the 8th National Congress of Vietnamese Trade Unions commenced at 9.00 AM. Political report of the VGCL was presented and Vietnamese Party and State leaders addressed the conference. Also a report on the constitution prepared by the executive committee of VGCL was presented to the conference wherein certain amendments were proposed. The political report reviewed the "renewal" period during the past 5

years after the 7th Congress. (See Box for excerpts) In the country now there are 5694 grassroots trade union units with a membership of 4,60,000. There is membership growth but number of full time TU workers decreased from 9077 to 6775 necessitating training of trade unionists and providing theoretical studies and practical operations. There are regular consultations and joint resolutions between trade unions and socio-political

organisations on coordinating actions to carry out their tasks. These yielded good results. Failure in promoting collective wisdom is noticed. Practice of bureaucratism and self-distancing from masses still existing is taken note of. Corruption and social evils at state enterprises have yet to become issues of mass movement. The quality of magazines and news reports is to be improved. Causes for the short comings both



subjective and objective were analysed and lessons drawn. Goals, orientations and tasks of trade unions were set for the coming 5 years - 1998-2003. On the whole, much stress was given on education to meet the requirements in the changed conditions of renewal. Targets to increase the membership and train the trade unionists were fixed. The report appreciated the great contribution of the working class and trade union organisations to the country's renewal cause, for the cause of building socialism and defending the Fatherland. The report and the constitution with

amendments were adopted by the Congress. A new executive with (Ms) **Cu Thi Hau** as president was elected. On 6.11.98 visits to factories and ethnic museum was arranged. We visited a garments factory where 90% of the production is meant for export, while 10% allotted for local consumption. A visit to Ha Long Bay - a tourist centre was arranged on 7.11.98 and we returned to Hanoi the next day. On the way to the Bay, we observed developmental work going on - road widening and drainage construction work on a massive scale. This is being carried with cooperation from

MNCs.

We had occasion to see the pains Vietnamese are taking to rebuild their country, having suffered heavy destruction in war against both France and America for more than three decades.

Com.BTR, CITU founder President, visited Hanoi in 1974 just after the end of Vietnam war, forcing shameful defeat on American imperialism. He then remarked that Hanoi was a city of cycles.

But now, conditions have changed. Apart from cycles, one sees a number of motor cycles on the roads, indicating the development in the country ever since.

(The Eighth National Congress of the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour was held at Hanoi on 5-6 November, 1998. We give below some excerpts from the political report to the Congress, presented by the Central Executive Committee of VGCL- Editor.)

VIETNAM: SITUATION OF WORKERS

Over the past years, our country's socio-economic situation has seen continued profound changes which have a strong impact on the movement of workers, public servants and labourers and trade union activities.

In reviewing the country's ten years of renewal, our country has emerged from socio-economic crisis although it remains to consolidate a number of aspects. Our road to socialism has been determined more clearly.

These great achievements embody worthy contributions from the Vietnamese Working Class.

However, our workers' movement and trade unions are also faced with difficulties and trials resulting from the side-effects of

the market mechanism and the impact of the monetary, financial and economic crisis in the region and the world in recent time.

The rank of workers has seen rises in number which, however, is not evenly distributed among industries, localities and economic sectors. Whereas the volume of labour is increasing in new trades and industries and in concentrated industrial areas, it is continuously decreasing in many others, especially in mountainous and Central Highlands areas and the agricultural and forestry sectors. A number of private, foreign-invested and state enterprises have in recent years forced their workers to work more hours than prescribed by the Labour Code

(their workers have to work 10-12 hours a day, even 14 hours in some cases). In certain incidents, workers even collapsed at work due to exhaustion.

A number of enterprises violate State regulations on salary. It is commonplace in the foreign-invested sector that the salary and income for foreign employees are often many times higher than those for Vietnamese employees of the same function or trade.

In recent years, there continues to be practices at a number of foreign invested joint ventures and enterprises that foreigners trample upon the dignity of or adopt rude behaviour towards Vietnamese workers. These practices are one of the causes of strikes.

TUI OF PUBLIC AND ALLIED EMPLOYEES: NINTH WORLD CONGRESS

The Ninth World Congress of Trade Union International of Public and Allied Employees was held in Calcutta, 4-6 November, '98 after a gap of more than 10 years.

The earlier headquarters of the TUI was in Berlin but due to dismantling of socialism in East Germany the organisation became defunct since the Eighth Congress of TUI held at Sofia (Bulgaria) in 1988.

The initiative to revive the TUI was taken in a meeting of the Directive Committee held at Damascus (Syria) on 25-26 June 1996. In the meeting it was decided to shift the office of the TUI to New Delhi. Christos A Christou was elected as President and Sukomal Sen as the General Secretary.

The TUI since then has been active and contacts with several trade unions were developed. The Directive Committee decided to hold the 9th Congress at Calcutta.

Indian affiliates of the TUI contributed to the success of the Congress. However, major responsibility was shouldered by the All India State Government Employees Federation. Prasanta Chatterjee, Mayor of Calcutta chaired the Reception Committee.

The Directive Committee of the TUI met on 2 November, reviewed all preparatory work and took appropriate decisions regarding the proceedings of the Congress.

A seminar on globalisation and its impact on public employees was held on 3rd November which was attended by around 300 delegates. Dr Ashok Mitra, Prof Bagchi, and other prominent economists spoke on the global scenario and how these policies have been adversely affecting the developing countries. Several speakers from 13 foreign countries explained how the policies of globalisation adversely affected their countries and particularly the public sector employees. On behalf of CITU, M K Pandhe addressed the seminar and highlighted the urgent need for international action by the working class against globalisation.

The Ninth Congress was inaugurated on 4th Nov. by Jyoti Basu inaugurated the Congress. He emphasised the need for international cooperation by the public

employees all over the world to fight against the onslaughts of capital.

Sukomal Sen, at the outset, explained the background of the revival of the activities of the TUI and expressed his confidence that the Congress would bring together all the affiliates of the TUI and once again emerge as the largest contingent of the WFTU. M K Pandhe, pledged the support of CITU in expanding the activities of the TUI. He appreciated that the TUI Congress was held in India for the first time. A representative of Public Service International (ICFTU) also greeted the congress.

Tarkeshwar Chakraborty, General Secretary, AIBEA and Vice President TUI presided over the meeting. During the delegates' session, Sukomal Sen presented the Draft Policy Document reviewing the International situation and pointed out the growing concerted attacks by the global capital. He further explained how the working class is reacting to these attacks and how growing unity is emerging all over the world. He also reviewed the global scenario regarding the working and living condition of the public employees and their TU rights.

In another note he pointed out the difficulties faced by the organisation and underlined the need to strengthen the centre financially.

Speakers from South Africa, Ghana, Cyprus, Libya, Cuba, Vietnam, Japan, Fiji, Mauritius, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal participated in the discussion and gave their views. The delegates from Japan had some reservations about the approach of the policy document.

The Congress adopted the documents and elected a new Directive Committee with Christos A Christou (Cyprus) as the Chairman and Sukomal Sen as the General Secretary. Tarkeshwar Chakraborty was elected as one of the Vice Presidents while N M Sundaram of AIIEA was elected as the member of the Auditing Commission.

The Congress ended on a note of enthusiasm that the revitalised TUI will play an important role in unifying the public employees and protect their interests through sustained struggles.

COAL MINERS TO JOIN STRIKE ON 10-11 DECEMBER

Nearly seven lakh coal miners all over India are facing acute difficulties most of which are arising from the economic policies of the Government of India.

Six point Charter of Demands adopted by all the central trade unions in Dhanbad two years ago still remain unimplemented despite prolonged negotiations with the Government of India. The Coal Minister has announced that a Bill to allow entry of private sector in coalmines will be brought in the next session of Parliament violating the assurance given to all the trade unions by the Minister himself.

The demand of the miners to make Coal India a unitary company is not being accepted by the Government despite several representations. As a result, the profit making companies have to pay Rs. 1200 crores as income tax while the losses of ECL and BCCL amount to Rs. 1000 crores! If a single company is formed this would not happen and overall Coal India will show profit.

The callous attitude of the Government of India towards coal industry is seen from the drastic reduction in custom duty on imported coal which resulted in import of 24 million tonnes of coal last year. When Indian coal miners are declared surplus and mines are closed down, such reckless import of coal is an anti-national act. The demand of the coal unions to restore import duty to 1991 level

is curtly rejected by the Government.

The coal industry supplies valuable sources of energy of the country. Hence the trade unions have been demanding subsidy to this industry for producing more coal indigenously. The Coal India has to recover Rs. 5000 crores of dues from various agencies when it has no funds for developing mines or payment of better wages to coal workers. Several Governments in other countries give budgetary support to the coal industry.

Despite united demand by all the trade unions the Government of India is going ahead with the privatisation plans and throwing out several thousands of coal workers on street. All trade unions are of the firm opinion that Coal India has capacity to produce the entire requirement of coal in the country, provided Government of India provides necessary funds during the next plan period.

The wage negotiations are pending for more than two years and workers want an early settlement. The Government of India is adopting dilatory tactics in this regard as in case of other public sector undertakings.

The issues of coal workers to day can be solved only if the Government of India's policies towards public sector is changed without nay further delay. But till now there is no sign of such a change in Govt. policies despite

strong assertion by the Trade Unions.

In this background, the AITUC, CITU and HMS have jointly appealed to coal workers all over India to join the two day strike called by the Committee of Public Sector Trade unions (CPSTU) on 10-11 December 1998.

M K Pandhe (CITU), Sunil Sen (AITUC) and A.D. Nagpal (HMS) jointly appealed to all other trade unions working in coal industry to join this important strike so that the nationwide protest is raised against the policies to liquidate public sector in India. They pointed out that the coal workers are constitute one-third of the public sector workers, have a major role to play in making this strike successful.

M K PANDHE ELECTED VICE CHAIRMAN

M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU is now the Vice-Chairman, representing workers, of the National Safety Council. The Board of Governors of the Council elected him unanimously at the meeting held on 9.7.98. Pandhe has been a member of the Board for over 15 years. He succeeds R K Samantrai of HMS.

CITU ORISSA STATE 7TH CONFERENCE

The 7th Conference of Orissa State CITU was held at Balasore in Saheed Amiya Das Manch from 7th to 9th November under the presidentship of Sivaji Patnaik. The Conference was attended by 179 delegates and 17 observers from trade unions in Steel and Mines, Spinning and Textile, Metal and Mineral processing, Surface and Sea transport, Electricity, Cement, Shops and Commercial Establishments, Hotels and restaurants, Plantation and various small scale industries of the State. The Conference was inaugurated by M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU. Chitabrata Mazumdar, Secretary, CITU and Dipankar Mukherjee, Member, Rajya Sabha also attended the Conference. The trade union leaders from several industrial organisations greeted the conference and messages were also received from different friendly organisations. General Secretary, Lambodar Naik placed the report and Pradeep Das, Treasurer placed the statement of accounts before the conference. About 36 delegates participated in the discussion. The thrust of the discussion in the conference was on the serious deteriorating condition of the working class during the 8 months rule of BJP led Government at the centre and 4 years of Congress (I) rule in Orissa.

The Congress government in

Orissa is equally anti-worker and during its last 4 years of rule it had hardly taken any step to protect the interests of the working class. The State government has vigorously pursued privatisation, particularly in electricity industry. The privatisation, sale and disinvestment is in full swing everywhere. All the industrial estates at different strategic locations are in a state of ruin and thousands of workers have lost jobs. The loss of mandays on account of closure, lockout, lay off, retrenchment - declared and undeclared - is colossal, reflecting the organised attacks of employers everywhere. The labour machinery has proved to be futile and functioning under guidance of employers' lobby and home department of the state. In case there is a strike, the police reach first and not the labour officers. The poor growth rate added with deindustrialisation and severe draught situation, have turned the entire life of the people miserable. The flight of labour to other States is increasing daily due to serious

unemployment situation and draught. The Central and State Governments are completely callous to prevailing inhuman situation in the State. The development activities have come to a halt, the investors are seen reluctant to proceed further in their promise to install industries, particularly steel plants.

The Conference also discussed the implementation of the Resolution on Organisation in detail. It resolved to improve collective functioning and plan TU education for the CITU ranks in the State.

A big rally was held on 7th November at Balasore, addressed by M K Pandhe, Chitabrata Mazumdar, Dipankar Mukherjee M.P., Sivaji Patnaik, Lambodar Nayak, R. Sarangi, Himansu Nandi and Pradipta Panda.

The conference elected a 19 member secretariat with Sivaji Patnaik as President, Lambodar Nayak as General Secretary and Dushman Das as a Treasurer and a 51 member executive.

(Report from Lambodar Nayak)

H S C L UNION CONFERENCE

The third annual conference of Hindustan Steelworks Construction Workers' Union was held at Bhilai on 1-11-98. Narayan Pal, Secretary, in his report dealt at length, the state of affairs in HSCL. He held the management and the policy of liberalisation of the Govt. solely responsible for the present crisis. While the employees are not getting

their wages, all the facilities given earlier have been curtailed; Rs 30 crore to provident fund is in default; all other statutory and annual benefits are illegally with-held.

The conference elected a new executive with Jibon Roy MP as President, Narayan Pal as General Secretary, and E X Mohanan as Treasurer.

BIHAR: MASSIVE CITU RALLY

Bihar State Committee of CITU organised a massive State-level rally at Patna on 29-10-98. Thousands of organised and unorganised sector workers, men and women, tribals and socially oppressed marched from Gandhi Maidan to Hartali Chowk near State Government's Secretariat. The rally was addressed by CITU General Secretary M K Pandhe, Vice-President Samar Mukherjee, State leaders including State President Chandi Prasad, General Secretary, J S Majumdar, Vice-President A K Roy and others.

A delegation consisting of office-bearers of CITU and convener of State Working Women Coordination Committee, Rampukeri Devi submitted a 16-points charter of demands to the



Chief Minister.

Following the rally, a State level convention of Jan Sangathan Manch, Bihar, consisting of 52 mass organisations was held at Vidyapati Bhawan, Patna attended

by 800 delegates from different parts of the State. The convention decided to organise a massive State level rally on 28-11-98 prior to December 11 general strike.

COUNTRYWIDE STRIKE BY SUGAR WORKERS

An All India Convention of Sugar Workers was held under the banner of the National Sugar Workers Coordination Committee on 30.10.98 at New Delhi. The Declaration adopted thereat called for a countrywide strike on 15.12.98.

The convention presidium comprised P K Ganguly (CITU), DK Panda (AITUC), Agni Yadav (HMS), N S Pawar (INTUC), Sohanlal Tiagi (HMKP), Somendra Kumar (UTUC), Ghansham Das Gupta (BMS), Madhukar Bhise (Maharashtra State Sugar Workers Federation),

Madhukar Katra (Maharashtra Sakhar Kamgar Federation) and Anand Tirthe (Karnataka State Sugar Workers Federation).

500 delegates from all the Central Trade Unions and independent federations in all the sugar producing states of the country attended the convention. 25 delegates participated in the discussion.

The delegates deplored the Government apathy to discuss and decide the common Charter of Demands submitted by the National Coordination Committee in 1994 in a Tripartite Committee.

While the erstwhile Congress Government dilly dallied the matter, the UF Government constituted a Tripartite Committee, in which all the Central Trade Unions were represented, and also held one meeting. Thereafter, the UF Government fell.

But immediately after the BJP Government came to power, it played foul with the decisions of the UF Government and unilaterally dissolved the Tripartite Committee. It constituted another Tripartite Committee with three

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representatives from BMS, three from INTUC and one from HMS. It totally excluded the CITU, AITUC and the convenor of the National Coordination Committee. The convention resented the arbitrary action of the BJP Government and demanded immediate revival of the original Tripartite Committee. The Declaration condemned delicensing of the sugar industry and the Government move to decontrol it. It also condemned

the repressive actions of UP Government against the sugar workers in the State, victimising a large number of them. The convention extended support to the UP workers' indefinite strike from 8.12.98. It decided to observe December 8 as All India Protest Day by holding demonstrations, torch light processions, etc and appealed to all workers in the sugar industry to make the all India strike on 15.12.98, a complete success.

NOTE: CITU UNIONS IN SUGAR INDUSTRY MUST NOTE THAT ON 11TH DECEMBER 1998 THE NPMO CALL FOR ALL INDIA GENERAL STRIKE SHOULD BE PARTICIPATED IN FULL STRENGTH. THIS SUGAR WORKERS COORDINATION COMMITTEE CALL FOR STRIKE ON 15-12-98 SHOULD NOT IN ANY WAY DILUTE THE 11TH DECEMBER STRIKE ACTION

P K GANGULY

STRIKE BY TELECOM EMPLOYEES

The Telecom Employees observed a successful one day strike on 12th November 1998 against the proposal to corporatise the Dept. of Telecom and on other major long pending demands. The call was issued by the following 5 unions, viz., All India Telecom Employees Union Class III (N), All India Telegraph Traffic Employees Union Class III, All India Telecom Adm. Offices Employees Union Gr. C & D, All India Telecom Civil Wing

Employees Union and Indian Telecom Employees Union Line Staff and Group 'D'. More than 2 lakh workers participated all over India inspite of the fact that the 3 Federations in Telecom kept away from the call.

The demands were:

- * GIVE UP MOVE TO CORPORATISE TELECOM DEPT.
- * RECRUITMENT OF GROUP C & D STAFF TO RECEIVE ACUTE SHORTAGE OF

MANPOWER.

- * REGULARISATION OF CASUAL WORKERS.
- * IMPLEMENT NOV. 97 AGREEMENT ON PAY COMMISSION ANOMALIES AND PROMOTION.
- * END DISCRIMINATION OF TELECOM FACTORY AND CIVIL WING EMPLOYEES.

The unions have also warned that they will be compelled to go on an indefinite strike if the issues are not settled without further delay.

(Report from V.A.N. Namboodiri)

WITHOUT COMMENTS

Too Many Holes In PM's Economic Package

"Sadly.....for the economy, the package is not alright. The first question that should be asked is where in the policy announcements is the slightest indication that the government have taken the rising prices of essential commodities as a serious problem. Citizens may well wonder what the government's priorities are. Aren't unaffordable essentials atleast as much of an economic malady as a depressed Sensex? It would be understandable if any one concludes from this that the government are more eager to please their industry friends who have been generous in helping the BJP's rise to power. Share buy backs have found a place in the economic package even if onions haven't."

(From the Statesman Editorial dated 27 Oct.'98)

HIMACHAL: ANGANWADI CONFERENCE

The 5th Conference of the Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union of Himachal Pradesh was held at Shimla, 14-15 Nov.98.

The conference began with a rally at Ganj-bazar area, with over thousand workers, mostly women, participating. A mass meeting chaired by Tripta Gupta was addressed by Neelima Maitra, President, All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers, Kashmiri Singh Thakur, General

Secretary, CITU Himachal Pradesh and others.

Inaugurating the delegates session attended by over 100 delegates, Neelima Maitra dwelt on the present situation and the hardship faced by the working people, particularly the women. She emphasised on building a strong organisation and that organisational work and struggle, both to be conducted simultaneously.

Devaki Sharma, Secretary, placed

the report. Resolutions on price rise, demands of the workers and Dec.11th strike were placed and adopted. 10 delegates participated in the discussions.

The conference decided to constitute a 41 member state committee and elected 24 members with the rest of the vacancies to be filled up later. Awatar Kaur, Dewaki Sharma and Tripta Gupta were elected as President, General Secretary and Treasurer.

CPSTU DENOUNCES CLOSURE OF EIGHT PSUs

The Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions denounced the decision of the Central Government to shut down eight public sector units viz. MAMC, TAFCO, Cycle Corp., National Bicycle Corp., RIC, National Instrumentation, BOGL and Weighbird Ltd.

In a joint statement, M K

Pandhe (CITU), H. Mahadevan (AITUC), R A Mital (HMS), Michael Fernandes (JAF Bangalore) and G. Narasingh Rao (PSU Coordination Committee Hyderabad) declared that CPSTU cannot accept such disastrous decision of the govt. lying down and called upon all the public sector workers all over the

country, irrespective of affiliations, to unitedly protest the move and build up struggle for all out resistance. As an immediate response, CPSTU called upon the public sector unions and workers to protest the decision for closure of eight PSUs through massive demonstrations at enterprise level and sending protest telegrams to Prime Minister.



A seminar against privatisation was organised at Raibareli on 14-11-98. A large gathering of ITI workers was addressed by Jibon Roy MP, Secretary, CITU, who was the chief guest. Besides, Ravi Sinha, Vice President, UP CITU and Ardhendu Dakshi, General Secretary Steel Workers' Federation of India also spoke.

WITHOUT COMMENTS

"Voices about onions and edible oil, if seen in their micro-isolation, will make us miss the macro-power invisibly operating behind our Finance Ministry to lift import duties so that American agriculture may occupy Indian common man's agricultural space".

"The grave danger for us is the US, incorporated".

(Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer in his inaugural address at Nikhil Chakravathy Memorial Seminar. Courtesy: The Hindu, 17 Nov.98)

HSCL: JOINT ALL INDIA CONVENTION

At the call of "Akhil Bharatya HSCL Trade Union Sanyukta Morcha" 2nd all India convention was held at Calcutta, on 19.11.98.

The convention was presided over by A K Dey (CITU), K K Srivastava (INTUC), B N Das (HMS), Paritosh Pathak (BMS). Pathak of BMS moved the main resolution of the convention. The resolution demanded immediate revival of Hindustan Steelworkers Construction Ltd on the basis of revival plan submitted by the

'Joint Committee of HSC Employees.'

M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU in his address told that need of the hour is to unite and fight against the govt policies.

Sunil Khan MP, CPI(M), Rathin Talukdar, (INTUC), R L Sreevastav (BMS), B N Das (HMS), Nemai Routh (AITUC) and Sudarsan Bose (AICCTU) also addressed the convention.

The convention was attended by more than 300 workers of Tamil Nadu, Bihar, UP, Orissa,

Karnataka, AP, West Bengal covering 15 units and HQ. 25 delegates spoke. The convention chalked out a programme of action as follows:-

1. March to Delhi and sit-in agitation before Ministry of Steel on 30-11-98.
2. Petition to Speaker, Lok Sabha with signatures of all the workers, employees, officers and engineers.
3. Memorandum to Minister of Steel.

(Report from Debanjan Chakraborty)

ASSAM NPMO CONVENTION

Four hundred seventy five delegates representing 36 mass organisations, viz., CITU, AITUC, UTUC (LS), AICCTU and employees' federations of bank, insurance, oil, railway, central and State Government establishments as well as different organisations of students, youth, women and peasants attended a state level convention on 26-10-98 at Guwahati, held under the aegis of Ganamancha, Assam. A presidium consisting of Amal Ghosh Dastidar, (CITU), Ananta Barman (AITUC), Pramod Bhagawati (UTUC, LS) and Biren Kalita (AICCTU) presided over the meeting.

Deben Bhattacharyya, General Secretary, CITU, Assam placed a declaration which was adopted after discussions. Demands relating to Assam like permanent

solution of flood problems, withdrawal of ESMA, solution of insurgency problems through negotiation and establishment of a violence free atmosphere for all round development of Assam, were also highlighted in the declaration.

The convention decided to make the nationwide general strike on 11-12-98, a total success throughout the state.

(Report from Deben Bhattacharyya)

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BANGALORE: JAF CONVENTION

Regional convention was held on 4-11-98 at Bangalore, under the aegis of the Joint Action Front (JAF) of Bangalore based public sector unions.

The convention was presided over by a presidium comprising Michael B Fernandes, S Suryanarayana Rao, G Nagaraja and A Harry Joseph and attended by around 800 delegates. The participants came from all the Bangalore-based public sector undertakings. Jibon Roy MP, Secretary, CITU, addressed the convention.

The convention ratified the decision taken in the CPSTU convention held on 11.8.98 to observe Two Days strike on 10th & 11th Dec '98.

UTTAR PRADESH: NPMO CONVENTION

A state level convention of National Platform of Mass Organisation was held at Lucknow, UP, on 27.10.98. More than 1000 representatives of various mass organisations including CITU and other central trade unions, representatives of central and state governments employees, bank, insurance, public sector, railway, post and

telegraph, defence, transport, municipal corporation employees participated in the convention. Leaders of other mass organisations, viz., like kisan, agricultural workers, students, youth, women, and cultural front activists also participated.

While deciding to make vigorous efforts for the success of the countrywide strike, a plan was

formulated for the preparations for strike. Accordingly, all the constituents will hold workers' meetings, gate meetings, public rallies, processions, padayatras and jathas to campaign intensively and ensure massive participation in strike.

P K Tandan, Ravi Sinha, Subhashini Ali and Arvind Kumar addressed the convention.

DAY LONG MEETINGS, RALLY IN PATNA

At the call of Coordination Committee of Trade Unions and Associations, Patna, various mass organisations organised street corner meetings in different parts of Patna on 7-11-98.

After the day-long street meetings,

a rally was held at the Dak Bunglow Crossing at 3 pm.

The rally was addressed by the leaders of the mass organisations. It gave a call to build a militant struggle against the wrong policies and misrule of the Central

Government and Bihar Government.

After the rally a human chain was organised blocking Dak Bunglow Crossing and raising anti-price-rise slogans.

(Report from Sachchida Na Singh)

SOUTH KOREA'S 'IMF ORPHANS'

Ji Seung-Yeop is too young to know why his father went to jail, or why his mother dropped him and his sister off, some week ago, at an orphanage. Technically they are not orphans: their parents are alive. But for the time being, four year-old Ju-hyun and five year-old Yu-na have effectively been orphaned by South Korea's deepening recession, which is breaking up marriages at an alarming rate. It started when their father lost his office job and went to jail for bankruptcy. Their mother disappeared after packing them off to Seoul's Angels Haven Orphanage. "Usually the father loses his job and can't pay the bills; so the wife gets fed up and runs away," explains Jennifer Yoo, a social worker.

Seung-yeop and his sister, believe it or not, are the lucky ones. Their father, now out of jail, has insisted he will take them back when he finds work. Others will never see their parents again.

Father Park Man-su, an American-born Catholic

priest, says the Korean War produced huge number of orphans. "To see kids being orphaned for financial reasons means the present situation is like a war for some people," he says.

Orphanages across Seoul are reporting similar increases in so-called "IMF orphans", named after the International Monetary Fund, which delivered a record bail out to South Korea last year and is blamed by many Koreans for the downturn.

Mounting concern has resulted in the television network running community service announcements exhorting poor parents not to dump their children on the street, but to take them to nurseries or orphanages. Nurse Margrit Ninghetoo, a Swiss who has worked in South Korea since 1985, says "The IMF is certainly having an influence on the number of orphans. Whether it's used as an excuse or not, the result is the same for the child."

(John Larkin. Courtesy: Asian Women Workers Newsletter, Oct. '98.)

13th NATIONAL CONGRESS OF ACFTU

More than 1650 delegates from 31 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions participated in the 13th National Congress of Chinese Trade Unions convened by the All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) at Beijing from Oct. 19 to 25, 1998.

The delegates, representing trade unions at all levels, were chosen according to strict procedures. They included activists who have won the trust and support of their fellow workers through their solid work. According to ACFTU sources, China has 5,86,000 grass-roots trade unions with a membership of 91% of workers.

The 13th TU Congress was also attended by 25 delegates from Hong Kong and Macao. Almost 28.9% of the delegates were women, while 62.4% representatives held professional titles.

Re-employment of laid-off workers and protection of workers' interests in a market economy were high on the agenda of the Congress.

The Congress unanimously approved the work report of the 12th Executive Committee of ACFTU and amendments to its constitution.

Wei Jianxing, Member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, was reelected Chairman of the ACFTU. In his concluding speech to the National

Congress he called upon the trade unions to work hard to protect the rights and interests of workers and shoulder bravely the lofty obligation of guarding the rights of the workers. He emphasised the importance of negotiations between the employers and the employees, of collective bargaining and of unions having more say in framing labour laws and policies.

In a message to the Congress M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary of CITU, extended warmest greetings and felicitations to the 13th National Congress of ACFTU.

The Message reads in part: "Ever since its inception the ACFTU has always been in the forefront of the working class movement in China. It has not only made notable contributions in promoting and defending the fundamental rights and interests of the working people, but also rendered valuable services in building a socialist society and eradicating poverty and backwardness and bringing about economic prosperity to its countrymen.

"India and China are two great neighboring countries of Asia bound by age-old traditional ties. The working class of both the countries is also bound by close traditional links, which go back to the period of our common anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggles. Over the past several years, China has made outstanding economic progress and has brought about a sea change in the living and working conditions of

its working people.

"Over the years, the ACFTU has developed fraternal relations with the CITU and other major trade union centres of India. A number of goodwill delegations have been exchanged between the two sides during this period, which, indeed, provided a good opportunity to know the working and living conditions of workers in each other's country and promote friendship, goodwill and understanding between the working people of both countries. "The CITU believes that the close fraternal relations between the trade union centres of our two countries would continue to grow in the coming years and make positive contribution in promoting international co-operation and strengthening unity and solidarity of the working class."

SAVE IDPL STRUGGLE

IDPL workers all over India will observe a save IDPL fortnight from 16th to 28th November, 1998. IDPL workers from all plants and marketing division along with FMRAI will stage a massive demonstration in Delhi on 18th December, 1998, demanding implementation of the revival package.

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Consumer Price Index Numbers for Industrial Workers on base: 1982 = 100

Sr. No	Centre	July 98	Aug 98	Sep 98	Sr. No.	Centre	July 98	Aug 98	Sep 98
1	Gudur	421	427	444	45	Amritsar	380	384	386
2	Guntur	393	396	407	46	Ludhiana	380	388	393
3	Hyderabad	382	382	393	47	Ajmer	396	399	407
4	Visakhapatnam	391	393	414	48	Jaipur	392	400	404
5	Warangal	409	411	409	49	Chennai	425	430	437
6	D D Tinsukia	357	372	384	50	Coimbatore	383	379	386
7	Guwahati	403	413	431	51	Coonoor	407	399	404
8	Labac-Silchar	344	350	358	52	Madurai	405	403	406
9	Mariani Jorhat	385	397	408	53	Salem	399	398	406
10	Rangapara-Tezpur	384	399	411	54	Tiruchirapally	439	449	460
11	Jamshedpur	388	392	397	55	Agra	397	403	408
12	Jharia	357	359	371	56	Ghaziabad	421	427	437
13	Kodarma	365	370	368	57	Kanpur	421	426	434
14	Monghyr	384	387	392	58	Saharanpur	380	386	391
15	Noamundi	372	382	386	59	Varanasi	461	460	468
16	Ranchi-Hatia	407	414	424	60	Asansol	390	390	402
17	Ahmedabad	403	410	419	61	Calcutta	419	419	428
18	Bhavnagar	437	439	451	62	Darjeeling	354	364	383
19	Rajkot	402	399	404	63	Durgapur	435	433	441
20	Surat	424	434	433	64	Haldia	435	436	445
21	Vadodra	387	400	411	65	Howrah	450	452	465
22	Faridabad	440	443	446	66	Jalpaiguri	379	387	424
23	Yamunanagar	386	387	390	67	Raniganj	356	359	368
24	Srinagar	433	435	438	68	Chandigarh	324	425	430
25	Bangalore	392	393	397	69	Delhi	467	465	468
26	Belgaum	446	436	427	70	Pondicherry	461	459	463
27	Hubli-Dharwar	413	415	420					
28	Mercara	424	423	432		All India	411	413	420
29	Alwaye	408	399	407					
30	Mundakayam	426	419	418		Additional Series of Labour Bureau			
31	Quilon	399	387	397	1	Kothagudem	430	432	434
32	Thiruvananthapuram	444	444	453	2	Himachal Pradesh	393	395	401
33	Balaghat	381	384	388	3	Bhilwara	395	398	404
34	Bhilai	368	365	373	4	Chhindwara	403	413	417
35	Bhopal	444	446	453	5	Tripura	384	387	402
36	Indore	417	416	425	6	Goa	461	459	456
37	Jabalpur	410	415	424					
38	Mumbai	462	459	464					
39	Nagpur	436	444	445					
40	Nasik	421	431	437					
41	Pune	456	464	463					
42	Solapur	450	448	453					
43	Barbil	368	375	387					
44	Rourkela	387	396	401					

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PUNISH ALL IN CORRUPTION DEALS

ARREST CULPRITS OF MUMBAI RIOTS

TAX THE RICH

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CHECK PRICE RISE

STRENGTHEN PDS

**STOP MNCs LOOT OF INDIAN
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REVERSE DISASTROUS ECONOMIC POLICIES

REVIVE SICK INDUSTRIES

HALT PRIVATISATION

11 DECEMBER STRIKE

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LAND FOR TILLERS

JOBS FOR ALL

**LEGISLATE AGRICULTURAL WORKERS
BILL**

33% RESERVATION FOR WOMEN

LIFT RECRUITMENT BAN

GUARNTTEE RIGHT TO WORK