

CENTRE OF INDIAN TRADE UNIONS

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PRESS STATEMENT:

I was a delegate from India to the Inter Parliamentary Union Conference held in Rome from 21st to 29th September 1972. After the Conference I went to Geneva and met Mr. Valticos, In-charge of the International Standards Department of ILO at Geneva on 13th October in the ILO Headquarters. One official of the Department was also present during our talks.

I was surprised to learn from him that the Government of India has ratified only 30 out of the 136 ILO Conventions - dismal record indeed. One of the most important Conventions i.e. Freedom of Association, has not been ratified by the Government of India. I have the impression from talks with Mr. Valticos that the Government of India is 'overcautious' in the matter of ratification of ILO Conventions. France has ratified 90 of the Conventions. Mr. Valticos informed me that ILO has a system of inspection under which they have powers to probe into various complaints irrespective of whether the Conventions have been ratified by the Government or not. It is under those powers that the International Standards Department is looking into the complaints sent by our Organisation viz CITU.

Mr. Valticos told me that they have been literally bombarded with complaints from CITU. From no other country of the world they have received such complaints about flagrant violations of fundamental trade union rights. As one of the Secretaries of CITU I then gave him details of how the trade unions led by Opposition parties have been virtually banned and the lives of the functionaries made totally insecure, functioning of trade unions in West Bengal totally stopped with the help of the State apparatus.

Mr. Valticos informed me that the Government of India has not so far replied to any of the complaints made by CITU which have been sent to the Government of India.

It is surprising that even after a lapse of 5/6 months the Government of India has not cared to reply to the charges. I understand that the impression of the ILO Officials is that what took place or is happening in West Bengal is at least something more than a mere trade union rivalry.

Mr. Valticos assured me that they would follow up the matter. He also informed me that they would formally report to the ILO Committee for Freedom of Association about my visit.

I then presented him with a copy of our booklet viz Face of Terror in West Bengal, which gives a comprehensive case study of one union viz Jay Engineering Workers' Union.

(Niren Ghosh)
Secretary, CITU.