



Vol. 36

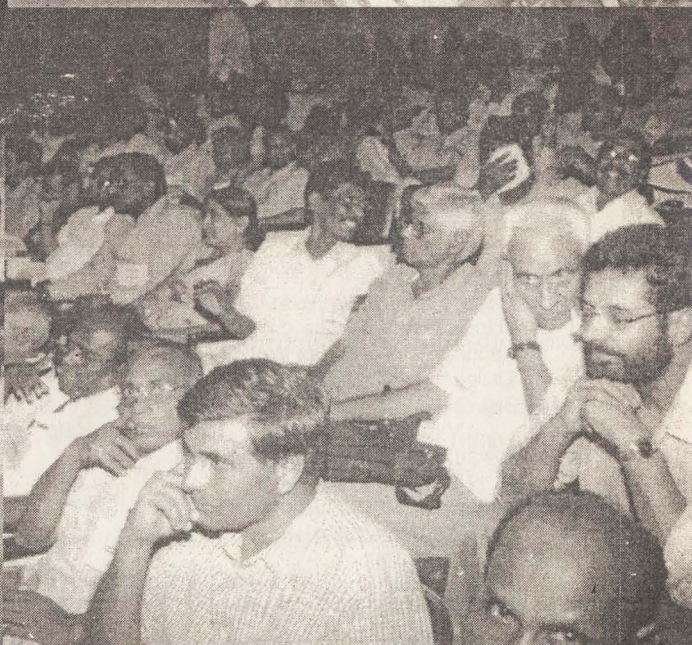
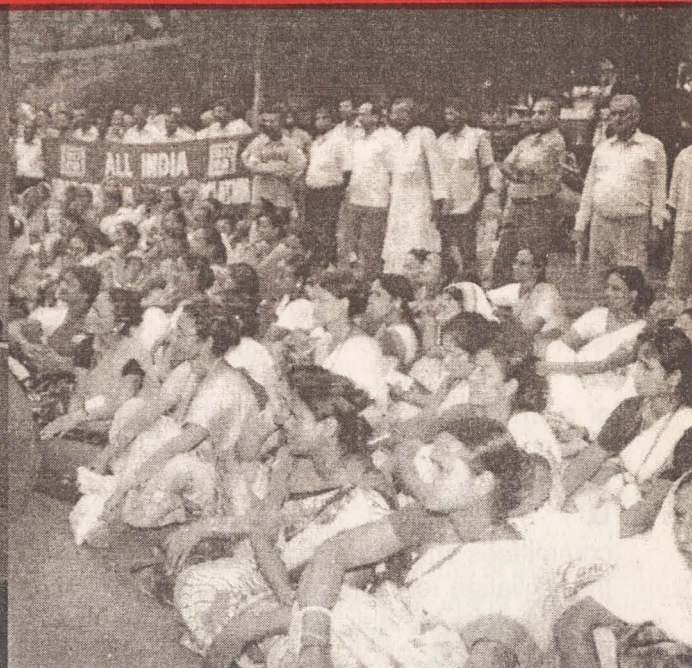
No. 12

August 2006

Price: Rupees Four

THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU



CITU: Ranchi General Council Call

PREPARE FOR A COUNTRYWIDE UNITED STRIKE!

12th CONFERENCE OF CITU

The meeting of the CITU General Council held in Ranchi on July 15 – 18, 2006, deliberated the agenda of item on holding the 12th conference of CITU and decided as follows:

■ The venue of the 12th conference of CITU shall be Bangalore.

■ The dates of the 12th Conference will be January 17 – 21, 2007.

■ The delegation for the 12th conference shall be based on the fully paid membership of CITU for the year 2005.

■ The total number of delegates to the conference, including the members of the CITU Secretariat and fraternal delegates, shall be 2500.

■ The CITU Centre shall arrive at the ratio of members to one delegate to the conference, after the full receipt of affiliation fees and annual returns for 2005.

■ The FINAL date by which the state committees should deposit with the CITU Centre the affiliation fees and annual returns in respect of all unions in their respective states shall be November 30, 2006. (This is the last date for receipt at the CITU Headquarters and affiliation fees/annual returns, if any, received after this date viz. November 30, 2006 will not be reckoned for deciding the delegation to the 12th conference of CITU).

■ State Committees MUST ensure that at least 15 per cent of the delegates from their respective states are women. Care should also be taken to include employed workers and representatives of smaller unions as well, in the delegation.

■ There will be commission discussions on SIX topics covering the issues of immediate concern to the trade union movement during the 12th conference. The CITU Centre shall decide the subjects of the SIX Commissions and take steps to present the papers for discussions.

■ Fraternal delegates from the international community are expected to attend the 12th conference from over 40 countries. The International Department at the CITU Centre will coordinate the visit of these fraternal delegates.

■ The delegate fee to be paid for the conference will be Rs 700 per delegates.

DISTRICT/STATE CONFERENCES OF CITU

All the state committees of CITU may take steps to complete the schedule of holding organisational conferences at the district/state levels, well ahead of the all India conference of CITU.

ALL INDIA WORKING WOMEN CONFERENCE

As on the earlier occasions, the all India working women conference will be held separately in Vishakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh on November 3-5, 2006.

State committees should ensure that the women delegates from the respective states attend the conference positively and extend them appropriate assistance.

Similarly the state committees should also ensure completion of the schedule of working women conference in their respective states, including district level conferences, wherever possible.

Communicating these decisions, Chittabrta Majumdar, General Secretary, CITU, requested all the State Committees of CITU to arrange to initiate appropriate action to comply with the aforesaid decisions of the CITU General Council and extend their full cooperation to the CITU Centre and the Secretariat in successful implementation of the same.

ON OTHER PAGES

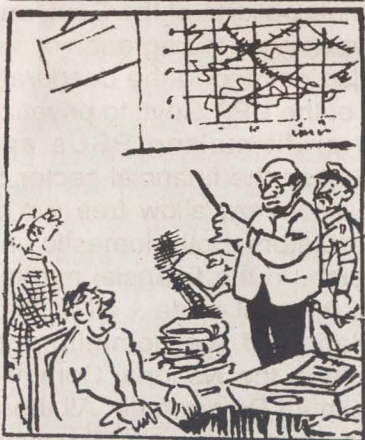
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THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

AUGUST 2006

YOU SAID IT by Laxman



OK. You have clear evidence that country is responsible for the bomb blasts. But how to announce it without being sure of what Mr Bush's reaction would be to our revealing it?

Courtesy: The Times of India

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EDITORIAL

TOWARDS COUNTRYWIDE GENERAL STRIKE ...

At the right initiative of the Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions, the National Convention of Workers held in New Delhi on July 25, 2006, has called for intensification of the struggle against the disastrous economic policies and the multi-dimensional attacks on the working masses of the country.

The UPA style of governance of the economy has left many things to be desired. A flawed procurement policy had led to all time low reserves of food grains held by the Food Corporation of India, resulting in very low off takes by different States and weakening the already inadequate Public Distribution System. The very food security of the country is at threat.

Prices are skyrocketing leaving the 'aam aadmi', unable to make a living, in the lurch. The government is artificially deflating the consumer price indices, just to relieve itself and the organised sector employers of the burden on account dearness allowance.

The employers are flouting at will the basic human rights of workers. Reports of incidents of barbaric offensives let loose on the workers by the goonda-police combine are daily pouring in. The government, which has to protect the basic labour rights of the workers and toilers, is turning its face the other way. There is a cynical debate going on in the corridors of power to explore doable options for making the labour laws of the country more flexible and less 'rigid'. The UPA regime, throwing to winds its own commitments in the NCMP, ventured for yet another dose of disinvestment but had to eat a humble pie in the face of resistance strike by the workers of Neyveli and NALCO.

The economy, despite claims of moving on a high growth trajectory, is not generating durable and decent employment. All the moves afoot are towards pushing our more jobs from the organised sector, under several new nomenclatures of job descriptions.

The rural India is fatally gripped by an acute distress and crisis. Neither the agricultural workers bill nor the unorganised sector workers bill, promised in the NCMP, is anywhere in sight.

Planning Commission has unveiled its approach paper, which is only confirming the popular perception that it has become a hub from where every anti-people measures are flagged off.

Resist, we must, this drift towards disaster. The declaration and the action programme adopted by the National Convention are valuable tools in the hands of the trade union movement, for turning the heat on the government to reverse its anti-people and anti-worker policy framework. Let us move with steadfast determination toward the December 14th General Strike!

PREPARE FOR A COUNTRYWIDE UNITED STRIKE!

Tapan Sen

The General Council meeting of CITU held on 15-18 July at Ranchi, Jharkhand called upon the working class to prepare for a countrywide united strike against the anti-people economic policies of the Govt. leading to back-breaking price rise, farmers' suicide, aggravating unemployment and attack on the rights and livelihood of the toiling masses. The session commenced on 15th July with the welcome address by A K Roy, Chairman of the Reception Committee. The Presidential address was delivered by M K Pandhe, which dealt in detail on the imperialist offensives on the developing countries including India in both economic and political fronts with the design to compel the respective governments to capitulate and follow the dictates of the imperialist powers in respect of foreign, economic and political policies. Pandhe also pointed to the increasing incidents of protest and resistance by the working class and the people against imperialist policies throughout the world leading to, in many places and in the Latin America in particular, the change in the political scenario. The imperialists and the enemy of the people cannot say the last words, Pandhe asserted.

REPORT PRESENTED

Chittabrata Majumdar presented the General

Secretary's report in the session, which dealt at length the national political situation and in that background the developments in the economic policy front and the response of the working class movements to such developments. While pointing to the results of recent assembly elections and massive victory of Left forces in West Bengal and Kerala and decline of both Congress and the BJP-led forces in general, Majumdar explained that these revelations indicates the prospect of a pro-people third alternative which can only be offered by the Left forces. And the history shows, the consolidation and widening of the working class movement and through that process, working class's ability to rally the mass of the people around the same can create the objective condition for emergence of such third alternative based on a common pro-people policy approach. The trade union movement must redouble its initiative in that direction, Majumdar asserted.

It was also noted in the Report that the heroic and all united struggle by the entire workforce including officers of NALCO and Neyveli Lignite Corporation during early July and its reflections on the political circles could ultimately compel the UPA Govt to retreat from its ugly design of disinvestments in those to profit making PSUs.

This shows that the united struggle of the working people of this country has the potential and capability to put a brake to the anti-people designs of the ruling polity.

The General Secretary's report also dealt on the phenomenon of alarming rise in prices arising out of faulty and hoarders-friendly policies of the Govt. and deepening of the agrarian crisis. It also pointed to the desperate bid of the UPA Govt. to privatize the profit making PSUs and liberalise the financial sector of the economy, allow free run of speculators, both domestic and foreign, in the financial market, FDI in retail trade - all in total violation of the commitments made in the National Common Minimum Programme. All these measures are making the living conditions of the people miserable reflecting in deepening of poverty, farmers' suicide, rising unemployment etc. On the other hand calculated onslaughts are being engineered on the rights of the working people through mass scale contractorisation, non-implementation of all labour laws and brutal police atrocities on the trade union activities throughout the country. Violations of labour laws are being promoted by the Govt.s in all spheres and any opposition to that is being tackled almost everywhere by police repression at the instance of the employer.

United struggle of the working class have to be heightened in the days to come to cry halt to such retrograde policy drives and attack on the people and we must prepare for countrywide strike action along with other trade unions which must be preceded by intensive campaign and widest mobilization throughout the country in the coming months, Majumdar asserted.

SPECIAL DISCUSSION

39 members participated in the deliberation on the Report besides 9 fraternal delegates from the fraternal all India federations of state and central govt employees, banks, insurance, defence, telecom and railways. Speakers stressed upon the need for a continued process of united struggles to culminate in a countrywide strike action in the first phase. They also emphasized on the urgency of widespread solidarity action to the ongoing struggles in defence of labour rights and against atrocities by the employers and police.

The General Council also held a special discussion on the most burning topic of the day, "Judiciary and the Working Class". Swadesh Dev Roye, Secretary, CITU presented the Special Discussion paper on the subject. The presentation dealt on the dangerous and emerging trend of series of anti-worker judgments being pronounced by different courts including the Apex Court, one after another, particularly after the onset of liberalized policy regime. These judgments mark a severe onslaught on the rights of the

workers earned through struggle besides demonstrating a trend of undoing and negating whatever protection the workers have under the existing labour laws and constitutional provision. The judgments against 'right to strike', denial of right of regularization of the contract workers deployed in permanent perennial jobs, denial of "equal pay for equal work" for casual workers, upholding the right of the employers to dismissal even on minor and petty issues are a few examples of such anti-worker judgments. This phenomenon of pro-employer interventions by the judiciary, many a time beyond the purview and premises existing labour laws has been acting as complementary to the effort of the Government to bring about pro-employer changes in labour laws and install a "hire & fire" and a union-free regime in all the workplaces. This posed a serious challenge before the working class movement.

30 members took part in the deliberation on the issue till lunch break, who stressed upon the need to unleash a countrywide united struggle to pressurize the governments to bring about appropriate legislations to negate the pernicious impact of these anti-worker judgments. The speakers have also put forth their suggestions on strengthening the formulation and analysis made in the discussion-paper regarding the character of the capitalist system under which the judiciary has been one of the organs of the "State" to carry on

exploitation of labour by capital. The General Council thus decided to redraft the discussion paper based on the inputs received from the deliberation for further in-depth discussion in the Commission in the forthcoming 12th Conference of CITU to be held in January 2007.

12TH CONFERENCE

The General Council also deliberated on the agenda item 'holding the 12th all India Conference of CITU. W. R. Varada Rajan, Secretary, CITU placed before the meeting the proposals decided by the CITU Secretariat at its meeting held in Hyderabad on June 11 – 12, 2006. The General Council unanimously decided to hold the 12th Conference of CITU at Bangalore on January 17 – 19, 2007 and approved the related proposals for finalizing the delegation to the Conference. The meeting also decided to hold the All India Working Women Conference at Vishakhapatnam in AP, on November 3 – 5, 2006.

The General Council also passed number of resolutions. They are: 1) In support of the forthcoming struggle by the Anganwadi workers and helpers to be held from 25th July onwards (moved by Dipankar Mukherjee and seconded by Nilima Moitra), 2) Denouncing the serial bomb blast in Mumbai and granade attack in Srinagar, killing several hundreds of innocent people and injuring many (proposed by Samar Mukherjee and seconded by Jibon roy), 3) On solidarity with the Struggles of Bank

Employees(proposed by A K Padmanabhan and seconded by B Sanyal), 4) State Sponsored Violation of Labour Laws and Attack on Labour Rights(proposed by Basudev Acharia, MP and seconded by Tapan Sen), 5) In support of the Struggle of Workers in Indian Telephone Industries(proposed by V J K Nair and seconded by K K Divakaran), 6) Against the move of de-linking CMPDIL from Coal India, 7) Against the move of privatisation and outsourcing in Coal India, 8) Denouncing imposition of economic sanctions against Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea.

The General Council also made an appeal for solidarity support and assistance for the struggle by the Hydel project workers in Himachal Pradesh who, braving the murderous assault by the contractor (HCC) and police combine and killing of three workers and activists by the contractors goons at Chamara III project of NHPC have been carrying on their united resistance. In response to the appeal, West Bengal State Committee of CITU contributed Rs 1,30,000/- , Kerala State Committee committed for Rs 1,00,000/- in addition to Rs 17,100/-, Construction Workers' Federation of India committed for Rs 45,000/- Steel Workers Federation of India Rs 10,000/- , Tamilnadu State Committee of CITU committed for Rs 25,000/- Karnataka State CITU committed Rs 10,000/- and Jharkhand State CITU committed Rs 5000/- and the All India Road Transport Workers' Federation has contributed Rs

10,000/-.

Chittabrata Majumdar, while replying to the points raised in the deliberation, mentioned that the National Convention of Trade Unions at the initiative of Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions is going to be held at Delhi on 25th July at New Delhi which is going to decided the united action programmes by the trade unions including countrywide strike against the anti-people policies of the Govt. Citing the experience of recent struggles in NALCO and Neyveli, he emphasized on building up all in unity at the grass root level which can definitely force the Govt to retrace its steps. Majumdar called upon the CITU units to intensify the campaign throughout the country for the forthcoming united strike action. M K Pandhe, while delivering his concluding address stressed upon the need for intensifying the ideological campaign among the working class which is of crucial importance for building up an effective combat against the all out offensives of the capitalist class on the economic, social, cultural and political front.

ANTI REPRESSION DAY

Keeping in view the increasing phenomenon of state sponsored violations of all labour laws throughout the country and the brutal atrocities by the police and state administration wherever the workers try to defend themselves from such assault of employers, as has been happening in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, UP, Uttaranchal and other places in

the country, the General Council called upon all its units and fraternal unions and associations to observe "Anti-Repression Day" on 10th August 2006 through massive demonstrations/dharna/rallies in all state capitals, district headquarters and industrial centers expressing solidarity with the ongoing struggles and raising voice against the unscrupulous game of the employer administration combine to promote blatant violation of labour laws.

The General Council also called upon all the affiliated units, state committees and federations to observe "Anti Imperialist Day" on 1st September jointly with other fraternal mass organizations through countrywide mobilization.

The open session of the General Council was held on 18th July 2006 at Town Hall, Ranchi where thousands of workers from the adjoining area assembled. The meeting was presided over by S K Bakshi, President, Jharkhand State CITU and was addressed by M K Pandhe, Chittabrata Majumdar, Tapan Sen, Sukomal Sen, J. S. Majumdar, A K Roy and D D Ramanandan.

HOMAGE TO BIRSA MUNDA

Before the commencement of the General Council session, the CITU leadership headed by M K Pandhe, President, paid floral tribute and homage at the memorial of Birsa Munda, a legendari tribal leader who fought against the British imperialists and was brutally murdered.

DECEMBER 14: ALL INDIA GENERAL STRIKE

The National Convention of Workers, organised by the Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions - a united platform of struggle against neo-liberal economic policies - has chalked out a series of action programmes culminating in an all India General Strike on 14 December 2006. Representatives of seven Central Trade Union Organisations viz. AICCTU, AITUC, CITU, HMS, TUCC, UTUC-LS and UTUC and all India Federations/Associations of employees and workers in Bank, Central and State Govt. offices/departments, Insurance, Railways, Civil Aviation, Defence, Postal, Petroleum, Telecom and other sectors as well as independent union participated in this National Convention of Workers held at the Mavlankar Hall, Vithal Bhai Patel House, Rafi Marg, New Delhi on July 25, 2006.

The National Convention of Workers had been called to plan for countrywide movement for intensifying the united struggle against price rise, disinvestments and privatisation, ban on recruitment, anti-worker labour law changes, outsourcing of work and contratorisation and for employment generation, comprehensive enactments for unorganised/agricultural sector workers.

A eleven member presidium, comprising Jibon Ray (CITU), Amarjeet Kaur (AITUC), Harbhajan Singh (HMS), N M Thomas (AICCTU), N Velappan Nair (TUCC), Sankar Saha (UTUC-LS), Ashok Ghosh (UTUC), Pradip Biswas (BEFI), Ramkumar Vajpayee (LIC), Shiv Gopal Mishra (AIRF) and Saila Bhattacharyya (AIDF), conducted the proceedings.

A draft declaration was circulated which dealt elaborately with the challenges faced by the toiling masses, the growing attacks of the employers, the indifference and anti-labour attitude of the UPA government at the centre and placed a 16 point demands for campaign and struggle. (Text of declaration reproduced separately).

From the presidium the following action programme was also placed before the

Convention:

16 August to 15 September 2006: Holding of Conventions at State & Sectoral levels

20 September 2006: National Day for Mobilisation for General Strike (Holding Demonstrations, Rallies etc.)

29 November 2006: Strike Notice to be served jointly by all unions is respective Establishments

14 December 2006: All India General Strike

M K Pandhe (CITU), Gurudas dasgupta (AITUC), Thampan Thomas (HMS), Swapan Mukherji (AICCTU), S P Tiwari (TUCC), Krishen Chakraborti (UTUC-LS) and Abanai Roy (UTUC) spoke endorsing the action programme and highlighting a lawless situation witnessed in different parts of the country, with the hired gangsters and the police unleashing barbaric attacks on workers and the growing employer-administration nexus.

Leaders of several industry-level federations also spoke at the Convention pledging their total support to the action programme, including the strike in December. These included Sukomal Sen (AI State Govt. Emp. Fedn.), S K Vyas (Confederation of Central Govt. Emp.), C H Vcenkatachalam (AIBEA), Rakhal Dasgupta (AIRF), Amanulla Khan (AIIEA) Amitava Guha (FMRAI), V K Tewari (AIFUCTO), K Rajendran (School Teachers Fed.), CC Pillai (NFPE), V A N. Namboodri (BSNLEU), Michel Fernandes (CPSTU) R G Karnik (Maharashtra JAC) and others.

The national Convention of Workers and its clarion call for an all India general strike in December correctly reflect the fighting mood of the working people throughout the country, whose experience painfully depicts that the change since last general elections of 2004 has been only for the worse, on the economic policy front and the labour situation in the country. It is also a reflection of the firm resolve of the workers to wage an unrelenting fight in the immediate future.

NATIONAL CONVENTION OF WORKERS DECLARATION

This National Convention of Workers, held in Delhi on 25th July 2006 with massive representation from the constituents of the Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions, Industrial Federations and independent unions, adopts this Declaration after seriously deliberating on the conditions of the workers in the country and the challenges confronting the workers and toiling people in general.

The UPA Government, in office for over two years now, has been persisting with the neo liberal economic agenda of the erstwhile NDA government, heaping unbearable burdens on the people, while favouring the rich. It is bent upon carrying forward the so-called 'reform' process, unmindful of its devastating impact on the working people. This has led to serious resentment among the common people and the working masses of our country.

The prices of all the essential commodities have skyrocketed creating enormous difficulties to the poor and common people; the government is planning to hike the issue price of food grains under the PDS, besides cutting down the allocations; it has failed to speed up the procurement programme in time and has allowed the private traders and MNCs to buy and hoard food grains; now it is importing large quantities of wheat at high prices. The PDS is virtually dismantled in the name of targeting. The cascading effect of the hike in petrol and diesel prices for the fifth time, ignoring the genuine and practical demand to recast their tax structure, is already visible in the rising prices of all the items of daily consumption including pulses, vegetables, etc.

The vigorous pursuit of neo-liberal policies in the case of agriculture has resulted in a serious distress situation in rural India. Debt, poverty and misery, starvation deaths and suicides are increasing alarmingly, reflecting the severe rural distress. Peasants are burdened with high cost of inputs, unremunerative prices for their produce, failure to improve irrigation and flood

control measures, non-availability of institutional credit and flawed procurement policies. Thousands of peasants continue to commit suicides, in different parts of the country.

Land reforms, which would ameliorate this rural distress, are not on the agenda of the government. Instead, contract farming and corporatisation including allowing 100% FDI in agriculture are being pursued. Public investment in agriculture and irrigation continues to be low and institutional credit is out of bounds for the vast majority of the poor and middle peasants. Even public utilities such as drinking water are being handed over to profit hungry corporates, both domestic and foreign.

The number of workdays available in a year for agricultural workers has come down drastically. Rural artisans including the handloom workers are losing their jobs and are forced to starve. Out-migration from villages is rapidly on the increase. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme, the only positive legislation brought in by the present government, is yet to take off in several states; there are several grey areas concerning its proper implementation, which need to be addressed.

Unemployment and underemployment are posing serious threats to the country. The economic growth under the neo liberal model, that is being flaunted, has failed to provide jobs to our youth; rather it has been a 'job loss growth'. The ban on recruitment in government jobs continues. The employment guarantee legislation needs to be extended to the urban areas to cover the entire country.

The government is yet to take any initiative on its own assurance to bring a separate comprehensive legislation for protecting the interests of the agricultural workers. Though the government has circulated several drafts of the Unorganised Sector Workers' Bill, it has not shown the necessary keenness to incorporate the unanimous suggestions of the Central Trade Unions and finalise the Bill for introduction in the

Parliament.

Despite its own commitment towards a 'strong and effective public sector' and not to privatise profit making public sector units (PSUs), the government is relentlessly pursuing privatisation and disinvestment of the PSUs, including the profit making and strategic sector PSUs like nationalised banks, insurance, telecom, airports, government departments and undertakings etc; coal, oil and mineral blocks are being handed over to private vested interests; defence production is opened up to private and even foreign capital throwing to winds our national interests; the decision to allow 100 per cent FDI in retail trade threatens the livelihood of hundreds of thousands of small vendors and traders. The government has taken no tangible steps to revive the sick/loss making but potentially viable PSUs.

The government policies have led to a proliferation of all round industrial sickness, engulfing scores of large, medium and small units, which are either closed or remain inoperative, pushing a huge number of workers and their families to destitution. The government is indifferent to the pressing need for taking measures for revival and rehabilitation of these sick units.

The government has given a go by to its professed commitment to 'actively pursue tripartite consultations with trade unions and industry on all proposals concerning them' and is taking decisions, which have serious repercussions on the workers, without any consultations with the trade unions.

The Prime Minister himself has chosen to fault the labour laws of the country of rigidity and flagged off an exercise for making them 'flexible', a euphemism for ushering in 'hire and fire' regime. The government has callously reneged on a solemn assurance on the floor of the Parliament to rescind the notification introducing a new category of 'fixed term workman. Several bills have been introduced in Parliament with provisions to curtail the existing rights of workers and freeing the employers from the obligations specified under existing laws.

There has been a proliferation of contract employment, resulting in worst exploitation of the workforce. Outsourcing and downsizing of workforce has become a routine practice in all

sectors, including the financial sector and government departments. Besides increasing the workload on the existing workers and leading to worse labour practices, this is posing a serious threat to the industry itself. Contracting, sub contracting and outsourcing of work has reached dangerous proportions threatening the job security of the workers. Contract workers are being appointed even in perennial jobs. The number of contractor workers, even in many PSUs, surpasses the number of permanent workers. The government itself resorts to the usage of such nomenclature as 'social workers', 'community workers', 'volunteers' etc to deny the workers their due rights.

There is a rampant violation of labour laws, as the employers trample all provisions thereof blatantly. Attacks of police and the employers' hoodlums working in tandem to suppress workers' rights are alarmingly increasing across the country. Enforcement machinery under the existing labour laws is in a state of total collapse. In the name of dismantling the 'inspector raj' the government is shirking from its responsibility of implementing the labour laws. A labour-laws free atmosphere is sought to be created in the Export Processing Zones (EPZs), Special Economic Zones (SEZ), Manufacturing Investment Regions (MIRs) and 100 per cent Export Oriented Units (EOUs) anywhere in the country. Women workers are denied equal wages, maternity benefits, and other statutory benefits. The government has not yet enacted a law against sexual harassment at workplace.

The judiciary – from the apex level downwards – is passing verdicts one after another favouring the employer class and placing fetters on the working class even in matters of exercising their democratic rights. The government is sitting silent despite repeated pleas of the trade unions to step in and legislate to remove the pernicious impact of such anti-worker judgments. It has not taken any measure to ensure the right to strike of the workers and the government employees in particular, in the wake of the August 2004 verdict of the apex court.

The senior citizens and the common workers are hard hit by the drastic cut in the interest rates on EPF, GPF, CMPF, PPF and small savings. Further

reduction in the interest rate on EPF is being contemplated. Attempts are on to reduce the benefit package under the Employees' Pension Scheme 1995. The government is adamantly insisting on enacting the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority Act to enable privatisation of pension funds and channeling them to the share market.

The government has arbitrarily released a new series of Consumer Price Index for the Industrial workers with the base year 2001 = 100, brazenly ignoring the unanimous opposition of all the Central Trade Unions. This is aimed at artificially deflating the price indices leading to severe cut backs in the DA entitlements of crores of workers. While lack of financial resources is the common refrain to counter the genuine demands of the working people and others, the government is ever ready to extend tax concessions and holidays to the rich on the pretext of 'attracting investment'. It has not shown the necessary political will to take to task the rich indulging in tax defaults, amassing black money, defaults to banks and other financial institutions. In the name of widening the tax net, the government is again targeting the salaried employees, leaving the rich aside. The Kelkar Committee report, which has outlined nefarious prescriptions in this regard, must be scrapped.

The working class has many more things to despair. The working people and the other toiling sections of the country cannot allow this drift any longer. The UPA government has not acted on any of the promises they held out to the working masses; rather, the steps so far taken have been adverse to the interest of the working people. The character of the UPA regime is evidently anti-labour.

This National Convention of Workers, therefore demands the government to immediately change the direction of its economic policies and take urgent action on the following demands of the working people and other common masses of the country:

1. Take firm and swift measures to check price rise. Strengthen the PDS.
2. Immediately introduce the comprehensive legislation for the Unorganised Sector Workers incorporating the unanimous suggestions of the Trade Unions. Simultaneously bring in a separate

comprehensive legislation for the Agricultural workers.

3. Immediately enact the Urban Employment Guarantee Bill to cover the urban unemployed.
4. Remove ban on recruitment. Stop downsizing of workforce.
5. Stop contratorisation and outsourcing of jobs.
6. Strengthen the enforcement machinery to ensure implementation of all labour laws, including statutory minimum wages, equal wages, maternity benefits etc.
7. Immediately enact legislation against sexual harassment at work place. Ensure full protection for women against atrocities.
8. Stop privatisation and disinvestment of profit making and strategic PSUs including nationalised banks, telecom, airports etc; stop merger of banks; no corporatisation of defence production units. No privatisation of public services and utilities. Take urgent measures for the revival of all sick/ loss making but potentially viable PSUs.
9. Stop measures to raise FDI in telecom sector; No FDI in defence sector; No raise in the FDI cap in banking and insurance sectors; No FDI in coal, retail and pension sectors.
10. Withdraw the amendment bill to the Banking Regulation Act.
11. Review the Electricity Act of 2003 and the National Electricity Policy of 2005.
12. Immediate measures to ensure right to strike for the workers and employees including government employees.
13. Carry out extensive land reforms and step up public investment in agriculture and irrigation facilities.
14. Take stringent action for recovering NPAs and unpaid tax arrears from the defaulters in the corporate and big business lobby.
15. Annul the drastic cuts in the interest rate on EPF, GPF, CMPF, PPF and small savings.
16. Scrap the new series of Consumer Price Index (2001 = 100) and set up an index review committee.

This National Convention of Workers calls upon the workers, irrespective of their affiliations to unitedly carry out the countrywide action programme to press for the realisation of the above demands.

TEXTILES MINISTRY MOVE OPPOSED

The Textiles Ministry at the centre had convened a conference of the Chief Ministers, Industry/Labour Ministers of the State Governments, Representatives of Textile Industry Associations and central trade unions on July 25, 2006 at the Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi. The agenda included giving relaxation in the provisions of labour laws favouring the employers.

The Central Trade Unions viz. AITUC, CITU, HMS, UTUC-LS, UTUC jointly wrote to the Textiles Ministry drawing its attention to the trade unions' pre-occupation with the National Convention of Workers, scheduled on the same date and sought deferment of the proposed conference. The Ministry, however, declined this request and decided to go ahead with the Conference. In this backdrop, the National Convention adopted unanimously a resolution, moved by W R Varada Rajan (CITU) and seconded by D L Sachdev (AITUC) deploring the move and rejecting the proposals made by the Group of Ministers headed by Sharad Pawar. We append the text of the resolution:

"The National Convention of Workers, held in Delhi on 25th July 2006 with massive representation from the constituents of the Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions, Industrial Federations and independent unions, deplored the move on the part of the Ministry of Textiles to virtually usher in the jungle law of hire and fire in the industrial relations scenario in the apparel and textile industry.

"It is regrettable that the Group of Ministers appointed by the UPA government has chosen to endorse the suggestions of the employers in the Textile Export Industry to introduce certain changes in the labour legislations as under:

■ Grant blanket exemption to textile exporting industry from the provisions of Chapter V (B) of the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947.

■ To amend the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 prescribing a longer notice period for strike, with intent to proscribe any strike, in the textile exporting units.

■ To amend the Factories Act, 1948 permitting increase in the weekly working hours from 48 to 60 hours and the daily working hours from 8 to 12 hours, with a suggestion for suitably compensating the workers during the extra working hours.

"Besides, the GoM has suggested that the State Governments should take steps to declare textile industry itself as 'public utility service' through State amendments to the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 and invoke the provisions in the Factories to grant flexibility to Factory owners in the matter of deployment of workers for extra working hours.

"Though the Government of India pays lip service that changes in labour laws must fully protect the interests of workers and their families and reiterates that changes in labour laws must take place after full consultation with trade unions, it has clearly conceded that it was imperative to address the rigidities of labour laws, a spurious plea resorted to by the employers.

"It is highly deplored that assuring to give employment for at least 100 days in a year to all the workers is doled out as a sop to make these anti-worker move saleable! It is ridiculous to compare the situation in the organised sector industries to that obtaining in the rural India, which is witnessing an acute distress condition and make '100 days of employment' the maximum permissible employment level in the country.

"The apparel and textile industry is highly organised and presently going through a boom period and there is no need to grant any special treatment to it in the matter of application of labour legislations.

"The National Convention unanimously rejected the proposals mooted by the GoM and urges the Government of India to rescind the move to amend labour legislations in favour of the employers of this highly profitable industry. "

The representatives of the CITU, AITUC, HMS, TUCC, UTUC-LS and UTUC, who attended the Conference at Vigyan Bhawan later in the evening, presented the resolution to the Minister of Textiles.

GROWING WORLDWIDE CHALLENGE TO IMPERIALISM

M K Pandhe

With its largest military budget of over \$500 billion, the U.S. imperialism is continuing its vile attempt to strengthen its control over the world. It is also facing resistance everywhere including in U.S. itself. Bush's popularity rating according to recently held opinion polls has gone down to 29 per cent.

Despite holding elections in Iraq, under the watchful eyes of U.S. troops, the outcome of the election was not to the liking of U.S. Government. It took five months for the occupation forces to form the stooge Government whose stability was in doubt. The conflict within the Iraqi Government heightened and it eroded its capacity to maintain semblance of law and order all over Iraq. The servile Govt. in Iraq could not form a unified army and police force in spite of U.S. training due to internal contradictions between Shias, Sunnis and Kurds.

Public opinion in U.S. is getting stronger with each corpse of U.S. soldier reaching home. Several intellectuals in U.S. have openly come out against war in Iraq. An assessment made by leading research organisation in U.S. reveals that over 70 per cent of the people all over the world are against U.S. war in Iraq.

Withdrawal of the army by Italy, Spain, Japan, Poland and other countries and pressure mounting on Tony Blair, British Prime Minister to withdraw troops from Iraq is adding to the

worries of U.S. imperialists. The demand for withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq is gaining ground in United States itself.

Meanwhile, popular resistance to U.S. armed forces and its dominated Iraqi Government is growing with each passing day. Despite inhuman brutalities committed by U.S. army against innocent civilians there is no sign of any let up of the heroic resistance struggle. Many columnists in U.S. have already characterized U.S. involvement in Iraq as comparable to Vietnam fiasco.

U.S. imperialism's game plan about Iran has misfired. President Bush had contemplated to resort to a nuclear strike at Iranian nuclear facilities on a plea of preventing Iran from manufacturing atom bomb. Though U.S. succeeded in taking out Iranian issue from International Atomic Energy Commission and referring it to Security Council it could not impose sanctions against Iran due to strong opposition by Russia and China, two of the five permanent members of the Security Council. France and Germany were also not in favour of any military action in Iran.

Iran expressed its firm determination to carry forward her programme of enrichment of uranium to feed the nuclear power generation plants. The Government of Iran even rejected the offer of Russia to do the enrichment of uranium in

their country as it claimed that as per Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty Iran could do the work in their own land.

U.S. attempt to attack Iran's nuclear sites could not materialise due to threat of Iran to retaliate not only against U.S. but also against Israel. U.S. realised Iran's capacity to retaliate and cause damage to U.S. imperialists interests. Moreover, the stoppage of oil supplies from Iran would further add to the gravity of the world oil crisis by pushing up its prices further. This ground reality prevented U.S. from indulging in any misadventure of military action.

Meanwhile, Government of Iran wrote to the U.S. Government about its readiness for talks on the dispute put U.S. imperialists in the dock. Worldwide public opinion was also in favour of a negotiated settlement instead of sanction or military action. Hence the U.S. Government found it difficult to reject the proposal for talks and to pursue its aggressive policy towards Iran.

ISRAEL ON THE RAMPAGE

The U.S. imperialists and Israel did naturally not like the spectacular victory of Hamas in recently held elections in Palestine. U.S. had already dubbed Hamas as a terrorist outfit and expressed open determination to throttle its economy by stopping the share of tax to be paid to it by Israel to the tune of \$50 million every

month. This added to the agony of the people of Palestine but leadership of Hamas refused to surrender before the Israeli dictates.

In the beginning Hamas declared that they refuse to recognise Israel but later on agreed to coexist with it. Yet Israeli authorities continued their attacks on Palestinian territory and continue to forcibly occupy a large part of Palestine homeland.

The invitation to Hamas leadership by Russia gave them a moral boosting. Despite acute financial difficulties the people of Palestine refused to surrender before the Israeli attacks and carried forward heroically their liberation struggle. They received international aid in their struggle, which is enabling them to survive despite Israeli brutalities.

Israeli tanks and armoured bulldozers pushed into the Northern Gaza strip and recklessly attacked civilian population. Even the Palestine Prime Ministers office and residents of important leaders were hit by rocket attacks. Despite worldwide condemnation Israeli atrocities continue unabated. The people of Palestine however are heroically resisting Israeli depredations. The US, imperialists are fully backing the Israel Government in all its nefarious actions.

The people of Palestine require moral and material help to survive and fight the Israeli brutalities. Their right to have their homeland after vacation of all illegal settlements can be

achieved only if they get strong international support.

ANTI-IMPERIALIST SURGE IN LATIN AMERICA

In the recent period the people in Latin America have come to the forefront in the struggle against U.S. imperialism. It is no more a "backyard" of USA following so-called "Washington Consensus" which ensures U.S. supremacy over the entire Latin American continent.

The people of Latin America from their own experience have realized the real face of U.S. imperialism. Brazil and Mexico were the largest indebted countries while the international finance capital have almost ruined their national economy. In April last, Bolivia, where Che Guvara laid down his precious life for the cause of its liberation, joined Cuba to carry forward the policies of Simon Bolivar who opposed U.S. imperialist domination over Latin America. Bolivia nationalised gas and petroleum companies and a historic people's Trade Agreement has been signed between Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia, which will be an effective alternative to the policies of globalization.

The popular mobilisation in Ecuador by the indigenous people and their opposition to the U.S. imperialists evil designs will have its repercussions in the forthcoming elections to be held in the month of October next. In the recently held elections in Peru the Leftists got the largest number of votes though the right reactionary forces could

form the Government.

In recently held elections in Mexico the Leftist candidates got the largest votes. However, the fraud and manipulations were resorted to by the rightist forces in the country with the help of U.S. imperialists to deprive the Left of their legitimate support. The Leftists are going to face the rightist challenge squarely, which is a significant development in Central America.

The anti-imperialist forces in Argentina, Chile, Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua have gained strength and are challenging U.S. Supremacy. As a result of all these developments the Latin American contingent has emerged as a front rank fighter against the U.S. imperialist game of striving to dominate the world. The remarkable struggle of the students and workers in France, against draconian employment law in March, paralysed the entire country. The long drawn struggle had forced the French government to retreat from their retrograde 'two year job contract' law. This generated confidence among the students and workers.

The defeat of the pro-U.S. Berlusconi Government and success of the center-left Government led by Romano Prodi was also a significant development during this period. The new Government took the first decision after assuming power to withdraw Italian army from Iraq.

(Excerpts from Presidential address to the CITU General Council meeting at Ranchi)

TOWARDS A REAL POLITICAL ALTERNATIVE

Chittabrata Majumdar

In the recent assembly elections in West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Assam and Pondicherry, the Congress has not been able to make any advance. Their success has been limited to Pondicherry and Assam, where they had emerged as the single largest party but failed to get absolute majority. However, a Congress-led coalition government in Assam and a Congress government with the support of the DMK in Pondicherry have been formed. The DMK led government has taken office in Tamil Nadu. These developments will, however, be helpful for UPA government at the Centre to ward off any immediate threat to its stability.

The victory of the Left Front in West Bengal for 7th successive term with three-fourth majority is an unprecedented historical event in a multi-party system. The victory of the LDF in Kerala with two-third majority is also an achievement of the Left forces there. The Left has been able to have a significant presence in Tamil Nadu and Assam too. These results have created an impact on the national situation and strengthened the intervening capacity of the Left.

COMMUNAL FORCES

During this period, the BJP also has not been able to make any substantial gain in these Assembly elections. The BJP was in the picture only in Assam, where it managed to marginally increase its vote share and seats in the Assembly. Though the BJP has been able to be a part of the coalition government in Bihar and the Kumaraswamy government in Karnataka, the internal dissensions, involving even its top leadership continue to haunt that party. The revolt by Uma Bharati, Madanlal Kurana, Babulal Marandi etc and the disarray within the top leadership over Mahajan family affairs have all rattled the communal party. The NDA has also been weakened, with the AGP and National Conference leaving it; the TDP and AIADMK have also broken their ties with the BJP. The JD (U) is also changing its stance, though they are unlikely to come out of the alliance, at least for the time being, because

of their dependence on the BJP to run their government in Bihar.

The danger of communal forces is very much there. These forces are very much active to utilise every provocation or opportunity and turn those into communal violence. Despite some internal problem within these forces, communal situation deteriorated specially in BJP ruled states. Attacks on minorities have increased in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. In Aligarh too, communal violence flared up and lasted for some days. L.K. Advani. Ousted from the presidentship of the BJP at the dictates of the RSS, attempted to resurrect his position by embarking on his brand model rath-yatra after the bomb blasts in Varanasi. Rajnath Singh, the present president of the BJP could not keep away from this exercise. But, response from the people was at best lukewarm and the programme was dropped like a hot potato using the pretext of Promod Mahajan murder. The BJP and the right reactionary communal forces are, however, utilising the issue of OBC reservation in education as well to give it a communal turn.

THIRD ALTERNATIVE

Under these circumstances, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Chandrababu Naidu initiated a move for a "national alternative", keeping the BJP and Congress outside. They claimed that AGP, National Conference and AIADMK were also part of it, along with the SP and TDP. They were optimistic about the success of AGP and AIADMK in the elections in Assam and Tamil Nadu. The outcome has frustrated this move.

The Left Parties took the position that the third alternative cannot be forged only as combination of some parties; it must be an alternative based on common policies and emerge through joint working from a common platform. Such a possibility can come about only through a left initiative.

In this background, the quest for a real alternative has naturally come to the fore. The anti-people NDA policy regime has, besides evicting the BJP led coalition from the seat of power, left that party

in such a disarray that it cannot hope to win back the confidence of the people. The people's verdict in successive elections, right from the general elections of 2004, has only revealed that the present ruling combine at the Centre will have to be desperately dependent on the critical support of the Left parties for its survival. These developments clearly signify that the ruling classes cannot hold the masses within their ideological grip. The recent assembly elections, resulting in the ascendancy of left parties, have simultaneously rendered both the Congress and the BJP incapable of making any significant gain. The prospect of emergence of the third force with a clear-cut pro-people policy approach and an unwavering anti-imperialist stand has brightened. In this situation, the working class movement has a formidable contribution to speed up the phenomenon of weakening the hold of the ruling classes and creating a determined roadblock against the ongoing retrograde economic policy measures. A vigorous initiative by the working class movement to mobilise all sections of people in the struggle for a directional change in the present policy regime can pave the way for developing the objective conditions for the emergence of a real alternative mode of pro-people development paradigm. This is the time for the CITU to seize the initiative in rallying the entire working class in this direction.

ROLE OF WORKING CLASS

The present situation, as it has emerged, has posed a formidable challenge as well as offered a tremendous opportunity before us. Despite all the hype generated by the pro-reforms lobby, the policies of economic liberalisation have failed in offering even a minimum solace to the mass of the people. The increase in the GDP growth rate is accompanied by increasing rate of unemployment, deepening impoverishment, increasing incidents of suicides among the farmers. This is getting reflected in louder voice of protests from all corners of the country and from all segments of population. The working class movement, the most organised segment of the common populace has to convert this rising disillusionment against the neo-liberal policies into countrywide organised struggle for change in the

policy regime.

The present political scene witnessed in the country is of a complex character. The ruling polity is keen to pursue its anti-people policies, but it faces several hurdles in its way, as it cannot retain itself in power on its own. Even as resistance struggles of the working class and democratic movement are gathering strength, the ruling classes in utter desperation perceive the working class movement as the most potential threat as well as obstacles in the pursuit of their policy regime. Hence, they are concentrating on curbing the labour rights, both administratively and through legislative efforts.

It is clear from the above developments that the Left Parties are the only force in our country, which are fighting against the anti people policies of both the UPA and the NDA combines. Left Parties are the only force capable of taking an effective lead in the formation of a third alternative, which can protect the interests of the masses and the rights of the working class. It is also a fact that the Left forces have emerged stronger during this period and have increased their intervening capacity.

Without the struggle of the working people, Left forces cannot increase its strength. Working class is the main organised force in this struggle. Without uniting the working class in struggles and thus strengthening the struggles of the working class, we cannot expect strengthening of Left forces to combat the attacks on the working class and the working people.

CITU is the main organ of struggles of the working class. Unless CITU is strengthened organisationally and it takes initiative to build and strengthen the struggles of the working class in both the organised and unorganised sectors, no meaningful and effective struggles of the working class can be developed.

It is, therefore, the task of CITU committees and comrades to take initiative in organising and building CITU among the workers both in organised and unorganised sectors of industries for strengthening the struggles against the attacks from the employers and the government and in support of their demands and converting them in all India united actions.

REFORMS, NCMP and COALITION DHARMA

W. R. Varada Rajan

The recent strike by the workers of Neyveli Lignite Corporation, leading to the Prime Minister deciding to put on hold all the disinvestments proposals 'pending a review' has sparked off furious outbursts by the advocates of economic reforms. The threat by the DMK chief to withdraw his ministers from the UPA cabinet, which obviously led to the decision by the PM, is described as a sort of unholy act, undermining the authority of the Prime Minister and blackmail by a coalition partner. In the process, jibes are thrown at the Left parties as if this move by the DMK has led to a loss of face for the former. This strident chorus of 'reforms at peril' apparently stems from a flawed perception as though the economic reforms process is a holy cow and it is out of bound of what is repeatedly referred to as 'coalition dharma'. The present regime ruling at the centre led by the Congress with Dr. Manmohan Singh, as Prime Minister, is not a single party government. It is a coalition comprising of several parties, most of them with their priorities as regional dispensations. The arithmetic that sustains this government is the outside support of the Left parties, extended not unconditionally but based on the National Common Minimum Programme. The efforts of the UPA regime to pursue its reforms agenda has to be viewed in the backdrop of

this ground reality and not just by the zeal and commitment to accelerate 'reforms' on the part of the Prime Minister or his Finance Minister.

What does the NCMP commitment of public sector or for that matter the disinvestments and privatisation issues? The NCMP asserts that the UPA Government is committed to a strong and effective public sector. It assures: 'generally, profit-making companies will not be privatised' and 'all privatisation will be considered on a transparent and consultative case-by-case basis'. It asserted it will 'retain existing "navaratna" companies in the public sector, while these companies raise resources from the capital market'. There is also the talk of modernising and restructuring sick public sector companies and revive sick industry. It added: 'The UPA Government also believes that there must be a direct link between privatisation and social needs — like, for example, the use of privatisation revenues for designated social sector schemes'.

Significantly, the NCMP concluded, "This CMP is the foundation for another CMP — collective maximum performance". There is no mention of 'disinvestments' anywhere in the entire text of the NCMP. It is another thing if one were to argue 'privatisation',

which finds a place in the NCMP is synonymous with 'disinvestments'.

But, from the very beginning, the Finance Minister, instead of laying stress on 'maximum collective performance', had been giving his own arbitrary interpretation of the NCMP parameters. In the very first budget presented by him, he declared: "The NCMP contains clear policy guidelines regarding disinvestment in PSEs. As long as Government retains control over the PSE, and its public sector character is not affected, Government may dilute its equity and raise resources to meet the social needs of the people'.

He also proceeded to utilise the move by NTPC, a navaratna company to raise capital from the market, to piggy-back on the public issue of NTPC and disinvest approximately five per cent of its holding. He also announced: 'this and some other cases which are under examination are expected to yield a sum of Rs.4000 crore in the current year'.

Even if this action of the Finance Minister is premised on the NCMP provision for 'privatisation', did he line up the NTPC or the 'some other cases' for getting Rs. 4000 crore in his kitty through a 'transparent and consultative case-by-case basis' process, either within the UPA coalition or in the UPA – Left coordination panel?

Reiterating the 'direct link between privatisation and social needs' the Finance Minister said: "While the disinvestment revenues will be part of the Consolidated Fund of India, I shall, while presenting the Budget for 2005-06, report to the House the manner in which the said revenues have been or will be applied for specified social sector schemes". This promise does not find any reflection in the subsequent two budgets presented by him.

However, the Finance Minister subsequently felt it would be more appropriate to credit the proceeds from disinvestments of PSUs to a newly established National Investment Fund (NIF) instead of the Consolidated Fund of India. The Economic Survey of 2004 – 05 stated: 'the broad objective of this fund (NIF) will be to make investments in social sector projects and capital investments in selected profitable or revivable PSEs that yield adequate returns'.

Again, the Finance Minister resorted to yet another innovative exercise down the line, of establishing 'a direct link between disinvestment revenues' and 'capital market investments' and not 'social needs'. The NIF will be managed by selected public sector financial entities to provide sustainable returns to the government without affecting the corpus. Three asset-management firms viz. SBI Mutual Fund, UTI Mutual Fund and LIC Mutual Fund were mandated to manage the disinvestments proceeds, to be allocated as per decision of the

CEO of the NIF, on the suggestion of a part-time advisory board, which has already been constituted.

So, no direct funding of social sector expenditure; no investments in profitable or revivable PSEs; moneys will be diverted to stock markets through mutual fund firms; the government will patiently wait for the returns to come in due course, which in turn will be utilised for social sector spending and for revival of sick PSUs! Is this not selling family jewels to bet on racing? In all these moves, whether at all there had been any consultative approach – not to speak of transparency – within or outside the UPA?

The moot question is will these Mutual Funds deliver more returns on the corpus? The Public Enterprises Survey 2004-2005, published by the Government, records that on the total investments of Rs.357849 crore in 237 PSEs as on March 2005, the PSEs posted a net profit of Rs. 65429 crore during 2004 –05. In terms of dividend alone, the PSEs have paid Rs. 20713 crore in 2004 – 05, up by 35 per cent over the previous year. Is there anyone who can guarantee returns far higher than this to be generated by the Mutual Funds? Why then this dubious exercise?

Even if the Finance Minister interprets the provision in the NCMP permitting the PSEs to raise resources from the capital market to justify his administering frequent doses of disinvestment 'medicine', it

raises several questions. First, is 'equity market' the only component of capital market? Can the PSEs not raise capital resources from the debt market? Second, where does the NCMP confer arbitrary right for the Finance Minister to arbitrarily decide in the matter? Third, how can the Finance Minister appropriate, to the Consolidated Fund of India or the National Investment Fund, the proceeds of such 'resource raising measures' by the PSEs? 'Stakeholders' is one term often finding place in the political and economic discourse post-globalisation. But, 'labour' admittedly one among the stakeholders has never been kept in the picture in the 'transparent and consultative case by case' exercise concerning the PSUs. That is why the workers decide to articulate their views, as was done recently in the Neyveli or NALCO case and find a positive response from the Left parties or even the coalition partners. In such an event, the blame for derailing the 'reforms' should squarely rest on those who failed to abide by the coalition dharma or recklessly threw to winds the NCMP commitments.

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WITHOUT COMMENTS

(We are reproducing here a document that sets out the agenda for economic policy and institutional reform during the 11th five-year plan. That the Planning Commission has become a hub from where the Fund-Bank dictated policies are imposed on the country is revealing itself even on a cursory reading of this – Editor)

AGENDA FOR ECONOMIC POLICY & INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

1. **COAL MINING:** Expedite Coal Mines Nationalisation (Amendment) Bill to allow unrestricted private entry into coal mining. In the meanwhile allow 'captive mines' to sell coal to each other and to the entire set of companies whose 'captive' mines they are. Alternatively, allow 'partially captive' coal mines that are owned by a power plant company but can sell coal to any power plant (private or public).

2. **PSUs:** Complete the process of selling of 5-10% equity in previously identified profit making non-navaratnas. List all unlisted public sector enterprises and sell a minimum of 10% of equity to the public. Auction all loss making PSUs. For those in which net worth is zero, allow negative bidding in the form of debt write-off. (The limits of debt liability would have to be defined clearly if genuine competition in bidding is to take place i.e. govt. must be liable for any unidentified debts incurred prior to the auction).

3. **INDUSTRIAL De-CONTROL:** De-control one or more of the following industries: Sugar, Fertilizer, Drugs, Petroleum Refining. No special tax incentives for any of these industries should be should be entertained unless this is done first.

4. **POWER:** Mandate principle for determination of surcharge for open access, based on difference between marginal revenue and marginal cost. Open Access to include access to electricity pillars to string a wire should be included as an aspect of open access. 100% automatic/remote metering down to the lowest level distribution transformer. Codification of delivery system hierarchy by different levels of transformer and inclusion of this code in the billing system for all users (even those getting free power). Reorganisation of billing systems according to the physical delivery system i.e. hierarchy of transformers.

5. **HIGHWAYS:** Introduce marginal cost pricing (tolling) of all National highways followed by State highways. Marginal cost is defined as

equal to maintenance charges+actual depreciation+running charges (access control and toll collection).

6. **RAILWAYS:** Free entry of private rail freight companies in Freight Corridor. Public sector rail freight company with 49-51% shares owned by the public. Rail Track company to own new tracks, signals. This company could be a 51% subsidiary of the Public Sector rail freight company with 49% of shares allotted to other/private rail freight companies.

7. **RETAIL FDI:** Allow up to 49% foreign equity share in all retail trade. If political resistance is too strong to resist, allow 100% foreign equity in foreign branded, specialized retail chains (e.g. Luxury Brands. Consumer Durables. Semi Durables.)

8. **RENT CONTROL ACT:** Notify the long passed and President approved Delhi Rent Control Act.

9. **INSURANCE:** Formulate and introduce Bill for raising foreign equity share in Insurance to 49%. In addition (or as alternative) allow 100% foreign equity in a special category of insurance companies that provide all types of insurance (e.g. health, weather) to rural residents and for all agricultural related activities including agro-processing. This may help dispel irrational fears of foreign equity in insurance.

10. **PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS:** Revive/re-introduce the bill for reducing government equity share in 'Nationalized' banks and SBI to 30% without changing their 'Public Sector Character' i.e. retaining management control.

11. **CONTRACT LABOUR ACT:** Companies providing contract labour should be responsible for abiding by and meeting the obligations of labour law and not the companies using the labour. The latter should be free to sue contract labour for any purpose for which the former are willing to provide contract labour. There should be no restrictions on the setting up of companies to provide contract labour. Part of this could

perhaps be done by identifying and changing some of the rules (so called Temp providers).

12. ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES ACT: Revise Act to make it into an emergency Law, in which the emergency has to be notified by the Central Govt. The notification would have to specify a geographical region, commodity and time period during which the emergency provisions would apply.

13. WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT & WATER HARVESTING: Water Policy and water Regulator: Transparent, simple rules for setting up irrigation water distribution co-operatives and empowering them to levy/collect charges for system upkeep. Individual farmers and panchayat officials could be members. Central govt. could devise a model law for a setting up a Water regulator by the States. Such a regulator should be empowered to set minimum (to encourage states) and maximum (to limit WUA charges) water charges. Public education campaign for water harvesting. Prepare material. Make it freely available to NGOs. Use radio and TV for propagation.

14. EDUCATION: Introduce a law to allow the setting up to private educational testing, teacher certification and school/college grading organizations. Allow free entry of registered societies and education companies subject to their getting graded (on entry, every year for 3 years and then periodically) and ensuring that students know the grade and the fees before they enroll. These companies would also be required to maintain, audit and publish accounts in a form useful for public to relate fees and charges paid. Allow free entry of A grade global universities (global grading already exists into India. Be grade global universities would have to register and get local grading like the domestic ones. The entry of C grade global universities/colleges should require prior approval and tight regulation. (Perhaps the Knowledge Commission will pronounce on these issues).

15. TRAINING: Set up a system of skill standardisation and certification (6000 odd skills). In categories in which private (including foreign) verification and/or training institutes already exist they should be allowed and encouraged to provide such certification and training in India.

16. STATVAT: The VAT should be converted to a

genuine/proper destination based VAT. This will require a mechanism for tracking inter-state sales and provision of refund from the exporting to the importing State. The VAT group headed by the Finance minister of West Bengal should start considering a mechanism for inter-state off-sets. This can be introduced when the BJP states have introduced VAT.

17. BANRUPTCY LAW: A modern Bankruptcy law does not exist in India. We should either introduce a separate section on bankruptcy in the Company Law or introduce a new bankruptcy law that faculties exist of old/failed management as expeditiously as possible. (2nd amendment to company law?).

18. GOVERNANCE-PAIS: Every program/sub-sector should have an internet accessible public Accountability Information System (PAIS). Such a system would have two objective:

(a) to provide information to the targeted population about (i) the expenditure allocated and spent, the receivers of the expenditure, (ii) The major program inputs purchased (sources, amounts) the people hired and their actual attendance record (e.g. teachers), (iii) The output of the program and when available its quality. These would be put on the website accessible through the internet.

(b) To empower the target beneficiaries (users) to put up their own evaluation of the program alongside the government provided data and information. Thus for instance in the case of primary education, parents of enrolled children should be able to post their comments on the attendance record of their primary school teacher, the number of children graduated and the quality of the education provided. They could also agree/disagree with the govt. posted data (as per (a) above). This would be a review system patterned on existing systems like Amazon Books in which readers can post book reviews.

A PAIS system should be designed for the Police and Courts and introduced on an experimental basis in Delhi and other Union territories. PAIS systems could also be designed for local roads, sewage and sanitation, drinking water supply and tested in the Union territories.

In States PAIS would be a geographically multilevel, multi-layered system.

RELAY HUNGER STRIKE BY ANGANWADI EMPLOYEES

The ten-day mass relay hunger strike of anganwadi employees, under the leadership of the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers, has commenced as if with a bang on July 25, 2006. In a huge pandal erected near Jantar Mantar in New Delhi, M K Pandhe, President, CITU, inaugurated the programme. Over 1200 women comprising Workers and Helpers in the ICDS centres from Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Assam, West Bengal, Gujarat joined the hunger strike on the inaugural day itself.

As the National Convention of Workers was also held on the same day at Mavlankar Auditorium, the zonal leaders of the AIIWA, who came to participate in the Convention, marched in a procession to Jantar Mantar and greeted the anganwadi employees.

Thousands of anganwadi employees from the other States have already started arriving in the capital. More than one thousand delegates from around 6-7 states would participate in the hunger strike on each day.

Leaders of different mass organisations like CITU, AIKS, AIAWU, AIDWA, DYFI and SFI will garland the participants on each day before starting the hunger strike. The Jana Natya Manch, the progressive cultural organisation would stage plays at the venue in the evening.

Leaders from different fraternal organisations of workers and employees in insurance, banks, coal, oil, electricity, BEL, CEL, railways, etc will greet the anganwadi employees on different days. The AIIWA has decided that the zonal leaders who would participate in the National Convention of Workers would march in a procession to Jantar Mantar after the Convention and greet the anganwadi employees. Women insurance employees from Delhi would also greet and address them.

Members of Parliament will greet them every day. Letters have been sent to leaders of the Parliamentary Groups of all political parties requesting to raise the issues in the Parliament. The AIFAWH has printed 50,000 leaflets appealing for support from the general public, as Integrated

Child Development Services is linked to the Right to food, health and education of the children of the country, and universalisation and institutionalisation of ICDS would help in the development of a healthy future generation.

Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary of CITU will conclude the programme on the last day, i.e. on 4th August 2006.

Preparations have been going on in all the states with encouraging response from the anganwadi employees.

Largest contingent is expected to be from Punjab followed by Haryana. Large contingents are also coming from far off states like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra etc. Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal have reported that more delegates than their quota will be coming. Even from Hindi speaking states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh etc, where the organisation has been only recently started or reorganised, the response is encouraging.

A delegation consisting of Neelima Maitra, President, Hemalata, General Secretary, AR Sindhu, Treasurer, WR Varada Rajan and Tapan Sen, both Secretaries of CITU met Renuka Chowdhury, the Minister for Women and Child Development and explained the problems and demands of the anganwadi employees. The Minister agreed that anganwadi employees needed better treatment but failed to give any concrete assurance on any one of the demands. When informed of the action programme called by the AIFAWH, she termed it as resorting to political pressure.

CITU GENERAL COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON THE STRUGGLE OF ANGANWADI EMPLOYEES

The meeting of the CITU General Council, held on 15-18 July 2006 in Ranchi, adopted a resolution fully supporting the struggle programme of the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers (AIFAWH) from 25th July to 3rd August 2006. It also called upon all the state committees of CITU and all its affiliated and fraternal industrial federations to extend

solidarity in all possible forms. The text of the resolution:

"The Anganwadi workers and helpers who have been rendering most vital services for the society under the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS), are receiving the most inhuman treatment from the Government. The Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS), which has completed more than 30 years, is a unique programme, which provides several basic services to the children below 6 years, and pregnant and lactating mothers. It helps in ensuring the right to food, health and education for the children of our country. Several studies including the latest one conducted by NIPCCD have noted the positive contributions of ICDS for the physical, mental and social development of children. The contribution of ICDS towards child development, through several thousands anganwadi workers and helpers throughout the country, made the Supreme Court direct the government to open anganwadi centres in all human habitations; the NCMP of the UPA also committed to universalise ICDS.

"Yet, even after 30 years of its launch, ICDS continues only as a Scheme and the anganwadi workers and helpers, the key grass root level functionaries of the ICDS, are not even recognised as employees by the Government. They are paid only a meagre honorarium, much below even the statutory minimum wage for the unskilled workers. They do not have any job security or social security. After decades of service they do not have anything to fall back upon in their old age and are forced to starve. They do not have any promotional avenues either.

"The AIFAWH has been agitating on the demands of the anganwadi employees for quite a long time and organising local and state level rallies, dharnas etc. The Federation has collected 1 Crore signatures, including from the beneficiaries, on the demand of making ICDS permanent and regularising the services of anganwadi employees and submitted them to the HRD Minister Shri Arjun Singh, after organising a big national convention, on 26th April last year. A delegation consisting of the leaders of the Federation and the CITU met the Minister for Women and Child Development Minister, Smt Renuka Chowdhury on 6th July 2006

and submitted a memorandum with the major demands of the anganwadi employees, which include:

- Universalisation of the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme as per the Supreme Court order and NCMP commitment and making it permanent
- Regularisation of the services of anganwadi workers and helpers as Grade III and Grade IV employees
- Immediate enhancement of the remuneration of the anganwadi workers to Rs 3,000 per month and helpers to Rs 2,000 per month
- Automatic linkage to Consumer Price Index
- Ex gratia of Rs 1,00,000 to workers and Rs 50,000 to helpers on 'retirement at 60 years
- Implementation of all the social security benefits like Provident Fund, ESI, Gratuity, Pension etc
- Formation of a National Tripartite Committee on the issues of the anganwadi employees.

"But no concrete assurance was forthcoming from the Government.

"In such a situation, the Federation has decided to go ahead with their struggle programme of a ten-day mass relay hunger strike in Delhi from 25th July 2006, the second day of the monsoon session of Parliament. During this programme, everyday around 1000 anganwadi employees will be staging 24 hour hunger strike and dharna before Parliament. The campaign for the programme is already going on and is getting encouraging response from the anganwadi employees all over the country.

"The CITU General Council deplores the attitude of the government to deny the basic rights to more than 14 lakhs women working as anganwadi workers and helpers, by calling them 'social workers'. It demands the UPA government to immediately take the necessary measures to meet the genuine demands of the anganwadi employees".

WORKERS' STRUGGLE STALLS NLC DISINVESTMENT

The united strike by the workers of the NLC (Neyveli Lignite Corporation) has once again decisively stalled the disinvestment plan of the UPA government.

During March 2002, the NDA government wanted to dilute the government's holding by 50 per cent through disinvestment. They were then taught a lesson by the united strength of the workers, of course supported by the Left and the democratic movements. The strike went on for full eight days till the decision to disinvest was reversed.

In the elections-2004, the NDA was trounced by the electorate of the country precisely for the reason of pursuing these types of policies. But, the present UPA government headed by the Congress pursues the same set of policies in letter and spirit. The Left parties in their meeting with the Congress in the coordination committee expressed their opposition to the Nalco and NLC disinvestment plan. But the government announced its decision to disinvest 10 per cent of its shares (from the presently held shares of 93.62 per cent) on June 22, 2006. When a reporter asked the representative of the government, it had the audacity to lie that the decision was taken in consultation with the Left parties. Such is their level of honesty. Immediately on hearing the announcement, the CITU held demonstrations inside the NLC

plants, without even waiting for a call to come. A Joint Action Committee of Trade Unions was formed in which 17 unions/associations took part. The unions led by the DMK and the AIADMK were all in the forefront unitedly against the decision to disinvest. Officers' organisations and all other category unions became members of the JAC. A unanimous decision was taken to go on indefinite strike from July 4, 2006 to press the government to withdraw the disinvestment plan. Demonstrations, picketing, street corner meetings and all forms of campaign were unleashed. Around 8000 telegrams were sent to PMO and the FM's office. In Cuddalore district the CPI (M) and CPI together had given a bandh call on July 5 besides all other campaign programmes in support of the Neyveli workers.

All trade unions had started rallying behind the Joint Action Committee in some form or the other with a view to defeating the government's decision. The CITU independently conducted demonstrations throughout the state condemning the government's move. When the leaders of the JAC met the leaders of all political parties, the workers were assured of unstinted support and solidarity from almost all of them.

The mood of the workers was quite upbeat having united everybody

under one umbrella with a single-minded devotion to defeat the ill-advised plan of the government. On third July there was a fasting programme. From July 4 morning 10.00 a m, the workers struck work. The whole Neyveli town wore a deserted look. Except for a few essential services, which were exempted from the strike, all the work came to a grinding halt. The shopkeepers had downed their shutters in support of the workers' strike. There was tremendous pressure on the state and central governments to act, and act fast. The chief minister and DPA leader Karunanidhi wrote to the prime minister seeking review of the decision on June 25. When no proper response was forthcoming from the PM, he again wrote on July 2, saying that the government explore the possibility of extending sale of shares to the workers themselves. Readily agreeing to the suggestion on July 3, the PMO announced it will allocate necessary shares to the workers. The JAC rejected the very idea and insisted that their struggle is to stop sale of shares and not to decide who the buyer would be. Not only trade unions but all political parties, except the Congress and the BJP, expressed full support for the indefinite strike. The whole process snowballing into a crisis of the first order for a new government that had assumed charge hardly 50 days ago, it had

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to intervene and the chief minister did intervene effectively on the second day of the strike saying that the DMK would have to consider the option of withdrawing from the government in support of the workers. The DMK ministers conveyed this to the prime minister on July 6, upon which the government had to backtrack.

There was enough pressure mounted by the left parties at the central level well before the decision was announced. The left had not only disassociated itself from the government's position but also decided to oppose at all levels the NALCO-NLC disinvestment plan. The CITU had organised a successful strike in Orissa and had started moving the workers throughout the state of Tamil Nadu. The left parties and their unions took the lead in organising joint platforms and mass actions. All

political parties jumped the bandwagon. This made a perfect setting and the chief minister did hit the last nail. However, the threat of disinvestment is there very much alive.

The BJP had expressed its displeasure for the way the government had withdrawn its move. It went to the extent of saying that the Congress is not loyal to the reforms programme to which the latter said it was committed to. The Congress was also not happy with the way the programme had to be abandoned abruptly midway. The corporate media, big business houses and their associations had obviously been faulting the government for yielding to blackmail (!). The workers are the clear winners in this round. But the spirit of unity of the working class and the fight against the pro bourgeois-landlord

class policies of the government had to be taken on the political-ideological plane throughout the nation without any let up.

The NLC is a repeat episode in the fight against any Public Sector disinvestment plan for the simple reason that everything when vehemently protested is put on hold only temporarily. It is a tactical retreat in the instant case, by the ruling establishment given the nature of the ruling alliance and its inherent compulsions. Experience shows that the pro-reformers who occupy vital positions in the government would again strike at an appropriate opportunity later. The eternal vigilance and unwavering unity of the workers would be put to test again and again till basic changes take place in the economic policies pursued by the successive governments at the centre.

Against disinvestments in NALCO

MASSIVE GENERAL STRIKE AT ORISSA ON JUNE 30

In protest against the move of the Govt of India to disinvest 10 per cent shares of NALCO, toiling people of the state of Orissa observed General Strike on 30th June. All the Central Trade unions including BMS and INTUC sponsored the strike call and unions across the affiliations covering all sectors of the economy joined the strike action in a big way. All the political parties including the ruling Biju Janata Dal except Congress and BJP also came forward in

support of the General Strike. In the Central Govt offices strike was total. In the industrial areas like Rourkela, Angul, Damanjodi etc witnessed almost a Bnadh like situation. In Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and other cities, massive picketing was organized in front of offices and establishments. Not only industries got paralysed due to strike but also educational institutions, shops and commercial establishments etc remained closed in many parts of the state

in response to the call of General Strike. Public transport got severely affected due to strike action and train services got virtually paralysed throughout the day owing to rail-roko demonstration by the striking workers and members of other mass organizations of students, youth, peasantry, women etc. Around 3000 workers of the Damrajodi plant of Nalco marched to the District Collector's office and held day-long picketing there.

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The striking workers of Angul plant of NALCO blocked the National Highway at two spots for several hours. Large number of people

from the mass organizations of peasants, agricultural labour, students, youth, women etc also took part in mobilizations,

processions and road-block demonstrations throughout the state.

TELECOM EMPLOYEES TO LAUNCH AGITATION

The Joint Forum of BSNL and MTNL Unions/Associations covering both the workers, engineers and officers of BSNL and MTNL have decided to go in for countrywide agitation including strike in the coming months to resist the anti-PSU move of the Govt and weaken the public sector telecom companies. In a joint meeting held on 15th July 2006, the Joint forum comprising 12 unions/associations of the workers and officers of both MTNL and BSNL, it was decided to hold joint demonstration in all state and district headquarters followed by

Demonstration before Parliament on 3rd August 2006 and stage countrywide strike in the month of September.

The issues/demands pressed for by the agitational programmes are 1) No disinvestments in BSNL/MTNL, 2) No unbundling of local loop, 3) No sharing of BSNL/MTNL infrastructure with private operators, 4) No increase in FDI, 5) No reduction in revenue sharing and ADC, 6) Immediate grant of Navaratna status to BSNL, 7) Meaningful Autonomy to BSNL and MTNL, 8) expansion of mobile and broadband services, 9)

Early and amicable settlement of ITS absorption issue.

The Joint Forum pointed out in a communique that they deferred their strike decision of 5th January 2006 following the written assurance of the DoT Secretary for positive consideration of their demands but the Govt is now moving in opposite direction much to the detriment of the interests of BSNL and MTNL as well as the national economy. The Joint Forum thus has to renew its agitation and called upon the employees to prepare for countrywide strike.

TEXTILES UNIONS: SOUTHERN ZONAL MEETING COIMBATORE, TAMIL NADU – AUGUST 29, 2006

Pursuant to the decision of the CITU General Council held in Ranchi on July 15 – 18, 2006, the CITU Secretariat decided to hold a Southern Zonal meeting of the representatives of CITU unions in the Textile Industry to discuss the issues faced by the industry at the present juncture.

The venue of the meeting will be:

Coimbatore Textile Workers Union (CITU)

330- Anupparpalayam,
(Opp) NTC Head office
Coimbatore.

Telephone: (0422) 2232927,

(Com. S.G. Subbiyan – Mobile: (0) 94437 52346

All the State Committees in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu (including Pondicherry) are to send ONE State Office bearer of CITU and FIVE representatives from the textile unions in the State to participate in the meeting. The concerned State Committees should also come to the meeting with a brief report on the situation obtaining in their respective States in the textiles industry.

W.R. Varada Rajan, Secretary, CITU will attend the meeting from the CITU Centre.

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CITU: NEW AFFILIATIONS

During the General Council meeting of CITU, held at Ranchi on July 15 – 18, 2006, the Credential Committee received 100 new applications for affiliations to CITU. On scrutiny, the applications covering a total membership of 42,304 were found to be in order and fulfilled all the necessary requirements. On the recommendation of the Credential Committee, the General Council granted affiliation to these new unions.

The state wise details of applications are as follows:

State	No. of Union	Membership
Andhra Pradesh	20	8818
Assam	2	243
Delhi	4	1013
Himachal Pradesh	8	2821
Jharkhand	7	1696
Karnataka	9	15856
Kerala	6	1141
Maharashtra	1	810
Orissa	2	202
Punjab	5	959
Rajasthan	2	343
Tamilnadu	19	5790
Tripura	3	653
Uttar Pradesh	2	205
West Bengal	10	1754
TOTAL	100	42,304

COMRADE KORATALA SATYANARAYANA

We record with deep regret the death of Comrade Koratala Satyanarayana on July 1, 2006 in Hyderabad. He was 83 years old. Com. Koratala, as he was popularly known, was a freedom fighter; a leader, who made immense contribution to the movement of agricultural workers union and kisan sabha; a leading light of the communist and democratic movement in the country. He had served the Communist Party of India (Marxist) as a member of its Polit Bureau and of the central committee.

He was jailed for three years and spent four and a half years underground. He was elected twice to the Legislative Assembly in Andhra Pradesh, where he raised a number of people's issues. The CITU and 'The Working Class' pay homage to the memory of Comrade Koratala Satyanarayana

His contribution to the building up of in Andhra Pradesh is immense.

Despite being on the bed for months together battling cancer, he keenly followed the day to day political developments in the state. In fact, he was very eager to attend the recent central committee meetings held in Hyderabad but the state leadership of the Party prevailed upon him to not exert himself.

Consumer Price Index Numbers (General) for Industrial Workers (Base 2001=100)

State	Sr. No.	Centre	Apr 06	May 06	State	Sr. No.	Centre	Apr 06	May 06
AP	1	GODAVARIKHANI	122	122	MHR	44	MUMBAI	123	124
	2	GUNTUR	117	118		45	NAGPUR	123	126
	3	HYDERABAD	114	116		46	NASIK	120	123
	4	VIJAYAWADA	117	118		47	PUNE	124	125
	5	VISHAKHAPATAN	116	118		48	SHOLAPUR	118	122
	6	WARRANGAL	120	122	ORI	49	ANGUL- TALCHER	118	119
ASM	7	DOOM DOOMA- TINSUKIA	115	115		50	ROURKELA	121	121
	8	GUWAHATI	114	115	PND	51	PONDICHERR	121	123
	9	LABAC- SILCHAR	120	119	PUN	52	AMRITSAR	128	127
	10	MARIANI-JORHAT	113	115		53	JALANDHAR	124	124
	11	RANGAPARA- TEZPUR	109	111		54	LUDHIANA	127	127
BIH	12	MONGHYR- JAMALPUR	120	123	RJN	55	AJMER	118	121
CHD	13	CHANDIGARH	122	123		56	BHILWARA	122	122
CHS	14	BHILAI	119	120		57	JAIPUR	125	126
DLH	15	DELHI	120	120	TN	58	CHENNAI	115	118
GOA	16	GOA	118	122		59	COIMBATORE	117	118
GUJ	17	AHMEDABAD	116	117		60	COONOR	113	116
	18	BHAVNAGAR	115	116		61	MADURAI	114	117
	19	RAJKOT	117	117		62	SALEM	111	114
	20	SURAT	115	116		63	TIRUCHIRA-PALLY	118	119
	21	VADODARA	115	118	TRP	64	TRIPURA	113	114
HRY	22	FARIDABAD	117	120	UP	65	AGRA	125	125
	23	YAMUNANAGAR	125	124		66	GHAZIABAD	123	123
HP	24	HIMACHAL PRADESH	118	117		67	KANPUR	122	124
J & K	25	SRINAGAR	117	117		68	LUCKNOW	119	120
JRK	26	BOKARO	116	120		69	VARANASI	119	119
	27	GIRIDIH	128	130	WB	70	ASANSOL	121	122
	28	JAMSHEDPUR	124	124		71	DARJEELING	116	118
	29	JHARIA	122	123		72	DURGAPUR	117	119
	30	KODARMA	129	128		73	HALDIA	113	114
	31	RANCHI HATIA	122	124		74	HOWRAH	118	120
KNT	32	BANGALORE	122	125		75	JALPAIGURI	113	116
	33	BELGAUM	121	124		76	KOLKATA	118	119
	34	HUBLI DHARWAR	120	122		77	RANIGANJ	123	122
	35	MERCARRA	111	113		78	SILIGURI	121	122
	36	MYSORE	120	122					
KRL	37	ERNAKULAM	123	124					
	38	MUNDAKAYAM	123	124					
	39	QUILON	125	125					
MP	40	BHOPAL	122	126					
	41	CHHINDWARA	121	126					
	42	INDORE	119	123					
	43	JABALPUR	122	126					
ALL INDIA INDEX								120	121

CITU SOLIDARITY WITH BANK EMPLOYEES' STRUGGLES

The meeting of the CITU General Council, held in Ranchi, on July 15 – 18, 2006, adopted the following resolution extending its full support to and expressing solidarity with the ongoing struggles of the bank employees in the country:

"The Government of India, as a part of its disastrous pursuit of indiscriminate privatisation, is set on course to bring down the share holding by the government in the Public Sector Banks (PSBs) down to 51 per cent. The Planning Commission in its approach paper for the 11th five-year plan has mooted a proposal to slash the government stake in the PSBs further down to 30 per cent. Though there is a vague mention that the same shall not be accompanied by any dilution of government control over the PSBs, this, obviously, is impracticable.

"The UPA regime has already introduced the Banking Regulations Amendment Bill, seeking to remove the 10 per cent cap on voting rights of the foreign investors, mostly the banking sector giant MNCs, in the private banks in India, besides paving the way of complete takeover of these banks.

"The government and the managements of banks have resorted to several offensives in the garb of outsourcing, core-banking solutions etc. These moves are mainly aimed at downsizing the work force in the banks.

"The drive towards outsourcing has assumed disturbing dimensions in the Reserve Bank of India, which is keen to offload all the clearing operations. Apart from the move to outsource the banking operations, the RBI is attempting to divest itself of the regulatory functions of a central bank even.

"The Finance Minister has been harping on merger and consolidation of PSBs, without paying heed to the voice of protest against such an indiscriminate move towards merger and ignoring the apprehensions voiced by the unions over consequential branch closures and employees being rendered surplus.

"The demand to opening up the pension scheme in the commercial banks to employees who have not opted earlier, has been stonewalled by the

bankers. The Finance Ministry tacitly aims at driving such employees towards the New Pension System, which has been opposed by the general trade union movement. Reports have emerged that the Government of India is reneging its commitment to the employees and officers of the State Bank of India, to improve the pension scheme in that bank, after their recent strike. Despite farcical talk of granting autonomy for PSBs, the Finance Ministry is interfering to put on hold proposals for recruitment by the PSBs, including appointments on compassionate grounds.

"The wage demands of the employees of the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), who have for long been treated on par with the employees of Reserve Bank of India, are also kept lingering.

"The employees of Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) in the country are also waging a relentless struggle demanding setting up a National Rural Bank of India (with state wise merger of all RRBs under its aegis) and parity in wages and allowances with their counterparts in the commercial banks.

"The CITU notes with immense satisfaction that these and other similar moves have met with a united resistance from all the organisations of employees and officers in the banking industry. The United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), the apex forum of nine national level federations, has been carrying on a sustained struggle against the offensives of outsourcing, privatisation, etc and for pension-related demands. Three of these federations, viz the AIBEA, BEFI, AIBOA have declared a countrywide strike on July 28, 2006. Bank wise resistance struggles are also emerging. There is a united forum of employees and officers in Reserve Bank of India as well, which has launched a series of action programmes.

"The CITU exhorts the bank employees of the country to surge ahead with their united struggles to safeguard the public sector banking against the attempts of international finance capital to take control of the financial sector in India. The CITU calls upon all sections of the working people to rally en masse in support of these struggles and enter into solidarity actions".