

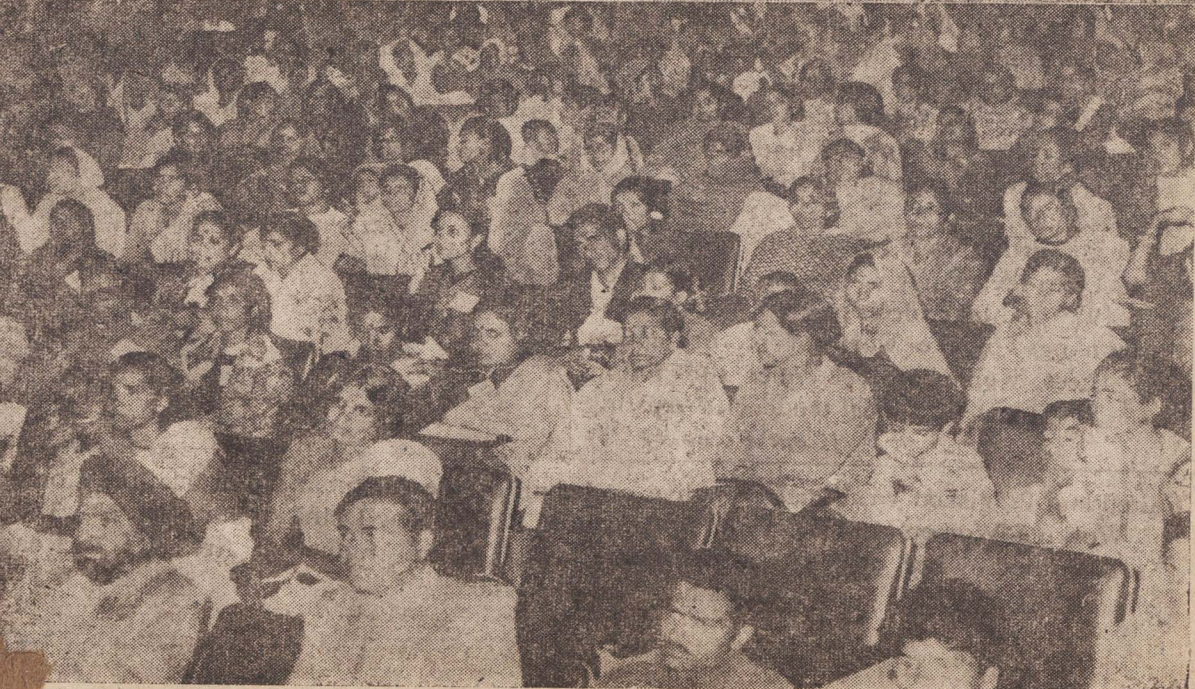
THE VOICE OF THE WORKING WOMAN

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All India Anganwadi Conference held in Udaypur On 5-6th Jan. 1991,

The Issues Before the Convention

The 3rd Convention of working women is being held in Calcutta on 12-13th of February, 1991. The period between the first convention in 1979 at Madras and this one is more than 12-13 years. During this period three different Governments ruled including the present one. Many legislations concerning women and working women were passed. Some schemes for self-employment Anganwadi, Balwadi etc. have been introduced. Despite the number of legislations passed, amended and so on, the position of working women has not qualitatively changed. In fact it has worsened. Dowry deaths and molestation is on the increase, the number of men and women job seekers has gone up. Shri V P Singh Government passed the proposals of the National Commission on Women, Family Courts, etc. It could not implement these proposals due to its dissolution. In short, during last 12 years, the situation of working women as a whole has worsened, under all the governments that ruled our country.

In the Madras conference in 1979, Com. BTR said while inaugurating the 1st convention: "The CITU had to take the decision to call special conference because it was found that the grievances of working women were unattended, the Government was indifferent, the employers were hostile and even trade unions were not very enthusiastic about their demands."

The important issue before our convention should be to review our work which was taken up in 1979 and take decisions to remove the shortcomings in the work of co-ordination committees, women's wings under the union and fight against the feudal tendencies existing

(Cont'd on page 24)

CONTENTS

1st State level Convention of Electricity Working Women Co-ordination Committee	3
Action Committee Formed Against Communal Situation	4
No destruction of Mandir or Masjid	5
Convention of Working Women under Public Sector Unions	6
Air Hostesses against blatant discrimination	9
Mr. Kalvi Must Resign	11
All India Anganwadi women's Federation's Call to unite and Struggle	12
Maternity leave for Miscarriage/abortion sanctioning	18
Women's Conference in Durby U.K.	19
Multinational Corporations : Agents of Women Workers Oppression	21

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Electricity Working Women Co-ordination Committee 1st State Level Convention Under CITU

—K.K. Sushela K.S.E. B.A.

Almost half of the employees of the Kerala State Electricity Board are women and 50% of them are the members of Kerala State Electricity Board Workers Association (CITU). As a responsible trade Union, Workers Association has to safeguard the interests of the employees and the industry as well. We know that the working Women are a part of Working class. Without organising them no movement of the working class can be successful.

The many problems of the Working Women are often neglected. The task of organising them is very urgent. Many offices lack primary facilities for women. Maternity benefits are insufficient. Nobody has thought of Creche. Most of the women employees are not even aware of these and many other problems directly affecting them.

It is high time that women are organised and brought into the main stream of working class movement. Workers Association decided to organise a convention of the women employees. The 1st state Level Convention of Electricity Working Women was held under the auspices of Workers Association (CITU) at the Town Hall in Ernakulam, the Industrial City of Kerala on September 21st 1990. It was attended by around 525 delegates and 100 observers, even those who seldom attend the programme of union participated with great enthusiasm.

The convention was presided by Com. N. Premakumary, Joint Secretary of Worker's Association. Com. Sarojini Balanandan, President, Democratic Womens Association, Kerala Inaugurated the convention. In the Inaugural speech she congratulated Worker's Association for organising the convention with massive participation. She pointed out that the achievements in various Sectors are a result of hard

struggle. She called upon working Women in Kerala State Electricity Board to come forward to take more active part in the Trade Union.

The convention was greeted by leaders of various service Organisations and Trade Unions.

Com. K. R. Bhanumathy, Leader of Kerala N. G. O. Union called upon the entire working women in Kerala State Electricity Board to come to the forefront of the struggle for achieving the demands of the working women. She explained the difficulties they faced in organising the Women in the Seventies, when the attitude of the Government towards their demands was totally negative. Whatever the working women have achieved is through their struggles and sacrifices. The present Government in Kerala is more sympathetic towards their problems. It is our duty to safeguard the L. D. F. Government in Kerala.

Com. Padma (Kerala Water Authority) emphasised the need of unity of action by Working Women.

Com. Soni Kamath (K.G. T. A.) in her speech explained the difficulties the women have to face in a capitalist society such as ours. She condemned the religious fundamentalists who are trying to take the Country back to the Medieval period and destroy the Unity and Integrity of the Nation.

Com. Prasanna Kumari (N. F. P. T. E.) said that the present Government at the Centre under the leadership of Shri V. P. Singh is far better than the previous Government of Shri Rajiv Gandhi. But many of their demands are not yet settled.

Com. Josephine, Leader of Democratic Women Association in Kerala also addressed the gathering. A clear picture of present India with its pathetic condition of Tribal and Harijan Women in various parts of the Country

specially in Tripura and Assam was given by her.

A Charter of demands was approved by the Convention. The following demands are included in the charter

(i) To appoint a Statutory Women's Commission to study the problems of the Women and find solutions.

(ii) Creche or Child care Centres be opened in offices where ever necessary.

(iii) Rest Rooms, Dining Rooms, Toilets etc. may be provided exclusively for Lady Officials in all Offices.

(iv) Period of Maternity Leave be enhanced to Six Months.

(v) Give special consideration to Women on Transfer.

(vi) Provide conveyance facilities to attend office.

(vii) Additional one hour rest time to pregnant Women during lunchbreak.

Com. K.O. Habeeb, General Secretary of Kerala State Electricity Board Workers Association also addressed the convention. The General Secretary emphasised the need for active participation of the working women. He reminded that the problems of the working women which were linked with the problems of the people as a whole could not be solved as long as the present system of society persist and hence all should jointly fight to change in the system.

Com. P. Jameela Beevi was elected convener of Electricity Working Women Co-ordination Committee. 4 Joint Convenors and 44 State Members were also elected.

Com. C.K. Sarojini Proposed vote of thanks.

The Convention as a first step to bring the working Women of Electricity Board to the main of working class movment, was a great success.

Action Committee Formed Against Communal Situation

A meeting of 8 national women's organisations and their Delhi units, to discuss a campaign against communalism was held at the YWCA on 28.11.90.

The following organisations were represented :

1. AIDWA (All India Democratic Women's Association).

2. AIWC (All India Women's Conference)

3. AICCWW (All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women)

4. Centre for Womens Development Studies (CWDS)

5. MDS (Mahila Dakshata Samiti)

6. JWP (Joint Womens' Programme)

7. NFIW (National Federation of Indian Women)

8. YWCA

The meeting decided to hold a fifteen day joint campaign with padyatras and tempo campaign, and gate meetings at offices and hospitals, during which 11 lakh leaflets would be distributed all over Delhi.

The various organisation undertook the responsibility to organise the padyatras and tempo campaigns in different districts of the city. A tentative budget of Rs. 15,000/- was worked out, for the entire campaign.

It was decided that each of the national organisations, wanting to be included in the leaflet were to contribute Rs. 2,000/-.

It is learnt the programmes taken up by these organisations were successful. The next issue will carry the report in detail.

No Destruction of Mandir or Masjid-Unity of Hindus and Muslims

Kalindhi Deshpande, Delhi

To preserve unity and brotherhood of the country the leaders of the prominent women organisations came out on the street of Delhi launching a campaign for 15 days. About 150 women leaders taking mikes in their hands appealed the people to refrain from violence and hatred and to remain united. They marched through the streets, lane and bylanes of the crowded areas like Jahangirpuri, Trilokpuri, mangalpuri distributing leaflets and appealing to the people to maintain communal harmony and peace. At every corner they held meetings. However since it was not possible to cover the vast city like Delhi on foot they went in tempo with mike fitted in the vehicle and spread the message of unity and peace.

The campaign had a mixed response at various places. Of course in areas inhabited by the working people and daily wage earners the response was very good.

"We work very hard for our daily bread—what do we have to do with a Mandir or Masjid?" said one woman, still another said—"my husband is a rickshaw puller, these days till he returns home, I do not know in what condition he would return. What these people have to do with Mandir or Masjid, Some people said that they are so disturbed with the price rise and the people who instigate communalism never thought of this question. The question of Mandir or Masjid has no meaning to them.

One-thing was very clear that now-a-days people are willing to listen to the discussion about Mandir and Masjid. The leaders during their speeches gave befitting reply to the arguments of the communal organisations like BJP

etc. on the basis of the country's history, religious tolerance independent movement etc. The reaction was positive. The call for human value got response from the people.

A student of the 12th standard in Jahangirpuri was so moved by the campaign that he took a whole bundle of leaflet and distributed in his school. At Cannought Place a student of St. Stephen's College requested the leaders to address meeting in his college.

One thing came out clearly from the campaign that the communal hatred is deliberately flared up for political interest of the communal parties. There is no doubt in this respect in the minds of the people whether educated, illiterate or even an officer.

During the course of the campaign in areas like Bhogal, Sunlight Colony, Karolbagh which are BJP strongholds some people argued that "You are taking the side of the muslims, why do, you go to muslim areas and explain to them?"

At Parliament Street a group of staunch supporter of Hindutava attacked the campaign team and physically assaulted the driver and abused the women leaders. Almost same was the situation near Plaza cinema.

But despite these odds the campaign was carried on undaunted. It has been clearly observed that the general people are keen to live through peace and brotherhood and with the tolerance for each other's belief and as good neighbours. The experience of the campaign has exploded the myth that there are 70 crores Hindus who want to build the Mandir destroying the temple.

Convention of Working Women under Public Sector Unions

The first convention of Working Women under public sector was held in Bangalore on 19th of December 1990. The women working in BHEL, BEL, Steel, Coal, Small Scale industries, electricity, India Meters, Nurses and from a number of industries under public sector numbering about 80 attended and narrated their grievances. Women workers in industries and in different private sector face discrimination worst type by the employers, contractor or by the agents of the Government. Strangly enough, these women under public sector come directly and controlled by the Central Government. Despite this, women complained about the blatant discrimination in wages, promotion, sexual harassment, denial of maternity leave and so on. The special attraction of the conference was the three women attending from Air India and India Airlines.

The convention was conducted by a presidium consisting of Coms Dipali Bose (Steel), Krishnabai (BHEL), Rohin Char (Air India), V. Saroja (IDPL), Sheela (Cochin Shipyards), Khurshid Begum (Bangalore), Parbati Das (Contractor Durgapur).

Com. M. Rajamma, chairman of the Reception Committee welcomed the delegates, women and men employees. In her welcome speech she spoke on the important role of working women, especially under public sector who have tried to hold the first convention. Unless we launch united struggles, it is very difficult to get the benefits and remove the discrimination.

Com. Vimal Ranadive while inaugurating the conference heartily welcomed the gathering of women and men attending the conference under public sector for the first time. She said women in steel and nurses in coal held their conferences and formed the committees. She congratulated the heroic women air hostesses who were facing blatant discrimination since many years. The issue was retiring age which

still is not solved despite the promise by the then V. P. Singh Government. One does not know what attitude the Chandra Shekhar Govt will take towards these working women. Vimal Ranadive, then gave instances as to how the AICCWW was formed in 1979 to fight against the discrimination faced by working women because of the feudal tendencies existing among the male dominated society and also in trade unions. Secondly, she also reported about the meagre representation on the union's committees of working women, for which union leadership is responsible. All these shortcomings are being removed during last few years. Now, the unions, associations of employees hold their women's conferences along with their own, write on the women's struggles in their journals and also try to give representation for them on the unions, though these things are still not satisfactory. She hoped at the end that the working women under public sector will fight for their interests as well as participation in the common struggle of the working people side by side with the union.

Com. M. K. Pandhe, Secretary CITU and the leader of the public sector unions moved the main resolution on the working women. He expressed his happiness on holding the conference for the first time in the annals of the trade union movement of public sector employees. This he said shows the growing consciousness among the women employees. He mentioned in this context that the conference also is being held on the 86th Birth anniversary of Com. B. T. R., who always championed the cause of working women and their struggle against the discrimination. He always denounced the male chauvinist attitude in the trade union movement. He admitted the trade union movement of public sector employees have neglected the problems of working women, though some attempts have been made to acknowledge

them by the unions.

There are only about one lakh and 25 thousand women under public sector, i.e. 6% of the total employment. He then spoke on the technology and its effects on women who would be the first victims of the unemployed masses. It is known that 30,000 women were thrown out of jobs in mines. Women who refuse voluntary retirement were immediately transferred far way places, meaning it was a compulsory retirement for them. Women are given jobs only as typists, steno, P.A. etc. But women are rarely found in technical nature of jobs.

What about the contract workers in steel, coal? Women there are used as a source of cheap labour. The work of loading and unloading, construction etc is given to them. There is no security of jobs for them. Then Com. Pandhe turned to the small scale industries like Masala-Paped Kendra who get only Rs. 300 to 400 per month. Medical facilities are denied to them. Com. Pandhe then dealt in detail about sex discrimination of Air Hostesses. This was an outstanding struggle under public sector. Both air India and Indian Airlines employ about 2,500 air hostesses. But they face worst type of discrimination. While male flight pursers were retiring at the age of 58, the air hostesses had to retire at 35 which could be extended to 45. They had to go through the medical tests which the male purser need not. They are fighting very bravely under their union and our MPs in Parliament also raised their voice. In fact Indian Airlines accepted and announced the retiring age of 58 for air hostesses. But the Air India did not accept. He also spoke on the conference of steel women and coal women workers. About 1,300 nurses working in steel have held their conference. Com. Pandhe ended his speech by appealing the women to organise and fight against the discrimination and join the union and be a part of the co-ordination committee.

There were a number of speakers from different unions, and some read out their speeches.

Shree Devi from HAL said women have got dual role. They have to travel more than eight hours, therefore the working hours should be reduced. There are no rest rooms. Our comrades must come forward to help in getting our small demands.

Shobha Maitra, Durgapur steel plant after paying homage to Com. BTR for his foundation work for working women, said that the country was facing an unprecedented crisis and women become the greatest victims socially, economically and politically. After five year plans, women felt that some good conditions and employment for women would be created. But soon they found that they were condemned to traditional jobs such as typist, clerks, teachers, receptionists etc. The employers were not enthusiastic to give jobs to women. They too were not conscious to break this tradition. In Durgapur steel plant, women are being provided jobs on compassionate ground, under the plea that there were not enough jobs. But after the union worked hard, some few women have secured service against compassionate pannel fighting against the INTUC. We are not getting the transfer facility despite there are vacancies in Calcutta. Though the trade union leaders suggest that working women should come forward and take active part in trade union but we, have the poor participation of women in trade unions. Also we observe where, women are active, and participate in every movement of the union were not getting proper place in the union along with the male members. After a long struggle, we have got one lady as office bearer in our union. She ended her speech with an appeal that CITU union will look after the problems of working women and launch struggles for their demands.

Mani Mekala from Hindustan Teleprinters came forward and said there was no equality as far as LTC is concerned. The interest subsidy given to men by the management is not given to women if they have husbands. Both should be given separately as they are two emp-

loyees. Maternity leave, is only 84 days and not 90. Com. Padmini from Andhra said there should be special leave if in case children suffer from illness. There are lack of safety measures and voluntary retirement is not applicable to staff.

Sheela Moses from KGF said there is no creche even though there are 80 women. Rs. 75/- only is given for child allowances. No union takes ladies into the committee, nor women are consulted any time. LTC concession is not given to homeless women.

Ambika Laxmi from BEL expressed the urgent need of a woman welfare officer who can protect the interests of women much better.

Sathi from Kochin Shipyards told the delegates that it was difficult to preserve the amenities already got. Women here are in a big number.

Krishnabai from Tamilnadu, working in BHEL said dependents on the women workers are not treated properly they are given only menial jobs for their dependents. There is six years training for men and two years for women.

The delegate from Hindustan Photo Films also spoke about irregularity in granting maternity leave.

Delegate from Hindustan Teleprinter said we get maternity leave only for 84 days instead of 90.

Com. Purnima Sen Gupta from HCL hospital said it is decided that 30% reservation for women in public sector. But in our HCL women are a negligible force. No female employee has been provided to run the machine inside the factory. Due to the policy of the Government of the privatisation the workers are being victimised. With regard to the medical facilities, the male employees get facilities for their dependents, but the female employees are deprived of the same.

Shyla Baplist BHEL Mysore, criticised the management for the discrimination in office. Those ladies whose husbands are also working

in the same factory are deprived of the benefits like LTC and medical benefits. Can't the wife also be permitted to the claim for her parents.

Com. Gouri Bose, Durgapur Contract worker spoke on the working condition under contractors. Our women are in a big number and they are exploited so much. Our major section belong to the Tribals and backward section. Contract workers are not treated as human beings, wages are low and less than male workers.

Com. Parbati also spoke saying women are only meant for cooking and looking after home.

Asha Mulgaonkar the General Secretary of Air Hostesses Association spoke in detail the blatant discrimination they are facing since many years. The demand for equality in service, the retiring age of women in Air India and Indian airlines should be 58 years is not yet accepted.

Com. Deepali Bose complained that the unions are not taking proper steps to send women delegates or in the participation of women in the convention. Women are not giving jobs on machine or in technical work. Can you imagine that in the steel union, no woman worker is an office bearer?

Com. Nilima Rai spoke in detail the working conditions of her bank and the discrimination they face. She criticised the feudal tendencies in the society and in the trade union which hampers the work. She said, it is true that women's problems find very rarely in the agenda of unions office bearers meeting. Due to this feudal attitudes, our trade union activists are reluctantly included in the trade union delegation or in the executive. She appealed to women to assert themselves by fighting on the issues and get success. Those others who spoke were Amastha Khasi (BEL), Prasanna Sen Gupta (HCL) and others.

Com. Ahilya Rangnekar, the Vice President of CITU summed up the discussion. She said the conference of public sector has given a call

(Cont'd on page 10)

Air Hostesses Determined to Fight against Blatant Discrimination, Perpetrated By Air India

Ruheen Khawbatta, President AIHA

Despite a directive issued by the Govt of India on 16th October 1989 removing the discrimination against air hostesses of both its National carriers, air India persists in harassing its hostesses. Indian airlines on the other hand, implemented the Govt directive immediately, within 3 days on 19th October 1989 thus removing all discrimination and allviating the long standing grievances of their hostesses. We compliment the management of Indian airlines on their quick and just decision in implementing the Govt directive.

Air India, the sister corporation, and India's International Flag Carrier on the other hand has issued circulars making the hostesses working conditions worse than they were before and totally contradictory to the govt directive. The hostesses of air India are extremely angry and deeply grieved by this callous attitude and have decided to take some positive action.

Though the struggle for equality with their male colleague has been going on for many years, they took their first major step in this struggle on 7th January 1991 by organising a protest meeting.

Under the guidance of Com. M.K. Pandhe, Secretary CITU and support from the Air Corporation Employees Union, Indian airlines hostesses and pursers, Janawadi Mahila Samiti, leaders Smt. Kalindi Desphande and Smt. Indrani Mujumdar and CPI (M) MPs Sukomal Sen, Ms. Malini Bhattacharya, Ms. Sarla Maheshwari, Shri Narayan Kar, the hostesses gathered at the CITU. Some of them had operated long and tiring flights to reach Delhi on the 7th. Yet inspite of fatigues and the cold weather they got together to show the the Govt and air India, that they were no longer willing to accept the high handed, feudalistic and callous behaviour of the management

and asking the Govt to intervene.

Ms. Asha Mulgaokar, General Secretary of AIHA gave a background to the hostesses struggle and explained the present situation. After this the meeting was addressed by all the three members of Parliament and all the leaders of the women's organisations encouraging the air hostesses to carry on their struggle and offering all possible help and support.

Basudev Acharya M.P. CPI (M) arranged an appointment with the Prime Minister Shri Chandra Shekhar at 5.45 p.m. He along with Ms. Malini Bhattacharya, Com. Pandhe and representatives of Janawadi Mahila Samiti Delhi, accompanied a delegation of 35 air hostesses and their representatives to the Prime Minister's Office to hand over a memorandum and request the Prime Minister to tell air India management to implement the Govt directive.

The following morning on 8th January 1991 at 9.30 a.m. Com. M.K. Pandhe and the representatives of the AIHA and ACEU met the Chairman of the Petitions Committee (Rajya Sabha) which had visited Bombay to investigate the working conditions of women in air India. Air India had gathered some women from various departments and presented them before the committee.

The Committee were given the impression that some of these women were air hostesses when infact they were not. When questioned about the working conditions of air hostesses these women said that they were quite satisfied. The Chairman is quite anoyed at this fraud and has agreed to hear the hostesses before the report is formulated.

At 2.30 pm. on the same day Shri Samar Mukherjee arranged a meeting with Mr. Harmohan Dhawan, Minister of State for Civil Aviation. He was apprised of the hostesses

problems and of the non-implementation of the Govt directive. After he had heard the representative's plea he wanted to have a proper discussion with the representatives and officials of the ministry to resolve the issues pertaining to hostesses. Since the Minister did not have enough time that day he asked us to discuss this with the Jt. Secretary Mr. Ravindra Gupta at 4.15 p.m. After a marathon session lasting over three hours he was convinced of the necessity for change in the service conditions of Air hostesses and a joint meeting will be held between the C.A. Minister, Ministry officials and representatives of Air Hostesses to sort out the problems.

On the 9th there was a meeting with Dy. Labour Commissioner at 3 pm. and Jt. Secretary Labour, at 4 p.m. This was to request them to ensure that Air India is not exempt from the pervue of the ERA. There is a notification of 79 under Sec. 16 stating that the ERA would not apply to air hostesses as their recruitment and pay scales were different. However, the ERA has been amended in 1986-87 and the CLC (C) has clarified that the ERA applies to air hostesse's and the notification only applies as far as recruitment and remuneration are concerned and not to service conditions.

All the ten National Trade Union Centres have also extended their full support and sent a memorandum to the Prime Minister and Civil Aviation Minister urging them to implement the Govt directive and stop the air India management from continuing the descrimination against air hostesses.

The Air India Hostesses Association would like to take this opportunity to thank Com. Pandhe and the CITU in particular and all the National Trade Union Centres, women's organisations, and all the members of parliament who have constantly helped and supported the hostesses of Indian airlines and air India in their struggle to achieve paritiy with thier male colleagues, and hope for their continued support in future.

TELEGRAM OF PROTEST

To,
Minister of Civil Aviation Chairman & Mg.
Government of India, Director air India
New Delhi Nariman Point,
 Bombay-400 021

Strongly condemn continuing discrimination of Air-Hostesses of Air-India in the matter of retirement age, flying duties, career progression, superannuation medicals, etc., and of Indian airlines against pre-coditions of medical examinations we support struggle of Air-India and Indian Airlines Air-Hostesses and demand equal treatment of airhostesses vis-a-vis their male counterparts.

General Secretary,
Air-India Hostesses Association,
Office of the A. C. E. U.
Viman Bhavan, Old Airport,
Santacruz (E), Bombay-29.

(from page 8)

to come forward to launch struggles. In public sector, privatisation is going on. The percentage of women workers is small here. They discussed very well their problems. In public sector too a creche is not provided. She appealed to all the delegates to come forward and fight for their demands.

A resolution on the discrimination of women air hostesses was moved by Rohini Char. She called upon all the unions to send protest telegrams to the Ministry of Civil Aviation on 5th of January 1991. R. Ram-dasan, Regional Secretary, Air Corporation Employees Union, Bombay supported the resolution and it was adopted unanimously.

A declaration on the points raised and the demands of the women in public sector was read out and adopted unanimously. It was informed that 10-12 women would be taken on the committee formed before the public sector convention is concluded. After the vote of thanks an behalf of the presidium, the conference ended with slogans on the convention of working women zindabad.

Mr Kalvi Must Resign

On December 7, volunteers belonging to various women's organisations staged a surprise dharna in the foyer of South Block which houses the Prime Minister's office. The action was undertaken to press the demand for removal of Kalyan Singh Kalvi from the Union Cabinet as he has been a blatant supporter of the inhuman practice of sati.

These volunteers reached the building in groups, taking the security guards by surprise. They carried, under their shawls, the placards which demanded removal of Kalvi from the Cabinet, and displayed them after reaching the South Block foyer. The action was necessitated by the refusal of the Prime Minister to meet the women's organisations' representatives despite their efforts for the last ten days to have an interview with him.

The organisations which staged the dharna are All India Coordination Committee of Working Women, All India Democratic Women's Association, Centre for Women's Development Studies, Joint Women's Programme, National Federation of Indian Women, Mahila Dakshata Samiti and Young Women's Christian Association of India.

Later, the representatives of the seven organisations submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister's office which held Kalvi guilty on three counts. First, Kalvi has showed contempt for the constitutional provisions of gender equality, etc. Secondly, he is liable to be prosecuted under Article 5, Part II of the Commission of Sati (prevention) Act for his glorification of the practice of sati. Finally, he has violated the spirit of the amended Article 43 of the Representation of the People Act of 1951 which specifically disqualifies any person convicted of any offensive of atrocity against a wo-

man. According to the memorandum, following the murder of Roop Kanwar in Deorala village of Rajasthan on September 4, 1987 in the name of sati, Kalvi was one who provided leadership to the most retrograde agitation in support of this savage custom, and was a leading member of the Dharma Raksha Samiti which collected lakhs of rupees for this purpose. On several occasions, Kalvi also made most virulent speeches in support of this practice, and the women's organisations also attached to their memorandum a set of clippings from the Deccan Herald, The Hindustan Times, The Times of India and other papers of October 1987 as evidence. These organisations have also said they are ready to produce the tape-recorded versions of Kalvi's interview to documentary makers, before the Prime Minister any time the latter asks for.

According to the memorandum, the then Cong (I) Government of Rajasthan had, out of opportunist considerations, refused to take any action against Kalvi despite the nationwide demand for his arrest. However, now the same person has been elevated to the Union Cabinet. This certainly suggests that such persons "can even expect to be rewarded", the memorandum says. It pinpointedly asks: "Are we to understand that the protection of women's life, rights and dignity is of no concern for this Government?" According to it, the militant offensive fundamentalist forces against the women's rights, and hence it has demanded Kalvi's removal from his present position.

The dharna-staging volunteers ended their dharna only after the political secretary to the Prime Minister assured that the latter would meet their representatives in a few days' time.

All India AnganWadi Women's Federation Gives Call to Unite and Struggle

"The ICDS is the only scheme all over the world for women and children" said the secretary in the Rajiv Gandhi Congress Govt proudly to the people in Parliament. But the various speeches made by the Anganwadi workers and Helpers told quite different stories. The poorly dressed young girls and women from villages stood boldly on the dias and spoke for the first time about their plight. The All India conference of Anganwadi workers and helpers was held in Udaypur on 5th and 6th of January 1990 at B. T. Ranadive Nagar (Town hall). The Preparatory Committee had to change its programme due to arrival of thousands of women from Rajasthan itself for the inauguration and for the rally and public meeting which was held on 5th.

Courage of the Delegates

Temperature in Udaypur was below zero 2 degree. Fortunately the sun came up to help the delegates. Despite the difficulties of changing the trains twice or thrice sometimes for the south and the extreme cold, delegates came only from the 8 states. Perhaps due to the reasons mentioned above delegates from Tamilnadu and Andhra did not join. Kerala numbering 14 had to travel for 4 days and spent thousands of Rupees to reach. Any democratic person conscious enough to raise his or her voice against communalism, would have felt proud to have a delegation from Punjab of 27. Special buses refused to come and very costly beyond their reach, they came by buses and train reaching on 5th morning. The bus they were travelling into, two persons were shot dead by the extremists with the result, one girl delegate fainted, and had to be hospitalised as they reached Udaypur. She was all the time crying thinking what would happen to her parents. But her morale was so high, that she

took mike and was shouting slogans in the procession. Punjab being at the head of the procession was the attraction for the people. The courage they showed and arrived! The delegation from Kerala, got into a wrong



compartment at Ahmedabad, were fortunate enough to realise the mistake and got down and travelled in another compartment. The bogie went to Jodhpur! A small delegation from Pondicheri with 6 arrived via Madras in time for the conference. West Bengal with 2 batches numbering 37 arrived. Maharashtra from Pune and Chandrapur side numbering 28 travelled

for two days, chaining trains twice reached Udaypur. Rajasthan was already there with 40 delegates. All others with small delegations attended. Altogether there were 148 delegates.

Decoration all over Udaypur

The press conference being held one day before, most of local papers and Jaipur gave good coverage. The CITU unit in Udaypur with others, SFI, DYFI, JMS and all others worked day in and day out for putting the flags all over Udaypur. There were 7 or 8 gates in the name of these organisations welcoming the delegates for the 1st conference. The District Committee of CPM and the secretary were present at the Stations to receive the delegates and they looked after them very well, to the limit that all the delegates got the bed and the 'rajoi' in the extreme cold they were facing. Thanks to such good arrangements and the prior consultations between the centre and the district CITU, most of the programmes went well no doubt.

Preparatory Committee Meets

The preparatory committee met at 12 PM under the Presidentship of Com. Bhabatosh Roy where Com. Vimal Ranadive and Com. Ranjit Basu from the centre placed the programmes discussed in the CITU secretariat. After placing flowers on the martyrs column, the open session began at 2.30 PM. with the following presidium; Com. Arati Dasgupta (W. B), Com. Surender Kaur (Punjab), Com. Vallikutti (Kerala), Com. Pushpa Sharma (Rajasthan) and Com. Nirupama Chatterjee a founder member of the west Bengal Anganwadi Union. A condolence resolution on Com. B. T. Ranadive, the all time defender of the exploited women and who addressed the first convention of Anganwadi women held in April 1989 was passed. Another resolution on martyr was moved. Com. B. L. Singhvi the Chairman of the reception committee then welcomed the delegates. He expressed the wish

in his speech that all the discussion will form a huge all India federation who would take the problems to get them minimum benefits.

Inauguration

Com. Laxmi Saigal, when came up to inaugurate the conference, there was a big ovation from the hall which was full with women even the galleries and outside. She said, the first ever idea of taking up the Anganwadi women was of Com. BTR. She asked to form the militant strong federation so that these exploited women can get some benefits. Till that time women have to be martyres in the cause of the workers. She explained the backward conditions of women and how the children were suffering under the Congress rule and also under others. She said we are not demanding to build mandir, but only a small wage in which we can live—this also is not being done. Unless we form a federation on an all India basis, we will not be able to win our demands.

Com. Chayya Bera-Chief Guest Speaks

Com. Chayya Bera, the Minister of State for Relief..... of West Bengal Left Front Govt. who was the chief guest of the conference gave an inspiring speech stating many instances of the benefits they were able to give to Anganwadi women because of the sympathetic attitude of the Govt of west bengal, towards the most exploited sections of women. She referred the glorious period of patriotism under Rana Pratap and now the communal and socio-economic conditions existing everywhere including Rajasthan. The literacy among women there is the lowest. The shameful incident of Sati at Deorala on Sept 4, 1987 of Roop Kanwar who was put to death will be remembered. Not only that Com. Chaya said, Shri Kalyan Singh Kalvi who earned the notoriety of being a supporter of sati was elected and has been rewarded with a post of Minister in Chandrashekar Govt. !

She said 14th Nov. 89 was declared "Happy

Universal Children Day" when it was declared "Happy Child-Nation's Pride". But what is the rate of infant mortality—the largest number is in our country. Many legislations were passed to protect the women. Out of 33.10 crores of women 25 crores are living under poverty line! Women constitute only 13.3% in the working force. According to the published report recently 2 lakhs women are forced during last 5 years to go to prostitution, increasing its total number to 13 lakhs.

What about the conditions in Anganwadi? According to our information there are 4688 projects under ICDS. Their role is important if they work properly. Com. Chayya then turned to the question of the neglect of the trade unions in general while taking up the problems of working women. She mentioned in this connection the guidance of Com BTR given to the trade unions, and appealed to give up the feudal tendencies and come forward to bring women in the mainstream of democratic struggle.

The speech was translated in Hindi by Com. Mahdu Sethia. Com. Ashok Paliwal, the General Secretary SFI while greeting the conference conveyed that it was the SFI who took up and helped the formation of the unions, and supported the struggles. Com. Sumitra Chopra, AIDWA gave all the support to Anganwadi while appealing them to join the JMS. Bijendra Kaushik on behalf of the Janwadi Lekhak Sangh welcomed the formation and greeted the delegates.

Two other federations working in Anganwadi, then greeted the delegates on their behalf who were specially invited by the preparatory committee. Shri B. K. Prasad, Chairman, Akhil Bharatiya Kamgar Union explained as to how many years they had struggled for their demands. He said they were going to have dharna at Boat Club with other organisations in Delhi on 1st of February 1991. Later on we try to bring 1 lakh women in the month of March 1991 to demonstrate at Parliament for the demands. The govt must give equal wages

for equal work. While mentioning the contribution by Com. BTR he said we have to pay more attention to the work of women. But this is not being done in anganwadi. He appealed for united actions, among all the trade unions working in Anganwadi.

Shri Pradeep Kumar, spoke on behalf of Akhil Bharatiya Anganwadi Karmachari Sangh, greeted the delegates by promising all the solidarity in action. Com. Ranjit Basu, secretary CITU greeted on behalf of CITU. He began his speech by paying tribute to Com. BTR whose inspiration today we are holding the conference here. The work which he began, must now be completed in a proper way. Turning towards the present communal situation he said the hand of imperialism cannot be neglected when there are riots in Kanpur, Punjab, Kashmir, Assam etc. He hoped that taking all the Political situation in the country and outside, the federation will take the programme of uniting all the democratic forces in the country.

Com. Vimal Ranadive, the convenor of the preparatory committee then read out the names of the steering committee, credential committee. The first session ended at 4 PM and the rally started. The ceremony of inauguration of the poem book by Com. Satya Narayan was done by Sarla Maheshwari MP, and the writer sang a song on working women.

Report Placed

The second session began with the placing of the report circulated in English and Hindi by Com. Vimal Ranadive, convener of the preparatory committee. She expressed regrets for non attendance of the delegation from south perhaps because of very cold weather and difficulties to reach the place of the conference. She paid her homage to Com. BTR who was defender of the cause of working women, and of all the toiling people. His guidance at every step was useful which we are missing. She reminded the delegates that he addressed the first convention and advised us

to form the federation belonging to all others, unions, and federations. Turning towards the national situation, she explained the serious crisis created by the forces of communalism and extremism on the question of Babri Masjid-Ramjanambhoomi, as well as on Mandal commission report. Many workers, women and children at different places were killed. What does it mean to us? It means disrupting of our movement, it liquidate the working class basis. We should not forget the role of imperialism. Then she mainly dealt with the situation of Anganwadi women which is the most exploited section in the society, conditions are pitiable, getting Rs. 225-275 and Rs. 110 per month. The scheme is centrally sponsored scheme, financed by UNICEF, USAID, CARE and such other foreign agencies. The women are called as "social workers" and are paid as "honourarium" More than 6 lakhs workers are employed in these scheme. The supervisors and CDPOS are getting the benefits as the Govt. employees but not the women who are from rural areas.

Then she explained the sexual harassment by CDPOS, threats and wage cut because of attending the conferences etc. The creals supposed to be for pregnant women and children are stolen, corruption is rampant. If demands are made, the reply will be dismissal!

Why All India Federation?

These conditions must be changed and so the necessity of forming the All India Federation. She then told about the joint action alongwith other federation. She said the Rajiv Gandhi Govt asked "what is Anganwada" and said "if honourarium is increased the women will have to be chucked out—half of them. When the delegation went to Shri V.P. Singh he listened to us sympathetically but the Govt had to leave because of dissention in Janta Dal, created by Congress. Now the Chandrashekar Govt with the support of Congress has taken charge and one does not know how long it

would remain. Unless the women launch great struggles, independent under federation and jointly with others, no demand will be available. She reminded the delegates that the federation of Anganwadi will be trade union of women workers, and it has to run by the trade union supported by other mass organisations. Another point she mentioned was of role of the left Front Govts Bengal and Kerala. The women got better benefits because of the struggles and the sympathetic attitude of the Govt. The situation in the international world, and in socialist countries is bad. But we are the consistent believers in socialism which is the only way for us to get relieved from exploitation. While concluding she appealed to women to take up militant programme to achieve their demands.

The conference then took up the discussion on the constitution which was already circulated and discussed in the preparatory Committee including amendments. Com. Bhabatosh Roy placed the constitution clause by clause with amendments and explained the specific character of the federation which will have a flag of its own, but other unions belonging to other trade unions can join the federation. Later it was decided that the flag will be of red colour in the background with white letters of the federation on it. The constitution and the flag were placed and passed unanimously.

Delegates Speak

There was very lively discussion by the delegates from different states. Com. Vallikutty, Kerala spoke on the activities of the workers. She said the Cong(I) did not pay us the maternity but our Govt gave us maternity leave for 2 children. When we used to go to congress demanding it, supervisors used to terminate our services. We fought and got leave for 42 days for miscarriage denied to us. We used to get festival leave and allowances of Rs. 45 after struggle we got now Rs. 100/- The govt has sanctioned Rs. 50,000 for anganwadi building.

Now workers and helpers are getting TA and DA. We are fighting for more. Working hours were 7½ hours and we are fighting for 5 hours. There are 6 other organisations belonging to other political parties. They are trying to exploit them. She ended her speech, which was translated in English and Hindi appealing for united actions.

Com. Preet Kumari From Punjab : Spoke on the situation in different states. We are afraid of extremist but despite that we organised blockwise organisation. We demanded from the supervisors that no anganwadi workers will be terminated. Now our organisation has become so strong that the CDPO, supervisors are afraid of us. Ration distributed was less than the quota, now we have taken the task of distribution in our hands. 32 women workers were promoted to supervisors from us after fighting for this. We got 2 maternity leave, now we are fighting for 6 months maternity leave like govt employees. Formerly CDPO used to take bribe for appointing workers, we fought against this and that CDPO was dismissed. She said we will all support the federation.

Com. Monika Chakraborty : from Bengal welcomed the delegates. She said we support all demands but we would require one representative of the worker, 1 helper on the project in the demand. We distribute the ration properly. We have leave on 2nd and 4th Saturday, on other days we work more. We get maternity leave for 2 children for 90 days, 32 days for miscarriage. Workers and helpers get TA. Since we have Left Front in W. Bengal, it listens to our grievances.

Mangla (Maharashtra) said the conditions of anganwadi workers here are very bad. CDPOs used to call us for paying salaries but kept waiting for hours. The whole responsibility of work is ours and if the place to hold the anganwadi is not found our job is terminated. Some of the helpers have to travel long way without getting any TA. After the struggle now we are getting the Divali holidays for 7

days. Now they recognise the union. The work load has increased, even the work of nurse is given to us like registering leprosy patients, disabled persons, death registration upto to 45 years which is not our job. If helpers work in the absence of a worker, she should get more salary. But that does not happen.

Com. Shuwna from Maharashtra said they formed their organisation from Chandrapur on 15th Aug 1989. 5000 workers participated in the rally, 500 delegates participated in the convention. We had all India Demands Day. AIDWA support our demands. In the 8th Sept rally at Delhi 2000 women participated. In Maharashtra there are other unions, but they used to collect money and did not do any work. We are happy that we have formed an organisation on all India basis. She requested the delegates to organise joint programmes under the banner.

Com. Jaspal Kaur (Rajasthan)—there are many problems in Rajasthan, but I mainly mention two, one of family planning, health care. Why these jobs are given to us? Why the nurses and doctors who earn Rs. 2000-3000 or more cannot do this? If we refuse threats are given for termination, there is no TA. and the Govt does not listen to us.

Com. Rajir from Rajasthan added some more points. The fund for building or place is much less. We have no festival holidays and bonus.

Com. N. Irmala (Rajasthan) said 6 services are given to us besides that many other jobs we have to do.

Com. Mary (Pondicheri) and **Com. Usha Kar (Pondicheri)** expressed to come to Udaypur and address the delegates. They have 5 projects and 6000 centres and 1200 anganwadi workers. They all work from 9am to 4 PM, but they are treated as bonded labourers. They submitted memorandum to Rajiv Gandhi nothing happened. We should organise and come together to fight for our demands.

Com. J. Ross from Kerala said in Kerala

too the communal forces are active but are trying to cure these activities. Com. Nirmala From Punjab proposed the resolution on communal harmony which was supported by Pondicheri worker and it was passed unanimously.

Most of the speakers spoke and expressed their own difficulties. Vimal Ranadive convener then replied the questions raised by workers and helpers and the report was adopted unanimously. Then she placed the programme of action for the federation and joint actions with others which was discussed and finalised in the conference. She announced the funds received from different states as follows:

Punjab—2000/- Pondicheri Rs. 500/- (clater the rest of the amount will be sent) U. P. (AIDWA) Rs. 100/-, Rajasthan 1500/- W. Bengal Rs. 3000/- Total Rs. 7500/-.

The resolutions on price rise, communal harmony, Tripura, Congratulations to left Front Govts and a charter of demands were adopted. Vimal Ranadive declared that Rs. 1000/- will be donated to Tripura Fund, which was accepted by clapping by the delegates.

Com. Nilima Moitra placed the charter of demands which was supported by S. Rose from Kerala.

The action programme which was adopted, in which (1) state deputation in every state (2) Reporting of the conference (3) Formation of statewise committees after the conferences, (4) 1 day strike of all India wise (5) Demands day etc. There will be joint programmes with other organisations too.

Com. Laxmi then moved the resolution on the new committee, as per the constitution. Credential committee report was placed and passed. A beautiful exhibition on the struggles of women was inaugurated by Vimal Randive.

This was prepared by JMS Rajasthan. The rally on 5th was a magnificent one, with the different banners and slogans. Punjab was leading the procession. It was colourful and enthusiastic with slogans. The public meeting continued under the chairmanship of Com. K. Varma, the vice President of CITU and addressed by Com. R. Sukla, the G. Secretary Com. Singhi, the Chairman of Reception Committee, Laxmi Saigal, Vimal Ranadive, Surender Kour and Com. Chayya Bera, the Minister from West Bengal, besides Com. Ranjit Basu, CITU Secretary. The important speeches of Com. Shopat Singh M.P. and Com. Sarala Maheshwari MP which were an attraction of the conference were well received and will be given in the next issue.

The conference came to an end with slogans in support of the federation. Thanks were offered by Com. Surinder Kour on behalf of the Presidium. for the work done by the Rajasthan committee for the delegates and the invitees who addressed the Rally. The conference came to an end with the shouting of slogan 'Federation Zindabad.'

All India Anganwadi Federation of Workers And Helpers Office-bearers of the Committee

President	: Com. Vimal Ranadive
Working President	: Com. Bhabotosh Roy
General Secretary	: Com. Nilima Moitra
Vice-Presients	: Com. Pushpa Sharma Com. Sarojini Balanandan Com. Nirupama Chatterjee Com. Laxmi Saigal
Secretaries	: Com. Madhu Sethia Com. Surendra Kour Com. A. Naximunniza Com. Kiran Moghe
Treasurer	: Com. Neena Rao

Maternity Leave for Miscarriage/abortion-sanctioning Working Committee Members of AICCWW Please Note

The circular mentions here now says they have withdrawn the earlier circular of withdrawal of maternity leave for miscarriage and abortion.

—Editor

The attention of the branches/offices are drawn to our circular No. PER/Main/Cir No. 12/90-91 dt 30.7.90 where in we have informed about the withdrawal of granting maternity leave to female staff members towards miscarriage/abortion with immediate effect. Now IBA, Bombay vide its circular No. PD/HNS/CIR/76/H (v)/1962 dt 21.11.90 has restored the facility and advised all member banks to grant maternity leave towards miscarriage/abortion to female staff members subject to the following conditions.

1. Maternity leave application should be accompanied by a certificate from a Registered medical practitioner who attended on the employee stating inter alia, the number of days rest required as a consequence of miscarriage/abortion.

2. Fitness certificate issued by the same Medical Practitioner should be submitted at the time of joining duty by the staff member concerned.

3. Maternity leave in such cases shall not exceed six weeks at a time and such leave, including maternity leave for delivery should not be more than four occasions in the entire service.

The bank reserves its right to refer to the doctor about the genuineness of the medical certificate in case of doubt.

4. In proven cases of misuse of this facility, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against the erring staff members.

In view of the above, our female staff members shall, while applying for sanction of maternity leave under the above two contingencies, adhere to the above norms scrupulously. This modification comes into force with immediate effect.

Sd/-

B. Venkateswaran
Asst. General Manager

Dear Comredes

1. I hope you have received the previous circular of AICCWW regarding the distribution of delegates to the states for 3rd convention of working women to be held on 12-13th Feb. 1991. You also are aware the meeting of the AICCWW will be held on 11th at 10 A.M. sharp to discuss the proceedings and report etc and all comrades should reach one day earlier to Calcutta. The meeting will be held at Shramik Bhavan.

2. There are some changes now in the distribution of delegates since the West Bengal State Committee has decided that they would take quota of only 150 instead of 200 with the result that the remaining fifty will be distributed among the states, and the weaker states as follows:

West Bengal—150; Kerala—50; Tamilnadu & Pondicherri—50; Andhra—20; Maharashtra—20; Gujrat 5; M. P.—20; U.P. 10; Karnataka—20; Punjab—30; Rajasthan—20; Himachal Pradesh—10; Orissa—10; Delhi—10; Tripura—10; Total 435.

As already reported in the earlier circular the state committee of CITU and Co-Committees should make efforts to include non-CITU, Anganwadi and women under public sector with the object that the convention should represent all sections of the working women.

The convention will be held at Salt Lake Stadium. The information should be given about their arrival and departure to the Reception Committee, Shramic Bhawan, 53 Achaya J.C. Bose Road, Calcutta-700 016.

A request is made to the state Co-Committees to bring their reports in writing so that they can be printed later on.

with greetings,

Comradely yours,
Vimal Ranadive
Secretary

Women's Conference in Durby U. K.

Joginder Bains

A conference on women and employment organised by the Association of Indian Women in Derby was held on 7th October 1990.

The conference gave emphasis to 'Home workers and workers in low paid employment'. The motto of the conference was 'Equal Wage For the Work of Equal Value'. A hundred and fifty men attended the conference. Most of the audience were either home workers or in work of low wage. The walls of the conference hall in the Indian Community Centre were covered with posters displaying messages of women issues such as; discrimination in education employment and in the society in general. The Derbyshire Equal Opportunity Unit, East Midland Regional TUC, Leicester Home workers Campaign and Derby Labour Women also displayed their literature. Kunwinder Bola the president of the Association of Indian Women, in her welcome speech said that women are discriminated against and are victims of inequality.

They are denied equal opportunities in education, training and employment. They are regarded as inferior beings in the society and hence are pushed in low status employment such as homework.

The conference began with paying tribute to sister Dhanwant kaur who was murdered alongwith her 17 year old son Jasbir Singh by Sikh extremists. Dhanwant Kaur's entire family was active for united India and for the cause of working class. They were the main target for the Sikh extremists. Sister Dhanwant Kaur openly exposed the activities of so called Khalistanis. She devoted every breath of her life for the unity of India. Even at the time of her assassination on the 25 August 1990, she was actively involved with organising women for the rally on Punjab issues held on the 26 August 1990 in New Delhi. We salute sister Dhanwant Kaur.

Women speak

Speakers at the conference included Bharti Patel who works with the West Midland Low Pay Unit. She gave details on the working conditions of women in low paid employment and said we must not accept anyone to work and live on such a low wage. She said the Equal Wage Act has failed to bring any change in women's economic situation, they still earn less than their male counterparts.

Women have the sole responsibility for the care of children, disabled and elderly relatives. They have no choice but homework, so that they can fulfill their caring role. Black women, vicism of racism as well as sexism are inhibited to develop their careers. They, especially the Asian women are targetted to homework. Although homeworkers are covered under the Equal Pay Act, racial discrimination prevents them from practicing their legal rights.

Due to lack of information, home workers often do not pay National Insurance and lose their entitlements for maternity leave, holiday pay, statutory sick pay, unemployment benefits and retirement pension. Frequently the National Insurance and income tax deductions are pocketed by their employers and since homeworkers are denied a wage slip, they do not have proof of these deductions. Absence of proof means that they are unable to file a case against their employers.

She ended her speech with encouraging women to join the union that can help them in various ways; to achieve our rights we must unite, she added.

Manjit Tara, works for Leicester Home Workers Campaign Unit, began her speech by reading experiences of two home workers, giving details of their working conditions, long hours and how it deteriorates their health. One homeworker-explained that she starts her day at six O'clock in the morning and complete it

at two O'clock the next morning. By the time she goes to bed whole body aches to such an extent that she is unable to go to sleep. The profits are reaching sky high when homeworkers are denied a decent wage, health and safety provisions and expected to deal with material that are health hazardous. Legally any employer not providing decent working environment can be prosecuted but there are not enough inspectors to carry but health and safety inspections and because of perceived costs for prosecutions, local authorities turn a blind eye on homeworkers and workers in small industries particularly the clothing industries. As long as the interests of the upper classes are being served, the homeworkers and women in low paid employment will continue to be ignored.

Chritine Wood, the Secretary of East Midland Regional TUC, put emphasis on discrimination faced by women workers. They are focused in part-time work, homework and in so called women's jobs.

Since their work is classed as inferior to that of men's work, they are not paid a decent wage. Proving the equal value of work is a long and frustrating task which women have to go through and they frequently give up. A majority of women in low paid work particularly those in clothing industry are not covered by the wage councils and do not have security of work. Their employers take advantages of the situation and continue to exploit them as they wish. She said the unions are fighting to achieve equal wage for work of equal value.

When speaking on European Union in 1992, she said the Trade Union has launched a charter of rights which is opposed by the British Government. Continuing on this issue she said that Britain is the only country that has the Race Relations Act. Absence of such Act in other countries will have a major impact on free movement for black people. They will be further discriminated and their socio-economic situation will be demoralised. We, therefore, must work together for similar Acts in other European Countries too, so that black

people's interests are also served by the European Community.

Prem Pardesi, National Secretary of the Indian Workers Association, discussed the class concept of discrimination and inequalities. He declares that we have a common enemy which is the capitalist system. Our struggle and the aim of which is to get rid of the system and replace it with socialism and to build a classless society where profits will reach those who work for it. Our fight is not between men and women but is against the system that allows discrimination, racism, sexism, exploitation and most of all inequalities.

We all, men and women, must work shoulder to shoulder against this rotten system. We must also acknowledge that women are exploited more than their male counterparts. However when fighting against inequality we must never forget our common enemy.

Mr. Shangari, works for the Centre of Indian Trade Union, Madras, spoke on women's working conditions in India. He said that after independence the Indian Government passed a several very radical legislations, however none of these legislations are implemented. He said that traditions such as Dowry and Sati still exist in contemporary India. He said that CITU is actively opposing these traditions and working towards having the above legislations implemented.

He also said despite the difficulties women are organising themselves and are actively involved with the struggle for women's emancipation and equality.

When speaking on unity of India, he said communalism is a major problem, the country is facing and it is being done under the auspicious of imperialism. However the issues of Punjab, Kashmir, Assam, Gurkhaland are all political issues and can only be resolved politically. Unemployment is reaching sky high, Socialism, he declared is the only solution to the problems India is faced.

Venu Gupta, another unionist from India
(Cont'd on page 23)

Multinational Corporations : Agents of Women Workers Oppression

Twenty years ago when free trade zones/export processing zones were first built in Asia and multinational corporations (MNC) began to establish their operations in Asia, it was claimed that such ventures would expand employment opportunities for women. Indeed, young Asian women were drawn into the industrial workforce in an unprecedented manner. This phenomenon has led to discussions about the impact of industrialisation on women in Asia. Some people suggest that Asian women are gaining economic independence and the experience of working in factories also lead women out of their traditional role as mothers and as housewives.

While the above assertion may be true, it has also been expressed that MNCs are agents of women's oppression. In fact, years of experience have shown that the MNCs of ten manipulate the traditional role of women to their own advantage.

Japanese researcher Tono Haruhi has recently published a detailed study about Shin-Shirasuna Electric Co., a Japanese multinational corporation. By exposing the management tactics of Shin-Shirasuna, Haruhi attempted to demonstrate how a MNC make use of women's lower status in employment to its advantage when restructuring its production for its profits.

Below we summarise the study of Tono Haruhi with additional information about recent moves of Shin-Shirasuna provided by Grassroot Women Workers Centre in Taiwan.

Management Tactics of Shin-Shirasuna : Shin-Shirasuna Electric Co. is a medium-sized Japanese electric company. Its predecessor, Shirasuna Electric, went bankrupt in the recession in 1957. Not long before the bankruptcy, the labour union had successfully forced the management to abolish the practice of requi-

ring all female workers to retire at the age of 25 years. When Shirasuna Electric was replaced by Shin-Shirasuna, the new management started to plan for internal and overseas expansion.

In order to clear its way for expansion, the company had to break up the old pro-labour union. It introduced a new pay scale which favoured male full-time workers and discriminated female workers. At the same time, a pro-management union was formed by 13 male workers. After struggling for three months against the new pay scale, the old Shirasuna union began to lose members because the management promoted the workers who joined the new trade union.

After the pro-labour union was broken up, Shin-Shirasuna embarked on a new expansion. According to Haruhi, Shin-Shirasuna pioneered in the following policies which many Japanese companies later followed. These policies were : 1. employing part-time workers (mostly housewives) in Japan; 2. establishing satellite plants in depopulated rural areas of Japan; 3. Overseas investment in Asia.

Due to shortage of labour, in 1968 the Japanese government established a labour policy to encourage housewives to join the labour force. Shin-Shirasuna took this chance to recruit housewives to work as part-time workers who were paid substantially less than full-time workers, even though when they only work 35 minutes less each day. The full-timers were assigned to supervise the part-timers and made to feel that they had more responsibility.

Due to the management's tactic of divide and rule, the full timers did not see that injustices suffered by their part-time co-workers who were hired and fired according to the production needs of the companies. On the other hand, the part-timers continued to see themselves as housewives rather than working

women. They therefore accepted the unfair treatment.

Between 1964 and 1968, Shin-Shirasuna established 5 satellite plants in depopulated rural area of Japan, hoping to employ young women with lower wages. But in rural Japan, only married women remained. As a result, a large number of housewives were employed in the satellite plants of Shin-Shirasuna. They were paid much less than the working in the main plant and when they reached 40 years old, they were forced to become part-time workers.

Between 1978 and 1982, Shin-Shirasuna closed down most of its domestic plants because of the drastic appreciation of Japanese yen and acute export competition. Japanese workers of Shin-Shirasuna had fought against closure of their plants. Workers at the Nagoya factory joined together in their struggle. Again the company used divide and rule tactics. The full-timers who were in the minority were offered relocation while the part-timers were forced to retire voluntarily. As a result, the part-time workers were left to fight on their own.

Sexual Discrimination in Taiwan Shirasuna : by 1984, Taiwan had become the main production base of Shin-Shirasuna which had started its operation in the Kaohsiung Free Trade Zone as early as 1966. During the peak of its operation, Taiwan Shirasuna employed over 2,800 workers, most of whom were unmarried women.

In Taiwan, Shin-Shirasuna again exploited the largely women workers employing gender tactics. Upon marriage, women workers were forced to retire. They would only be compensated with one month's salary for each year's service. On the other hand, a worker who resigned before she completed 25 year's service would not receive any retirement compensation.

The Grassroot Women Workers Centre in Taiwan reported a case of a woman worker who decided to resign from Taiwan Shirasuna after working there for 8 years. Since she would not

be entitled to any pension nor bonus, she decided to marry her fiancé so as to claim the little retirement compensation she might get from the company.

In 1989, the company announced that women workers who were getting married can continue to work for the company, but they would have to forfeit their earlier years of service and start anew. Other practices in Taiwan Shirasuna which discriminated against women workers include unfair promotion opportunities. Usually women took 8 years to promote from line operators to assistant supervisors. Thereof the positions were all reserved for men. For overtime work, women workers only received one-third of their basic wages which was usually only two-thirds of their overall income (including all the fringe benefits). Before the Taiwanese government's promulgation of the Labour Standard Law in 1984, Taiwan Shirasuna started to employ contract workers because the Labour Standard Law would make it more difficult to retrench regular workers. Contract workers were recruited from smaller factories. They were contracted to work for a certain period of time and could be laid off without any compensation. In 1986 when Taiwan Shirasuna suffered from financial difficulties, the 300 contract workers which the company had employed were the first to be laid off.

With the downturn of the electronic industry in the 80s, Shin-Shirasuna decided to reduce its workforce in Taiwan and opened a new plant in Malaysia. By 1988, only 930 workers remained in Taiwan Shirasuna. Workers from Taiwan were sent to Malaysia to train the workers there.

Since January this year, weekly working hours in Taiwan Shirasuna was reduced. Soon workers discovered that orders and machines were being transferred to Malaysia. The company stopped operating its canteen and commute buses, forcing some workers to resign voluntarily. By the time the company announced its decision to sell 85% of its stock to a

local entrepreneur, only 30 workers remained.

There was a labour union in Taiwan Shirasuna, but it was a pro-management union. Throughout the period when the management slowly reduced its workforce, the union had never taken any action. Even when Shin-Shirasuna decided to move out of Taiwan, the union agreed to it without prior consultation with the workers. Only after workers organised a strike did the Japanese management agree to pay the workers their compensation, but the new management has yet to agree to collective bargaining with the workers' representatives.

Conclusion : By now, it is widely recognised that MNCs moved into Asia for its cheap and docile female labour force. In other words, the MNCs have come to Asia, expecting a submissive labour force. While it is true that Asian women have for centuries been trained to sacrifice themselves for their families, they have been manipulated not because of their submissiveness, rather it was because they had no former experience of working in industries. Moreover, our societies still see women's primary role in marriage and family, thus their low and insecure status in employment is rarely challenged and few trade unions saw the importance of organising women workers.

Thus Shin-Shirasuna has operated from its own country, then in Taiwan, and presently in Malaysia. On each occasion, the company has cleverly manipulated its female employees to maximise its profits.

Concluding her study of Shin-Shirasuna, Tono Haruhi commented that the management tactics of Japanese companies are based on the unorganised status of the women workers, discriminatory wages and by means of forced retrenchment, they regulate their female workforce according to their production needs.

Indeed, while exploiting the low status of women in employment, the MNCs have also been reinforcing the traditional image of Asian women as docile and family-oriented with the way they treat their female employees and preventing them from organising.

Two and a half decades have passed since the first Free Trade Zone was built in Asia, and trade unions are still banned and strike actions forbidden in most of the zones where mostly women are employed. In cases where women workers have succeeded in organising, the MNCs are found harassing union leaders

(Cont'd on page 24)

(From page 20)

also highlighted women's working and social conditions in India.

Surjeet Hothi, Secretary of the Anti-Dowry Campaign, Birmingham, was greeted by the audience with applause. She said that it is true that the Indian culture is a rich culture but it also has negative elements which we must fight against.

Discrimination against girls begin right from birth and in order to save money for dowry girls are deprived of decent food, clothes and equal opportunities for education, training etc. They are constantly reminded of being inferior to boys.

The conference passed a resolution demanding the followings :

1. The Wage Councils that have been abolished by the present Government, should be reinstated across Britain, and should be easily accessible to homeworkers.

2. The employers should be legally obliged to provide a safe working environment for their employees.

3. While acknowledging the work being undertaken by the Trade Union Congress, the Conference strongly urges to accelerate its campaign and take homeworkers in their ranks in struggle for achieving the rights as employees.

4. The homeworkers should have a legal right as employees to influence their working conditions.

5. An adequate number of inspectors should be employed to carry out the Health and Safety inspections.

6. Free child care facilities should be provided for working parents at their work place.

7. The conference recommends that the male workers should play a part in the struggle, in principle, for equal wages without any discrimination as well as equality for women in all walks of life.

57.50 were collected for the Asian people trapped in Middle East.

A classical Hindi Dance was performed by ten years old girl Neema Gutma, and songs on women's working and social conditions were sung by Rita Walia, Shanker Jossila and Iqbal Purewal read their poems.

(From page 2)

in the leadership of the unions and also among working women.

The delegates coming to the Convention should speak about the progress and shortcomings of their activities on this front. Have we been able to establish women's wings in the unions where we are the members, or did the unions try to help women to do this jobs? It is a fact, where the women's wings and the unions moved, launch different type of movements to gather some demands were accepted.

Recently it is observed that the tasks the CITU had taken, is being carried by middle class women employees, forming wings, holding conferences side by side with the unions, leading delegation on various demands, writing in their journals on their specific problems.

The question should be discussed as to why the CITU State Committees and our Co-ordination Committees are not able to do this work in many states. The difficulties of our women and unions if there are any should come for discussions in the convention. It is noted that the enthusiasm seen in the beginning in CITU state committees is slowly diminishing and women workers are little bit disappointed for not taking up their demands. Despite the decision, the state committees are not formed, and where formed, now they are inactive. The convention should discuss this aspect.

It was decided that the unions, federations and women's wings will try to promote women cadres in the higher bodies, bring them on leadership level. One can say it has been done to a certain extent in some industries, mainly in the middleclass employees unions and in some industries like Beedi, construction Coir, etc. The difficulties of illiteracy, ignorance, double work in the house and factory does hinder them to come up at the level of leadership. But to what extent our unions have paid attention to these problems? How far our women also have fought to get the equal rights in these issues. The question of how to co-

ordinate the work among the middle class employees and women workers, in industries, through women's wings and co-ordination Committees etc also should be discussed in the convention. It is not surprising that some of the state CITU committees are not yet aware about the actual functioning of the women's wings, and co-ordination committees, and what was the actual purpose of forming them? Many of the committee members have an idea that it is an organisation of working women and has a membership'. This issue also should be discussed and the complimentary role of AIDWA AND Co-ordination Committee should be understood.

The participation of women in struggles launched by the unions, federations is noted. They are militant, protect the union and the leadership but as com. BTR said "In many strikes that the working class fought there were very few instances when special demands of the working women were given prominence" (1979).

These are some of the issues to be discussed and review our work in the states. It is very serious, that the conference of Anganwadi women held on 4-5 Jan many states could not send delegations, when thousands from Rajasthan rallied and held public meeting. The nearby states too did not send. The difficulties should come before the whole sessionmen and women and correct appraisal be made so that the work began by Com. BTR on the question of most exploited women should gain momentum on the way to progress in this particular work. Responsibility of our CITU unions and State Committees is much and we hope they will do the needful.

(From page 23)

and members, sometimes to the extent of using outright violence. When all these fail, the MNCs would simply close down its operation and move some where else which is what is happening in many Asian countries now.

(Source : Women Workers vs Multinationals : The Shin-Shirasuna's by Tono Haruhi, 'Tmopo', Vol. 20, No. 4 & Vol. 21, No. 1; Grassroot Women Workers Centre, Taiwan.)