



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

National Trade Union Convention Calls for Massive March to Parliament on 25th November

The National Trade Union Convention Against Economic Policies of Central Government held on 13th. September '92 at Mavalankar Hall, New Delhi has given a clarion call to the working class of India irrespective of affiliation, to March to Parliament in terms of lakhs & lakhs on 25th. November, 1992 to once again demonstrate its total opposition to the IMF/World Bank dictated Economic and Industrial Policies of the Central Government. The Convention also called upon the unions of all affiliations to hold State level, Regional level, Industrywise, Area level Conventions, demonstrations, rallies, dharna and jathas to make effective preparations for the March to Parliament.

The Convention was attended by about 2,000 delegates representing different Central Trade Unions, National Industrial Federations and the Federations and Confederations of Central and State Government Employees and NCOA who are constituents of the Sponsoring Committee of Indian Trade Unions.

The Convention was conducted by a Presidium consisting of E. Balanandan (CITU), M.S. Krishnan (AITUC), Kamala Sinha (HMS), D D Shastri (TUCC), Sushil Bhattacharya (UTUC), Michael Fernandez (HMKP), Sunil Mukherjee (UTUC-LS) and Sukhendu Sen (AICCTU).

Speakers while severely criticising the Economic and Industrial Policies expressed concern at the all round deceleration of economy since the new policies has been effected and at the increasing hardship of the people. They pointed out that both the industrial & agricultural productions are coming down, decline in the procurement has brought about collapse in distribution system. Prices are soaring every day. Negative trade balances coupled with increasing current account deficit has further dwindled the BOP position. Now the nation is made increasingly dependent upon foreign loan with heavy dose of debt service commitments.

The Exit Policy which the Government of India

has presented in the name of NRF and the contemplated closure of several PSUs and the VRS came under heavy criticism.

Several speakers have said that New Policy is leading the country towards re-colonisation of the country.

Shri Vireswar Tyagi, Secretary HMS while introducing the resolution has said that no government in the country with the policy of confrontation against the working class could survive in India and this Govt. also will have to go if it continues with its existing policy. Shri Indrajit Gupta, the Vice President of AITUC said that only the organised working class can stall the design of the Central Govt. He further stressed that it had been the resistance of the working class which could slow down the pace of the offensive which the Central Govt. and its foreign backers wanted. Shri M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU blasted the current Govt insinuation that the productivity in Indian Industries is declining. He said productivity in almost all sphere in organised industry had risen to a great extent during the eighties. It was the Govt policy which is now standing in the way of further growth. He was applauded by the audience when he informed the house about the decision of the Co-ordination Committee of Public Sector taken from its Convention held on 12-9-92 for continuous strike against the New Economic Policy and other demands. He called upon the working class to mobilise also the peasantry against the new economic policy and to make the 25th March a biggest working class mobilisation even to take place in capital. Shri Chitta Basu of TUCC has called for massive mobilisation on 25th November, before the Parliament. Shri Prithish Chanda of UTUC (LS) said that Central Govt. has proved through its acts that it is not interested functioning the labour machineries democratically, that is why they have boycotted ILC. He called for massive TU action. Shri Bhagwan Singh, of UTUC, and many other speakers called upon the trade unions to reach the followings of INTUC and BMS urging them to prevail upon the leadership for joining the struggle. If

INTUC and BMS leadership really oppose the new policies they should come forward in support of the people.

Besides these speakers Shri Sukomal Sen MP, A.B. Bardhan, S.K. Vyas, Confederation of Central Govt. Employees and Workers, Sunil Basu Roy MP of Coal Workers Federation, Mr. Jogswar Gope, AICTTU; J.P. Chaubey, AIRF, Com. N.S. Bhargoo of AIREC, Com. R.K. Ganguly of Defence Employees Federation, Com. Jadav Prasad (Steel Workers Federation), Com. Rama Kant Pandey (Fertilizer Workers Federation) Harish Sharma of BEFI, Com. Kedia of Mercantile Federation and Com. Debanjan Chakraborty of Construction Workers Federation also spoke and other leaders of National Federations have addressed the convention.

Summing up the deliberations Com. E. Balanandan called upon the working class to participate in the March to Parliament in a massive way and raise the struggle to such an extent that the Narasimha Rao Govt. is forced to change the policy or made to resign. The resolution adopted unanimously in the Convention is as follows :

Resolution

1. The National Trade Union Convention against Economic Policies of the Central Government organised by the Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions in New Delhi on 13th September, warmly congratulates the 15 million workers and employees all over India who downed their tools on 16th June 1992 in protest against the economic policies of the Narasimha Rao Government.

2. The Convention reiterates the resolution adopted in the previous convention on 16th September 1991 and on 10th May 1992 and notes that during the last one year the economic policies of Narasimha Rao Govt. have had disastrous impact on the Indian people. The prices have gone up steeply, industrial and agricultural production has either stagnated or declined, foreign exchange earnings in dollars have declined despite increase in exports, the costlier imports have made many industries sick while multi-national companies are increasing their grip over economy. The country is almost on the verge of debt trap.

3. The share market scandal has shocked the entire nation with the swindling of financial institutions by the unscrupulous share-brokers by thousands of crores of rupees. The involvement of the Central Minister Chidambaram and the member of Planning Commission V. Krishnamurthy are only tip of the ice-berg. Though the responsibility of the Reserve Bank Governor and the Union Finance Secretary are clearly seen, the Government of India is not forcing them to resign. In spite of the unanimous demand of the trade union movement for resignation

of the Finance Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh for his moral responsibility in the scandal, he continues to go ahead with his detrimental policies with impunity. The attempts to cover up the scam by two Ministers of State for Finance, Rameshwar Thakur and Dalbir Singh as noted by the Joint Parliamentary Committee only highlights the involvement of more Cabinet Ministers and their cohorts in the security scam. The selling of public sector shares is leading to their privatisation and liquidation. The speculators managed to purchase them at throw away prices through the Financial Institutions, which has become a bigger scam involving several thousand crores of rupees. The Chairman of the Committee appointed by the Central Government to suggest policy measures to sell the public sector shares himself was supplying information to speculators and making easy money. Many of the public sector shares have been cornered by the multinational companies through foreign banks. Privatisation of core sector such as oil, power, coal etc. is in full swing.

4. The Chelliah Committee has shamelessly recommended fantastic tax concessions to the corporate sector and higher income bracket group while it failed to recommend taxation on agricultural incomes benefitting the landlords and the rural rich. The Government had announced further concessions to the foreign monopoly capital withdrawing all competitive advantages of the Indian industries which would only add to the ruination of Indian industries. The Dunkel proposals will only benefit multinationals and hit the interests of national industries. The Drug Policy will enhance the prices of medicines adding to the profitability of foreign drug cartels. The Reserve Bank study has already announced bleak prospects of economic development in the forthcoming year.

5. The withdrawal of the fertilizer subsidy and the rise in cost of agricultural inputs is resulting in pushing up the price of agricultural products. The reduction in food subsidy would only put out of gear the public distribution system of essential commodities. In the name of curtailing administrative expenditure the Central Govt. has drastically reduced expenditure of several social welfare measures as a result of which several lakhs of State Govt. employees have been rendered surplus. The new telecom policy will also make a large number of Central Govt. employees surplus.

6. The special Tripartite Committee to go into the impact of the new economic policies has been reduced to a farce since none of the decisions have been implemented in practice. Even the decisions of the industrial committees have either been violated or not implemented. The Government of India announced a package for Textile Industry without even reference to the Industrial Committee. Threat of retrenchment of over 75,000 textile workers is looming large and workers are forced to accept voluntary Retirement Scheme. The promised budgetary support has yet to reach the textile mills with

(Cont'd on page 23)

Public Sector Workers to Prepare for Continuous Strike

The extended meeting of Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions held on 12th September '92 in Constitution Club, New Delhi has called upon the public sector workers to prepare for continuous action. The meeting which has been attended by 250 delegates from industrial federations representing steel, coal, Fertilizer, construction workers, Hyderabad and Bangalore Co-ordination Committee, LIC, Bank and many other public sector unions have asked their units to prepare for the strike through a series of campaign programmes including conventions, demonstrations, lunch boycott, 1/2 hour taken strike. The trade unions will meet in Hyderabad on 3rd and 4th December to finalise the strike and other details. The following resolution has been unanimously adopted in the meeting which was conducted by a Presidium consisting of M.S. Krishnan (AITUC), V.V. Cherian (CITU), Kamala Sinha, M.P. (HMS), M.N. Jha (BMS) Michael Fernandes (JAF, Bangalore) and V.S. Bose (Co-ordination Committee Hyderabad).

Resolution

The Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions expresses its grave concern at the serious situation prevailing in public sector undertakings in the wake of new economic policies of the Govt of India. The very existence of this premier sector of our economy is at stake.

The public sector undertakings which played an effective role in creating a self-reliant economy in India developed a stagnant character due to bureaucratic bungling and erroneous policies. The unutilised capacity is very high and many are incurring heavy losses. 23 lakh employees working in 244 undertakings having investments of over a lakh crores of rupees are extremely worried about their future.

The disinvestment of shares of profit making undertakings, is privatisation through the back door. The selling of these shares at throw away prices have helped speculators in the stock market to garner huge profits. Without studying the assets position the Government of India frittered huge resources bulk of which have been cornered by the multinational companies. The CPSTU demands that there should be a thorough probe in this scam and stop selling further shares in the stock market.

The budgetary support to several central public sector undertakings has been stopped with the result that they are becoming more sick and are starved of funds. Despite assurance by the Union Finance

Minister they are yet to receive necessary assistance. The, 58 undertakings which have been declared as sick have been referred to BIFR which has already started going ahead with the cases despite assurance given by the Union Labour Minister that the BIFR would wait till the outcome of the special tripartite committee. The Committee headed by Union Dy Labour Minister recommended that the financial assistance to sick undertakings should continue. However, these recommendations remained only on paper.

The special tripartite committee and the industrial committees have given some recommendations which have remained unimplemented so far making them meaningless. The assurance of the Union Finance Minister that in the units which are showing profit in current working but are incurring losses due to past liabilities, steps would be taken to write them off, remains unimplemented. Several units have no funds even to purchase raw material.

The World Bank report on Central Public Sector undertakings recommended closure of most of the public sector units which is a gross interference in India's internal affair and the CPSTU records its strong protest at this insult to our country's sovereignty and right to decide its own economic policies.

The government is practically killing well run undertakings like BHEL by giving orders to foreign multinationals. The recent deal between Railway Ministry and ABB which was cleared by Jaffer Sharief, Railway Minister has been rightly criticised by the Parliamentary Committee. In Oil, Power Generation and other core sectors multinational companies are given free entry affecting the growth of public sector industry in India. It also goes against the nationally accepted policies of the self-reliance.

The closure of sick units and retrenchment of lakhs of public sector workers is on the cards. This meeting opposes the constitution of National Renewal Fund which is mainly meant for retrenchment compensation for the workers. It resolutely opposes retrenchment and closure of the sick units and demands that attempts should be made to revive them so that indigenous investment is saved and workers are not thrown out of jobs.

The workers in public sector undertakings are facing serious problems which have been kept pending for a long time. The virtual ban on wage negotia-

tions despite assurance to withdraw it continues, the recommendations of the tripartite committee on DA for public sector undertakings still remain unimplemented, the agreements regarding pension schemes in coal and steel and other industries have not yet been implemented, the ban on recruitment is continuing on the one hand, the contractor's workers are growing alarmingly in regular employments on the other. Despite cooperation offered by the trade unions to improve performance genuine schemes of workers participation in management are not implemented in public sector undertakings. Several other pressing demands of workers remain unattended which is having demoralising effect on the workers.

The CPSTU firmly believes that the public sector should be saved at all cost and the trade union movement is committed to improve its performance so that it can continue to play an important role in the economy.

The CPSTU therefore, calls upon the workers and employees in public sector to launch a country-wide campaign on the following issues:

1. Put an end to the policy of disinvestment and privatisation of public sector.
2. Revive all the sick public sector units in cooperation with trade unions through workers participation in management.
3. Withdraw ban on negotiations in public sector and immediately commence wage negotiations wherever they are pending.
4. Immediately implement the recommendation of Tripartite DA Committee and finalise the slab system in consultation with Trade Unions.
5. Remove ceilings on Bonus and gratuity.
6. Withdraw ban on recruitment in all public sector undertakings.
7. Abolish contract labour in permanent and perennial nature of jobs and stop offloading of jobs.
8. Stop entry of multinationals in the Indian industries.
9. Put an end to corruption and malpractice and bureaucratic bungling in public sector.
10. Ensure full administrative autonomy and accountability in all the public sector units.

With a view to achieve these demands through joint movements of public sector workers and employees this meeting calls upon the working class to

organise the following programme of action:

i) On October 8, 1992 : Organise Food boycott inside the work place. On the same day there will be demonstration at the gates and a telegram will be sent by every union to the Prime Minister on the demands of public sector workers.

ii) On October 12, 1992 : Effigies of IMF conditionalities, Exit Policy, Closure of Units, NRF, Privatisation etc will be burnt in front of all work places in all the shifts in the units.

iii) On October 28, 1992 : The employees will demonstrate for half an hour after commencement of the shift and workers will mark attendance late by half an hour.

iv) The CPSTU emphasise that the struggle to defeat the retrograde policies of the Government has to be continuous, consistent and militant. It is with this understanding that the CPSTU calls upon all the workers and employees in public sector undertakings to prepare for an indefinite strike in public sector undertakings, if the Government of India does not settle the demands. The details of the programme will be chalked out by the extended meeting of the CPSTU to be held at Hyderabad on 3rd and 4th of December 1992. Prior to that the Core Committee of the CPSTU will meet in November, 1992 to consider the question of improvement in the functioning of CPSTU at all levels.

v) The CPSTU will organise a National Seminar on the "New Economic Policy and the Public Sector Undertakings" in Bombay, the date of which will be fixed in consultation with unions in Public Sector in Bombay.

The CPSSU appeals to all the workers and employees in public sector undertakings to rally with full strength to make the phased programme of action a grand success.

Draft of the Telegram to be Sent to the Prime Minister on 8th Oct. 1992.

*Prime Minister
Government of India
New Delhi-1*

Strongly Protest at the Non-Implementation of the Recommendations of the Tripartite Committee on DA, Ban on Negotiations In Public Sector Refusal to Implement Agreed Pension Scheme, Failure to Remove Ceiling on Bonus and Gratuity, Policy of Privatisation Entry of Multinationals Disinvestment and Closures Stop Demand Immediate Action to Settle the Problems.

(Name of the union)

Copy to be sent by post to CPSTU

Hoax of Falling Inflation Rate

A Mathematical Jugglery

Tapen Sen

There is much euphoria over falling inflation rate in the power-that-be circle & much self-congratulating gesture in the North block over the same, being projected as the infallible efficacy of the economic liberalisation measures. And essentially with the coinage of figures of declining point to point inflation rate during last 4/5 weeks, the great Economist cum Bureaucrat turned politician, the Finance Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh has gone recently to knock the doors of IMF & World Bank to beg for more funds.

The intellectuals in the pro-liberalisation camp lost no time to explain with renewed vigour how faultless the prescription of the great masters of World Bank/IMF was to restore the country's economy to health. As if the Manamohanomics has turned the clock of rising prices back by its magic wands. And the common people depressed with waiste-breaking inflationary pressure have to digest such intellectual diliriums being propogated through electronic and printmedia regarding falling inflation rate.

Mathematical Jugglery

But much remained untold in the midst of so many things told through mass media. It has not been told that the point to point inflation rate during the weeks of July-August September 1992 being projected as falling are calculated in relation to inflation rate of the corresponding period during the previous year (1991) which marked a steep and abnormally rising trend in 1991, and it is nothing but a escalating denominator with a comparatively slow moving numerator that is pushing down the rate. Denominator escalated since it was around the same period in 1991 heavy injection of inflationary factors was made in the economy through massive devaluation of rupee and other deregulatory measures. That led to steep rise in price level during July-August 1991 pushing inflation rate to all time high level during the preceeding 0 years period. In fact, during August 1991 the inflation peaked to the highest double digit level in last two decades. Hence comparison between the peak point of the reptile type curvature and any point at either side of it is bound to yield a down-ward trend and it is nothing but an opportunistic mathematical caricature designed to befool the people.

Import Compression Suppressed Real Impact of Devaluation

It is no doubt that the movement of the wholesale price index during July-August 1992 followed

less steep a path albeit having an upward trend. And such comparatively lower rate of price-rise during said period can be attributable not to the magic wand of so-called liberalisation programmes but to severe import-compression measures, tight credit policy and stringent expenditure-management and other deflationary measures adopted under situation of compulsion by the Government to tackle the immediate jerk of the inflationary pressure let loose by the initiation of several deregulatory drives in the economy by the Govt itself. Such tight fiscal and monetary measures must have to be a purely temporary phenomenon and the Govt must have to release the control further if its own liberalisation policy has to advance, indication of which has already started surfacing.

Even the full inflationary impact of devaluation is yet to be felt in the economy owing to severe import compression during 1991-92. Because of such import compression, increased cost of imported inputs did not become that big a factor in the inflationary spiral except having pushed up the cost of imported essentials.

But since April '92 import compression got considerably relaxed. Import took off considerably during first three-four months of 1992-93 particularly in the areas of industrial inputs. Hence in reality direct impact of devaluation is expected to be felt more by the consumers during the months to come, besides broadening the trade deficit and Bop gap in the face of sluggish export.

Falling Inflation (?) With Rising Prices

Besides above, the measures of point to point inflation rate on which the north block economist is so much banking upon cannot reflect real face of the price situation. A falling inflation rate on point to point basis does not necessarily mean fall in prices and it would be sheer hypocrisy to project this as indication of easing inflationary pressure on the people, shutting eyes to other factors in the price-panorama. The entire period of July-August 1992 revealing marginal fall in inflation rate on point to point basis is at the same time marked with consistent rise in prices of commodities and the price index except a very marginal fall in wholesale price index during the week ending 22nd August '92. Not only that during this entire period of July-August '92 wholesale price of food articles marked consistent rise ranging from 0.7% to 1% per week on the average.

During the week ending July 25, 1992 price of wheat marked a rise to the tune of 2%, fish by 7%.

During next week wheat marked a rise in prices by 4%, fish by 6%, Dal by 7% and rice by 1% and during the week next the price of drugs like tetracycline rose by more than 5%. Edible oil price for the entire four weeks period (i.e. period of fall in inflation rate) increased at the rate of 1.5% per week and marked a 0.5 percent fall in the fifth week only, again going up in the next week.

Point to Point Inflation—Unsound Measure

In fact the point to point inflation rate is not a sound indicator of the price trend a normal seasonal flexibility in prices during the year cast undue influence to make it not representative enough to the trend of the price movement throughout the year. Hence, it is but natural for the proponents of the present macro-economic gymnastic in the Government to juggle with this measure to play over-optimistic confusion all around.

But the wind gets released of the balloon of such self-patting over-optimism when annualised aggregate inflation rate is taken into account. It is practically that rate about which Dr. Manmohan Singh referred to in his letter to IMF Chief, and has been projected to be around 12.5 percent during the current year, i.e. the same as in 1991-92. The difference in annualised aggregate inflation rate and the point to point one well explains the inefficacy of the later measure.

Moreover, even if inflation rate on certain selected mass consumable items is looked into, the utopia of so-called falling inflation rate essentially calculated even on the basis of averaged wholesale price index with much defective and unbalanced weightage on the priorities, stands exposed. Between July 25, 1991 and in the same day in 1992 the rate of inflation for foodgrains was as high as 25 percent while in case of cereals it was 29 percent which will speak for themselves.

1991-92—Not to be The year to Compare with

Further, the year 1991-92 being the year of initiation of the new macro economic programmes of the Government, revealing peak-level inflation as immediate response to such policies, should not be treated 'base' for measuring impact of the following year. In all propriety the year 1989-90 (the year of pronouncement of election manifesto of the ruling party and also the year where Cong-I cherished to return in respect of price level within 100 days) i.e. the year which did not taste the so called innovative policies of the Government of India, should be the year to compare with.

Between 1989-90 and 1991-92 the wholesale price index for food articles rose to the tune of 34.5 percent that for non-food primary articles by 38.3 per-

cent and as a whole the price index went up by 25.3 percent. The consumer price index during the said period marked an increase to the tune of 26.49 percent and the same for the agricultural labourers increased by more than 28.4 percent. The cumulative rate of inflation during the last 2 years as on the week ending August 8, 1992 was around 25.7 percent although on the same date inflation rate on point to point basis marked a fall from 9.1 percent to 8.7 percent.

More Paper Management Than Managing the Prices

Even, while not commenting on the lunacy of the effort to tackle inflation by compressing effective demand on the part of the Government in a situation where the need of the overwhelming majority of the population does not at all constitute 'effective demand' in classical economic sense, anybody with little sanity has to term the euphoria over falling inflation rate either as insanity or the naive design to cheat the people. Whatever the North Block claims about the efficacy of price-Management, the reality stands exposed by the editorial comment of Financial Express on 22nd September, 1992 which says "the fiscal deficit reflects more the Finance Ministry's Book-Keeping abilities than good Management. Whatever be the inflation rate being registered, this is on the top of the double digit rate of the past year". In other words it is sheer mathematical gymnastic the Finance Ministry is displaying in respect of inflation to make to fool of others.

Much yet remains to be seen on price Movement front. Around the time when the Indian Finance Minister proudly flaunted on his credit of bringing down inflation rate, while meeting IMF Masters, the petroleum prices have already been hiked considerably; few days before it was the announcement regarding increase in procurement price of food grains which as a corollary would ultimately lead to increase its issue prices. All these are going to bring about cascading effect on price level to be reflected in the price-figures in the coming months. No doubt the North Block officials have to invent some other measures to claim credit and pat themselves and also to befool the people!

Editorial Board

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Anganwadi Workers Stage Large Demonstration in Bombay

Kiran Moghe

In response to a call given by the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers, about 2500 Anganwadi employees belonging to the Anganwadi Karmachari Sanghathan (Maharashtra) participated in a march to the Maharashtra State Secretariat on the 16th September 1992.

This was despite the fact that the previous days newspapers carried an announcement by the Prime Minister, Shri P V Narasimha Rao that the central Government would increase the honourarium of workers and helpers by Rs. 125/- and Rs. 90/- respectively, from 2nd October 1992. But the announcement of this meagre increase had absolutely no effect on the motivation and militancy of the women who poured into Bombay on 16th morning to express their opposition to the government that treats them as voluntary workers. As many of them reiterated, our main demand still remains that we should be recognised as full time government employees, and be given a regular scale and other resultant benefits.

It will be recalled that the government of Maharashtra had increased the honorarium of Anganwadi workers and helpers by Rs. 100 and Rs. 75 respectively from May '92 onwards. However, this could not be considered an 'increase' in any terms, because the state government had also burdened the employees with an extra hour's work at the Anganwadi Centre (from four hours to five) and the additional responsibility of maintaining immunisation and other health records of children in the age group 6-15 years.

Since there is a possibility that the Government of Maharashtra may conveniently adjust the increase in honorarium granted by the Centre against the State Government increase, representatives of the Sanghathana met the State Minister of Rural Development, Shri Basahed Kedar, and the Social Welfare Minister, Ramdas Athavale, and told him that the Anganwadi employees would not be satisfied unless they received the full share of the central increase.

Both Ministers appeared to respond favourably to the demand of the union, and promised to take up the matter with the Chief Minister, Shri Sudhakarao Naik. The Sanghathana has decided to follow up the matter by taking a delegation to meet the Chief Minister in the next few days.

Apart from the demand for regularisation as government employees the charter of demands included a demand for an ex-gratia payment as a festival allowance, payment of a consolidated

'meeting allowance'. Irrespective of the distance of the anganwadi centre, permission for workers in remote areas to be accompanied by the helper when attending meetings with a provision for the helpers TA & DA, increase in the stipend paid during the training period, payment for any additional duties imposed on the employees, and preference in recruitment to supervisory posts.

The Minister assured the delegation that he would consider all these demands, and especially recommend the payment of 'meeting allowance' and increase in training stipend to the central government as these were decisions to be taken by the government of India at the ministry level.

The delegation was given a copy of the government notification specifying the recruitment rules for anganwadi workers, whereby the regional selection boards have been asked to give preference to anganwadi workers and helpers while recruiting supervisors. However, it is believed that due to widespread corruption in these selection boards, deserving workers do not get a chance to be selected. The Sanghathana has therefore decided to pressurise the state govt to do away with the regional selection boards and directly recruit ICDS supervisors with 75% posts reserved for anganwadi workers and helpers.

The Minister also categorically state that no additional duties would be imposed by the state government on the workers and helpers.

The delegation also brought the problem of temporary appointment of anganwadi workers in the urban projects to the attention of the Social Welfare Minister. These employees are given orders for 29 days and a service break on the last day of the month. In practice, however, they are required to work continuously, and in other words, the government makes use of their services without paying them wage for the day the break is given. This exploitative practice has been continuing in some urban projects for more than two years. The Minister promised to look into the matter and put an end to it at once.

The rally was attended by women from interior parts of Maharashtra, some of whom travelled for more than two days to reach Bombay. Women came from Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, Parbhani, Amravati, Nagpur, Pune, Sangli and Satara.

The delegation consisted of state CITU presi-
(continued on Page 8)

2nd All India Conference of Construction Workers Federation of India

The 2nd all India Conference of CWFI was held at Mangalam auditorium, B. T. R. Nagar, Thoppumpady, Cochin, Kerala, from 21st to 23rd August 1992. 405 delegates/observers from 11 states attended the conference. 15 delegates were female.

The presidium comprising of Com. M.K. Pandhe, Com. Raghunath Kusari, Com. T.M. Mohammed and Com. C. Kannan presided over the 3 day long conference.

Com. M. M. Lawrence, Secretary, CITU and convener, Left and Democratic Front of Kerala in his inaugural speech told that the Indian working class have to accept big challenge thrown before them. He appealed to the working class to fight the IMF dictated economic and industrial policies of the govt which has posed a real threat to the sovereignty of the country.

Com. M. K. Pandhe, General Secretary of CITU and President of CWFI in his presidential address told that the New Economic Policy of the Central Government would bring disaster to the national economy. He criticised the Govt for its mad drive of dismantling the public sector. He said that the Exit policy is nothing but a policy of massive retrenchment of workers. He also spoke on the long pending demands of the construction workers and urged for joint movement with other trade unions in the industry for realising the demands.

Fraternal greetings for the conference were received from African National Congress, Charge D' Affairs, Cuba, International Labour Organisation, ZENROREN, Japan, WFTU, French Construction Workers Union, France, Indian Workers Association Great Britain, All India State Govt Employees Federation, Chief Minister, Govt of West Bengal. V.R. Krishna Iyer, and many other fraternal organisations.

Com. Debanjan Chakrabarti, General Secretary, CWFI, placed the report for discussion, Com. K.C. Ghose placed the Annual Audited accounts for discussion and approval. Forty delegates took part in the discussion on general secretaries' report.

The following resolutions have been passed by the conference unanimously (1) On comprehensive central legislation for construction workers (2) On Bipartite National Wage Committee for Construction Workers (3) Against the Govt of India New Economic and Industrial Policy, (4) On Punjab, (5) On Cuba, (6) Reduction of Building Materials Price, (7) On Housing Right, (1) Working Class peasantry alliance and, (9) Against communal and divisive forces. General secretary's report and

accounts have been also passed unanimously by the conference. The following programmes have been taken :

1. Parliament March in 3rd week of November, 1992.

2. One day before Parliament march of November 1992 construction workers mass dharna before Prime Minister's House.

3. 4th November 1992 will be observed as all India Demand Day by holding rallies demonstration at local level, taluk level, district level and state level.

4. All the affiliated unions and associations will send telegram to the Prime Minister demanding central legislation and bipartite national wage committee for construction workers.

5. Signature campaign will be done on the basis of a memorandum addressed to the Prime Minister, Government of India. Target fixed for 5 lakhs signatures by November 1992 first week.

6. Target of membership has been fixed at to lakhs by the end 1993.

The conference has elected a 45 members working committee with Com. M.K. Pandhe as president and Com. Debanjan Chakraborty as General Secretary.

The open session was preceded with a colourful procession of thousand of construction workers of Kerala, Tamilnadu and A P. The mass meeting was presided over by Com. M K Pandhe and addressed by Com. C Kannan, Com. E K Nayanar. Polit Bureau Member, CPI (M) Ex-Chief Minister of Kerala and Com. Lonappan Nambadan, MLA.

(From Page 7)

dent Com. Prabhakar Sanzgiri. Sanghathana President Ahilya Rangnekar; General Secretary Kiran Moghe, and Dalimbi Vaidya (Gadhiron), Jyoti Lodarliwar (Chandrapur) M. Cornelins Nagpur), Shanta Shinde and Rajani Pisal (Pune), Kanta Bhusari (Amravati) and Shobha Paratkar (Parbhani), all workers and helpers from the various districts and members of the state committee of the organisation.

The march ended in a public meeting that was addressed by the state treasurer of the organisation Vinaya Deshapande, organising secretary, Shubha Shamim Anganwadi employees from various districts, state CITU leaders and representatives of the Janwadi Mahila Sanghathana SFI and DYFI.

Chelliah Report Echoes IMF Design in India

The Secretariat of The Centre of Trade Unions has issued the following statement to the press :

It is not surprising that the Chelliah Panel, like Narasimham Committee report on Bank Reform is singing to the tune of IMF/World Bank on the so-called restructuring package for India. The final report of Chelliah Committee—if implemented—will further contribute to the destabilisation of Indian Economy.

On the plea of attracting foreign investment the Chelliah Committee has surrendered itself to the blackmail of the multinationals by extending enormous concessions to them. After having reduced the custom from 220 per cent to 110 per cent through its interim report, the final report has suggested equalisation of tax rate on corporate profit both for multinationals and indigenous industries. This would pave the way for elimination of a number of Indian industries. Even if the Government accepts the maximum differential of 7.5 per cent, which the panel allowed reluctantly, the corporate tax rate on foreign investment would come down to 47.5 per cent from the existing 65 per cent, as the panel has recommended the reduction of corporate tax for indigenous industries itself to 40 per cent by 1994-95 from the existing level of 51.7 per cent.

In view of very direction of the Chelliah Committee, to further boost the oligopolies of multinationals and Indian monopolists, one is not at all surprised at the Committee's total refusal to suggest any measure in unearthing the huge amounts of black money which would come around 75,000 crores by any reasonable estimate.

The panel did not find any logic in raising the minimum income limit to attract income tax, but true to its moorings has called for further reduction of income tax within the Rs. 50,000 to 2 lac bracket. The recommendation for so called agricultural tax on non-agriculturists is a smoke screen to continue keeping the big farmers and landlords out of the net.

All these has left open the possibilities for widening the net of indirect taxation in the country, through the tunnel for restructuring excise duty as was recommended by the Chelliah Panel. This put in simple terms is further attacks on the living standard and purchasing power of the masses.

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions calls upon the Government to reject the Chelliah Panel Report. It calls upon the trade union movement to voice united protest and to expose the lobbies being groomed by IMF/World Bank within the socio-political life of the country.

CITU Calls for Nationwide Campaign against Govt Policy of hiking prices

The Secretariat of CITU has issued the following statement to press :

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions shares with people their grave concern and common anguish at the sudden spurt in market prices after the announcement of hike in petrol and petroleum products' prices. This increase has set the stage for the contemplative hike in coal prices and train fare which the Government of India has already began airing to press.

The CITU calls upon the working class to join the masses in their protest against the Government policy to increase prices through the hike of administrative prices,

The CITU expresses its support to West Bengal Bandh called by the Left Front on 23rd September and calls upon the working class to express solidarity with West Bengal organising rallies and demonstration on that day all over the country.

Massive General Strike in West Bengal

Quite in consistence with their advanced consciousness and democratic and struggling spirit the people of West Bengal recorded their emphatic protest, against Central Govt's recent decision for hike in price of petroleum & petroleum products, through massive BANDH throughout the state on 23rd September '92. Left Front had given a call for 12 hours bandh in West Bengal to protest such disastrous action for price hike of petrol leading to another spurt on already existing inflationary pressure and consequent distress of the common people. The Working class of Bengal and all the left trade unions responded to such call by deciding for 24 hours industrial strike. Both the industrial strike and Bandh were a total success inspite of opposition and resistance from Congress (I) and BJP leadership and their trade unions, and many people & workers even in their fold of influence joined the strike action enmasse.

Struggles in Tamilnadu

CITU Unions in Taminadu are in the midst of organisationally preparing for the next phase of action at the National level and also at State level. District Conferences of CITU and state level Conferences of Industrial Federations are being held. All the District Conferences of CITU and those of the working women's Co-ordination Committees are to be held by December 1992. It has also been decided that the State Conference of CITU and the state level Conference of Working Women will be held in April '93.

Already District Conferences have been held in Madras, Trichy, North Arcot, Coimbatore and Salem. 4 more conference are to be held in September—Tanjore, Ramanadhapuram—Pasumpon, Nii-giries and Madurai Rural District. Officebeares of the State Committee are attending and guiding all these Conference. Over coming the organisational weaknesses and strengthening the political movements and campaigns are the major points being stressed in these Conferences. Massive rallies and public meetings are also being organised in connection with these Conferences.

Federations of State Transport Employees, Water and Drainage Board Employees, Handloom workers and Textile workers have held their Conferences during the last three months.

State Level Demonstrations

Demonstrations and rallies were organised all over the state by CITU Unions on 24th August demanding amendments to Bonus Act and against the Anti-labour policies of the State Government. A memorandum, against the various anti-labour policies and attitude of the State Government and also demanding amendments to Bonus Act, addressed to the Chief Minister were submitted to the authorities at all places of demonstration. Various sections of workers participated in the demonstrations.

Contract Workers Court Arrest

More than 10,000 Contract Workers including more than 1000 women Workers in State Electricity Board courted arrest by picketing State Govt. Offices on 26th August. Workers were demanding implementation of the Justice Khalid Commissions order to regularise 18,006 Contract Workers in State Electricity Board. The Board and the State Government has been refusing to implement the order and has again approached the Supreme Court. It was in such a situation that the Central organization of Tamilnadu Electricity Employees (COTEE) and CITU gave the call for picketing.

CITU Leaders and leaders of the Electricity Employees Union (CGTEE) led the picketers in all the centres, COTEE has been conducting a protracted struggle for the last few years, in defence of the

much exploited contract workers.

Against Privatisation of Medical Education

Thousands of Men and Women Courted arrest all over Tamilnahu on 1st September, protesting against the State Government's handing over of a taken over private Medical College. Medical College students and other students have been on strike and struggles against the State Government's decision and the Government has been taking repressive actions against the struggling students National Front and Left parties had given a call for picketing of Govt. Offices on 1st September and CITU, AITUC, LPF and other Trade Unions also decided to participate in the picketing.

The State Government, in the name of preventive arrests, arrested more than 25,000 people including leaders of participating organisation five days before the picketing. But, braving all the repressive actions thousands of men and women assembled at the picketing centers and courted arrest. Large sections of CITU workers also participated in the struggle.

AICCWW Condemns Unpardonable Negligence of Shivkasi Cracker factory Owner

The All India Co-ordination Committee of working Women (CITU) severely condemns the callous cracker factory owners in Shivakasi whose unpardonable negligence has once again caused the tragic death by fire of 16 innocent lives of women and child labourers.

Despite the Supreme Court judgement against employment of child labour and protection against health hazards, this is not the first accident of its kind. A few days back 69 lives were lost in Dawn factory. The report of the expert panel appointed by the Supreme Court has suggested stringent action against these profit making factory owners, which is still pending to be enacted. It is to be noted that these children are given Rs. 2/- or so. Despite the ILO Convention on Child Labour, judgements of the Supreme Court and protests all over India by women's organisations not to employ children in the hazardous industries, the employment of children continues unabatedly. The AICCWW demands : (i) strict punishment for these factory owners and (ii) adequate compensation to the families of the children killed in the accident (iii) the Central Govt should be strict to implement the laws against health hazards and employment of children.

Management—BJP Govt Combine Attack on TU at Gwalior

Once again the BJP run state administration of Madhya Pradesh is on the news for its barbarous attack on the trade union leaders, workers including their women folk and the innocent public. This time the venue is Gwalior.

The J. C. Mills management of Gwalior have been conspiring to close the mills since some times. Over the year the number of workers has been reduced from forty thousand to about eight thousand. It has been reported that the BJP Govt of the state is conniving with the management in its current nefarious game.

The salary for the month of August has not been paid to the mill workers by the management as yet. Obviously the agitated workers have been demanding the payment of salary. Peaceful meeting, deputation to the management and govt did not yield any result. The Minister of the State Govt and the management went on giving empty assurances only.

On 19th September 1992 when a complete peaceful meeting was going on at the mill gate suddenly the agents of the management and group of anti-socials went into action and started looting of shops and setting on fire the houses of workers. This was the situation the police was in need to go into action. Immediately Sec. 144 was promulgated and indiscriminate lathi charge was resorted to on the innocent workers. Simultaneously large scale arrest of leaders and cadres also begun.

On the night of 19-9-92 curfew was clamped rather silently without making any announcement through public address system or news papers. In the morning when the people particularly the women folk came out of their houses for fetching water from the wayside tap and for other morning work they were brutally lathi charged by the police. Unaware of the curfew the people were unable to make out the reason for the brutal police action on them.

All total 187 leaders and cadres were arrested on concocted and fabricated false charges. Com. Sailendra Saily, Secretary, Madhya Pradesh State Committee of CPI(M) and Com. Badal Soraj, Secretary MP State Committee of CITU were arrested from the CPI(M) Office. The arrested also included the senior TU leaders of textile workers Com. Rambilas Goswami and Com. Harijan Batham and Com. Kanti Prasad Rathor. About one hundred workers have been injured due to lathi charge by police. The police raided the houses of CPI (M) and CITU leaders and even attacked their family members.

A meeting of all political parties was held on 20-9-92 and condemned the management and state administration for the atrocities inflicted on the TU leaders and workers and held the management and state administration fully responsible for the entire incident. The meeting demanded the unconditional

release of the arrested leaders and withdrawal of all cases lodged against them and also immediate release of payment to the workers. An all party demonstration was also organised before the office of the Divisional Commissioner on 21.9.92 which was attended by more than one thousand workers defying curfew.

Com. Saifudding Choudhury, CPI (M) M P visited Gwalior on 22.9.92. He met the arrested leaders at the jail, visited the areas and talked to the workers affected by police atrocities. He also met the Divisional Commissioner of Gwalior and lodged strong protest for the repression let loose by the administration and management. While addressing a press conference there he severely criticised the BJP Govt of the state for its antiworking class policy and appealed for joint movement to combat the onslaught the Working class.

CITU Denounces Hike in Petroleum and Cooking Gas Prices

The Secretariat of Centre of Indian Trade Unions has issued the following statement to the press :

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions denounces steep hike in the prices of petrol, diesel, cooking gas and other petroleum products announced by the Government of India. This is expected to fetch an amount of Rs. 1200 crores in the current financial year and will make all kinds of transportation and industrial production costlier which will in turn accelerate prices of all commodities and services. The hike in prices of cooking gas will make the middle class living more difficult,

The Government of India has introduced this administered price hike in response to the specific commitment made to IMF towards fulfilling the condition for further loan. This has further vindicated that the so called 'structural adjustment' programme is not at all an independent wisdom of the Government of India but the compulsion arising from loan conditionalities. Now the nation is taken to a stage when each and every visit to IMF by our Finance Minister is preceded with a series of hike in administrative prices.

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions calls upon the working class to raise massive protest against the atrocious move of the Central Government, alongwith other section of people.

All India Convention of Unorganised Workers

The meeting of the All India Coordination Committee of Workers of the unorganised Sector was held at the UITU Central office, New Delhi on August 30, 1992. The following comrades attended the meeting.

Mrinal Das, Piyush Sarkar, Nikhil Mukherjee, Nirmal Jana, Masudal Hussain (West Bengal); S. Chandrasekhar (Tamilnadu); Chandrasekhar (Punjab) and Wagarul Ahad (Rajasthan).

Comrades M K Pandhe and P K Ganguly attended the meeting from the centre. Com M K Pandhe presided over the meeting.

On the basis of a written report placed by Com. Mrinal Das, the convenor, the members took part in discussions and the following decisions were taken:

1. The All India Convention of workers of the unorganised sector, which was earlier proposed to be held in September, will now be held on November 1, 2 and 3, 1992 at Panihati, Calcutta.

2. Reception Committee has been formed under the chairmanship of Com. Subhash Chakrabarty, Minister of Youth Welfare and Tourism, Govt of West Bengal and Vice-President of West Bengal State Committee of CITU.

3. Statewise Delegation: It was earlier decided that the total number of delegates would be 400. However, West Bengal informed that the Reception Committee can accommodate upto 600 delegates. The meeting, therefore, decided that each State can increase its number of delegations by 1/3 in excess of the quotas fixed in the meeting held in May which is as follows:

Delhi 30, Rajasthan 12, Haryana 10, Karnataka 10, Punjab 25, M.P. 10, Himachal Pradesh 7, U.P. 20, Kerala 60, Bihar 20, Assam 10, Tamilnadu 30, Orissa 10, Gujarat 15, Tripura 5, Andhra Pradesh 25, Maharashtra 15 and West Bengal 125.

All State Committees should inform the Convenor about the actual number of delegates attending the conference by 15 October, positively.

4. Delegate fee will be Rs 50 inclusive of board and lodging.

5. All delegates must reach Calcutta by 1st November morning and inform the Convenor accordingly the exact time and train of their arrival.

6. All delegates are advised to book their return ticket from the place of origin itself.

7. A bulletin will be published by the Reception Committee on the occasion of the convention containing articles from M K Pandhe, Com P K Ganguly, Com Chittabrata Majumdar, Com Mrinal Das, etc. The bulletin would be published in English, Hindi and Bengali. All State Committees are requested to inform the Convenor about the number of bulletins required by them by 15 September positively. Price of the bulletin would be Rs. 2/ per copy.

8. All State Committees should send their reports on unorganised workers to the Convenor positively by 25 September with a copy to the CITU Centre. The reports should also contain informations regarding the number of unions affiliated to CITU in the unorganised sector in each state, their membership, movements, achievements, etc in the questionnaire form which was earlier sent. The address of the Convenor is as follows:

Com. Mrinal Das

West Bengal State Committee of
CITU 53, Acharya J.C. Bose Road
Shramik Bhavan, Calcutta-700016

9. State level conventions of workers of the unorganised sector should be completed by October 1992. Informations regarding statewise conventions should be given to CITU Centre and the convenor, so that they can attend the conventions, if possible. Extensive campaign should be carried forward through postering, leaflet distribution, for the success of the convention. The draft report of the convention will be prepared by Com. Mrinal Das, the Convenor. The meeting authorised the following comrades to adopt the report on behalf of the Co-ordination Committee Com. Mrinal Das, Comrade Piyush Sarkar, Com. Nirmal Mukherjee, (W.B); Com. S. Chandrasekhar, (Tamilnadu); Com. Satpal Bharati, Com. Chandrasekhar (Punjab); Com. S B Bhardwaj, Delhi; Com. Arun Mishra, Bihar; Com. Waqarul Ahad (Rajasthan); Com. Jagannath Bharati, M.P; Com. M B Radhakrishna, Andhra Pradesh; one comrade from Kerala and Com. P K Ganguly from centre.

10. All the above named comrades will meet at the CITU Central office, New Delhi on 14 October, 1992 at 10am for finalisation of the draft report.

11. Kerala State Committee is being requested to send one comrade for this purpose. Com. Mrinal Das will circulate copies of the report to the above comrades before the meeting.

Successful Kerala Bandh

To protest against the administered hike in prices of petroleum products 12 hours Bandh was successfully observed in Kerala on 25th September 1992. The Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions first gave a call for general strike which was subsequently supported by the Left and Democratic Front with a call for 12 hours statewide Bandh.

Ignoring the active opposition of the state government including threat of severe punitive actions, the people responded to the strike and Bandh call magnificiently. Life in the state came to a halt. The overwhelming majority of the state and Central Government employees stayed away from work. The secretariat at Trivandrum wore a deserted look with only handful of employees present in the office.

(Cont'd on page 16)

Meeting of All India Coordination Committee of Textile Workers

A meeting of the All India Co-ordination Committee of Textile Workers was held at the Central Office, New Delhi on 31st August, 1992. Following comrades attended the meeting:

Gopal Biswas, Mrinal Das, (W.B), Chandraskhar, Joginder Pal Singh, Dinesh Prasad, Raghunath Singh, (Punjab); Vijay Rawat, Ravi Sinha (U.P); S. Chandrasekharan (T.N); Prabir Kumar Haldar, (Assam).

Com. M K Pandhe and P K Ganguly attended the meeting from the Centre. Com. M K Pandhe Presided over the meeting.

Com. P K Ganguly placed a report on the situation in the NTC mills in particular. As decided in the earlier meeting held in May, no State Committee had sent report about the conditions of the NTC mills, the causes of the sickness and the plans for their revival. He also reported that the joint convention held at Indore did not implement the decisions as the INTUC backed out suddenly. After the statement of the Textile Minister regarding the revival package of 34 sick NTC mills, he had written a letter to the Minister and had contacted other central trade unions also so that a joint movement can be launched on the threat of closure of NTC mills and the crisis in the textile industry as well. Central trade unions including the INTUC and BMS had agreed for a meeting in the CITU office on 31 August at 2 PM.

Com. Pandhe also explained about the deep crisis in textile industry and suggested for statewide movements and independent activities by the CITU culminating in all India movement. In the background of the threat of closure of 34 NTC and BIC (Kanpur) mills and the decisions taken in the Industrial Committee meeting on Textiles by the Government of India, the members participated in the discussions. The following decisions were taken in the meeting:

- 1) To organise state level conventions or extended broad based meetings, demonstrations to be completed by September demanding (a) submission of the governments revival scheme of the NTC and BIC mills to the central trade unions (b) demanding immediate meeting of the Tripartite Industrial Committee on Textile Industry (c) stoppage of all retrograde moves on NTC announced by the Textile Minister till finalisation of the revival plans as decided by the Industrial Committee (d) continue extending budgetary support to the mills as agreed upon in the Industrial Committee meeting on Textiles. (e) scrapping of the Textile Policy and formulation of a new policy in full consultation with the trade unions, (f) nationalisation of the textile industry.

- 2) All India Convention and massive rally at Delhi of textile workers on 15th/16th October, 1992.

It was decided to make efforts to carry forward these suggestions in the meeting to be held with other central TUs the same day, so that an all India

joint movement can be launched. If other trade unions do not come forward then the CITU would carry forward programme independently or with other trade unions whoever come forward.

Meeting with other Central TUs

The meeting with the other central TUs attended by Gopeshwar, Ram Lal Thakkar (INTUC); Bhaglal Sharma, Din Dayal, Ishwar Singh (AMS); A D Nagpal (HMS); B DJoshi (AITUC) and M K Pandhe and P K Ganguly among others from CITU.

The meeting decided to write a joint letter to the Labour Minister (P A Sangma) protesting against the so called revival scheme arrived at by the government bypassing the Industrial Committee and demanding immediate meeting of the Committee. The letter would also be released to the press. The meeting also decided to meet again on 7th or 8th of September to take further decisions on any joint movement, which was actually decided in the Indore convention.

After the meeting, the CITU coordination committee met again. It was decided to carry forward the decisions if any after the second proposed joint meeting. A circular will be issued after this. State Committees and Textile Unions, however should start our independent activities as decided above.

Multinational Entry to Capital Market Will Destabilise India's Self-Reliance

Secretariat of CITU has issued the following statement to Press;

Centre of Indian Trade Unions denounces the Government of India's decision allowing the Multinationals and foreign Mutual Funds to enter India's Capital Market. It has further allowed massive tax relief for such entry in the equity market.

This step in the nick of the moment when the Government has decided to go for massive disinvestment of Public Sector share is obviously aimed in facilitating the multinational entry into Public Sector share capital.

It is an irony that in the year when the Government is observing the Centenary Year of Quit India Movement it has simultaneously decided to welcome mighty foreign economic powers to dominate over our economic system.

Centre of Indian Trade Unions demands of the Government of India to retract itself from the suicidal step. It calls upon the Indian Working Class and the people to foil every game to re-colonise India and to organise massive protest.

Thirtieth Session of the Indian Labour Conference

The Thirtieth Session of the Indian Labour Conference held in New Delhi on 7th and 8th of September ended without any definite conclusions. The issues before the conference were merely talked out and in their anxiety to show that the conference was successful, hurriedly drafted conclusions were read out. The demand of the CITU that the draft of the conclusions should be circulated among the members before their formal adoption so that delegates can give their amendments was not accepted. The government had no excuse of time constraint because the conference was concluded before the scheduled time by one hour. The CITU therefore expressed its disapproval and did not accept the conclusions.

The venue of the conference was shifted from the Parliament Annexe to the FICCI House at the eleventh hour and many delegates had raised the point whether the ILC was being privatised.

Minister's Tirade Against Workers

The Union Minister of State for Labour and Coal P A Sangma who presided over the conference spoke at length in an aggressive tone and waxed eloquence on the low productivity in India. He even went to the extent of stating that high wages in public sector was responsible for its sickness. His tirade against coal miners was totally unfounded and only showed how he was not aware what was happening in his own department. He blamed miners and loaders for higher absenteeism without even mentioning under what conditions they are working. His lack of knowledge that attendance bonus in coal mines was a part of the minimum wage evoked strong resentment even among the INTUC leaders in mines unions.

Sangama had nothing to say about the dismal performance of his own ministry during the last one year. The Bill on Workers Participation in management introduced 2 years ago was not pursued and no discussion was organised by his Ministry to improve it. Though the Report of the National Commission on Rural Labour was submitted to the Central Government in July last year no Bill has been drafted by the government so far and dilatory tactics are being adopted by the government to delay any enactment to protect the rural labour.

The retrograde thinking of the Union Labour Minister became so clear when he circulated a copy of agreement signed in Pakistan in which the trade unions accepted retrenchment in public sector. He praised the agreement in superlative terms but failed to mention that the agreement was signed in a country where trade union rights are absent.

Agenda Not Prepared

The agenda of the conference included subjects namely, the report of the Ramanujam Committee, the impact of the new economic policies on the Indian working class and employment. The notes submitted by the Union Labour Ministry exhibited lack of seriousness. P A Sangma agreed in the Standing Labour Committee meeting held on 25th July that the draft or outline of the new Industrial relations law would be placed before the Indian Labour Conference. The previous dates of the ILC were postponed by one month to enable the Union Labour Ministry to prepare such a draft. However, agenda notes only included the statement giving position of the workers, employees and the state government without stating the views of the Central Government.

Practically all the delegates criticised the Government for its failure to bring the draft before the conference. The conference therefore decided not to discuss the agenda notes and asked the Union Labour Ministry to prepare the outline of the Bill and finalise it only after tripartite consultations.

The agenda notes on the New Economic policies of the Narasimha Rao Government consist of two notes prepared by the Ministry of industrial development on national Renewal Fund and the so called rehabilitation scheme for the retrenched workers. Both the schemes were rejected by the workers representatives and the idea of their bringing it again before the ILC was only expressing the determination of the Government to go ahead with these measures despite opposition by the trade unions.

The official note referring to the functioning of the Special Tripartite Committee had the audacity to claim, "perhaps the various organs of labour tripartite and other consultative mechanism have ever been so active as they are now". This ridiculous claim was made by the Govt when not a single decision of the Special Tripartite Committee was implemented by the government of India. The assurance given in the meeting on 20th January 1992 that soon a meeting to discuss the sickness in the private sector would be called, was yet to see the light of the day. The assurance given by the Union Finance Minister in the meeting that budgetary support to some needy undertakings would be continued was not implemented putting these undertakings in great difficulties. The Finance Minister's commitment that past liabilities of the public sector units showing profits at current years working would be written off, also remains un-implemented.

Dismal Performance of Industrial Committees

The performance of 6 Industrial Committee was

dismal. Meetings of only 4 Industrial Committees have been called while remaining 2 have not even met despite passing away of 9 months. Whatever commitments given in these meetings have either been violated or not implemented. Before discussing on the Textile Ministry's scheme on NTC textile mills in the committee the Government announced in Parliament in which retrenchment of over 75,000 workers was visualised. The promised status paper was not supplied and discussed in these committees.

The promise of the Govt that BIFR would wait till the outcome of the tripartite committee also remains only on paper. As Sangma's speech noted, "once these revival packages are accepted as viable by the industrial committees/special tripartite committees, the Bureau of Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) set up under the Sick Industries (Special Provisions) Act 1985 would then really only be required to accord formal approval to the rehabilitation plan". However, BIFR is going to all the cases of sickness without taking any cognisance of the industrial committees or special tripartite committees. Despite Passing away of several months revival package of a single sick unit has not yet been finalised so far. All this clearly indicates that the government only wants to make a show of tripartite consultations while in practice go ahead with their policies. It is only due to consistent opposition of the TU movement the govt of India could not finalise the exit policies, despite the categorical commitment to the IMF.

False Assurance on Employment

The Labour Ministry's note on the employment policy was nothing but an extract from the Report of the Planning Commission and the Ministry invited C. Rangarajan, Member Planning Commission to explain its view points. Though the note assures that by 2000 AD full employment will be ensured in India, how this would be achieved was not explained. Moreover, it failed to point out how the existing jobs would be protected. It was usual official exercise which did not ensure any better employment prospects for the working class.

The ILC was addressed by three Union Minister, P.K. Thungan, Minister of State for Heavy Industry, Krishna Sahi, Minister of State for Industrial Development and P.J. Kurien, Minister of State for Small Scale and Agro-based Industries and Commerce, who in their stereo-typed speeches conveyed nothing to the conference. Pranab Mukherjee, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission also read out a speech and replied to some question. Everybody was in a hurry to leave the conference after their speeches and had no time to listen to the remarks of the delegates. The CITU objected to the procedure of Ministers merely reading out speeches prepared by bureaucrats without listening to the views of the delegates. The Prime Minister who holds the Labour portfolio had no time even to attend the conference.

CITU's Criticism

E. Balanandan while participating in the debate

criticised at length the economic policies pursued by Narsimha Rao Govt. which hit hard the common people and help multinationals. Giving examples of India's development of power sector he noted that the World Bank wanted to demolish the development of these industries so that multinationals can take their place.

Attacking the policy of privatisation he noted that this would result in giving up the self-reliance to Indian economy. He noted that the share market scam was the direct outcome of the govt's policies and it cannot disown its responsibilities.

Trade Union rights are coming under heavy attacks when threat of closure and retrenchment is looming large in the country. He observed that the working class would not accept these policies and their resistance was bound to increase in the forthcoming days "A subservient high cost economy is sought to be built around a small minority consisting of the Indian elite at the expense of the vast majority of the toiling masses" he said.

M.R. Pandhe while speaking in the Conference criticised the statements made by Sangma and pointed out that his criticism of the working class was baseless. Particularly Sangma's attack on the coal mine workers was totally unjustified since he has not taken into account shocking conditions prevalent in the coal mines.

Referring to the talk of productivity he stated that capital formation in India is 22% per year. However, It has not led to corresponding increase in the production in the country. Pandhe further pointed out that the National Renewal Fund is in essence National Retrenchment Fund and trade union movement will physically resist every measure of retrenchment and closure.

He said that the Government had been making a farce of talking to trade unions but in practice going ahead with its programme of implementation of the economic policies. The revival packages jointly prepared by trade unions and technicians are not considered at all by the government.

Pandhe referred to the collapse of Labour Administration and non-implementation of labour laws over a period of years. Referring to the disunity in the trade unions he proposed that a confederation of trade unions should be formed so that common stand is taken on all the issues facing the working class.

The CITU demanded that the ceiling on bonus should be removed without any delay.

Inconclusive Debate

The workers' representatives generally opposed the central government's economic policies but, on the whole, the debate was in a low key. Some trade union leaders talked too much about productivity, redeployment and retraining but less on opposition to the economic policies. There could have been more co-ordination among the workers group to express firm opposition to these retrograde Policies. The national renewal fund and the rehabilitation

scheme was generally opposed and exit policy condemned by all trade unions. The unions also criticised the role of multinationals in penetrating the Indian market and opposed privatisation of public sector which would seriously affect India's independent economic development. All union sccondemned the IMF and World Bank role who are out to subjugate Indian economy.

The employers' representatives were aggressive in demanding the right to close down a unit. They wanted to abolish regular employment and social security protection. The employers appreciated in superlatives the new economic policies and wanted withdrawal of all regulations. Some demanded that worker's DA should be linked to productivity. Instead of removal of ceiling on bonus, they pressed for non-payment of bonus to loss making units, the employers also wanted the trade unions to accept-retrenchment as a necessary requirement in structural adjustment. They wanted that "management should be allowed to manage" which means acceptance of managerial right to hire and fire. Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea, according to them, were ideal economies and they wanted India to follow the same path. The labour minister of West Bengal, Shanti Ghatak, made an all-round attack on the centre's economic policies and stated that it would ruin Indian economy. The Bihar labour minister was forthright in his speech in condmening the central government's policies. Labour ministers of some BJP ruled states however, has praise for the central government's economic policies. The Gujarat and Tripura labour ministers went to the extent of criticising the workers for low productivity and indiscipline. All state labour ministers, however, were strongly critical of the industrial relations commission while many, including some Congress labour ministers, approved secret ballot to determine the recognised union. Some, however, preferred to read out extracts from their prepared speeches which were stereotyped repetition of what was already spoken in the conference.

Onesided Conclusions

The conclusions drafted were totally unjustified and onesided. The fact that there was no conclusion were aptly noted editorially by *The Times of India* on September 14. It stated, "The 30th Session of the Indian Labour Conference strove hard in order to produce only the proverbial mouse" To point out that productivity in Indian industry is too low is only to insult the Indian workers. The recorded conclusion only highlights the need for increasing productivity without ensuring that there would be no retrenchment as a result of rise in productivity and that the norms of production would be worked out in agreement with unions.

The draft talked about retraining and redeployment. But the national renewal fund and the "participation," schemes which are meant for retrenchment will continue to be in operation. Then, where is the question of unions agreeing for redeployment and retraining? The so called voluntary retirement schemes are nothing but devices to throw the workers

out of jobs, and have to be opposed.

The so called conclusions do not mention about the opposition of the trade unions to the new economic policies of the Govt of India. The demand for another National Labour Commission in the context of new economic policies may prove to be a devise to sidetrack the attention of the working class from the nationwide struggle against these policies.

The so called conclusions do not mention the govt's failure of to honour the commitment given on 3rd June, 1992, that the negotiations in the public sector undertakings would commence, pension agreements would be honoured, financial assistance to sick public sector undertakings would continue. There is no mention that the Govt has not yet honoured the commitment given in the tripartite committee on DA for public sector undertakings. Mere calling this as recommendations only tantamounts covering up the failure of the Govt of India, that too in a shabby manner.

There was no discussion among the workers for seven days working. It does not automatically increase the employment as was seen from the experience of cotton textile industry where employment declined even after working for all the days. The draft does not mention about 5 day week for the workers.

The Government of India has not given commitment in the ILC that the ceiling in the payment of Bonus Act would be removed. It did not mention when the commitments given to the public sectors workers would be honoured. Thus without giving any commitment the Govt of India extracted concessions from some of the representatives of workers. Incidentally P. A. Sangma is leading a TU and employers delegation to visit England and Hungary to study how the programme of redeployment and retraining was organised in these countries. This is an indirect way of involviug TU leadership in implementing the policies of the Govt of India.

The CITU was represented in the conference by E. Balanandan, M. K. Pandhe, Chittabrata Mazumdar as delegates and P. K. Ganguly, Kanai Banerjee and Vimal Randive as advisors.

(From page 12)

The agricultural workers and the unorganised workers also joined the strike. The communication systems went out of gear. The KSRT buses went off the roads. The railway movement was also heavily disrupted. About 10 thousand people were arrested from different places for picketing in the railway track.

The Bandh and strike was almost completely peaceful barring a few cases of stone throwing at one or two buses. In many districts people participated in the Bandh spontaneously as a result of which there life was completely paralysed.

While the Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions and the leaders of the LDF have congratulated the people for the success of the strike and the Bandh, the frustrated Chief Minister of the state has threatened employees of vindictive actions including pay-cut for participating in the strike.

30th Session of Indian Labour Conference

(Text of the Speech of E. Balanandan, President, CITU at the 30th Session of Indian Labour Conference on September 7-8, 1992)

Mr. Chairman,

I thank, the Indian Labour Minister and the Government of India for organising this Session of the India Labour Conference. On behalf of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU). I wish to bring before you certain issues arising out of the economic and industrial policies being pursued by the Government of India.

The Indian working class had played a crucial role in the freedom movement of the country. Textile and other industrial workers, the railwaymen, the rural proletarians and other numerous sections of the Indian labour had all participated in full force in the struggle against British imperialism. Tens of thousands of their unsung heroes had lost their lives in the fight against the imperialist world order. Even after independence Indian labour, especially the modern proletariat, have played a crucial role in influencing and shaping up the policies of the national Government as a result of which the country has made modest progress in some of the basic sectors of the national economy.

Development of basic industries through national planning and the public sector has helped in developing of new skills and expertise within the country which was non-existent in a mainly agrarian traditional economy. Millions of skilled workmen, technicians, engineers, scientists and other professionals were trained and developed on the basis of a national perspective in mining, in production of primary metals like steel, aluminium, copper or zinc, in petroleum prospecting and refining, design and manufacture of power equipment, aircraft, ships, telephone exchanges and systems, electronics, atomic energy, space technology, machine tools, mining machinery, power generating utilities and several other sectors. The rapid expansion of the technological skills and managerial expertise in all these newly opened up sectors of the Indian economy was possible because of the emphasis given on human resources development in independent India through a system of national planning and public sector.

These core sector industries in the public sector and the skilled manpower resources represented by them are the backbone of India economic and political independence today however limited that may be. Their optimal use and further development is the necessary precondition for further development of our backward country. But in the World Bank's agenda for economic reforms that are being pressured to be accepted by the national government, demobilisation of these substantial organisational resources

is indicated as the first priority. Pointing out the poor performance of a few public sector enterprises a wholesale attack on the entire public sector institutions has been launched. Schemes after schemes like the national renewal fund as suggested by the World Bank, the golden handshake and others are launched one after the other with the sole objective of demobilising this skilled manpower in vital sectors of the national economy.

One can quote several examples for the lopsided policies initiated by the government under compulsions from the IMF and the World Bank. The public sector set up under the Indian Electricity Act-1948 has increased the generation and consumption of electricity in the country by 50 times since independence, where as the private sector dominated Indian economy as a whole has increased its output hardly by six times. Even when the financial losses and subsidy elements are taken into account electricity cost are only one third or one fourth of those prevailing in developed countries. Yet these public sector institutions are declared as inefficient and foreign investors are invited to set up power plants and sell electricity at three or four times the prevailing prices in the country.

Yet another example—the power equipment manufacturing giant Eharat Heavy Electricals Ltd can manufacture and install power plants in this country at nearly half the cost of its competitors overseas. But in the name of a resource crisis the government is increasingly resorting to bilateral credit and importing equipment at double the costs compared to indigenous equipment and systems. Encouragement given to foreign direct investments in infrastructural sectors like power, communication, fertilizers, oil prospecting, shipping and others as well as the directed credit programmes imperialist financial system are targeted at the competitive basic goods industries that have taken root in the country since independence. Organisations like BHEL, the Indian Telephone Industries, the ONCC, the oil sector companies and several others which should be more than doubling their capacities by the next decade are asked to demobilise their workforce, privatise or be taken over by foreign capital.

It is quite clear that denationalisation drive initiated in this country under World Bank pressures is aimed at the opening up of the vast potential market for basic goods and services marketed by global monopolies. The crisis due to the stagnation in the metropolis is thus sought to be resolved through the deindustrialisation of developing economies like that of India. The working class and the trade union movement in the country with their fine

traditions in antimperialist struggles cannot be silent spectators to the recolonialisation process now unleashed in this country.

The trade unions and working class movement have reacted to these anti-people policies by organising massive strike actions at the national level twice in a course of just one year since the launching of the economic reforms which now stands exposed and discredited, thanks to the securities scam. More than ten million industrial workers joined the first one-day strike action on November 29, 1991 and their number was more than 15 million in the second strike action on June 16 this year.

Unionisation of the professional workers, managerial personnel and government employees and their joining the trade unions of the industrial working class in demanding policy changes in national policies are a relatively new phenomenon in our country. These sections of working people considered to be constituting the middle strata of society were by and large unorganised till recent times. They are denied trade union rights and even today after having formed associations and federations at national levels the authorities concerned refuses to recognise them. This open denial of democratic rights to large sections of working people whose services are so very vital to the society has to be rightly condemned. They should have been given representation even in these consultations. It is regretful that the Government of India continues its policy of denying trade union rights to these sections of wage earners in our country.

It is worthwhile to remember that only a small fraction of the wage earning classes enjoy some sort of permanency of employment and a semblance of social security in our country today. The public sector employees and workers including government employees and the workers of medium and large scale private sector firms belonging to the so-called formal sector of the economy and enjoying such benefits account for hardly ten percent of the working population. The others do not have permanent employers. These are the agricultural workers, farm servants, rural proletarians, the artisans, the construction workers, workers in small scale industries, shops and establishments, workers in traditional industries, contract labour, house maids and other sections of the labouring masses. If we go by the 1991 Indian Census their number will be over 160 millions, excluding the poor and marginal farmers who are classified as cultivators according to the census definitions.

Labour laws of the country does not provide any social security cover for these toiling masses nor is there any worthwhile government administration that can extend a protective hand to these economically and socially handicapped sections. Struggles by these underprivileged sections of the Indian labouring classes do not get even legal recognition

and are seen and handled as simple law and order problems by the local authorities. Trade unions and working class movements in the country are working against heavy odds under the circumstances in organising these sections of the Indian labour.

The millions of ill-paid, uncared for workers, under-employed and unemployed in the informal sectors of underdeveloped economies like India represents the backyard of modern corporate capitalism at the global level. The reformists take the view that permanency in employment and 'high wages' prevailing in the formal sector of the economy are standing in the way of making full use of these opportunities. They argue that notions of job security and permanent employment prevalent in these high wage islands are standing in the way of economic progress and market efficiency. They insist that the American style hire-and-fire policy should get implemented straight away even without waiting for the introduction of the so-called safety-net prevailing in many developed countries.

It is in fact a matter of national shame that the vast majority of labouring people in the country does not enjoy even the benefit of permanency in employee employer relationships. They live in inhuman conditions—under semi-feudal exploitation and oppression. This will need going agrarian reforms, decentralisation of the administration and extension of democratic set up upto the grass root levels. Such reforms have to be necessarily implemented within the framework of central planning for the development and industrialisation of the national economy so that neo-colonial exploitation of the country should not be permitted to continue.

The economic reforms initiated by the Government instead of strengthening national planning, have weakened it. Instead of augmenting the core sector industries developed in the public sector since independence measures are taken to demobilise them. Instead of expanding and further developing the formal sector its scope is sought to be curtailed and demolished by the insistence on formulating and implementing the so-called exit policy especially for the public sector industries. Instead of expanding and improving the quality of Governmental interference in the economy the governmental machinery itself is sought to be replaced by global market forces.

Even after four and a half decade of independence India continues to be an agrarian country. The 1991 census once again confirms the fact that with over 65 percent of its working people being in the agrarian sector: there was only marginal changes in the composition of its economically active population since independence. "Work participation rate or the percentage of working people in the total population continues to be low at 37.7 percentage even in 1991 in spite of the rapid strides made in population control. Opportunities for gainful employ-

ment is denied to vast majority of Indian females, work participation rate among them being only 22.7 percent compared to 51.6 percent for males. Number of educated unemployed registered with the employment exchanges for jobs in the formal sector has crossed the 35 million mark a ten fold increase since independence. Against this staggering figures of job seekers only less than half a million job opportunities are newly created every year in the formal sector with its present 26 million employment and this was mostly through the expansion of the public sector. With more than half its population living under abject poverty it requires more than ordinary courage to predict that integration with the global market will be an instant or even long term solution for the problems of these dimensions.

Indian efforts for planned economic development has yielded only mixed results. It has succeeded in developing excellent manpower resources and expertise in several sectors as indicated earlier. We could have done even better if the contents of national planning were not continuously diluted under pressures from vested interests. But the solution to the present day problems is not to abandon this policy flitter and flitter away the valuable human resources and expertise built over the past decades in the name of market efficiency and globalisation.

Four and a half decades of planned development in the country with all its limitations has given also some small benefits to the poor and the under privileged. Even these are now under attack. Subsidised irrigation and fertilizers for the agricultural sector, cheap electricity, drinking water, educational facilities, health care, rural roads and several others were benefits that have trickled down to the poorer sections of the labouring classes. All these are now branded as free lunch by the theoreticians of the economic reforms. In the name of cutting down public expenditure and ensuring of market efficiency all "such free lunches" are now sought to be stopped.

Infrastructure facilities like power, telephone, roads, railways and even education and health care are sought to be privatised so as to be market efficient. Several of these vital sectors are to be opened up to foreign direct investment so that India becomes a ready market for foreign capital goods, technologies and services. A subservient industrial sector for manufacturing and marketing of quality goods for the benefit of the rich with the help of imported technologies and inputs is to replace the somewhat self-reliant industrial base that was built up since independence. A subservient high cost economy is sought to be built around a small minority consisting of the Indian elite at the expense of the vast majority of the toiling masses.

This is the painful scenario that is emerging as a result of the economic reforms—a scenario of further marginalisation of the Indian labour in the international market to the benefit of the metropolis or the imperial centers of economic development—a scena-

rio of re-colonialisation of the country without being physically occupied by its colonial masters.

Friends,

Hence, I request you to consider these points and agree with me in demanding immediate reversal of the new economic and industrial policies which are being imposed on the Indian people by the Government.

CITU Demands Immediate Meeting of the Special Tripartite Committee

In a letter addressed to Shri P.A. Sangma on 16th September CITU has criticised the govt.'s Casual approach towards Industrial Committee and demanded immediate Convening of the Special Tripartite Committee Meeting. The letter is as follows :

September 16, 1992

Dear Shri Sangma,

We are surprised to know that the Industrial Committee meetings of Cotton textile and Power which were scheduled to be held on 16th September, 1992 have been postponed by the Govt of India. As a matter of fact, the meeting should have been held much earlier in view of the serious crisis in the two industries. The meeting was fixed after 9 months of the assurance given by the Government to constitute this Committee. The CITU feels that the Government is not taking this meeting seriously and the casual approach is only adding to the sickness in this industry.

We would also like to draw your kind attention to the non-implementation of the decisions of Industrial Committee on Jute, Engineering, Chemicals and Cotton Textiles. This is seriously affecting the credibility of the Committees among the general workers in the country. What is more serious is that the Industrial Committee on Transport has not been convened so far.

We also would like to draw your attention to the commitment given by the Government to convene the Special Tripartite Committee to consider the sickness in the private Sector. Perhaps, you remember that the decision was taken on 20th January, 1992. I think 9 months time is too much when you gave the assurance that you will soon call this Tripartite Committee. I would, therefore, request you to convene the Special Tripartite Committee, at an early date so that the functioning of the Industrial Committees will be reviewed and the Special Tripartite Committee also will function for the purpose it was formed.

I hope that you will treat this as urgent.

With personal regards,

M. K. Pandhe
(General Secretary)

TU's demand meeting of the Tripartite Industrial Committee on Textile Industry

Consequent to the statement made by the Textile Minister in Parliament on 11th August regarding an Turn Around Strategy on NTC & BIC Mills, which will render about 86,000 workers jobless, the five Central Trade Unions leaders who are members of the Industrial Committee met at the CITU Central Office and decided to write a joint letter to the Minister of State for Labour demanding convening a meeting of the Industrial Committee.

Following is the text of the letter :

Shri P A Sangma
Minister of State for Labour
Government of India
Shram Shakti Bhavan
Rafi Marg, New Delhi-110001

Dear Sir,

Re : Statement of Textile Minister in Parliament
Sub : Turn Around Strategy on NTC & BIC Mills

This has reference to the statement made by Shri Ashok Gehlot, the Minister of State for Textiles, in the Parliament announcing a Turn Around Strategy on NTC & BIC Mills, which is supposed to have received the approval of the Government.

We as members of the Tripartite Industrial Committee and representatives of the Central Trade Unions express our surprise and concern over the statement made by the Textile Minister. This is because the statement as above is in total variance with the decisions taken in the industrial Committee meeting on textiles held on 21 February, 1992 which was chaired by you.

This meeting of 21 February considered the issue of 34 sick NTC mills and BIC mills and decided that the data on these mills would be furnished by the Ministry of Textile to the trade unions within 15 days and then trade unions and the NTC would submit specific proposals within 2½ months for revival of these units. Thereafter the matter would be discussed in the next meeting of the Tripartite Committee. The Meeting also decided that till the Industrial Committee takes final decision the Governments shall continue the budgetary support to the sick NTC mills.

You had repeated the same assurance in the Standing Labour Committee meeting held on 25 July, 1992.

During this period, however, no meeting of Industrial Committee has been called despite repeated requests by us.

We, therefore, urge upon you to call a meeting of the Tripartite Industrial Committee to discuss the issue. Till then the Government should not take any move on the NTC and BIC mills and should continue budgetary support to these mills as assured in the earlier meeting since the issue relates to closure of so many mills affecting about 86,000 workers. We hope you will take immediate steps to call the meeting of the Industrial Committee to discuss the issue.

Yours sincerely

Sd/-
(Gopeshwar)
General Secretary,
INTUC

Sd/-
(P.K. Ganguly)
Secretary, CITU

Sd/-
(R.K. Bhakt)
General Secretary, BMS

Sd/-
(B D Joshi)
Acting General
Secretary, AITUC

Sd/-
Veereshwar Tiagi)
Secretary, HMS

NFL Panipat Gas Tragedy, CITU Condemns Callous Management

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions is shocked at another gas leak tragedy, this time at Panipat Unit of National Fertilizers Limited, a public sector undertaking, causing instantaneous death to 11 workers and injuring several other workers who are hospitalised with severe burns.

The accident has occurred due to utmost callousness, criminal negligence on the part of the management in maintaining minimum standard of safety and maintenance provisions. In spite of the fact that pumps were under repair it was made use in the work and no gas masks were made available to the workers which had put the lives of the workers under constant danger. It was only because of the alertness of the workers that a tragedy of greater magnitude was averted.

The CITU demands severest punishment to all those who are responsible for this criminal act of negligence, adequate compensation to the families of the bereaved and injured workers and a judicial enquiry into the incident.

The CITU conveys heartfelt sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

Words and Deeds Differ Much

There is a gulf difference between the words and deeds,—what is being preached and practised. The electronic media covered with much fanfare the crocodile tears shed by the premier of the country atop the Red Fort on the 45th Independence day, for the poor and have-nots and the ornamented commitments pronounced for the upliftment of them. But reality is some thing else. The Government coffers could offer only negligible accommodation to the poor and the oppressed, particularly those living below the poverty line, and facing inhuman exploitation. Rather budget has slashed down the allocation almost on all heads of rural development and poverty alleviation when those sections of people have turned out to be the target of the prehistoric mode of exploitation—bonded labour, child labour, forced labour, uprooting of tribal population from land and the like.

There are host of laws and regulations against the systems of bonded labour, forced labour and child labour in our country; there are also regulations imposing limit on hours of work; there are legislations also for fixing the minimum wages so as to give a facelift to the whole system as civilized one. There are numerous Commissions, Committees, Working groups to monitor and above all powerful top heavy administration to supervise monitoring of the implementation of all these regulations and enactments. But, still workers have to face bullets from authorities while pleading for nothing but only implementation of the existing legislations regarding minimum wages and other statutory obligations of employers while the enforcement authorities-employer combine are carrying on their game sitting merrily upon the statute books. A Welfare State indeed!

Hoodwinking ILO

The observation of the Committee of Experts on the application of conventions and recommendations constituted by International Labour Organisation in respect of implementation of different ILO conventions relating to minimum wages, child labour, bonded and forcible labour etc. manifests a dismal picture on Government of India's performance on these fronts. From the report of the said Committee on India, it is clearly understood that, on being asked specific clarification regarding implementation of different ILO conventions, the Government of India used to maintain consistency in respect of replying to those clarificatory queries either in vague terms or through commitments for looking into the matter. Many a times Government used to describe measures being intended to be taken to plug the shortcomings in implementation of different ILO conventions without any time frame and experience

shows that even those committed measures have hardly been adopted by the Government in most of the cases.

On Hours of Work

In respect of implementation of the ILO convention on Hours of Work (convention No. 1, 1919 which was ratified by Government of India as back as 1921) in the Railways the ILO Committee of Experts observed "Government of India circular in this regard couched in general and imprecise terms, falls short of requirements of Article 6 of the convention. It recalls that, under that provision, regulation made by Public authorities must determine the exceptions permitted to normal limits and maximum additional hours that may be allowed".

On Minimum Wages

In respect of implementation of convention No. 26 on Minimum wage fixing machinery, the ILO Committee, after taking note of Government of India's statement regarding arrangements being made and to be made for setting up a suitable minimum wage fixation machinery throughout the country, commented sharply, "The Committee would be grateful if the Government would indicate the measures introduced with a view to implementing above recommendations and to ensure better application of the law on minimum wages in the entire territory."

It is interesting to note here that the Union Ministry of Labour in a note circulated on the occasion of Indian Labour Conference held on 7-8 September 1992 at New Delhi could not help mentioning "Statutory provision for minimum wage for workers in the scheduled employment exists but its coverage and implementation has been inadequate, so that a large part of workforce is still outside the purview of wages fixed under Minimum Wages Act and actual wages on the ground are often much lower than those fixed by the appropriate Government under the Act".

On Bonded Labour and the Sovereign Employers

The ILO Committee's observation depicted a horrifying picture of prevalence of bonded labour/forced labour in India at the end of this 20th century alongwith Government of India's evasive tendency to confront the problem.

The ILO Committee referring to the estimate made by Gandhi Peace Foundation in Co-operation with National Labour Institute observed that there were around 2.9 million bonded labour in India only in

Agricultural or rural sector. There is all probability of this figure being on lower side in view of the enormity of concentration of land and resources of rural India few hands leaving majority of the rural population subservient to the landed gentry for their livelihood. As per 1981 census report 2.4 per cent of large land holdings account for 25.6 per cent of the total cultivable land while 74.5 per cent of the cultivating households below 2 hectares operating 26.7 per cent of the land. In 1991 census situation appears to have no improvement at all. Such alarming concentration of land and wealth in rural India alongwith there being 410 million people living below the poverty line has left the countryside a natural ground for the system of bonded labour, and vicious debt-bondage to flourish.

Not only in rural India, the ILO Committee also made strong comments on the existence of bonded labour in other areas. While referring to report of Commissioner for Scheduled Caste and Sceduled Tribes, the ILO Committee observed that bonded labour exists also in other areas such as quarrying and weaving and domestic service, existence of bonded labour in quarrying and weaving was confirmed by Supreme Court-Judgement also.

The cynical hypocrisy of the Government of India in reaction to ILO observation on bonded labour is worth noting. The Government of India in one of its reports submitted before the Conference Committee of ILO, 1991, Stated that it did not accept above observation and the estimate on bonded labour made by Gandhi Peace Foundation-National Labour Institute-combine and it had already advised State Governments to enquire and make survey on the existence of bonded labour. Interesting to note that, may be reacting to such advlce of the Government of India, the State Govt. of Haryana lost no time to send a report denying existence of bonded labour at all in that State of Haryana at a time when the investigation made by Anti Slavery International into incidence of bonded labour at Harayana identified more than 2000 bonded labour in a particular area in that State and submitted the said report with all documents before the Supreme Court of India in June 1991. Probability of similar report from other State Government can not be ruled out.

But report of State Government and the Government of India denying existence of bonded labour can not alter the stark reality. The same ILO Committee observed in its report that in March in 1989, 242,532 bonded labourers had been identified and March 1990 2,45,636 bonded labourers were identified of which 2,18,028 had been rehabilitated quoting another Government report. The ILO Committee also observed that the Report of the Working Group on Contemporary Form of Slavery under United Nations refers to information submitted by Anti Slavery International that debt bon-

dage affected almost 5 million adults and 10 million children of India.

Child Bonded labour—India Heading the list

On the child labour front situation is more precarious. The proceedings of the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery under United Nations Sub-commission held on 1989 and 1990 observed that "In relation to situation in India report refers to Children in bondage in numerous occupation stating that debt bondage, force and compulsion are common to almost all categories of child labour. According to estimates, several million children between the ages of 5 and 14 are in chronic bondage in Agriculture; around a million in the brick-kiln, stone quarry and construction Industries; hundreds of thousands in Carpet Weaving; handlooms, match and Fire works, glassbangles, diamond cutting and polishing as well as lockmaking. Child bondage and forced labour are connected with the trafficking and kidnaping of children, repression, absence of freedom of movement, beating sex abuse, starvation, abnormal working hours, unhygenic and dangerous working condition and exposure of children to grave health hazards".

According to the same report constitutional and legislative provisions adopted to protect the children exist, but are not applied and the situation in practice regarding bonded children is not improving. For instance, in Mirzapur-Bhadohi belt, the carpet weaving region of Uttar Pradesh organised rackets of kidnaping and luring away of children and extraction of forced labour from them in carpet—weaving are still operating under the very nose of law-enforcing authorities. The report went to the extent of commenting sharply that "Despite Sanctions provided in the legislation, the exploiters have no fear of being punished and penalised since the enforcement machinery is weak and the indolence of authorities and collusion and corruption hamper identification, release and rehabilitation of the bonded children".

It is interesting to note here the observation of the Fact finding Committee appointed by Supreme Court of India in August 1991 to inquire into bonded child labour which investigated into the aspect in villages of Carpet Weaving region in UP & Bihar. The investigation unveiled a dismal and horrifying picture of the system of child bondage in Carpet weaving industry in particular. It is noted, inter-alia, that.

a) a large number of children some in the age group of 6 to 9 work as bonded labour in carpet weaving;

b) Children are generally brought from outside, many times lured by gangs;

c) Parents of the children get advance money from the labourbroker which is generally partially

adjusted from children wages; interest on the advanced money continues growing leaving the children into continuous bondage, forcible and inhuman labour. Besides, there is no limitation of hours of work & children are inhumanely tortured on the plea of mistakes. System of exorbitant fines from the children wages compel them to live a life even worse than animals. Also, the children are exposed to dangerous working condition, hazardous work leading to accident and loss of limbs.

While commenting on the collusion and connivance of the law enforcing machinery with the child-traffickers, the fact finding committee mentioned in their report placed before the Supreme Court that "strict enforcement of the Abolition of Bonded Labour Act and measures to ensure that the amounts granted on release of the bonded children (for rehabilitation) ..are not missappropriated"

Are They Bothered At All !

Our Prime Minister reiterated his assertion atop the Red Fort to carry the country prosperous to 21st century. The ILO committee report exposes prevalence of 18th Century mode of human-governance and slavery in many parts of the country pushing a considerable section of would-be citizens of ensuing 21st century to languish in bondage crueller than animality. Does that bother our premier much when he pretends to dream about 21st century? Atleast the policy measures adopted by the Government do not vouch that way.

(From page 2)

the result the various cotton textile and jute textile mills have no money even to purchase raw material. The sick units in public sector referred to BIFR are threatened with closure. The assurance that the BIFR would not go ahead till the Special Tripartite committee looking into the revival of these units completes its work, remained only on paper.

7. Though the Exit Policy has formally not been announced, the Central Government has given firm commitment to IMF to finalise such a policy. The National Renewal Fund is an embodiment of this policy and the Government of India is going ahead with it despite the united opposition of the trade union movement. Ghost of massive unemployment is looming large in the country in forthcoming days. The Convention warns the Government that the continuation of such a dangerous policy will only evoke strong resistance by the united movement of Indian workers.

8. The Convention notes that but for stubborn resistance put up by the working class, the Govern-

ments' declared policies of privatisation, retrenchment, closure of PSUs etc. would have been carried much faster, and more racklessly and indiscriminately. Even the IMF has expressed dissatisfaction at the slow progress of "reforms" in the Indian Economy. This is primarily the result of the struggle of the organised working class.

9. Refusal to withdraw the ban on recruitment, the failure to bring a bill in Parliament to remove the ceiling on bonus and gratuity, non-withdrawal of the circular to ban negotiations in public sector undertakings, withholding of the Government permission to implement the agreements on pension scheme, non-implementation of the recommendation of the Tripartite Committee on D.A. in Public Sector Undertakings, refusal of the Government to enhance the exemption limit in income tax, failure to substantially increase the minimum wages of the unorganised workers, refusal to concede the demand of Central Govt. employees for wage parity with public sector, reference of question of wages, D.A. etc. of Central Services, Public Sector and Bank employees to the discredited H. N. Ray Committee, callous continuation of discrimination of women workers and exploitation of child labour, the growing phenomenon of casual, extra departmental and contract workers in all sectors of economy, growing attacks on trade union rights including extension of notorious ESMA, have combined to add to the already severe discontentment among the workers all over the country.

10. The discontent is also rising among the agricultural workers, poor and middle peasants, women, students, youths, intellectuals and officers, who have also been victims of these economic policies. All these developments are creating a nationwide basis for a common popular movement throughout the country.

11. The Convention fully endorses the decision of the Sponsoring Committee to organise a massive march of the working class to Parliament on 25th November during its next session so that powerful voice of the entire working class is raised against these retrograde policies.

12. The Convention calls upon unions of all affiliations to hold State level, Regional level, Industry-wise, Area level Conventions, demonstrations, rallies, dharnas and jathas, to make effective preparations for the March to Parliament.

13. The Convention appeals to all mass organisations in India to join together so that jathas are organised in different States and resolute opposition of the entire people is expressed through these jathas in all corners of our country till the draconian policies are defeated squarely.

Railwaymen's Struggle

AIRF Revives Strike Ballot Decision

The 65th Annual Conference of the AIRF, held in Madras on 27-28 August has called upon its constituents to conduct strike ballot between 12th and 20th of December 1992. It has also asked them to ensure that the result of ballot is immediately communicated to the federation. The resolution adopted in the conference also incorporates a 21 point charter of demands which includes among others the demand for appointment of wage review body, grant of 20 percent adhoc increase in wage, treatment of DA as Dearness Pay, removal of anomaly in the rates of running allowance and running allowance rules, stop surrendering of posts, fill up all vacancies and create new posts for new assets, stop off loading of work to contractors, decasualisation, 8-hour day and reintroduction of 10 hour duty for loco running staff from signing on to signing off, restructuring and reclassification of group C & D staff. The list includes the demand for implementation of all pending awards of Board of Arbitration under JCM Scheme. The list of demands also include repeal of Ar 311 (2) (b) of the constitution, DA Rule 14 (ii) and Rule 301 R I (old 149 R I) and reinstalment of all victimised employees.

It may be noted that the decision for conducting strike ballot was actually taken earlier in 64th Annual Convention of AIRF held in Delhi on 26-29 December 1991. The process was decided to be completed by May 1992. But curiously the working committee in its meeting held in March 1992 virtually dropped the programme stating, vide the report in Indian Railwaymen, March 1992, that settlement of economic demands of railwaymen was out of question unless government's economic policies could be reversed and those policies could be changed only by united action of the working class and the people of the country.

However, as is well known, though the strike ballot programme was dropped, the AIRF failed to live upto its own declaration in favour of united action which appeared in the Indian Railwaymen of March 1992. On the same old ground as it had always put forward, it kept clear of countrywide one day industrial strike. Its "United Action" remained confined to seminars, conventions, meetings demonstrations and campaign.

The mainstream trade unions hailed the AIRF declaration in favour of united action. There is no doubt they will also hail the decision for strike ballot because struggle for railwaymen's demand is essentially a part of struggle against the Government's economic policies.

One pre-condition for success of such struggle however is the most broad based unity of railwaymen. Only a joint platform like the NCCRS of 1974 can ensure enthusiastic participation of the entire railwaymen in the struggle. Is the AIRF as the biggest and most important organisation of railwaymen taking initiative to forge such a platform? It will be an acid test for the seriousness of their decision.

However, if a railway strike actually comes about there can be no doubt that entire trade union movement will stand behind it.

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