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Re. 1

Conference in Kerala



Congress Party's 20 Point Programme and Women

ON 15th of August the Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi announced once again a new 20 points programme. One may fail to understand the urgent necessity of announcing this at this juncture, as for the past 10-12 years since internal emergency, people have been listening through every available media, including T.V., as to how successfully various programmes and plans for removal of poverty, giving pure drinking water to the rural people, removal of untouchability, education for poor children etc were being implemented. Then why a new 20-Point programme now?

The women's Decade ended in 1985. The Congress Party had a chance to speak about women's equality, equal status and inform the world what have they have been doing about women's problems and how they were almost solved during last 38 years when the UN Declared a Women's Decade in 1975. What they did was to pass the Muslim women Protection Bill which according to them was in the interest of Muslim women. What could Rajiv Gandhi do to help the women if they in general felt otherwise? At least the fundamentalists have supported him.

Now, therefore some other programme for women must be found to be put in 20 points to give it a new-look. The Congress party has chosen that population control should be paraded as the basic cause for poverty in our country. Pat came the slogan — promote responsible parenthood by "voluntary" (?) acceptance of the "two child Norm Family".

The People have not yet overcome their traumatic emergency experience on family planning. Therefore, the drafters of the programme did not forget to put the word 'Voluntary'. If these are press reports about the excesses and compulsion in the execution of the plans of family planning in rural and urban areas — the entire state machinery is there to mount a campaign of denials. Thousand Meher Alis will chant — "Sub Jhut Hai" (All are lies).

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The 4th Pay Commission has shown what "voluntary" means. Men, in the opinion of the Commission, should be left out as women are only responsible to give birth to a child! Hence it has just recommended a punishment — some may want to garb it as disincentive, i.e., not to pay Maternity Benefit to women employees after two children. The 20 point programme on women concerning the 2 child norm and maternity benefit, would thus be implemented "Voluntarily" among women government employees.

The expansion of Maternity hospitals and
(Contd. on page 23)

Women Employees and 4th Pay Commission

THE reaction on the recommendations of the Fourth Pay Commission from different corners express a deep discontent. Many Unions have threatened to go for actions. The women employees in Post & Telegraph, Central Govt. Nurses Association, Women's organisations and Co-ordination Committee of Working Women have come out against the recommendations concerning women employees. Some said "the fourth Pay Commission has "Male bias", some expressed "it was a "curious mixture of compassion and male bias". The criticism so expressed has genuine grounds no doubt. Otherwise how could you explain the discontinuance of Maternity leave and benefit after two children to women?

The real 'gift' of the Fourth Pay Commission to the women employees is the following:

"Presently, there is no limit on the occasions on which maternity leave may be availed of by women Government employees. We recommend that, in consonance with the national objective of a small family, maternity leave may not be allowed to women employees having two children". Some years back the congress Government tried to bring this proposal in the Kerala Assembly, but could not be carried out due to opposition from many corners. The same idea is being passed forward under the "National objective of a small family" to control the population growth. The experience of compulsory family planning during emergency is there for everybody to see. Nobody will object to have small family. But, the way the commission wants to make it legal, by punishing only women employees is something which will not be accepted. The question is rightly put by some organisations whether men never be made accountable for violating the family planning policy, even when they are directly employed by the Central Government? The commission said that the maternity leave can be taken for one year, if there are difficulties for the mother. Well, is the Government going to pay her if she is on leave for one year as it is paid under Socialism? Can she afford to stay without pay for one year under the present economic conditions? It is only a ploy for those in

the higher echelons who could afford to remain without earnings also, so that the majority are punished with withdrawal of maternity benefit after two children.

The 4th Pay Commission quoting the Department of women and Chief Development who have recommended "that creche facilities should be provided for women employees wherever there are more than 30 women employees in one organisation or more than one organisation located in the same premises...", has commented that "it is a reasonable suggestion and *may be implemented as far as possible*". Does the 4th Pay Commission not know the acute necessity of provision of creche for working mother who leave behind their small children and work in offices? If at all the commission was serious about the provision of creche it should not have put the words "may be" implemented and "as far as possible". etc. It should know that women are restive on this question. Many deputations, mass movements, representations etc. have been made to the Labour Ministry with no results so far. Whatever little provision exists under the Factory Act for creche, even that is not being implemented. The Commission should have made the provision of creche in clear terms.

The issue of hostels for working women has been discussed a number of times by the Welfare Ministry, and also by Development of child and women Department. The women employees are put to hardship for being suddenly transferred to remote parts of the country, some are asked to be present for interviews in different cities or capital when the question of residence becomes an acute problem. The security of young girls is also involved. Is the commission not aware about the shortage of hostels for women employees under Central Govt.? Are they not aware about the daily happenings in the Capital when women's security is involved and when the nurses and typists have to attend the duties on night shifts? Everyone knows, that only showing compassion and pity towards these employees in the situation they are working, (Contd. on page 9)

No Maternity Benefit for Women in Beedi Industry in Maharashtra

COM. Shankar Pujari, from Maharashtra CITU submitted a paper in the workshop on Beedi Workers on 7-9th August 1986 held by national Labour Institute. More than 70 per cent of the workers are women, Muslim women in particular. Some of the important points from the paper have been given below:

There are about four lakhs Beedi Workers in the State of Maharashtra. The number of Beedi workers in the region of Sangli, Miraj is about four thousands. Of these about sixty per cent are Muslim women and about forty per cent are Maratha 'Kunmbi' women.

The workers collect the Tobacco and leaves from employer and give back the Beedies every day. Each worker has to work for 10 to 12 hours a day. Average production of Beedies is about 650 Beedies per day.

As a result of intense, struggle launched by the workers under the leadership of CITU, the employers were forced to give some of the said facilities. But even now many points are not observed.

1. All workers are not issued with Cards.
2. Workers are not paid Wages for lay-off period.
3. There is no ESI benefits for the Beedi workers even though the areas are covered by ESI.

One employer having the brand name Musa, has 1600 employees. He has earned enormous amount of profits in this business and has invested the surplus in many other businesses. However, as the workers got organised and demanded minimum wages, the employer, now gets help from his production done from villages in Karnataka, without being required to pay the minimum wages.

The employers, are in a much better

bargainable position. They quite often succeed in displacing old employees even without paying 10 per cent of the legal dues and obtaining their signatures in full satisfaction.

Unfortunately the state machinery has not only become a silent spectator but even a beneficiary and a party to this oppression.

The average production of a worker is about 650 good beedis. The profit earned per worker per day is Rs. 4.22. Hence the employer employing 1,000 workers earns a profit of Rs. 4,220/- every day. While the earning of worker is Rs. 6.25 every day, if they are fortunate enough to get as per Minimum Wages Act.

Beedi Workers Welfare Fund

Contrary to what is available at Bhandara or Sagar District, which are essentially rural areas, the workers in Sangli and Miraj are in towns which are covered under ESI Scheme. The Beedi Workers are neither covered under ESI Scheme, not any arrangement of Medical treatment under the Beedi Welfare Fund Scheme is available. All the 4000 women who are working have never received any amount as maternity benefit. The Maternity Benefit Act is virtually a dead letter in Beedi industry in Sangli. Perhaps this applies to the entire Maharashtra.

As far as the Housing Scheme under the Welfare Fund Scheme is concerned, so far not a single house has been constructed for the Beedi Workers for total Maharashtra. Only in Kolhapur District a decision has recently been taken to allot some funds but the construction has not started as yet.

Social Security, namely Provident Fund, Gratuity and Retrenchment Compensation are non-existent. In every case the worker has to go to a labour court to secure his legal dues.

Role of Trade Unions and Voluntary Organisation

The concept of voluntary organisation working among the Working Class is not acceptable to CITU. Because there are many such Organisations of questionable character. The fact that the Govt. has forbidden 137 such voluntary organisations from accepting money from foreign sources speaks eloquent about inadvisability of allowing such organisations to work freely unless they remain accountable to the Govt. As the vast majority of the beedi workers are unorganised, help to organise the workers in a trade union is welcome. But the workers must form their union and they have to be made aware of their rights and duties. The role of the voluntary organisations may be pacifist and therefore is suspect particularly due to the divisive forces having raised their ugly heads in consonance with imperialist plans for dismembering our country.

Suggestions

1. Reliable and national study be made on cost of production, taking trade union representatives on the study group.

2. The present machinery under the Labour Department is totally inadequate to implement the Labour Laws which are now being violated with impunity. It is suggested that every town or district should have a tripartite Beedi Labour Board and workers Inspectors be appointed to ensure implementation of all the beneficial labour legislations. The workers representatives in the Board or Workers' Inspector should be elected through Secret Ballot of all Beedi workers in the area who should also have the right of recall.

3. The welfare scheme should be utilised for the housing construction programme for the Beedi workers.

4. The Central Government should fix Rs. 25/- at 600 points of CPI (Base 1960=100) + dearness allowance @ 0.05P per day per point over 600 points to be adjusted quarterly for rolling one thousand beedies throughout the country as national minimum wage. This is very important for this industry in order to avoid migration of industry and exploitation of workers.

5. Abolition of Contract System

We are of the firm opinion that the industry has to run on healthy lines and workers welfare to be protected and collective bargaining to be strengthened for effective implementation of the Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966. The present method of getting beedies rolled in dwelling houses should be put an end to and the beedies should be rolled in the industrial premises by providing separate accommodation to women workers.

Women Demand Family Courts

A procession was taken out on 30th August 1986 in Bulandshahar, U.P. demanding a family court, with hundreds of women participating in the procession, for their various demands. With their flags, banners and slogans written on boards, the procession started from the stadium and passing from the main streets of the town, reached to the office of D.M. This was the first time in the district when the women brought out a procession for their demands.

At the office of the D.M. the procession was changed into a General meeting which was addressed by Com. Umesh and by the organiser of Democratic women Federation Com. Meena. The above demands were also supported by Com. Surrender of CITU, Com. Suresh chand of Democratic Youth Federation and the District Secretary of Kisan Sabha, Com. Amar pal Singh. A Women's delegation presented a memorandum to the D.M. in which the following demands were made: 1. Family courts should be formed 2. Molestation of woman should be stopped 3. Establishment of a creche 4. Equal wage for equal work.

The mass meeting at D.M.'s office was attended by about 1000 people, including the women in the procession.

Nurses should have been given Due Consideration by 4th Pay Commission — TNA

THE Nursing Journal of India in their August 1986 issue has stated that even after submitting an elaborate memorandum on their demands by the Trained Nurses Association to the Fourth Central Pay Commission in December 1983, their demands are not considered by the Commission. We are giving a few extracts from the article in the last issue, "To Pay or Not to Pay" for consideration of nurses in other states.

"This memorandum had profiled the structure of the Nursing profession in a comprehensive manner and had demonstrated that Nurses had a more rigorous instruction and training than is the case with personnel in the general categories with whom they are equated for purposes of fixation of emoluments. It had been argued that parities should be established between Nursing personnel and appropriate workers in general categories. But while enhancement was made in the emoluments, the justifiable desired parities with equivalent personnel were not granted and as a result personnel in the general categories with qualifications and instruction equatable to those of Nursing personnel have been accorded higher grades of pay.

There are certain anomalies and inconsistencies in the fixation of salaries for some categories of Nurses. The Public Health Nurses with degrees, Professors and other teaching staff of the College of Nursing, and many other categories have suffered having not been offered the grades that are accorded to those, working in general institutions, with equivalent qualifications. Officials working in the highest position in the discipline of Nursing in the Government too deserved a better deal in view of the criterion of equivalence.

Nursing being a special type of service-oriented profession, ought to be given due consideration; allowances as compensation for awkward shifts, rural difficulties, expenses on uniform and washing accounts, etc. have not attracted the Commission's attention that is disappointing.

The Association is submitting another memorandum to the Union Ministry of Finance pleading that while fixing emoluments

of Nurses, the structure of the Nursing profession should be taken in its proper perspective and the special circumstances of the personnel working in this field have to be taken into account. We hope that the vital issues would be reconsidered and steps taken to meet the just demands of Nurses.

Mahila Subcommittee NFPTE, Kerala Submit Charter of Demands

The Mahila Sub-committee of NFPTE in Kerala had submitted a charter of demands to the P&T authorities, many of which were placed before the fourth pay commission. The Commission has recommended the following:

1. Grant of extra-ordinary leave should be considered sympathetically for women employees who desire re-entry in government jobs after prolonged absence due to family reasons. For entering into Govt service age relaxation upto 10 years i.e. upto the age of 35 years, may be given to widows, divorcees and legally separated women.

2. Govt should construct single working women's hostels in all major centres of employment, priority may be given to women in allotment of residential accommodation.

3. Special transport facilities including chartered buses on payment wherever possible may be provided to women employees.

4. Child care service including creches may be provided in the neighbourhood of places accommodation of women employees or if this is not possible in or near the office.

5. Women employees may be allowed to avail of any kind of leave to which they are entitled upto a maximum Period of one year in continuation of maternity leave.

But, No Maternity Leave beyond Two Children

The Pay Commission has also suggested that:

"In consonance with the national objective of a small family Maternity Leave may not be allowed to women having two children."

This recommendation is most inhuman and deserves condemnation by all organisations.

Jyoti Chakrabarty — Kakima, Is No More

Vimal Ranadive

SHE was 'Kakima' for all of us. I met her in 1969 for the first time in West Bengal. She used to walk straight, speak fluently in the meetings, mix with all of us, very freely. I observed she was very much respected by everybody, women and men.

Kakima, (Jyoti Chakrabarty) was born in 1900. She was 86 years old when she died. From her young age she was a freedom fighter, organised people in the Congress to fight against the British rule in Noakhali Distt., which was in West Bengal state at that time. During the 2nd world war she tried to organise the "Atma Raksha Samithi" a women's organisation to fight actively against the British rule. She joined Communist Party in 1941 and remained in the Communist Party Marxist till her death. Kakima became the secretary of Mahila Atma Raksha Samithi and started working actively. Later she became the President of the samithi, after the division of the organisation.

During the semi fascist terror in West Bengal in 1971-72, her house was attacked, burnt and she herself got injured seriously when anti-socials and Congress goondas attacked knowing she was the leader of our women's organisation. She was staying away since then and could never return to her old house.

She was the President of Pachim Banga Gantantrik Mahila Samithi, the Branch of AIDWA, till she was able to move till 1983.

Myself and Ahilya took the opportunity to meet her at the time of the Party Congress in Calcutta in 1985 at Bonani's house, her daughter and active member of our organisation. First question she asked was about the health of Com. BTR. Then she complained he was touring a lot and he should not take so many trips. Then suddenly she asked how is our work going on all over India? Is it developing or not? I replied in the affirmative.

Kakima requested me to take her to the Party Congress Hall. She was in fact pleading for it. But how to take her in her present condition was our problem. "Let me see the Party Congress Hall before my death" She knew the hall was decorated beautifully. But

we could not fulfil her wish. But still I remember her words and the deep desire behind her wish. One could feel how strongly she felt about the Party she always belonged to. She belonged to mass organisation of women, tried to develop it till she was active. She resisted the attacks bravely by anti-socials and Congress, never deterred to continue to work even in face of danger to her life. Her loyalty to organisation and to the party knew no bounds. She suffered for this and never grumbled.

This was our Kakima. She is no more. But we all pledged in our last AIDWA meeting that her sacrifice for the cause of the working class and women will not go in vain. The fight against the authoritarian and anti-working class, anti-people rule of Congress, will be carried forward more vigorously.

AICCWW Demands Resignation of Mr. P.C. Sethi

The Secretary AICCWW has issued the following statement to the press on the humiliating treatment meted out to the telephone operators in Kidwai Bhawan by Mr P.C. Sethi the Congress(I), MP and the former Union Minister, on 23rd August 1986.

"The AICCWW expresses its shock at the indecent behaviour of Mr P.C. Sethi on 23rd of August when he approached the telephone operators in the night which he had no business to and abused them in filthy language and went to the extent of taking out the pistol to threaten them. AICCWW congratulates the telephone operators for stopping the work to express their indignation and demanding immediate action against such high handedness of a Congress(I) MP by obstructing their routine work. It also condemns the use of Army and police to break the morale and unity of women operators when an assurance was given by government that only women police would deal with such situation.

The AICCWW demands immediate action against Mr Sethi by the ruling party and unconditional apology for his indecent behaviour towards women operators. It also demands intervention of the Prime Minister to ensure that such incidents are not repeated".

WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

Are the Women Workers Rewarded for their Special Qualities?

The following survey made by the Labour Ministry of Cashew Industry once again prove that despite the majority of women employed in the industry, their wages are miserable, their cheap labour is taken advantage of. The CITU and AICCWW raised their voice against the inhuman exploitation of women workers in industries while the Government also had to admit that 53 per cent women workers are low paid.

—Editor

CASE STUDY

53 per cent are low paid women workers in cashew industry

THE cashewnut industry in Kerala is a crowded industry and has more workers justified by the quantity of raw material available to run the industry on a continuous basis. Consequently, the workers get work only for a few months in a year. Concerted efforts for uninterrupted availability of raw material, besides enabling the industry to work all through the year, will go a long way to improve the plight of workers in the industry.

The present survey has noted a "definite improvement" in the social security and industrial relations affecting the workers in the industry. For instance, the survey revealed that "all the sample units surveyed were covered by pension and gratuity schemes and maternity benefits", which it says, was not the case in 1965-66.

According to Kerala Labour Commissioner and Cashew Officer, the State had 307 units employing 1,83,873 workers. The Bureau team selected 46 cashew processing units employing 25,885 workers "by adopting the method of systematic sampling with a random start." In regard to units where records were not properly made, the survey team, in order to gather material regarding living conditions, interviewed workers "with the assistance of

managements to avoid language problems."

The composition of worker complement in these 46 cashew processing units was revealing. Of the total 25,399 "production workers", 24,228 were women and only 1,171 were men. The Sample survey, of course, did not reveal employment of any adolescent or child labour nor did it reveal employment of contract labour.

Only seven per cent of the women workers were graders (a time-rated job), the rest were employed for shelling, peeling, etc. on piece-rate basis. It is noted that no male workers was found to have been employed on piece-rate basis. The employers explained that predominance of women workers in the industry was due to the "repetitive nature of the job which requires a lot of patience and speed that are special qualities of women workers."

Are women workers rewarded for their "special qualities" such as "patience and speed"? Certainly not. They in fact suffer for it. And this can be seen from the rates of wage prevalent in the industry. Payment of wages and dearness allowance in the cashewnut industry is normally made on weekly basis. Only 7 per cent of the time-rated workers are paid on monthly basis. Of the total women workforce, 93 per cent are piece-rated, the remaining being the time-rated graders.

The graders were paid a daily wage of Rs. 9.81. At the same time, male workers were employed in a variety of occupations and on a time rated basis with the daily wages ranging between Rs. 11.56 and Rs. 19.91 for borma workers, Rs. 12 and Rs. 19.29 for roasters, Rs. 11.56 and Rs. 16.94 for packers, Rs. 9.81 and Rs. 14.06 for mazdoors (maicad) and between Rs. 12 and Rs. 25 for supervisors. Piece-rated workers all women-received an average daily earnings ranging between Rs. 7.36 and Rs. 17.06 and Rs. 18.91 for

peelers,

The payment of dearness allowance (linked to consumer price index) was the same for all workers irrespective of the nature of their work or sex; it was Rs. 5.36 per day at the time of the survey. For 1980-81, a sum of Rs. 185 was paid as bonus to each worker and 2.5 months' salary to supervisory staff.

Statement showing Range of daily wage-rates of time-rated workers by sex and occupation

Range of daily wage rates (Rs.)

Occupation	Basic		Dearness allowance		Consolidated	
	Mini-mum	Maxi-mum	Mini-mum	Maxi-mum	Mini-mum	Maxi-mum
Male						
Borma worker/dryer	6.50	14.85	5.06	5.06	11.56	19.91
Roaster	6.94	14.23	5.06	5.06	12.00	19.29
Packer	6.50	11.88	5.06	5.06	11.56	16.94
Maicad (Mazdoor)	4.75	9.00	5.06	5.06	9.81	14.06
Supervisor	6.94	19.94	5.06	5.06	12.00	25.00
Female						
Grader	4.75	4.75	5.06	5.06	9.81	9.81

Range of average daily earnings of piece-rated workers by sex and occupation

Female						
Sheller	2.30	12.00	5.06	5.06	7.36	17.06
Peeler	2.00	13.85	5.06	5.06	7.06	18.91

Industrial Relations: The workers in the industry were well organised and were members of trade unions in almost all the units. The managements of all the factories had accorded recognition to all the unions functioning in their units. The trade unions in all the factories were registered made as laid down in the above Act.

Maternity benefit was being paid to the employees under the Employees' State Insurance Scheme.

[The Indian Worker, Jan. 13, 1986]

(from page 3)

does not help them. The Fourth Pay Commission knew but has just done this and did not ask the concerned Ministries to do certain things within a certain limit and thus avoided its responsibility.

Appearing almost like a silver lining of a dark cloud, the commission has shown consideration towards the widows, divorcees, women who have been separated from their husbands and so on, and suggested that "grant of extra ordinary leave should be considered sympathetically", because "Recently after a prolonged absence due to family reasons may no doubt pose some problems" ... and therefore the commission suggests "some measures should also be adopted to solve the problem of women who seek employment at a later age, primarily for economic reasons".... These unfortunate women, will surely welcome, them, though they know quite well whose policies are responsible for the "price rise", the mention of which has already been made by the commission. It suggests that age bar should not come in the way for getting jobs for such women, and jobs be given by relaxing the age limit by 10 years, that is upto the age of 35 years." If these recommendations are put into practice without any delay, some women may benefit. But the question is when and whether there would be enough jobs to offer.

The feudal attitude of the Congress rulers pervaded the 4th Pay Commission and it has come to light once again in the form of recommendations. The only difference is the commission has very cleverly talked about the sufferings of working women, the extra household burdens they have to take and so on, so that women will accept whatever is put in the recommendations without any grumble. There is no doubt that the Commission has failed to hood wink the working women. The Govt. of India should note that this is not the first time women employees have heard such platitudes and promises. The bonafides of the Govt. would be proved if these beneficial recommendations are put into practice without any delay and these recommendations of the commission are taken seriously while rejecting all retrograde recommendations like restricting of maternity benefit etc. If this is not done, no other way would be left to the women employees but to launch struggles for their demands.

3rd Conference of Kerala Mahila Federation

—T. Devi, General Secretary

THE third State Conference of All India Democratic Women's Association was held at Malappuram on August 1st, 2nd and 3rd 1986.

A broad convention was held at Perinthalmanna in order to discuss and organise arrangements for the successful proceedings of the conference. A Reception Committee of 501 members was formed with Mrs. Cherukad as Chairperson and Vijayalakshmi as Convener.

The Preparation of the Conference

The Convention decided to organise a huge rally associated with the conference, with 5000 minimum participants exclusively from Malappuram District. Propaganda for mobilising people was emphasised in the Working Committee meetings held at Panchayat area and district levels. The workers were bursting with enthusiasm and participated in all sorts of activities. A good many of them were Muslim women, Malappuram being a muslim majority district. Mahila squads were organised for fund raising, for booking vehicles and such other duties. Mahila squads collected fund mostly in kinds. Paddy, coconut, rice, money; was collected by Mahila workers. Hundred of people were waiting at every centre to receive the delegates. All this was new to Malappuram district. Besides the working committee meetings, so many general meetings were conducted every day. Even the areas, where Mahila's message, nor activities have reached, were enthusiastic about the conference.

More than 2000 flags-7000 posters were pasted in every nook and corner of Perinthalmanna. Most of the activities were shouldered by the Mahila workers themselves. With the opening up of the Reception Committee office at Perinthalmanna, the whole town was swept into the conference work. July 25th was observed as the Flag day. Mahila units hoisted flag and put up boards. By July 27th, huge placards and boards were visible everywhere on the roads of Perinthalmanna. They wrote up the Message of the Conference on boards

and put them up in every important corners and junctions.

Delegates Received

July 31 — Delegate comrades, started arriving at the Sammelan Nagar. First to reach were the delegates from Wynad. Comrades Sainaba, Thankamani and Prema of the District Mahila Committee were waiting at the reception committee office to welcome them. Mahila workers were also waiting at Bus station and railway stations for receiving the delegates. On the whole there were 270 delegates representing 270,000 members with 130 observers besides 40 State Committee members.

Registration began at 9 a.m. on 1st of August. A presidium consisting of comrades Devootti, Umadevi, Antharjanam, J. Saradamma and Molly Mathew conducted the proceedings. Members were elected to steering committee, resolution committee, credential committees. After hoisting of the flag by P. Devutty MLA, the conference started. The resolutions on Martyrs and a condolence resolution were passed. CPI(M) State Committee Secretary Com. V.S. Achuthanndan inaugurated the conference. Com. V.S. in his inaugural speech emphasised the role of Mahila organisations in building up national integrity, independence and progress. T. Devi, the General Secretary placed the report for discussion.

Com. Vimla Ranadive Vice-President of AIDWA saluted the delegates, who played a prominent-role in the agitation against the Muslim women's Protection Bill. In her speech she gave account on the national problems. While explaining all India women's movement and the situation in our country and the increasing communalism and disunity fostered by the Communal forces, she said the common people, are crushed under the weight of the economic policies of the Indian ruling class. The people — including Muslim women—however are standing in the forefront in protest against all such malpractices.

32 delegates participated in the discussion.

On August 2nd at 6.00 p.m. there was a cultural seminar and the auditorium was flooded with men and women, beyond the organiser's expectation. Ezhacheri Ramachandran introduced the subject: "Degeneration of our cultural field". His speech was followed by discussion on the subject. K.E.V. Kunjahammed, a critic and leader of the Purogamana Sahithya Sangam" pointed out the role played by capitalism in exploiting women through advertisements. He explained how the concept of private property is closely connected with the servitude of women and emphasised the role of women and womens' organisations in freeing our society from these evils.

Com. Susheela Gopalan reminded that only through a strong fight in the cultural and economic field a new cultural path could be build up. She stressed the importance of such a fight. Josephine declared that the Mahila workers will fight against all sorts of bad impacts of the capitalist culture which is exploiting women and degenerating their status into mere advertising machines. Com. Devaki Warrior presided.

On August 3rd by 2 p.m. the conference ended. New committee of 58 members with Com. Sarojini Balanandan as President and Com. T. Devi as Secretary was elected. Com. Susheela Gopalan addressed the delegates while summing up the discussion.

She pointed out the enthusiasm of the leaders from Christian and Muslim sections and from tribal areas. Their readiness to work and their spirit to take up and solve their problems through the organisation and their fight helped them to come up to the leadership of organisation. She emphasised the need to extend the scope of activities.

From morning our comrades, were having propaganda through microphone for the rally. Buses for the rally reached at Angadipuram from various parts of the districts. Most of the women started from their houses early in the morning. There were women who came travelling a long way in buses and trains.

Most of them came with lunch packets. A good lot of them have never participated in a

rally before. They were enthusiastic to join the procession. Their leaders, freed themselves from superstitious and customary taboos, but these women still suffered. They have been fighting for their rights. Comrades Sainaba, Aisha and Vijayalakshmi, they were their leaders — the three spirited Muslim women who rushed to Delhi to fight against Muslim Bill. The Muslim women breathing the spirit of freedom and strength of Eranad-they are now stepping up to the forefront, to wipe-out the tears of downtrodden, Nadiras and their sisters. Women's Band from Thripunithura bugled the bands to the tune with the march; Com. Santhamma and Com. Prema announced through microphone, the marching of the rally.

Out side, the Panchayath community hall, the venue of the conference, the Volunteers were getting ready, to take out the procession. The delegates with, more than 6000 women workers, waiting them to proceed, were all in cheers, to see that the senior leaders went with them. Com. Lakshmi, Vimala and Suseela, preferred to walk, all the way to the "PANKAJ ACHARIYANAGAR", at the high school school grounds. Thousands and thousands of the white flags, with the three slogans and the red star, over the corner, in the fading sun, at 3 in the evening, was a real sight to be remembered for a very long period in the living memory of the milling crowds of Perintalmanna town. This they had never seen before. More than 25 welcome arches, put up by several mass trade union and public organisations; and the white flags in thousands put up along side the main route, provided stimulating spirit to the marching women, and the cheering crowds around.

Slogans reverberated in the air, slogans declaring the message of the organisation. Women marched through the streets, declaring "We would fight for the creation of a new world. We would fight until ignorance and poverty is exterminated."

Both sides of the roads were overcrowded with people. Muslim women standing on the terraces of their houses, watched the rally with wonder. It is for the first time, the Muslim women stood up outside and watched such a procession.

Slogans of protest against Talaq echoed

the streets. "We won't allow Talaq" — and thousands of Muslim mothers, repeated it; with delight and pride, some waved their hands and greeted. The Muslim women of the rally exchanged friendly smiles with them.

When the rally arrived Perinthalmanna town, it was flooded with over crowding people. Salutes from Comrades on both sides of the road-KGTA, KPTU, Electricity, Toddy Tappers, Head load workers, SFI, DYFI, NGO, Transport, Private Transport — their salutes boosted the spirit of the women's organisation in their fight for a bright future tomorrow.

Fire works displayed before the rally entered Pankaj Acharya Nagar and the Maidan seemed to be an ocean of people.

The venue of the public meeting, the high school ground had never found such a crowd: and it was hardly wide enough to provide, space, for all the women and men, collected.

The convener of the reception committee Com. P.P. Vasudevan welcomed the gathering, Com. Sarojini Balanandan was in the chair. Com. Lakshmi took the salute of the red-clad band team, that led the procession and delivered her inaugural address. Com. Vimala Ranadive covered every important point, ranging from, world peace to the position of Indian economy. She also mentioned the problems of the Indian women. Com. K.R. Couriamma covered the Kerala situation. Com. Suseela Gopalan explained the work, and experience of the All India Democratic Womens Association. She also elaborated her bitter experience, when she met the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi at Delhi, with a big women's delegation, to represent the Muslim bill. She told the gathering, that they found Sri Rajiv Gandhi as a captive Prime Minister of the communal and casteist forces and also wanted to know whether they believe in SHARIAT or not. She said, that the Prime Minister of a secular nation, should never have gone to such a length, to pacify the fanatics and throw away the poor divorced muslim women, to such a pass. From the very same Malappuram District, where from, both, the Muslim league leaders Mr. Sulaiman Sait and Banatwala, the champions of the bill got elected. The new mass movement will surely contain these reactionary elements; she said.

The meeting also heard the challenging speech of Com. Sainaba, a muslim girl the president of the Malappuram District Unit, of

the Association which was full of sarcastic criticism of the Central Govt. for its role in throwing back the muslim community to the 18th century.

Again the Perinthalmanna town heard the thundering slogans, being raised by the thousands of women, as a mark of their protest against their pitiable social condition, with a rejuvenated spirit and strength, that they were able to collect from the speeches delivered. Then the delegates, and the crowd melted away, only to meet again at Trivandrum, at the venue of the All India Conference, to shape the fortune of the Indian Women.

And thus came to an end, the historic 3rd session of the All India Democratic Women's Association's Kerala Unit; held at Perinthalmanna in Malappuram District.

AIDWA—1st Sundargarh District Conference

THE first conference of the Sundergarh District AIDWA was held on 27th July, '86 at Rourkela and was attended by 200 Delegates including 120 working women. After the flag hoisting by Com Vimala Ranadive Vice-President of AIDWA a 2-minute silence was observed to pay respect to the memory of martyrs.

In her inaugural address, Com. Vimala Ranadive gave a brief idea about the founding and growth of the AIDWA, she elicited the problems of women, including both working women and housewives. She called upon the women of Sundargarh district to organise themselves to fight against the torture and harassment of women.

Com. Shyamali Gupta, Joint Secretary-AIDWA spoke about the organisation and victories of AIDWA in West Bengal and the different problems the women were facing there. Com. Kalyani Das presented the report. Com. Tapasi Fraharaj from Cuttak State Committee spoke on the discriminatory Muslim Women's Bill. Discussions took place on dowry system and plight of College students and working women.

Resolutions were passed against the Price Rise, against Muslim women bill and for national integration.

A 19-member District Committee including 8-office bearers was elected with Janaki Mudali as President and Kalyani Das as Secretary.

Passing of the Laws only will not Eradicate Dowry System

COM. Kanak Mukherjee, M.P. spoke on the Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Bill 1986 on 22nd August, 1986 in Rajya Sabha. Some extracts from the speech are given below:

"While welcoming the move to amend the Dowry Prohibition Bill and most of its amendments I do record my protest against the way the Govt. is introducing and passing it in such a hurry. Yesterday the Govt. passed an important Bill called Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls Bill and today they want to pass this Bill. These are two most important bills affecting women and we should have been given time for proper study and for collecting opinion from the people outside, especially the women's organisations as we did before. I don't know what is the intention of the Govt. to pass this important Bill in such a hurry. Do they want to appear as champions of the women's cause after passing such a retrograde Muslim Women's Bill or is it just a propaganda to show that they want to do some good for the women?

But, I would like to point out that some of the major recommendations of the Dowry Prohibition Joint Select Committee have still been left out. They have not been included here. The Dowry Prohibition Joint Select Committee, which included the present Hon. Minister and myself also, took two years to study the matter and they made exhaustive recommendations, but still its major recommendations have been left out. The major women's organisations especially the All India Democratic Women's Organisation, the National Federation of Indian Women, AIWC, all took interest. After consulting all of them the Dowry Prohibition Joint Select Committee made some major recommendations.

We must remember that the dowry system is a deep-rooted social evil. In spite of the fact that we are passing more and more laws and amendments and on obscenity of women, atrocities on women are increasing day-by-day. Why is it increasing even after four decades of independence?

Sir, the economic policies of the Govt. are throwing more and more women out of employment. Similarly, through the education policy of the Govt. the children of the masses are not getting opportunities of education. So these women when they are not having the chance of education and employment, they have to depend economically on men. Therefore economic independence is very essential for raising the status of women. If economic independence is not there then evil of dowry and evil of prostitution cannot be eradicated. So long as their cultural level, educational level and economic independence are not improved this evil of dowry system would continue. The marriage system in our country has become something like commercial under the capitalistic and feudal system, the marriages are linked up with commercial motives. It is all related with the present economic, educational and cultural policies of the Govt. This Bill will not have any effect on the dowry system unless we go to the root cause and find out all these things.

The evil of dowry cannot be completely eradicated unless the boys and girls are culturally advanced and are educated. The self-respect among boys and girls must be there to eradicate evil of dowry.

I would like to say that equality between men and women is assured. But our Govt. of India is just compromising with the fundamentalists and communal forces and following the footsteps of the Britishers to divide and rule the people. They are dividing people among the castes, communities and even among women. They are differentiating between Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and others.

Instead of following the policy of our Constitution to bring all the communities under the fold of Uniform Civil Code, they are just dividing the people into many communities. With the economic, educational, cultural, social and political policies of the Government, the dowry system cannot be fully eradicated.-..

Important Decisions taken at the Meeting of AIDWA

THE CEC of AIDWA met in Delhi on August 19 and 20th. The following decisions were taken after the discussion in detail among the members of the CEC.

1. The All India Conference of AIDWA has been confirmed to be on 17, 18, 19 and 20th October, 1986 at Trivandrum, Kerala. The number of delegates and observers were fixed as per the membership in the states.

Delegates and observers will each have to pay a free of Rs. 10. Food charges will be communicated later.

2. The CEC has decided that the draft report will be printed in English and Hindi. A cyclostyled copy of the report will be sent to all states (other than Hindi speaking) to be translated into the relevant languages as early as possible. It is essential to translate the report to enable the full participation of the delegates in the Conference. Main resolutions will also be sent to the states by September 20th for translation.

3. The address of the Reception committee, Trivandrum will be communicated to all states by first week of September so that the delegates can inform arrival and return booking.

4. The CEC has given a call for a mass signature campaign on the burning issue of South Africa. The forms should contain the followings:

We Demand:

The unconditional release of Nelson Mandela and all other political prisoners.

An immediate end to the abhorrent system of apartheid and the ruthless repression of Botha regime.

We Condemn

The continued refusal of US and British govts to impose Sanctions.

These mass signatures should be brought

to the Conference in Trivandrum.

5. The CEC also has given a call for anti-price rise campaign. States can decide their own dates. Any other queries concerning the Conference may be directed to the Reception committee office in Trivandrum.

AIDWA—Hissar District Conference

THE first conference of the Hissar, Dist. AIDWA was held on 9th and 10th August, 1986. In her inaugural address Shulha Sharma outlined the current situation and the states burning problems of the women community. She was happy at the founding of a democratic women's organisation in Haryana around 150 women were present. Office bearers of various mass organisations and employees organisation expressed their solidarity and good wishes to the Conference. In the evening the women delegates took out a procession through the main streets of the city. Bela Goel presented the report to 51 delegates. Resolutions were passed against the social and economic discrimination and atrocities on women, for national unity and integration, against the danger of nuclear war, for the liberation of S. Africa and other issues. It was stressed that consciousness should be roused among larger number of women on these issues.

A 12 member district committee including 5 officer bearers were unanimously elected with Bimala devi as president, Jagmati as Secretary. Sarala devi as Vice President, Kamala devi as joint Secretary and Neelam as Treasurer.

At the closing session, on behalf of the AIDWA Com. Brinda Karat gave an account of the All India struggles for women's rights launched by the AIDWA. She called upon the delegates to launch struggles for the rights and equality of women.

Second Conference of Bihar Rajya Janwadi Mahila Morcha

THE Second State Conference of Bihar Rajya Janwadi Mahila Morcha took place at Co-operative Hall, Gardanibagh, Patna on 23rd, 24th Aug. 1986. The Conference started at 4.30 p.m. with hoisting of flag by Com. Vimla Ranadive, Vice-President of All India Democratic Women Association and with garlanding the martyr column by delegates in memory of martyrs. In her inaugural speech Com. Vimla Ranadive, appealed to the delegates to organise against oppression.

The delegate session started with three member Presidium consisting of Com. Ramnika Gupta, Com. Ram Pukari Devi and Com. Mridula Ghosh, Com. Sudha Bindu Mitra the Convener of Bihar Rajya Janwadi Mahila Morcha presented the political, organisational report. On this report 32 delegates participated in the debate. Lastly the report was accepted unanimously.

A State Executive Committee consisting of 35 members was elected with Coms. Ram Pukari Devi President, Sudha Bindu Mitra-Genl. Secretary, Ramnika Gupta and Mridula Ghosh as-Vice-President, Manju Prakash and Shivani Choudhary — as Joint Secretary and Minoti Poddar —as Treasurer.

10 delegates and 3 observers were elected for All India Conference of Democratic Women Association which is to be held between 17 to 20th October in Trivandrum (Kerala).

Remembering the glorious tradition of women in freedom struggle in India in her speech as a Chief guest Dr. Lakshmi Sahgal, Comrade-in-arm of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and Commandant of Jhanshi-Rani Regiment of INA, stressed the important role of women in the present social system.

The conference adopted several resolutions against price-rise and unemployment, dowry system and oppression on women, Muslim Mahila Bill, filthy literature, film and television, decadent culture, new education policy and nuclear war, and resolution in support of National unity and integrity.

By a separate resolution the name of this organisation was changed to All India Demo-

cratic Women's Association, Bihar State Committee. The representatives of many mass organisations including CPI(M), SFI, DYFI, Kisan Sabha greeted the conference.

In the beginning artists belonging to Patna Unit of Democratic Cultural Morcha (Perna) presented cultural programme in the conference.

Com. Yogeshwar Gope, President of Reception Committee and CITU leader welcomed Chief Guests and delegates.

Total delegates representing 12,000 members were from 23 districts of Bihar—Patna, Vaishalli, Muzaffarpur, Madhubani, Samastipur, Begusarai, Saharsa, Madhepura, Katihar, Saran, Siwan, Khagaria, Hazaribagh, Giridih, Singhbhum, Ranchi, Lohardaga, Dhanbad, Bhagalpur, Munger, Bhojpur, Rohtas and Nalanda.

Health Hazards due to Hi-Tech

There is so much talk of Hi-Tech, in our country. The Prime Minister and the Government have promised our people to take them in 21st century with tremendous progress in every sphere by introducing the Hi-Tech. But from the information available from various sources, in USA, West Germany, Japan etc where the Hi-Tech is used on a large scale speak something totally different about the working conditions there. The forecast for bringing the computers in operation in India by the end of the decade is 20,000 and the personnel working on these machines would be about 20,000 as per the reports. The experience of working in Video, United States, and the health hazards from Video display terminals (VDT) which came to light after 10 years of its use is very significant for our people, especially for our women.

The research on these projects indicated that some specific physical stresses and strains associated with the operation of VDT, were mounting. Visual problems were reported, discomforts, high fatigue, soreness, itching tearing and so on were experienced by the employees. The persons operating the VDT

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Woman in South Africa—March Forward

Vimal Ranadive

"LET August 9th — the 30th anniversary of the Women's heroic march on Pretoria — be a day on which the whole nation moves with our women in the march towards freedom." Thus the call was given by ANC to the people of South Africa.

The movement against the "passes" for women in South Africa was continuing since many years. On behalf of the African and coloured women's Association women were demanding that Botha Government enact a legislation exempting them from carrying passes. They formed the Bantu women's League to organise women on this issue, women formed anti-pass Committees in various towns to resist local regulations. In a town called Potchefstroom, even children were required to purchase the permits in order to live with their parents. When, the appeal through Courts did not succeed, women called for a general strike and brought the town to a standstill. In 1950s the Apartheid regime decided to impose passes on women throughout South Africa, but women's sustained resistance to this action deferred the implementation for eleven years. By 1954, women of all races came together in the Federation of South African Women, which played a Key role in organising the campaign against passes.

On 9th August 1956, 20,000 women assembled in front of the Union Buildings in silence but defiantly. Thousands and thousands of signatures were collected on petition and delivered to Pretoria Govt. on that day. The slogan was "Now you have touched the women, you have struck a rock, you have dislodged a boulder, you will be crushed."

Botha Regime was adamant! The movement against passes continued with more vigour. Many women refused to carry the passes, many burnt them and many women were arrested and punished. Women were whipped and some were shot dead. The jails overflowed with women who courted arrests. The bravery of women in the movement was such that the ANC put the Banner in their first legal conference, "Let the women be praised" in honour of women.

The National Campaign began against all passes which ultimately led to ban the African

National Congress. Since 1963, women have had to carry passes and restrictions on women entering the urban areas. They were confined to Bantustans. Despite the ban, tortures, repression, women refused to carry the passes. Annie Silling, one of the leaders of the struggles refused to carry the pass upto 1984, upto her death at the age of 74.

The final assault against the passes is being considered now by the women's organisations and ANC. Many men and women became the heroes and heroines during the course of the struggles. Dedeka Heliso, after her marriage to Rivonia, could meet him after 22 years in 1986 in the prison Pollsmoor for the first time! Barbara Hogan, a white woman was sentenced in 1982 for ten years for treason! Helene Passtoor, was sentenced to ten years in April 1986 for becoming a member of ANC and "Umkhonto we Sizwe". Thandi Modise was sentenced in 1980 to eight years. June Mlangeni, Albertina Sisulu and Irene Mkwai were sentenced to life — Many more unknown women fought and died, suffered and still suffering. The women in South Africa will march to victory. The Botha Govt. can not rule on the minority votes for long. Margret Thatcher is getting rotten tomatoes for not sympathising the cause when she went to attend the Edinburgh Common-wealth games. The support for the struggle against Apartheid is increasing day by day. The days of Botha are numbered now.

(Contd. from page 15)

complained about headaches also. It was found, the operation of this machine also affected the pregnant women. A recent study taken up by some institutes in USA it was found that there is a close relationship between VDT use and angina or chest pain.

Since women are working in a big number on sophisticated machines in foreign countries, the hazardous effects of this high technology were already noted.

The talk about bringing the hi-tech in our country should make us aware about the health hazards it carries, besides a large number of unemployment among men and women due to computerisation and hi-tech.

Contribution of Le Duan to Women's Movement

L E DUAN, General Secretary of the communist party of Vietnam died at the age of 79 in Hanoi on July 10th, 1986. On behalf of All India Democratic Women's Association Com. Susheela Gopalan, the General Secretary and Com. Vimal Ranadive, Vice-President, went to the Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to pay homage to the great leader and placed a wreath on the photo, stood there for 2 minutes in silence and signed in the condolence book.

Le Duan came from a Working Class family and was full of patriotism. He fought against the French imperialist and was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment. After his release he was leading the people against the colonial reactionary threat of fascism and war. He was again sentenced for 10 years in 1940 and was deported to Popular Condor Island, to be released only after the 1945 revolution. He worked with Ho Chi Minh the Great leader of Vietnamese people. He got elected to the Central Committee of Communist Party Vietnam in 1951 and became the Secretary of the party in 1960. He was the deputy to the National Assembly from the second to the seventh legislation.

Le Duan contributed in the people's struggle of Vietnam before and after the revolution. He also contributed much for the women's movement in Vietnam. He addressed the delegates to the IV the Congress of Vietnam women's Union in Hanoi in 1974 and gave valuable guidance. It would be appropriate if we quote some portion of his speech which is relevant for women in our country.

"In the old society, women were those who suffered most, and who were most oppressed. Therefore they were highly responsive to the revolution and constitute a great force of the people. No revolutionary campaign can succeed without the participation of women. The socialist revolution, the most profound, thorough and all-sided revolution in the history of mankind, is all the more unimaginable without the active participation of women....

"The emancipation of women must be associated with national liberation and the liberation of the working class. If the nation and the working class are not liberated, the

women will not be liberated. Yet, if the women are not emancipated and do not yet share the role of masters of the country, the nation as well as the working class are not really liberated. A society cannot be considered civilized and advanced if women are still dependent and do not enjoy freedom. The extent to which women are masters of society is a yardstick of the development and progress of a society because women were those who endured the greatest injustice in the old society....

"So, what does the question of women's emancipation and the achievement of equality between men and women imply in the present stage of the socialist revolution. in North Viet Nam? It is clear that after the decisive victories of socialist transformation and the establishment of new relations of production, the principal content of the struggle for the emancipation of women is mainly a struggle against economic poverty, against the backward and wrong conceptions of the old society with regard to women. It is mainly to achieve an ever-wider participation by women in the management of society and production in line with their characteristics and capacities. It is to reduce the burden of housework by means of rational reorganisation of their life; it is to work actively to raise women's political, educational, scientific and technical standards. Thus in the socialist revolution, to emancipate women is in essence to ensure their fullest participation as collective masters in all three respects: to be masters of society, to be masters of nature and to be masters of themselves! This is the content of the struggle for the emancipation of women in the period of transition to socialism. It is only in the socialist regime that everyone is masters.....

"In this revolutionary cause, a cause dear to the hearts of women themselves, they ought to strive to set forth, move vigorously forward, trample underfoot all difficulties and obstacles, doing away with their inferiority complex and self-complacency. With all their strength and intelligence, let the Vietnamese women rise up as a dynamic force, to speed up the process of building a new regime, a new economy and a new man so as to render our society truly fine and superior, and bring splendour to the Fatherland, and happiness to every family."

Dowry to be made non-bailable offence

A Bill to amend the Dowry Prohibition Act was introduced in the Rajya Sabha by the Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Women and sport, Mrs Margaret Alva. More stringent punishment, appointment of Dowry Prohibition officials, and a new offence — dowry death — to be included in the Indian Penal Code are some of the features.

It recommends that a new Section, 340B incorporated in the Indian Penal Code and the punishment for dowry deaths will be a prison term of not less than seven years, but which may extend to imprisonment for life.

The proposed section will read "where the death of a woman is caused by burns or bodily injury occurs otherwise than under normal circumstances within seven years of her marriage and is shown that soon before her death she was subjected to cruelty or harassment by her husband or any relative of her husband, or in connection with any demand for dowry, such death shall be called 'dowry death', and such husband or relative shall be demand to have caused her death".

A suitable entry will also be made to Section 304A of the Code of Criminal Procedure. A new section, 113B, will also be added to Indian Evidence Act, which states that "when the question is whether a person has committed the dowry death of woman and it is shown that soon before her death such woman had been subjected by such person to cruelty or harassment for, or in connexion with, any demand for dowry the court shall presume that such person had caused the dowry death".

Punishment

The Bill recommends that the minimum punishment for taking or abetting the taking of dowry be raised to five years and a fine imposed of Rs. 15,000. The burden of proving that there was no demand for dowry will be on the person who takes or abets the taking of dowry. The statement made by the person aggrieved by the offence shall not subject him to prosecution under the Act.

It bans advertisements in which a share of property or money is offered in consideration of the marriage of a child. The person making such an advertisement and the printer or publisher of such an advertisement will be

liable for punishment. The prison term for such an offence will range from six months to five years or with a fine; the outer limit being Rs. 15,000.

All offences under the Act will be non-bailable, the Bill proposes. Provision has been made for the appointment of dowry prohibition official by the State Governments for the effective implementation of the Act such powers may be conferred on police offices. The States may also appoint advisory boards of social workers not more than five people of whom at least two must be women to advise and assist the Dowry Prohibition officials,

Despite various government laws on "dowry deaths" and the large-scale publicity on the subject, bride burning is on the increase.

In U.P. alone, there were 182 cases of dowry death, including deaths by burning and suicide, in 1984. The following year, the number of cases shot up to 323 and, in the first four months of this year 110 cases had been registered.

In a written reply in the Lok Sabha today questions on dowry deaths by Mr Hussain Dalwai, Mr. P. Chidambaram, minister of State in the ministry of home affairs, said in Maharashtra too, an unprecedented number of dowry deaths had been reported. There were 124 cases in 1984, 136 the following year and 32 in the first three months of this year.

Haryana comes next, with the graph showing a steady rise in the last two and a half years. Fifty-four cases were registered in 1984, 99 last year and, upto May this year, 64 dowry deaths had been reported. Punjab, Rajasthan and Karnataka show an almost identical number of dowry deaths. About 30 to 35 cases have been reported annually for the last two years. In Rajasthan, in the first five Months of this year alone, 29 cases had been registered.

Government figures also show that dowry deaths occur all over the country and not just in the northern states, as believed earlier. In Delhi, there were 30 cases in 1984, 33 last year and 16 cases till this May. Dowry deaths have been reported also in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu and even Kerala.

Britain : One More Greenham Heroine

JANET McBRIDE has been jailed twice in Holloway where the screws she refuses to call them prison officers are trained to intimidate. At the time of writing, she is probably serving a third sentence for her bravery on the front lines at Greenham Common. But she remains steadfast.

[From Peace Courier]

"When I enter Greenham Common and I am lying with my head in the dirt I wonder what I am doing there". Yet Janet McBride remains true to her commitment to the Greenham cause to rid Britain of US missiles. She used to go to Greenham on "the odd days", but she left her salaried job last May and now works regularly at Greenham and for women in politics — both nonpaying jobs. She has no money, and her husband has been declared redundant so often that he is now very poorly paid. "But we carry on". Janet has the wholehearted support of her family in what she is doing for them all — three daughters and five grandchildren included. "I couldn't do it otherwise. I never thought I'd ever be doing this sort of thing".

Janet typifies the Greenham women who are convinced of their mission to establish a nuclear weapons free and peaceful world. They do not indulge in heroics; they are merely doing what they see as necessary. They are dedicated women who have participated in the longest ever political struggle in Britain. They have spent nearly five years opposing their government's acceptance of US military bases and missiles on British soil.

New By-law in effect: Janet says that Greenham has been depleted this past year through a definite government policy to see this done. Since May 1985, when a new by-law was enforced, more and more women have been arrested-for such infringements as stepping on the ground of the Greenham base, or throwing a spot of paint on US military vehicles, or cutting the fence. Women are liable to six months imprisonment for cutting the fence around the base. But the Ministry of Defence police and the US military now have the right to arrest women at any time, usually for one or two weeks. These arrests deplete the women's camp because they cannot afford to pay the fines imposed.

Brutality stepped up: Earlier no US military personnel harassed the women. They ignored the women's ability to get into their highly secret bases; the women were never arrested or convicted. Now the US military has the right to arrest British women on British soil! And they assault the women with impunity; Women have been beaten up at police stations. Janet remembers a small woman (4 feet 10 inches) proved guilty of police harassment, of violence against the police who towered over and had knocked her out and chipped a bone in her cheek "I have found out things that I would never have believed could happen".

Evictions increased: Evictions from the camp have increased. Bailiffs have the right to remove people from the camp on to the roads-with no warning. The men come in and confiscate all the women's goods and chattels when they are away from the camp, moving into the base or doing other work. Those women left at the camp have difficulty moving everything quickly enough to save them from the "muncher". One young woman, Janet remembers, was caught up in a plastic sheet being inserted into the "muncher" whose jaws steadily scrap whatever is inserted between them. The men thought her plight was hilarious, and only stopped it in time, at the very last minute.

Injunctions served: The government also gets rid of the most active women by serving them with injunctions. Disobeying these injunctions make the women liable for 20 years imprisonment or more, effectively banning them from Greenham Common for the rest of their lives.

Government officials have decided to buy the four acres of land where the women's camp is based. They will give 40 acres to the County Council in exchange for these four acres at the main gate and effectively put Greenham Common women under siege.

The call is out for more women to replace the ones arrested and served with injunctions. "We are very strong and we support each other more than ever now".

Triumph Over Feudalism In China

OVER the past 30 years Chinese women have made remarkable progress from complete suppression under the old feudal code to liberation and social and economic emancipation under modern China. Women have become an important for modernisation. They make up 32.1 per cent of China's personnel with technical and medical training and provide much of the skilled labour for industry. To ensure greater participation of women in the development and progress, provisions have been made for maternity and child care. A working woman has 56-70 days of maternity leave with full pay.

In recent years state regulations provide for 6-12 months leave on 74-80 per cent of original pay. There are 26 children's hospitals and 239 maternity and children's medical centres and 2734 clinics, 92,000 hospital beds for children and 34,000 paediatric centres.

National mortality rate of pregnant women has dropped from 15 per 1000 in 1950 to 0.5 per 1000 in 1985 and the infant mortality rate from 200 per 1000 in 1950 to 20-25 per 1000 in 1985.

In all of China today, public or enterprise run kindergarten and nurseries care for only 1,140,250 children which is far from the demand. Grandmothers are now usually working women too and it is very hard to find domestic servants.

The current retirement regulation too which require men to retire at 60 and women retire at 55 years is becoming a popular topic of discussion. A vast majority of woman almost 62 per cent consists of women officials, professionals in science, education and public health. Teachers and nurses are opposing the regulation. They are of the view that this regulation considers only women engaged in physical labour but not those in fields of science culture, education & technology. It is an age where women have grown up children and not much experienced and mentally energetic and can bring about better professional results. It is also urged that women start school and career at same age as men and also longer than men.

Supporters of the regulation feel that since women did more housework & brought up children, they should relax earlier and such early retirement also leaves more positions open to young successors.

On the basis of this discussions, the Chinese government is considering reforms in retirement regulations to ensure equal treatment to women.

The Chinese women made great studies in fields of education and employment. The rapid population growth and return of millions of young people from countryside to cities caused considerable unemployment in late seventies. This was quickly controlled and jobs were given to all by early eighties the population growth too was curtailed. This situation led to reemergence of age old feudal attitudes which led to inequities in opportunities for education employment and promotion. This was reflected in that the profession of men to women changes from 2.1 to 1 among total technical personnel to 4.4 to 1 at rank of engineer or equivalent and to 7.6 to 1 at higher ranks of senior engineers, research associates and professors. The Chinese government took remedial measures to end such discrimination in matters of promotion.

In today's China the emancipation and progress of the Chinese women is not only remarkable but also admirable. But yet there is a need to fight against the remnants of feudalism which darken the bright skies of these achievements.

Review of Tara Valanju's Book

Com. Tara Valanju, after returning from Nairobi conference in July 1985, has written her experiences in a book in Marathi. She has narrated them in a simple way, which can be understood by any ordinary woman as to how the women in Chile, South Africa, Latin America, Sarhavahi and so on are suffering and fighting for their rights, for the liberation of their countries with great sacrifice. It has already been translated in Hindi, by our Kanpur branch of AIDWA. Tara Valanju has done a good service for our women's movement by publishing the book.

Father Cyriac should be Punished

IN a country where children are sold like cattle by starving parents and the flesh trade, the ghastly story of trafficking in nuns in Kerala has come to light.

A 67 year old priest Father Cyriac of Ettumanoor parish has been conducting a flourishing business, luring young women from impoverished Christian families in Kerala to nunneries in Italy, on a commission of Rs. 15,000 per girl.

The young Christian girls are deceived by showing them photographs of Father Cyriac and his previous recruits with the Pope which have the definite effect of impressing them. The girls are promised a career in nursing but instead end up being medical domestic or lay-sisters in short staffed Italian convents. Some of them languish in the kitchens, their future prospects dimmed and it is impossible for them to return home. The girls have traumatic experiences at the Italian convents. Jessy, one such girl developed paralysis in her left leg but was locked in a room. Her uncle and aunt, settled in Rome put pressure on the Mother Superior to show her to a doctor and send her back to India. Fortunately for Jessy, she managed to return although her family never got the money that they entrusted to Father Cyriac for her continued medical treatment. Other families are trying to get their girls back to Kerala. One girl Saji is especially keen to return as she has passed her Pre-Degree examination. However, the convent authorities allegedly scolded the girls and refused to let them go. There are Malayali nuns acting as intermediaries between the Italians and the Keralite girls whose attitudes are showing. Recruiting girls for overseas convents is illegal and prohibited by the Church both Indian and abroad. Years ago Father Cyriac had been stripped of his position as parish priest for the same racket and he had been arrested and his passport impounded. However, he unashamedly continued his profitable business of luring unsuspecting, impressionable young girls whose poor parents were com-

pelled by their poverty to voluntarily send their daughters. Such families are unable to pay the dowry and marry their daughters.

Today, nobody including his family knows of Father Cyriac's whereabouts. Much damage has been done to the lives and future of several of his victims. This shameful convert operation has been going on uninterruptedly for years. Prominent members of community suggest that Fr. Cryiac may not be the sole offender and there are hushed reference to clergymen in Trichur district operating in a similar clandestine fashion. The priests get a safety commission for filling the nunneries of Europe with the girls from Kerala who are trapped as domestic servants. This activity must be investigated and the inhuman racketeers severely punished.

Nursing Staff on Strike in Israel

A strike by 11,000 nurses in the month of July 86 has paralysed Israeli hospitals. Many patients have been turned away and only emergency cases are being admitted. Some doctors sympathies openly with the strikers. The workers are demanding a revision of collective agreements to include wage index based on the growing rate of inflation and improved working conditions.

Following the lasting economic crisis, the Israeli government has made drastic cuts in social expenditure, including a drop in salaries for nursing staff which increases the work load for those remaining.

Protection of Working Mothers in Hungary

THE laws of the Hungarian People's Republic, its economic, planning and organizational work fully take into account the fact that the wide extension of women's economic and social activity is only possible in harmony with fulfilment of the function of motherhood, in a coordinated and consistently applied system of social economic, cultural and social policy measures for the harmonic performance of both tasks.

The Constitution not only stipulates women's equal rights as citizens and equal rights in employment, but also calls for the protection of mothers and families. On the basis of these rights women, as mothers, enjoy extensive health and social protection. In addition to this, women in employment also enjoy special protection under our laws.

Our society makes strong efforts to achieve harmony in, and the coordination of women's two-fold vocation, motherhood and work, on the highest possible level. As a result of the development of Hungarian social policy, on the basis of government regulations put into practice on 1st January and 1st June 1974, we further assisted families with children, reducing the share of the costs of raising children covered by the family by increasing the share of society's participation in child-raising through cash allocations and other benefits.

The increased family allowance, the childcare aid, the extension of sick pay for the care of children have meant an increase of more than two billion forints a year in the state financial contribution towards child-raising. These benefits concern over 900,000 families. The state covers 50 per cent of the cost of care for children.

The system of child care aid was introduced in Hungary on 1st January 1976 and very soon became highly popular. In 1968 92,000 mothers took advantage of this benefit while this figure rose to 185,000 in 1972 and 290,000 in 1977. In formulating the measures raising the standards of living under the Fourth Five-Year Plan we devoted special attention to increasing material support for

large families and improving the material situation of single-parent families.

Families are entitled to most of the benefit through the mother or through the mother's employment as a working woman. Below we list some of the more important labour law and social regulations concerning pregnant women and mothers:

(a) Pregnant women or mothers may not be refused employment by the employing enterprise on the grounds of their condition, moreover, all things being equal, pregnant women and mothers of small children must be given priority in hiring.

(b) From the beginning of the fourth month of pregnancy until her child reaches the age of six months, a working woman may not work overtime and mothers caring for children under the age of six years may only be required to work overtime under exceptional circumstances.

(c) Women giving birth are entitled to twenty weeks of confinement leave. In the case of abnormal birth, at the doctor's recommendation, this may be extended by four weeks. The mother receives 100 per cent of her average wages for the duration of the confinement leave.

(d) Mothers are entitled to 60 days of sick pay a year to care for a sick child between the ages of one and three years and to 30 days a year for children from three to six years. (In the latter case single parents are entitled to 60 days of sick pay.)

(e) At the request of the working woman, the enterprise must grant her unpaid leave after the expiry of confinement leave to care for a child up to the age of three years. During the childcare and this period the mother receives childcare aid is 800+110 forints for the first child, 900+110 forints for the second child and 1000+110 forints for the third child. During the period the mother receives the aid she is entitled to all the rights arising from employment. Women workers who have been in

employment for a total of 12 months in the 18 months prior to delivery and worked for at least 6 hours a day are entitled to this benefit.

(f) Working mothers are entitled to 2 days of supplementary leave a year in addition to their normal annual leave, for one child under the age of 14 years, 5 days for two children under 14 years and 9 days for three children. Working mothers with three children under the age of 18 years not in employment are entitled to a further 2 days of supplementary leave a year.

(g) Working women caring for at least two children under the age of 14 years must be granted one day of unpaid leave a month at their request to carry out their household tasks.

(h) Workers are entitled to a family allowance for dependent children. The amount of family allowance has been raised several times during the past decade and a half. At present single parents are entitled to 360 forints a month for one child, 760 forints for two children and a further 380 forints for each subsequent child. The family allowance for families with two children is 720 forints a month and 380 forints a month for the third and subsequent children. In addition to this, families receive a 110 forints price compensation.

(i) Under the social insurance system the state pays mothers a maternity grant of 2500 forints at the birth of each child. At the recommendation of the trade unions in response to requests from working mothers, the amended family rights law contains a provision whereby the state temporarily pays for child maintenance if the divorced father fails to meet his obligations.

These benefits improve the living conditions of working women and contribute to the fulfilment of their two-fold vocation and to the fact that women willingly undertake to give birth and raise children while continuing to work. The humane nature of our social policy is reflected in the fact that it provides the greatest benefits for families where the mother is in employment and there is more than one child. Social support for families thus increases progressively with the number of

children. Families with three or more children enjoy the greatest benefits. They are also given priority in housing allocations.

In all areas of its activity the trade union movement devotes full attention to improving the social and economic situation of women workers and it is struggling for the successful application of the women's policy resolution.

[Women in Trade Unions — Hungary]

Com. Marsa Hembrom Attacked and Injured

"Com. Kalyani Das, the Secretary of Sundargarh Dist. Committee, Orissa has condemned the attack by BMS goondas on Com. Marsa and other eight women of AIDWA, Sundargarh Committee on 9.8.1986. The women were observing the National Integration Day in Barsua when they were attacked".

(from page 2)

childcare facilities is one more point in the new 20-points. It can continue to remain there as long as the congress rule is there. It is however common knowledge that two or even three women are forced to share one bed after their delivery, and many are kept on the ground in the Maternity hospital, in Delhi and perhaps, elsewhere too.

Working women are in dire need of creche. But no legal provision has been made by the Congress party, even during the period of Women's Decade! The women in the organised industries where the provision of creche exists, the women are being retrenched on a large scale. Women employees now have to wait long for the creches while their children may become grown-ups during the period.

Now, the question, as to why this particular time was chosen to declare the new 20 point programme has caused wide-spread apprehension. Is it a prelude to more attacks on employment or on the rights of Working people and the announcement of the 20 points programme is to detract the attention from the real problems of the people? Prima-facie it appears to be so. Hence the working women will have to come together to fight against the attacks on their employment and other rights and for protecting their existing rights.

On Peace Front

Mothers' Day Walk for Peace in FRG

More than 500 marchers from every major peace organization in the Steel City of Hamilton made this Mother's Day Walk and Rally for Peace the biggest ever. Speakers called on the federal government to make the International Year of Peace (IVP) the year for rejecting Star Wars, cruise missiles and free trade with the US, in favour of new policies on peace and disarmament.

The event was advertized with a banner draped across the city halls entrance for a week, and the public and separate school boards permitted the organizers to advertize the Walk in every city school — the first administrative recognition of the Peace Council's efforts in this city.

Women Scientists for Star Peace

Three women scientists from the USSR, US and Britain discussed the star Wars Programme in seven meetings around Britain organised by the National Assembly of Women during April. A resolution supporting No to Star Wars-Yes to star Peace from each of these meetings was sent to prime minister Margaret Thatcher, urging her to support a test ban treaty. As a result of the meetings scientists from Leeds University are calling a staff meeting to discuss what action they should take if asked to work on research for the Star Wars programme.

Crimes Against Women on the Increase-BPRD

The figures of cases of rapes and crimes against women as collected and reported by Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD) are astounding. The analysis of data collection shows the crimes against women have risen from 16,300 in 1971 to 28,100 in 1982-83. The cases of rapes during the corresponding period have increased consistently from 2487 in 1971 to 4621 in 1982-83. The rape cases have shown an increase of about 11 times since 1962 to 1982.

It is not surprising that Delhi has shown the highest number of rape cases in one year, followed by Bombay. The reported cases in Delhi were 78, Bombay 58 and Calcutta 23. There will be many more cases of rapes and molestation in Delhi, Bombay and other places, which are not reported and also the police do not register the cases. The figures of gang-rapes were stated as one-fifth out of the

total cases of rape. The study made by the BPRD apart from their other conclusions say the higher the educational level of the women, the lesser were the chances of rape.

The Bureau pointed out that the problem does not seem to be limited to the "ineffectiveness in regard to law enforcement agencies". The experience of the women's organisations who are dealing with such cases in Delhi and in different cities and rural areas, repeatedly complained on the ineffectiveness of the enforcement machinery of the police department in such cases. The police connive at the persons who are guilty, the exchange of money and bribe, playing important role in not registering the cases. The Bureau should have come out openly against this. Whatever it may be, the facts shown in the report is a matter for concern for the women's organisations, and the democratic masses of people, who have to raise their voice against the increasing crimes against women.

Representatives from AIDWA and AICCWW to Attend Seminar in Tashekent

The soviet Women's Committee will be organising a regional Seminar for women's organisations in Asian and Pacific countries in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic from October 2-6, 1986. The topic of the Seminar is "Women and Development, women's contribution to the Maintenance of Peace". The seminar has been included in the UN Plan for the International year of Peace. Many women's organisation, regional and international including the United Nations, the WIDE, the World Peace Council, UNESCO, the Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity organisation etc. are participating in the Seminar.

The AIDWA and AICCWW have been invited to attend the conference. Com. Pappa Umanath, the Secretary of AIDWA and Com. Mythily Shivraman, a member of AICCWW will be attending the seminar and presenting the papers on one of the subject to be discussed in the seminar.

Both the delegates will leave India on 27th Sept. '86.