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THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITY

MARCH 8

- ♦ ON THIS DAY WE PAY OUR TRIBUTE TO THE MILLIONS OF WOMEN WHO STRUGGLED IN THE YEARS GONE BY FOR THE RIGHTS NOW ENJOYED BY WOMEN
- ♦ ON THIS DAY WE EXPRESS OUR SOLIDARITY WITH WOMEN WORKING IN FACTORIES AND FIELDS, IN HOMES AND HOSPITALS, WOMEN STRUGGLING TO PROTECT THEIR RIGHTS, AND FOR AN END TO DISCRIMINATION
- ♦ ON THIS DAY WE REITERATE OUR COMMITMENT TO THE FIGHT AGAINST CASTE, CLASS AND GENDER OPPRESSION, AGAINST COMMUNALISM, AND FOR A WORLD FREE FROM EXPLOITATION
- ♦ ON THIS DAY WE TAKE A PLEDGE TO MARCH TOGETHER, SIDE BY SIDE WITH OUR SISTERS TO FIGHT AGAINST THIS IMPERIALIST GLOBALISATION WHICH BREEDS INEQUALITY

LONG LIVE INTERNATIONAL WORKING WOMEN'S DAY!

CENTRE OF INDIAN TRADE UNIONS

Meeting of the General Council

A meeting of the General Council of the CITU will be held at Siliguri (West Bengal) on 22nd-25th April 2002 to consider the following agenda :

1. Condolence Resolutions
2. Presidential Address
3. Report of the General Secretary
4. Audited Statement of Accounts for the year 2000 and 2001.
5. Special Discussion on "United Struggle and Organisational Consolidation of Trade Union Movement"
6. Resolutions
7. Applications for New Affiliation
8. Any other subjects with the permission of the Chair

The meeting will commence on 22nd April at 10 am. The Railway Station for Siliguri is New Jalpaiguri. All Trains going to Guwahati and Assam are passing through New Jalpaiguri. Bagdogra is the nearest Airport for Siliguri having connection with Delhi and Kolkata. Comrades are requested to book their tickets directly to New Jalpaiguri.

The members attending the meeting will have to pay Rs 250/- as part of the boarding and lodging expense. Members having accompanying persons will have to pay extra charges as mentioned above.

All members are requested to inform the Reception Committee the date and train of their arrival at Siliguri at the following address:

Com Ajit Sarkar
Secretary Reception Committee for
General Council Meeting of CITU
Vivekananda Super Market
Hill Cart Road, Siliguri, Dist Darjeeling
West Bengal.

Phone : 0353-432837, Fax: 0353-436176

It may be noted that the meeting of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women will be held on 21st April 2002 at Siliguri.

11th February 2002

M K Pandhe
General Secretary

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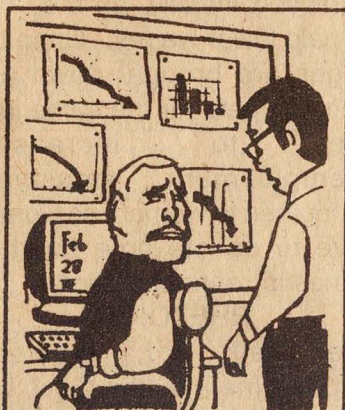
THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

MARCH 2002

BUSINESS AS USUAL

by UNNY



**Postpone the budget to
September 11th, Sir. It'll be
good to have one anniversary
for all disasters.**

Courtesy: The Indian Express

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EDITORIAL

NEEDED, A FORCED EXIT FOR NDA GOVT!

P rime Minister Vajpayee presented 'Shram Awards' to 28 workers on 4th February 2002. Speaking on the occasion, he sought the support of all sections on labour reforms and said that changes in the "archaic labour laws" would be made only after consultations with all the stakeholders. He swore that his Government would also consider the recommendations of the Second National Labour Commission, before deciding on these changes and abide by its responsibilities to protect the interest of workers.

The very next day Vajpayee presided over a meeting of his Cabinet which, *inter- alia*, pronounced a capital punishment to 11 lakh Central Government employees, in a bid to carry out the downsizing prescriptions of the Geethakrishnan Commission. This was presented as an 'attractive' VRS package, which will be imposed on them at the end of one year period. The Prime Minister conveniently overlooked the consultative machinery, in place for the Central Government employees, and allowed his Cabinet to decide arbitrarily.

The move was aimed 'at expenditure reforms'. Is there a case for pruning the expenditure on staff? Had that become an unbearable burden on the 'slender' resources of the Government?

The Rakesh Mohan Committee on Indian Railways, in this context, noted: "The Fifth Pay Commission is currently regarded as the villain of the piece in causing the current fiscal problems. Analysis of the data suggests that this is not the case at the central government level. The total cost of government salaries, excluding defence and police, when expressed as a proposition of GDP, can be seen to be much lower now than it was right throughout the 1980s".

This signified that justified or not, this NDA Government is determined to pursue its anti-worker 'reforms'.

The day after the polling in the four States were over, the Vajpayee Cabinet met again - this time to approve the amendment to Industrial Disputes Act, vesting the employers with the right to hire and fire workers. Dissent, even inside the Cabinet, was stonewalled. Rightly the employer class has jubilantly described it as a 'shot in the arm' in the words of Sanjiv Goenka, President, CII.

Now again, the Prime Minister had no qualms of conscience to have infringed on his own commitment for consultations with all the stakeholders.

The oncoming budget is likely to become yet another monstrous exercise in economic misgovernance. The country is to be held to ransom by the rabid 'Saffron Parivar' in its bid to start Ram temple construction, with the tacit connivance, perhaps, of the Vajpayee Government. On all counts, the only way to redeem the country and the people is to force the exit of the NDA Government!

Let's rally to do just that!

MARCH 8: INTERNATIONAL WORKING WOMEN'S DAY

K.HEMALATA

Since 1910, March 8 is being observed as Women's Day or Working Women's Day throughout the world. It is a day of international solidarity - a day for reviewing the strength and organisation of proletarian women.

As the May Day has its origin in Chicago, the Women's Day also has its origin in America. On the 8th March in 1908, the women socialists of the U.S.A. organised huge demonstrations and meetings all over the country demanding right to vote for working women. (It must be remembered that universal adult franchise for all, including women, working people and the Blacks, was not extended in the U.S. even by 1960s). This was the first "Woman's Day". The initiative on organising a woman's day thus belongs to the working women of America. In 1910, at the Second International Conference of Working Women, Clara Zetkin, a German socialist and leader of the international working women's movement, brought forward the question of organising an International Working Women's Day. The conference decided that every year, in every country, they should celebrate on the same day a "Women's Day" under the slogan "The vote for women will unite our strength in the struggle for socialism".

But, this is a special day, not for women alone. The 8th of March is also a historic and memorable

day for the workers and peasants and for the workers of the whole world. In 1917, on this day, the great February revolution broke out. It was the working women of Petersburg, in Russia, who began this revolution; it was they who first decided to raise the banner of opposition to the Tsar and his associates.

WOMEN IN INDIA

Now women in India have the right to vote; but they continue to be discriminated and socially exploited. This has worsened with the advent of the neo-liberal policies, which the BJP led Government is so zealously pursuing. As a lip service to women, the Government declared 2001 as the 'Year of Women's Empowerment'. But its policies have in practice, only disempowered the majority of women.

Privatisation, VRS and 'downsizing' have reduced the already low women's employment in the organised sector. Even in the informal sector, where the so called 'feminisation of labour' which is supposed to take place due to these policies, appears to be a myth, at least in our country, with women's employment coming down in all sectors including agriculture in many States. What has taken place is in fact 'feminisation of poverty'. It has been estimated that 40% of the people in South Asia, a vast majority of them women and children, have become poorer

because of these policies. Now, home based work, without any job security, social welfare or other legal benefits, appears to be the only avenue of employment for working women. In the informal sector, where 96% of the women are concentrated, no legal benefit is implemented. Women in the informal sector do not get equal wages; minimum wages and other benefits. Here, women are employed initially, as they can be paid lower wages. Once the wages are brought down and men compete for the same jobs, due to increasing unemployment, employers prefer men to women, as women have to devote time for their domestic responsibilities.

RHETORIC

The talk of womens' empowerment by the Govt. has only been a rehetoric. The budgetary allocation in the last budget for specific schemes for women has been reduced; some departments could not spend even the amount allocated. In a country, where the ratio is of girls amongst children is on the decline, the per capita allocation for nutritional support for girl children through mid-day meals, has declined. The per capita expenditure for girls in elementary education is Rs. 60 lower than that for boys. While the Government is advocating self-employment and micro credit for women, the allocation for this is also drastically cut down. It is only the family

planning schemes, aimed at controlling women's reproduction that got an increased allocation from the Government.

The Integrated Child Development Services Scheme, which employs more than 10 lakhs women throughout the country, is sought to be weakened by transferring it to the State Governments and handing over the anganwadi centres to the Panchayats or Non Government Organisations. Scores of anganwadi centres are being closed in several States. The number of operational centres in 2000 has come down to 5,32, 572 from the total sanctioned centres of 5,91,921 in 1995. One of the main components of ICDS, pre-school education to the poor children in the villages and tribal areas, becomes superfluous as the Government wriggles out of its responsibility to provide pre-school education to children below 6 years of age.

ILLS OF GLOBALISATION

Globalisation has led to the import of decadent culture and commercial use of women's bodies to promote vulgar consumerism. Sexual harassment at work place has increased manifold in the last few years. Several surveys, conducted by the different State coordination committees of working women as well as others, indicate that more than 90% of working women in metropolitan cities across the country, are subjected to sexual harassment by their colleagues, superior officers or customers, at some point in their working

lives. Though it is now more than four years since the Supreme Court has given the judgement on sexual harassment, the Government has not enacted any legislation in this regard. Nor has the Government taken appropriate initiatives to ensure setting up of complaints committees in the establishments; even in the few cases where they have been formed, they are not allowed to function properly. Violence against women and atrocities against them have sharply increased.

Ever increasing poverty and unemployment, with no hope whatsoever of mitigation has led to disillusionment among the youth and draw them to terrorist activities. Women again are the worst victims of terrorism. Communalism, of the majority as well as the minority varieties, targets particularly women in its bid to control the communities.

CONCERN FOR ALL

These are some of the major concerns facing the women as we observe the Women's' Day this year. Working women should take a pledge to get organised to defeat these attacks on their lives and to fight for a better place for them in the society. But these are not and cannot be the concerns of only women. They are of concern to the entire society, particularly the working class. The CITU has repeatedly emphasised the need for the unions to address the specific problems of working women and mobilise the entire membership of the union for their redressal. The task of emancipating the society from

all exploitation, to which the CITU Constitution has committed itself, can never be accomplished without the emancipation of the women, who form half of the society. Hence, the CITU Constitution has pledged: "The CITU fights... for the abolition of discrimination based on caste, like untouchability, on sex and religion, in relation to employment, wages, and promotion."

CLASS PERSPECTIVE

The Tenth Conference of CITU, in its Commission on "Working Women - a class Perspective" noted: "For ending the capitalist exploitation of the workers and the society, it is necessary that we must make the working class conscious of its historic task of transforming the society in a revolutionary way. This requires instilling political consciousness in the very people most oppressed under capitalism". The Conference also observed that this cannot be achieved without drawing the women into revolutionary activity. As Lenin emphatically asserted "There can be no real mass movement without the women".

On this International Women's Day, the working class also needs to take a pledge address these issues, and take this occasion to reach out to the working women and bring them in to the broader struggles to oppose the disastrous policies of the Government as a precondition for bigger struggle to change the society and end exploitation, both of women and men.

ILLOGICAL OPPOSITION TO SECRET BALLOT

M. K. PANDHE

The Government of India has unleashed a ferocious attack on the working class of the country. It was a happy augury that the Indian trade union movement has jointly expressed its united resolve to resist and defeat this attack. The CITU is happy that beginning from the last session of the Tripartite Indian Labour Conference, all the trade unions have been carrying on a sustained campaign and struggle against the economic policies of the Government of India. It is heartening to note that the INTUC has agreed with other trade unions on the 5-point issues for campaign and struggle. It is a positive step taken by the INTUC to be in the mainstream of the trade union movement. We are keen that such common approach on various issues should further be strengthened through more dialogue in the days to come.

But, we are deeply pained to read the contents of a signed article by G Sanjeeva Reddy, President, INTUC, in February 1-15 issue of the "Indian Worker", opposing secret ballot as verification procedure for recognition of trade unions. He has advocated check off system as the only way to decide the strength of each union. In his article, Reddy has not only repeated the old arguments advanced by the INTUC in the past, but also singled out the Left trade unions for attack. We deem it necessary to set the record straight and trust the INTUC leadership will view the same in proper perspective.

ROLE OF INTUC

In several plants and establishments in the country, the INTUC unions are recognised without any verification of membership. Using Bombay and M.P. Industrial Relations Acts, many INTUC unions have obtained recognition without having any strength among the workers. What Reddy calls as "constructive approach" is only an approach to collaborate with the management against the interest of the working class. He has, therefore, argued: "The emotional and agitational trade union movement will weaken the industrial relations and also increase animosity and misunderstanding between the management and

trade unions." When trade unions call for agitation against anti-worker policies of the managements, Reddy does not want INTUC to join it, since it would cause misunderstanding with the management. Reddy writes: "INTUC's experience reveals that secret ballot system has not only proved to be harmful to the industry but also to the trade union movement itself. Its experience is that most unethically the workers are allured by false promises, serving liquor and distributing money to purchase votes for winning the trade union elections."

Our experience is that serving liquor in elections is a tradition developed and nurtured by the INTUC itself in the past. Despite that, INTUC is losing in many places in secret ballot. Workers have understood the "unethical" methods adopted by the INTUC. INTUC has to do some self-introspection to find out how much liquor flows even during internal elections of the INTUC unions, served by different groups.

ANTI-STRUGGLE POLICY

Sanjeeva Reddy observes: "It may not be out of place to mention that workers' loyalty towards trade union is gradually deteriorating, the membership of trade union is getting eroded and the trade union movement itself has disillusioned the workers."

The observation is applicable only to INTUC. Strength of CITU has increased in the recent past. The INTUC has no doubt lost much of its mass base due to its anti-struggle policy.

During the last decade of liberalisation, the INTUC has opposed all struggles; but the rank and file workers of INTUC have joined the struggles because the INTUC followers are also facing the brunt of the capitalist attack. While manpower is being reduced and factories are getting closed, workers of all affiliations come together. The INTUC in Maharashtra and Gujarat joined State level strike actions against anti-worker policies of the Government of India. In Kerala, the INTUC unions of State Government employees have joined the strike to oppose the policies of Anthony Government. The INTUC unions in port and dock

industry joined the 5-day strike two years ago and even now they are ready to down tools to oppose privatisation. In Balco, INTUC union had to join strike for 65 days to oppose privatisation of the public sector unit. There are many examples of this type, which will point out that INTUC unions also had to resort to agitational approach to resist anti-worker policies.

COERCIVE CHECK-OFF

Sanjeeva Reddy is a champion of check off system. Here the management collects the subscription of the union. It is commonplace for the INTUC unions to fill fictitious check off forms by forging signatures of workers and forcibly collect subscriptions from the workers. The following passage in his article is, perhaps a confession by Sanjeeva Reddy: "...there are vast majority of workers who pay the subscription under compulsion or under threat. This is what really existing in the trade unions." Having concluded that workers will pay subscription only under compulsion or threat, Sanjeeva Reddy can not but opt for check off, as it is the only weapon by which the highhanded machinery of the management can be used to force the workers to pay the union subscription.

Reddy is certainly losing faith in the working class and he has become an open supporter of management policies of market economy. He has admitted in his article: "In the changed atmosphere due to global economy, the employer is getting an upper hand, because he has to compete with the international market. He has to re-organise the industry finances and marketing including labour force. The trade union is getting weaker because of its traditional and militant approach."

ADVOCATING EMPLOYERS' CAUSE

According to Reddy, traditional approach of resisting the attack on the working and living conditions of the working class is weakening the trade union movement! As a matter of fact, the trade unions of the INTUC variety are getting weakened, because they capitulate before the employers who attack the workers. The employment of a worker is under attack; his social security is under great threat; anti-worker Bills are brought in Parliament. Instead of defending the interests of workers, Sanjeeva Reddy is advocating the cause of the employers:

"According to the market conditions, industry has to change and workers and the trade unions should be the willing partners to cooperate with the new method/system, where survival of the industry and job are more important than any other thing." Thus the INTUC leader has openly supported the policies of the management, which are detrimental to the working class interests.

NEED TO RECONSIDER

The position taken by INTUC President is militating against the united movement of the working class and we only wish to appeal to him to reconsider his stand.

We wish to draw Sanjeeva Reddy's attention to the Supreme Court Judgement on verification of membership in the case of Food Corporation of India (FCI). The apex Court categorically remarked that secret ballot is a better method of judging the strength of a union when compared to check off the system. The Court also directed the FCI to hold secret ballot.

All central trade unions except INTUC are advocating secret ballot as the only democratic method of determining the strength of unions in an undertaking. Sanjeeva Reddy thinks that it is the slogan of only the left trade unions, which is far from truth. INTUC by opposing secret ballot is only supporting the management's game of recognising their own 'favoured' minority union, leaving out the union having the support of overwhelming majority of workers. In BHEL, it was jointly decided to hold secret ballot for deciding the representing status of the unions and it was fairly conducted, reflecting the true feeling of workers. In NTPC, BEL and many other undertakings it has proved effective in determining a genuine bargaining agency.

We only hope that the President of INTUC will realise the gravity of the situation in the country and come forward to strengthen the unity of the working class. It is always better for a trade union to rely on the working class, than on the employers.

We are happy to note that on many issues common understanding is increasingly emerging in the trade union movement today. By keeping aloof from this mainstream of movement, INTUC will only end up weakening its own mass base.

PSUs SELLING SPREE, DOWNSIZING DENOUNCED

The NDA Government had, in post-haste, handed the profit making blue chip PSU, VSNL to the TATAs. In the same meeting of the Central Cabinet, the Vajpayee Government announced its decision to implement the retrograde recommendations of the Geethakrishnan Commission to send out 11 lakh employees on 'VRS', which will be compulsorily imposed if not opted within a year. The Central Trade Unions have unitedly denounced the move. In a statement released on the 6th February, 2002, they stated:

"The entire Trade Union Movement denounce Govt of India's selling spree of blue chip public sector companies, unmindful of their consistent contribution to national exchequer and huge asset base. The highly profit-making VSNL is being handed over to TATAs at a price (for 25% share) less than the dividend received by the Govt. last year from the company. The Deutstch Bank is funding the TATAs for the same. Decision has been taken to sell-off 3 ITDC/HCI hotels to private hands and the selling price does not even cover the value of the land on which these hotels (all in Delhi) are situated, not to speak of other capital-assets

and properties. BPCL and HPCL have also been short listed for sale and PSUs have been debarred from bidding therefor. The whole exercise reveals a process of distress sale of national assets to pre-determined buyers in private/foreign sector, which deserves outright condemnation.

"A VRS Scheme has been floated for the Govt. employees under 'surplus pool' and given the recommendation of the Expenditure

Reform Commission (Geethakrishnan Committee) declaring mass scale redundancy in/dismantling of various departments in the Central Govt., this VRS scheme is nothing but a camouflage for downsizing and retrenchment. It may be recalled that even the Rakesh Mohan Committee in their report on the Indian Railways, notwithstanding their other

adverse recommendations, had observed that: "The total cost of Government salaries excluding defence and police, when are: expressed as a proportion of GDP can be seen to be much lower now than it was right throughout the 1980s."

"Side by side, the price control on drugs has been almost done away with, by drastically pruning the listed drugs under price

Control, besides decontrol of sugar. The list under Essential Commodities Act has also been drastically pruned, a step towards dismantling of PDS itself, which is detrimental to the interest of common people.

"These moves reflect the total bankruptcy of the Govt. of India and mismanagement of the economy. The Central Trade Unions denounce such anti-people, anti-worker and anti-national steps of the Govt., and call upon the working class to unitedly oppose those disastrous measures and prepare for countrywide united struggle including strike. The CTUs also extend total support to the Govt. employees in their struggle against the move for downsizing, including the All India Mobilisation Day on 26th Feb. 2002. The CTUs reiterate the call for observance of National Protest Day on 14th March, 2002, against these anti-people, anti-worker policies."

The signatories to the statement H. Mahadevan (AITUC), A.N. Dogra (BMS), M.K. Pandhe (CITU), R.A. Mital (HMS), Chandidas Sinha (INTUC), Swapan Mukherjee (AICCTU), D.D. Shastri (TUCC), Abhani Roy (UTUC) and Ashutosh Banerjee (UTUC-LS).

NATIONAL SAFETY CAMPAIGN

The National Safety Council had decided to observe the 31st National safety Day/Week from 4.3.2002. This year the theme is "Make Disaster Preparedness An Integral Part of Safety and Security Management". Several programmes are being organised in this connection to focus on safety and health at workplace.

Call for Countrywide Struggles Against Reforms Kerala Government Condemned for Invoking ESMA

The Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions met at New Delhi on 15th February, 2002, Gurudas Dasgupta, General Secretary of AITUC presided. Gurudas Das Gupta (AITUC), Swapan Mukherjee (AICCTU) M.K. Pandhe (CITU), A.D. Nagpal, (HMS), Ashutosh Banerjee (UTUC(LS)), Shyam Charan Gour (TUCC) and Sunil Sen Gupta (UTUC) in a joint statement said:

"The meeting condemned the Kerala Government for its blatant anti-labour attitude by invoking ESMA on the striking State Government Employees and for terminating the services of the temporary employees. The Sponsoring Committee demands immediate withdrawal of the ESMA and reinstatement of the terminated employees and settle the demands of the employees through discussions. It warmly congratulated the employees for the successful united strike. It further congratulated the trade unions in Kerala for their decision to observe one day solidarity strike in their favour, and called upon the constituent unions to extend full support to the striking employees.

The Sponsoring Committee also congratulated the M.P. Government employees for their successful two-day strike. It welcomed the decision of the Defence employees to launch an united 48-hour strike against 100 per cent private participation

in defence industry and 26 per cent FDI and against corporatisation of Ordnance Factories. The Sponsoring Committee further extended full support to the decision of the Central Government Employees to observe National Mobilisation Day on 26th February against downsizing, VRS and privatization. It extended support to the All India State Government Employees Federation's decision to observe National Protest Day on 5th March followed by day long countrywide dharna on 23rd April.

The Sponsoring Committee took serious note of the Govt.'s ongoing steps towards disinvestment and dismantling of even the giant public sectors in all industries, completely ignoring the mounting protests of all sections of the workers, employees and the people.

It welcomed the growing unity among all the trade unions including INTUC and BMS, and extended full support to the call of all the Central Trade Unions to observe March 14 as the All India Protest Day, against the reforms.

It further welcomed the decision of the public sector trade unions to hold a convention at Delhi on 5th March, followed by mass dharna on 6th.

The Sponsoring Committee appealed to all trade unions to step up united struggles and prepare for countrywide strike action."

Secret Ballot in NTPC: CITU Unions Outperform Others

As per a bilateral agreement, secret ballot is going on in the different Power Stations of NTPC for electing the NTPC National Bipartite Committee (NBC). So far elections have taken place in five projects. CITU contested in projects and won in two. AITUC also contested in three and won in one. Two independent unions (an ally of CITU) have won in two. In two another projects the CITU unions have been elected uncontested.

Under the Madhya Pradesh IR Act, Vindhyachal and Korba power stations situated in M.P. and Chhattisgarh respectively, have been excluded from the secret ballot. The CITU has filed a petition in the court seeking secret ballot in these projects also. Elections in Vindhyachal will be cakewalk for CITU. At Korba too the CITU union has a winning edge. Among the four projects and the Corporate Centre, New Delhi due to go for secret ballot very shortly, the seats will certainly be shared by the CITU and independent unions only. The election results have clearly shown that the workers have completely rejected the INTUC and BMS unions. The number of workers in the different projects went for the elections vary between 500 and 1200. The INTUC and BMS unions have got votes ranging from 20 to 100.

ENRON: MOTHER OF ALL SCANDALS

Ardhendu Dakshi

SCANDAL NO.1

ENRON has hit the headlines again, this time the entire world over. In 1995-96 and onwards ENRON had hit Indian media for everything that happened surrounding the Dabhol power plant in Maharashtra. The way the project was granted, the politicians and media people were bribed, the 13 days Vajpayee Govt. gave the counter-guarantee to ensure its profits, shocked every patriotic Indian. But the bribed media people and politicians showcased that ENRON was the result of liberalisation that ushered in an era of growth as foreign investors were heading for India.

The CITU was a lone fighter, which, in order to stem a prospective disaster, went door to door to stop it. Maharashtra State Committee of CITU filed a writ petition in Bombay High Court, pleading to stop swindling of the country. Bombay High Court agreed and noted: "This (ENRON) case has highlighted to the people as to how even after 50 years of independence, political considerations outweigh the public interest and the interest of the State and to what extent the Govt can go to justify its actions, not only before the public but also before the Courts of law". But the Bombay High Court did not pass any orders to cancel the ENRON deal.

Maharashtra State Committee of CITU filed a Special Leave Petition in the Supreme Court in

March '97 to contain the damage and save the country. But, Supreme Court refused to go into 'Economic Matters'. So ENRON went on to establish their 695 MW Plant in 1st phase and on to 2184 MW plant in its 2nd phase.

WHY CITU OPPOSED?

Dabhol project is a fraud on the Indian people. Sharad Pawar and his Government had flouted all national laws, all statutory obligations, all techno-economic evaluation processes and worse, signed the deal secretly to dupe the Indian people while granting the first phase of the project. One question remains - how did Enron manage to get it done by Sharad Pawar & Co.? The answer is clear. ENRON admitted that it had spent 20 million dollars (about 100 crores of rupees now) to 'educate Indians.'

L K Advani, then an opposition leader shouted in Parliament: "I want to see some of those Graduates educated by ENRON". During the subsequent election campaign in Maharashtra, Advani, Vajpayee, Bal Thackeray - all of them shouted that ENRON agreement would be thrown into Arabian sea if they came to power. Sharad Pawar lost the election. BJP-Shiv Sena came to power in Maharashtra.

The ENRON started another round of 'education' of Indians. Rebecca Mark, the chief of ENRON in India visited Bal Thackeray's house and, wonder

of wonders, Shiv Sena-BJP leaders became "Post Graduates", a bit too soon. ENRON was not thrown into Arabian Sea, but was granted permission to expand from 695 MW to 2184. MW capacity, after this eventful meeting.

But in between, the same Shiv Sena-BJP Govt of Maharashtra had submitted in Bombay High Court in their affidavit in CITU's case that "the original Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) was induced by misrepresentation, fraud and bribery"; but soon afterwards, they revised their stand and justified not only the first but also the second stage of Dabhol.

CITU opposed it because Central Electricity Authority (CEA) did not approve the project; there was no tendering; the project cost was too high; the contract was to be guided by U.S. Laws not Indian laws; the cost of power would be more than double or three times than what is charged by other producers; all these were unacceptable to any Indian. Even World Bank opposed it and said: "Our analysis based on the parameters provided to us indicates that the LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) based project as presently formulated is not economically viable, and thus could not be financed by the Bank (World Bank)."

CITU opposed Dabhol because the Maharashtra Govt. would be bound to close down its own power plants generating power

at less than Re 1 per unit in order to buy the entire power generated by Dabhol at the cost of Rs 5/- per unit (which later on went up to Rs 7/- per unit). We opposed it because the price of power was fixed in terms of dollar (0.073 dollar/unit) and the counter guarantee given by Govt of India to pay to ENRON about Rs 1300 crores per month, whether we buy power or not - an amount of Rs 2 lakh crores in 20 years. These are not CITU's calculations but are stated in the letter by Finance Ministry to Power Ministry of Govt. of India.

But, ENRON is ENRON. Then they were bold enough to declare that Dabhol would not give out their secrets and technical details, they refused their accounts and expenditures to be audited even subject themselves to a judicial scrutiny. About World Bank report and media criticism, ENRON Vice President wrote: ... "I feel that World Bank opinion can be changed. We will engage a PR firm during the next trip and hopefully manage the media from here on" (28.6.1993). It was audacity unlimited. ENRON, it seems is above our laws, our Government, our country.

SCANDAL NO.2

Everything stated in the CITU affidavit before the Supreme Court in 1997 came true soon after. Worse, the cost of power shot up beyond all projections between Rs 5 per unit to as high as Rs 7.80 per unit. MSEB turned bankrupt and was in a spot and refused to buy power from Dabhol. It was a scandalous situation that the

MSEB and State Govt refused to abide by the contract signed by them. Dabhol plant had to be closed down and still it is down. The ENRON management, the US Ambassador to India, the Vice President of US, have already reminded the Govt. of India about the counter-guarantee, though softly, diplomatically. They would have held the Govt. of India by the neck by this time had there been not a dramatic development in the ENRON headquarters in United States, which has shaken the world of capitalism and corporate structure at its very roots.

SCANDAL No.3

ENRON has collapsed. Backed by the US Govt. ENRON had dictated terms to Govt. of India and got whatever they wanted in Dabhol. It wielded enormous power to dictate even to the US Govt. From a small company managing pipelines and supplying natural gas, it grew into a richest and most powerful company.

And suddenly came the end. By September-October 2001, it became clear that ENRON was bankrupt. Its accounts showing huge profits were all fabricated; in fact it had huge debts that were kept out of the balance sheet. In August 2001, its stocks sold at 90 dollars per share, in October it came down to 40 dollars; in December to 3 dollars and in January the share certificates became cheaper than its paper, barely 30 cents or so. ENRON applied to the US Govt. for bankruptcy. Everyday new information is pouring in how 3 or 4 people, with the help of

entire political leadership including US President, have cheated the people, the country and the entire system of law and governance.

ENRON heavily bribed the entire political leadership of the US. One top-ranking cartoonist has sketched that only the doorkeeper and the plumber of Senate house can carry out an impartial inquiry, because all others were on the pay-roll of ENRON. When it was clear that the company had gone bust, the top brass of the company placed their own shares worth millions of dollars to some fictitious companies. Those shell companies got huge loans from banks and that money was transferred to ENRON. This was shown as ENRON's profit. The share prices soared. Then they sold their own shares at high prices making huge personal gains. The loan taken by those companies were not shown in ENRON's accounts.

We called ENRON as fraud. Now we can call these people cheats, swindlers, gamblers, hypocrites, bullies and, out and out criminals. They advised their 20000 employees to buy ENRON shares with their pension fund. The employees have lost their 2 billion dollar fund; they lost their jobs; they will have no pension, because the company has declared itself insolvent.

Vajpayee signed the counter-guarantee during his 13-day Ministry. When he had no authority even Vajpayee has to prove that he is not one of those Indians "educated or graduated" by ENRON!

HEROIC STRUGGLE BY STONE QUARRY WORKERS

The workers and common people in the stone mining area of Bhiwani district (near Tosham town) of Haryana have been carrying on a heroic struggle, braving brutal police repression. Throughout the entire area covering 35 villages, the work at the stone quarry came to a grinding halt. The CITU took the lead in mobilising the rural folk against the illegal extortion and repression by the Contractors' henchmen - with active patronage of police and district administration - and it became a peoples' movement against the tyranny by the State Govt.-contractor combine. Several hundred persons, including women and children suffered injuries due to police repression; hundreds were arrested; entire stone mining area was converted into a police camp; many battalions of police force were brought to Bhiwani from other districts; police force was deployed in every village in the area, carrying on a witch-hunt in every house even during night, man-handling women-folk and children with uncivilized brutality. Section 144 had been invoked to prevent meetings and house-to-house search operation had been carried out to arrest the leaders of the struggle.

CONTRACTORS' TYRANNY

The focal point of the struggle is the Khanak village having ten stone mining plots. Three of them were with the workers' union in the form of lease. Seven plots had recently been leased out to a contractors' combine, known to be close associates of the Chief Minister. The contractors deployed gangsters' groups to install illegal barrier/check post in all the exit points of the Khanak village, on the public road itself and extorted huge sum per track of finished stone materials coming out from the village in the name of royalty. Extortion/royalty rates were abnormally high, Rs 2.50 per cubic foot, or Rs 250/- per small trolley, Rs 500/- per small canter, Rs 1000/- per truck and Rs 2500/- per bigger trolley. The contractors did not invest anything at all for the mining work. The work pertaining to explosion/bursting of stone mine, breaking the stones manually, loading and unloading in trucks/trolleys and crushing the stones to bring them to required size - all are being carried out by the villagers'

community for decades.

Earlier, prior to the contractors' regime, the villagers' community, consisting of workers, trolley operators, crusher-men etc., used to collectively pay the lease money and taxes to the Govt. During the time of Bansilal Govt, a move was made to lease out the village mines to contractors, but the Govt. had to and cancel the contract in the face of stiff resistance by the workers and villagers. During that struggle, the Khanak Stone Mine Workers Union was formed by the effort of CITU.

RESISTING MUSCLE POWER

The Chautala Govt., ignoring the villagers right, contracted out seven mining plots at Khanak village and the extortion operation initiated by the contractors, which increased manifold the price of finished stones in the market, has put the entire economy of stone production in jeopardy and the workers were the hardest hit. The rate of extortion in the name of royalty is so high that daily collection has been more than couple of lakhs of rupees from the mining cluster in Khanak area itself. Not only that, the contractors, with the blessings of the Chief Minister's office and active patronage of the administration also imposed extortion-cum royalty on the output from even those mines which are with the workers' union. With police support, they have taken forcible possession of even the union office and their other belongings.

The workers and the villagers, opposed the illegal acts of the contractors' combine and against their intimidating activities in the villages. On 29th January 2001, a ten thousand strong demonstration by the workers and villagers submitted a memorandum to the District administration demanding corrective intervention, against the unlawful activities of the contractors, removal of the illegal barriers by 2nd February, registration of all workers working in the mines and fixation of their minimum wages and other social security benefits. Satvir Singh, Prabhat Singh, General Secretary and Vice President of Haryana State CITU, Indrajit Singh, Secretary of Haryana State CPI (M) and representatives from other opposition parties including Congress

addressed. The Administration took no action on the same. On 2nd February massive mobilisation of more than ten thousand workers and common people surrounded the illegal check posts/barrier installed by the contractors and demonstrated reiterating their demands.

BRUTAL ONSLAUGHT

From 2nd February night, the police onslaught against the villagers started. A large reinforcement of police force, ransacked and looted the houses; people were beaten indiscriminately; women and children were dragged out of their houses and severely tortured; mass scale arrests of villagers including women and children (mostly below 13 years) were made. Till date only 36 of the arrested have been produced in the court. The police entering the houses in the name of search, vulgarly abusing the women and manhandling the children and threatening the villagers with dire consequences, continues everyday.

Prohibitory orders had been invoked against all type of gatherings including social assemblies. But, ignoring the prohibitory orders, the villagers assembled in thousands before the Gungipa Mandir in the khanak area on 3rd February, to protest against police repression. Satvir Singh, Indrajit Singh, Brinda Karat and others addressed the meeting. On 7th February, a panchayat mobilisation was called in the Saral village outside the area of section 144. Massive Police reinforcement diverted all the public buses enroute to that village and installed police check post manned by the DSP and the SDM themselves to stop the people from joining that meeting. Tapan Sen Secretary CITU, Indrajit Singh, SN Solanki, President, Haryana State CITU, Jagmoti Sangwan, President, Haryana State Janvadi Mahila Samity, Hiranand Arya, ex-Minister and Congress Leader and Brahmanand, Advocate and the local Youth Congress leader - were all taken in custody on their way to the meeting at Saral village. Yet, the police could not stop the meeting. The villagers of the adjoining area and also the main leadership of the struggle reached the meeting place crossing the fields and decided to carry on the struggle till realisation of the demands.

On 18th February a massive panchayat

mobilisation was held in the Kunwari village in Hissar district where the villagers and workers together assembled in several thousands. The meeting was addressed by the CITU leadership along with the leaders of various opposition parties including the Congress leaders.

GROWING SOLIDARITY

On 9th February, a massive demonstration of workers was staged before the Haryana Bhawan in Delhi, pledging solidarity to the struggle of the stone-quarry workers. Tapan Sen, Secretary CITU, S.B. Bharadwaj, President, Delhi State CITU, SN Solanki, President, Haryana State CITU and Chowrashia, President, Khan Mazdoor Workers Union, Faridabad, and others addressed. On 12th February, massive solidarity demonstrations were staged by the workers and other mass organisations of women, student, youth, peasants before all the district headquarters and industrial centers throughout the State.

All the terror and madness by the district administration could not force the workers to surrender. The combing operation by the police could not trap the leadership, leading the struggle from the midst of the workers.

FARCIAL NEGOTIATIONS?

Being forced by circumstances the District administration had to call the trade union leadership for negotiation with a commitment that the leadership coming for the negotiation will not be arrested. The talks commenced in the early 2nd week of February. On 18th February, while the trade union leaders came out from the office of Deputy Commissioners, Bhiwani District, they have been suddenly arrested by the police. Satveer Singh, general Secretary of Haryana State CITU, and Dharamveer Dongar, Karamveer, Anil Sharma, all office bearers of the Khanak Stone Mine Workers' Union were put behind the bar and now are being physically tortured in custody. It is another attempt to terrorise the workers and the people into surrender.

But the workers and the villagers en-masse are determined. After arrest of the leadership, a big demonstration was held before the police station. M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, in a fax message to Chief Minister, Haryana, denounced the arrests and demanded their release. (23.2 2002)

ECONOMY DERAILED

ECONOMY AS BLACK HOLE....

The Government may compliment itself by saying India is still the world's second fastest growing economy.... But the fact is that the economy today has never been in worse shape since the crisis days of 1991. Estimates out from Central Statistical Organisation(CSO) in fact, put last year's growth at a mere 4%.... It is the lowest growth India has had since 1986..... More

frightening, as the CSO data shows, overall investment levels have once again fallen — at 24% of GDP, this was significantly lower than it was even on the eve of reforms in 1990-91.....even more alarming is the fact that private sector investments are the ones that have suffered most...

(The Financial Express, 5-02-2002)

DESPITE ALL CONCESSIONS, PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT DIPS...

The ratio of private corporate investment to GDP dipped to 8.4% in 1997-98(from 9.6% in 1995-96), to 6.6% in 1999-2000 and 5.9% last year(2000-01)...Gross capital formation by private corporates has shrunk evening absolute terms from Rs127304 crore in 1997-98 to Rs

123022 crore in 2000-01. During the same period, public sector investment levels have gone up by Rs 47000 crore.....On the contrary, the banks are awash with liquidity and lending rates have never been as low as they are presently...

(From Business Line, 5-02-2002)

PRIVATISATION: MARKET HOLDS THE KEY, OR THE TATAs?

Control of the blue chip Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd (VSNL) has been handed over to the TATAs at a price less than the dividend earned by the Govt. from the company just preceding the sell-off. On the pricing of the deal, the Minister-in-charge of the PSU-sell out swore by the Market-God.

But in the bidding process, the Govt. debarred MTNL and BSNL the telecom PSUs to bid for VSNL, as all other oil-sector PSUs were barred to bid for HPCL and BPCL. The market god was conveniently forgotten.

Now, VSNL under the TATA management has been planning for entering the national long distance telephony (STD service), the area where BSNL and MTNL are operating, and the Govt. has merrily allowed the same. Because, the market god must be honoured. But, the same Govt. has already refused to grant similar permission to BSNL and also debarred MTNL to enter into the international long distance telephony (ISD) segment, letting the market god go to hell.

More interestingly, the privatised VSNL has been gifted the "preferred carrier" status from BSNL, which means that BSNL is forced to route all its outgoing international calls through the VSNL gateway. Here, market is not to decide; rather a captive market is assured for the TATAs. But, the Tata owned VSNL has no obligation to route its incoming international calls through BSNL.

And the climax comes when towards the end of January, BSNL staked claim for 26% share of VSNL and the Govt. bluntly refused. Just a few days after, the Minister for Communication, Promod Mahajan indicated that the TATAs, even after taking over VSNL, would continue to be eligible to bid for BSNL and MTNL. All talks of market-forces and competition etc are there to deprive and sideline the PSUs or to facilitate their sale. In reality, it is not the "Market" but the TATAs' clan that holds the key.

(Source: Business Line, 14-02-2002)

DISASTER AHEAD

JESSOP PRIVATISATION: SALE OR A GIFT?

The exercise on privatisation of Jessop is being carried on at top speed. To attract the prospective buyer, the Govt. became liberal in waiving the loan and interest liabilities and a two-year guarantee of regular orders from Railways and many other things, which same Govt. was not willing to extend to Jessop under PSU framework.

The Selling agency of the Govt. viz. the Ministry of Disinvestments is finalising the minimum selling price, which is reported to be fixed around just Rs 18 crore for Jessop, with all its property, land,

equipments etc.

Is it a sale of Jessop or a gift to the predetermined (?) buyer? While the Jessop is now slated to be sold at Rs 18 crore only, only a few years back the Govt. of West Bengal paid Rs 27 crore to Jessop to purchase its headquarter building at Calcutta. When only the head-office building of the company can be worth Rs 27 crore, can the value of the entire company with the entire factory and land, equipments, machineries etc. be so much less? The Govt owes an answer.

RAKESH MOHAN AND INDIAN RAILWAYS

The (Rakesh Mohan) committee has recommended that second class ordinary fares be raised by about 10 per cent on a continuous basis for five years assuming 6 per cent annual inflation. The recommended increase in upper class fares, however, is just 1 to 2 per cent. While strongly denouncing cross subsidisation to benefit the ordinary second class passengers, the Rakesh Mohan Committee has ignored the heavy cross subsidisation of freight rates designed to benefit commodities such as coal and other raw materials required by industries. Is it because the third class passengers were not represented in the composition of the RMC?

As for the panel's suggestion that the Railways should be converted into a corporation... Corporations also have to pay income and other taxes, which will be substantially more than the dividend to general revenues now paid by the Railways. The Railways is a public utility too precious to be exposed to the tender mercies of market forces and should not be constrained by funds beyond a limit. A private railway system or even a corporation will aim at profits more than national interests. Obviously, it is easier to recommend than implement.

(J. Rajagopalachari, former General Manager, Northern Railway, in "THE HINDU, 21 Feb. 2002).

INDIAN BUSINESSMAN IN BRITISH SCAM

Who said Indian can not match the global giants in the era of neo-liberal globalisation? If ENRON could bribe politicians in the US and India and get its deal through, can Indian Business class lag far behind? No. In the art of corruption, Indians can reach out anywhere, to any extent.

This is what Lakshmi Mittal, Indian Businessman heading the LNM Group has proved. He has purchased Romanian State Steel Company, SIDEX. He secured a £70 million loan from European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), which was set up to fund development projects in the former socialist states of Eastern Europe.

What is wrong? It is a business deal any way, one may contend. But, how the deal come about?

British Prime Minister Tony Blair, of the Labour Party in Great Britain, wrote a letter to Romanian Prime Minister, Adrian Nastase, backing Mittal's bid to buy SIDEX.

The Department for International Development of the British Government backed the £70 million loan to Mittal by EBRD.

Shortly before Tony Blair wrote the letter and Britain voted favouring the loan by EBRD, Mittal had donated £125,000 to Labour Party. Mittal is said to be the second biggest individual donor of the Labour Party last year! The opposition leader in British Parliament, Duncan Smith, has demanded an independent enquiry into the conduct of Tony Blair and his Government in this scam, which has received Britain.

INEQUALITY OF WORLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION

Robert Hunter Wade *

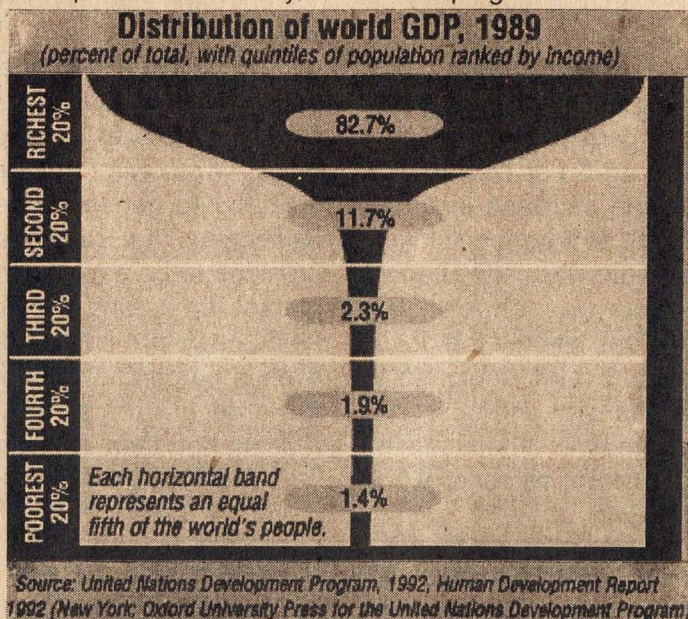
Does it matter what is happening to world income distribution (among all 6.2 billion people, regardless of where they live)? Amartya Sen, the recent Nobel laureate in economics, warns that arguing about the trend deflects attention from the central issue, which is the sheer magnitude of inequality and poverty on a world scale. Regardless of the trend, the magnitude is unacceptable. He is right, up to a point. The concentration of world income in the wealthiest quintile (fifth) of the world's population is indeed shocking and cannot meet any plausible test of legitimacy. The chart shows the distribution of world income by population quintiles. Ironically, it resembles

a champagne glass, with a wide, shallow bowl at the top and the slenderest of stems below.

Many champions of free trade and free capital movements say that world income distribution is becoming more equal as globalization proceeds, and on these grounds they resist the idea that reducing world income inequality should be an objective of

international public policy. ... Indeed, the neo-liberal paradigm - which has supplied the prescriptions known as the Washington Consensus - says that all national economies gain from more integration into international markets (relative to less integration), and lower-cost, capital-scarce economies (developing countries) are likely to gain more from fuller integration than higher-cost, capital-abundant economies (developed countries). Developing countries

wishing to catch up with standards of living in the West should therefore integrate fully into international markets (by lowering tariffs, removing trade restrictions, granting privileges to foreign direct investment, welcoming foreign banks, enforcing intellectual property rights, and so on)... Fortunately, the self-interest of the wealthy Western democracies coincides with this integrationist strategy for developing countries.... The World Bank, the IMF, the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the other global supervisory organizations are therefore.... seeking to enforce maximum integration on developing countries for the good of all.



What does the evidence show?

It depends on (1) the measure of inequality (2) the unit of inequality (countries weighted equally, or individuals weighted equally and countries weighted by population), and (3) the method of converting incomes in different countries to a common numeraire (current market exchange rates or purchasing power

parity exchange rates). Treating these as either/or choices yields eight possible measures, each with some plausibility for certain purposes. Then there is the further question of what kind of data is used-the national income accounts or household income and expenditure surveys.

None of the eight alternative measures clearly shows that world income distribution has become more equal over the past twenty years. Seven of the eight show varying degrees of increasing inequality. The eighth - the one that uses the Gini coefficient, countries weighted by population, and purchasing power parity-shows no significant

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change in world income distribution. This is because the Gini coefficient gives excessive weight to changes around the middle of the distribution and insufficient weight to changes at the extremes. ... Using market exchange rates, the conclusion is clear: all four combinations of measures using market exchange rates show that world income distribution has become much more unequal.

Causes of increasing inequality

What are the causes of the rise in world income inequality?

Differential population growth between poorer and richer countries is one cause. The fall in non-oil commodity prices-by more than half in real terms between 1980 and the early 1990s-is another, affecting especially the poorest countries. The debt trap is a third. Fast-growing middle-income developing countries, seeking to invest and consume more than can be covered by domestic incomes, tend to borrow abroad; and they borrow on terms that are more favorable when their capacity to repay is high and less favorable when-as in a financial crisis-their capacity to repay is low. We saw repeatedly during the 1980s and 1990s that countries that liberalized and opened their financial systems and then borrowed heavily-even if to raise investment rather than consumption-ran a significant risk of costly financial crisis. A crisis pulls them back down the world income hierarchy. Hence the debt trap might be thought of as a force in the world economy that is somewhat analogous to gravity.

Another basic cause is technological change. Technological change might be thought of as distantly analogous to electromagnetic levitation-a force in the world economy that keeps the 20 percent of the world's population living in the member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) comfortably floating above the rest of the world in the world income hierarchy.

Consequences

Income divergence helps to explain another kind of polarization taking place in the world system, between a zone of peace and a zone of turmoil. On the one hand, the regions of the wealthy pole show a strengthening republican order of economic growth and liberal tolerance (except

toward immigrants), with technological innovation able to substitute for depleting natural capital. On the other hand, the regions of the lower- and middle-income poles contain many states whose capacity to govern is stagnant or eroding, mainly in Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, the former Soviet Union, and parts of East Asia. Here, a rising proportion of the people find their access to basic necessities restricted at the same time as they see others driving Mercedes.

The result is a large mass of unemployed and angry young people, mostly males, to whom the new information technologies have given the means to threaten the stability of the societies they live in and even threaten social stability in countries of the wealthy zone. Economic growth in these countries often depletes natural capital and therefore future growth potential. More and more people see migration to the wealthy zone as their only salvation, and a few are driven to redemptive terrorism directed at the symbolic centers of the powerful.

Reorienting international organizations

The World Bank and the IMF have paid remarkably little attention to global inequality. The Bank's World Development Report 2000: Attacking Poverty says explicitly that rising income inequality "should not be seen as negative." The Bank's view thatinequality should not be seen as a negative ignores the associated political instabilities.... - all notions of justice and fairness and common humanity aside - can harm the lives of the citizens of the rich world and the democratic character of their states.

The global supervisory organizations like the Bank, the IMF, the WTO, and the United Nations system should be giving the issue of global income inequality much more attention. If we can act on global warming- We should start by rejecting the neo-liberal assumption of the Bretton Woods institutions over the past two decades, now powerfully reinforced by the emergent WTO.

International public policy to reduce world income inequality must include a basic change in the policy orientation of the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO so as to allow them to sanction government efforts to impart directional thrust and nourish homegrown institutional innovations.

(Courtesy: Finance & Development, IMF Publication, December 2001)

REPORTS & EVENTS

SEAMEN'S STRIKE AGAINST SCI DISINVESTMENT

The seamen on board in all vessels of Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) staged a one-day token strike on 22nd February in protest against the Govt decision to privatise the public sector shipping company. The Forward Seamen's Union of India (FSUI) had called the strike. As per reports received till 14 hours on 22nd, the seamen in all

the vessels of Shipping Corporation in all the ports all over the world joined the strike on board. They demonstrated in the gangway to denounce the Govt. move to sell out the only public sector shipping company in the country. The seamen on board in all the Indian ports viz., Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, JNPT, Kandla, Sikka, Cochin, Paradeep, Port Blair and

also the seamen aboard the tankers, bulk-carriers, off-shore supply vessels etc. joined the strike enmasse.

At Kolkata, around 500 seamen staged a sit-in strike in front of the headquarter of SCI along with the employees and the officers. Sadhan Kanjilal, General Secretary, FSUI addressed the striking seamen.

Against Downsizing, Privatisation and VRS:

CENTRAL GOVT STAFF STAGE PROTEST ON 26TH FEB

The Central Govt. employees all over the country observed 'All India Mobilisation Day' on 26th Feb. 2002, against the Govt policy of downsizing and privatisation at the call of Confederation of Central Govt. Employees and Workers. The meeting of the Steering committee of the Constituent Organisations of

the Joint Consultative Machinery for the Central Govt Employees, in its meeting held on 13th January 2002 adopted a unanimous resolution recording their strong opposition to the retrograde recommendations of Geethakrishnan Committee to drastically downsize various Govt. departments, Rakesh Mohan

Committee regarding corporatisation and privatisation the Indian Railways and Nair Committee on privatisation of Defence industries. The All India Mobilisation day was observed all over the country through dharna, demonstrations, rallies etc by the central govt employees.

STATE GOVT EMPLOYEES ON THE MOVE

The Kerala State Govt. Employees had been on indefinite strike (see separate report on page). The State Govt employees of Madhya Pradesh observed two day strike action on 13-14 February and decided to go in for continuous strike from 26th February. In other States also the employees are preparing for united struggle against the policy of

downsizing and privatisation etc. While taking note of the above developments, the national executive of the All India State Govt Employees Federation has called upon the State Govt. employees all over India to hold countrywide protest demonstration on 5th March and join the "National Protest Day" on 14th March called by all the Central

trade unions in the country. The Federation also decided to hold "day long dharna" all over the country on 23rd April in all the States against the anti-worker, anti-people economic policy. The Federation also called upon the employees to prepare for countrywide strike action along with the Central Trade Union Organisations and other industrial federations in the days to come.

KERALA - UNITED STRUGGLE IN FULL STRENGTH

The indefinite strike of more than five lakh of the Kerala Government employees and teachers brought the whole Government machinery has come to a stand still since 6th Feb. 2002. The Government spokesmen and all the media admitted that the strike was total. The strike has affected the normal life in the State to a very great extent. The taxes are not being collected; the check posts remain unmanned; smugglers and spirit mafia are taking advantage of the situation. The strike has affected small traders, peasants etc., who were, to a large extent, dependent on these salaried employees. According to the Transport Minister, the State Transport Corporation was incurring a loss of several lakhs per day due to the strike.

The Government is adamant on its stand to persist with its decisions cutting down the benefits of the employees, which led to the strike. It is not even ready to talk to the employees, unless they withdraw the strike. The Government has also declared to implement ESMA on the striking employees and most of the services are declared 'essential', much before the strike started. Many of the leaders of the Employees union have been arrested under ESMA.

The Congress (I) lead UDF Government had issued orders to close down more than 2000

schools, which are not 'economical'. This includes those in the tribal, coastal and other backward areas, which are the basis of the literacy and other progresses in the social spheres of Kerala. New Government 'reforms' include, cutting down the workforce, banning new recruitments, voluntary off duty scheme for more than 80,000 employees, casualisation of the newly recruited employees - without DA and pension benefits, stoppage of loan facilities, stoppage of vacation salaries to teachers etc.

The Kerala Government has signed an agreement (without discussing in the State Legislature even) with the Asian Development Bank, which is now dictating to the Government on policy matters. The Revenue Minister admitted that it is not a 'short term adjustment', as claimed by the CM, but a long-term policy change.

Actually, the Government is propagating that these measures are taken to help the farmers who are affected by the crisis in agriculture sector; all other sections of the people are suffering and the Government expenditure has increased manifold, due to the increase in salaries of the employees and teachers. Therefore, the Govt. claims that they are taking out Rs.500 crore benefits from the employees for a short period and giving it to the

farmers. It blames the employees for not willing to accept these measures and that they have no concern for the national interests. This is a sheer lie. Actually the salary allocation has not been increased in the last five years. After the UDF came to power, there is a sharp decline in tax collection particularly in sales tax, excise duty and forest tax, which amount to 2000 crores.

The decision of the Central Finance Commission to cut down the allocation for Kerala - as the State is performing better in social sectors than all other States - has also added to the financial crisis of the State. The State is losing Rs. 3660 crore in the Plan allocation. Ignoring all these factors, the Congress (I) Government is on a false propaganda against the employees and trying to turn the public against the striking employees. The Director General of Police, in an unprecedented manner, directly appealed to the people to 'resist the strike'. The traders association also declared that they would resist the strike, instead of paying their tax dues. A section of the Christian church, which will be benefited by the closure of the Government owned educational institutions, also is organising programmes against the strike.

The striking unions (of all affiliations and without any exception) are organising mass

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campaigns explaining their position. In every village and town, peoples committees are formed in support of the strike. All the trade unions, including the INTUC and BMS had declared support to the strike and together gave a call for hartal and announced the decision

to go on a general solidarity strike, if the Government is not settling the matter. In spite of all the propaganda against it, this time the strike is getting unprecedented support from the farmers, agricultural workers, youth, students, women etc., from which

it is evident that more and more sections of the people are now recognising this move as part of a larger offensive of the policies of Globalisation. It is slowly developing as a people's movement against imperialist globalisation and will become a precursor for the country as a whole.

CITU WIN IN APSRTC CO-OP. SOCIETY ELECTION

The APSRTC Employees cooperative credit society is the largest one in Asia with 1,16,910 share holders. The annual turn over is Rs. 363 crores. Elections were held on 14th December 2001 to elect 536 governing body members. The APSRTC staff and workers' federation, affiliated to CITU, won 32 seats; besides, 4 independents supported by the federation also won. This time the APSRTC Staff and Workers Federation (SWF) got the third place. Earlier it had only 14 members.

The elections took place 24 days after the long historical strike in APSRTC. The role-played by the SWF and CITU during the strike and its decision not to sign the agreement, because of some reservations, were well received by the workers throughout the State. Hundreds of workers in many districts joined the SWF after the strike.

The SWF contested 180 seats and won 32. In many seats, it was defeated by a margin of only around 25 votes, despite the two major unions in APSRTC- the Mazdoor

Union and the Employees' Union - having an electoral understanding. It was significant that SWF won 10 seats in Hyderabad city against one held earlier. Now, it has representatives from 14 districts against only 5 in the last governing body.

Even though the AITUC affiliated union and the independent union fought jointly, only the independent union has formed the managing committee, leading to dissatisfaction amongst the AITUC representatives.

JOY ENGINEERING: ANTI-WORKER CONSPIRACY

The Joy engineering Works Ltd, which had been a premier company in West Bengal engaged in the manufacture of fans and sewing machines, has now been facing serious challenge of survival owing to the conspiratorial activities of its owner. The management of the company has been trying to convert this premier manufacturing concern into a trading company and to get rid of

almost the entire workforce. The Joy Engineering Workers Union (CITU) along with others has been fighting against this nefarious design of the management.

The Company had enjoyed the frontline position in the fan and sewing machine manufacturing, since its establishment in 1938 and out of the profit generated by the Calcutta factory, the management has built new factories at

Hyderabad, Agra and also started new companies like EIC, ICP etc. It is primarily due to constant drainage of resources from Joy Engineering Works Ltd., by the management for other profitable ventures on the one hand and deliberate neglect towards modernisation of the factory and diversification of product profile on the other, the company started incurring loss, resulting in its

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reference to BIFR.

In 1997, after prolonged deliberations, the BIFR sanctioned a revival package of Rs 64 crore with the consent of all concerned, which envisaged investment in modernisation of the Fan and sewing machine production after bringing both the production units in the same place. Precisely on this condition, the promoter was allowed to sell its landed property at Anwar Shah Road to collect around Rs 30 crore and rest Rs 33 crore was supposed to be invested by the promoter from own sources. But, with an ulterior motive the promoters made the revival package a failure and started draining out its own committed investment amount of Rs 33 crore, showing expenditure under all unproductive heads

despite consistent pointers and opposition by the unions. And now, on the one hand the owner has been trying to sell-out its landed property at Anwar Shah Road and on the other they are actively pursuing the design of virtually closing down the manufacturing operation. They have applied to BIFR for amending the revival package and trading was further unveiled by its agreement with a Hong Kong based company to import table-fan, pedestal-fan and wall-fan for sale in the domestic market. The company had earlier floated a separate agency named Usha International, which has been made the sole selling agency of the Joy-Engineering, through which also the company drained out huge resources generated by the manufacturing activities.

The case of Joy Engineering is a typical example of how the private promoter turns its well-run manufacturing unit deliberately sick in order to switch over to trading with much less workforce and mint money from sale of real estate, earlier allotted at cheaper rate to them for promotion of industries. All the unions in the factory have jointly expressed their strong opposition to such destructive design of the company. The Citizens' Committee of the concerned area also opposed the unlawful activity of the promoter. In a citizens' convention widely participated by the workers and the people of the adjoining area, unanimous resolution was passed to oppose and resist the conspiracy to close down the factory.

MASSIVE CONVENTION OF PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS

A massive convention of public sector workers was held in the PSU City of Bangalore, on the 20th January 2002 under the banner of Joint Action Front of the PSU workers. More than 400 delegates attended the convention. The convention was held in preparation to the call for countrywide struggle given by the Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions (CPSTU) against the policy of privatisation, downsizing and looting the workers in the name of expanding the tax-net.

A presidium comprising S Suryanarayana Rao (BEWU/

CITU), Michael Fernandes (ITIEU), Rangadhamappa (HAEA), M Chandragowda (BEMEA) and N Balappa (BEWUF).

Jibon Roy, Secretary CITU, inaugurated the convention and by H Mahadevan (AITUC), Rajan (HMKP), M.C.Narasimhan (AITUC) and VJK Nair (CITU) addressed.

The Convention decided to participate in the All India Convention to be held on 5th March at New Delhi and also in the Dharna before Parliament to be held on 6th March from all the

PSUs in good number. It also adopted an unanimous resolution against the Govt's decision to expand the income-tax net downwards to impose more burdens on the workers, while granting more concession to the richer section. By another resolution, the convention also deplored the non-coverage of the working class struggle by the print and electronic media.

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VIZAG EXPORT PROCESSING ZONE STRIKE ENDS

The 39 day strike in the Visakhapatnam Export Processing Zone ended on the 17th of February. On behalf of the management, Ayyanna Patrudu, the Minister from Visakhapatnam district, the District Collector, the Police Commissioner, and the local MP Srinivasa Rao assured the workers in the presence of the media that the management would implement the major demands of the workers and that there would be no victimisation or harassment of the workers and the holidays would be given on Indian festivals. They told that the financial issues also would be resolved after three months and appealed to the workers to withdraw the strike and join duties. The CITU affiliated VEPZ Employees' Union held a general body of all the workers and discussed the assurances. Though

the workers were initially sceptic about the assurances, as the management did not directly participate in the discussions, they agreed to join duties.

When the workers went inside the factory on the 18th of February, the management continued with the same harassment with increased intensity. It did not give any work to the workers. 4 electricians were individually called in and forced to resign; another 9 workers, whose services were terminated during the strike period, were not allowed inside; 26 monitors were reverted to the post of workers with lower wages; the workers were told that they would be permitted to use the toilet only two times in a day; chairs given to some workers were removed and they were given the inconvenient tripods; 20 workers were sent back

on the pretext that they were 1 minute late. The workers again gave a call for strike on the 18th and started a sit in strike inside the factory itself on the 19th. They lodged a police complaint against the General Manager of the company Lucas, who assaulted Sujata, a union leader. They continued with their sit in even after the duty hours. Ultimately the management was forced to apologise to Sujata and promised to stop all harassment in future. The workers resumed duties on the 20th. Since then there has been no ill treatment of the workers; maternity leave has also been sanctioned to a woman employee. It is significant that due to the prolonged struggle, the workers have learned to carry on the struggle inside the zone also without the direct help from outside sources.

Himachal : VICTORY OF HOTEL WORKERS' STRUGGLE

The workers Siddharth Hotel at Simla ultimately won after a long drawn united struggle. The hotel management dismissed all the workers, when the workers demanded payment of statutory minimum wages to them through the Himachal Hotel Mazdoor Lal Jhanda Union. The hotel management, while denying statutory minimum wage, insisted the workers to disassociate with the union and thereafter threw out the entire workforce from

employment on 30th January.

The Union planned for action programme involving the entire hotel workers at Simla. From 31st January onwards, everyday, hundreds of workers from other hotels of Simla, along with the dismissed workers of Siddharth Hotel held continuous demonstration surrounding the hotel including at nights. Such demonstration continued till 7th February. Not only the workers, but also the common people of

Simla, the shop owners in the surrounding market area extended their active support to the struggling workers. The district administration also tried to disrupt the united struggle of the workers but in vain.

On 7th February 2002, the Hotel owner had to call the union for negotiation. Ultimately, all the dismissed workers were taken back in job and the management agreed for payment of statutory minimum wage with arrears. On

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8th February in a massive mobilisation of Hotel workers at

Simla, the State CITU leadership congratulated the workers and

people for the successful struggle against the management, patronised by the State Govt.

ANDHRA PRADESH: PEASANTS STRUGGLE

The Left Parties and the Congress in Andhra Pradesh gave a call for 40 hours' roadblock demanding that the State Government solve the agricultural crisis in the district, prevent suicides of farmers and pay compensation to the families of the farmers who have committed suicide. CITU cadres participated in the programme in large numbers. The roadblock started at 6 a.m. on the 20th of February 2002. They have resorted to this measure, as the Government did not concede their demands even after the Collectorate was blockaded for 30 hours on February 4-5.

Thousands of farmers, including a large number of women and students and leaders and cadres of trade unions participated in the roadblock. All road traffic in the district came to a stand still as the blockade was carried out in 85 centres in the district. 900 State Road Corporation buses from 11 depots could not ply; all the private vehicles except occasional two-

wheelers were off the roads. All the vehicles passing through the neighbouring districts of Kurnool, Chittoor and Cuddapah were diverted. The drivers and cleaners of the vehicles were seen cooking their meals under the trees and supported the agitation of the peasants.

The Government mobilised a large contingent of police force to terrorise the people. It is estimated that around 6,000 agitators were arrested by the evening of the 20th and coerced them to announce that they were withdrawing the agitation. Around 1,000 of them were women. But the agitators did not budge. In many places, the tents set up by them were forcibly removed. Women were dragged to the police stations. The mandal secretary of CPI (M), who protested against this, was brutally beaten. Villagers surrounded the police station and shouted slogans against this inhuman treatment. The Gutti mandal secretary of CPI (M) was also trampled under feet

till he lost consciousness. He had to be admitted to the hospital. In many places, the police could not find the place to lodge the arrested persons and they were kept in the tents. M Imtiaz, General Secretary, V Rambhoopal, President of the Ananthapur district Committee of CITU and G Obulakonda Reddy, member, State Committee of CITU addressed the peasants in several points and were taken into custody.

The 9 left Parties organised a dharna at Hyderabad in support of the roadblock of the peasants in Ananthapur. They criticised the statement of the Chief Minister that peasants were committing suicides for money.

The left Parties and the Congress raised the issue in the State Assembly also. As the Government refused to give any concrete assurance, they blocked the proceedings for around three hours and resorted to a dharna in side the assembly. The Government suspended 36 MLAs from the opposition for 1 day.

Vijayawada: WORKING WOMEN MEETING

A meeting of Working Women activists, office bearers of the CITU affiliated unions in industries with a large number of women and the city CITU leaders was held at the CITU office in Vijayawada, on

the 8th of February 2002.

Comrades from unions of Hotel Workers, Shop employees, Construction Workers, Industrial Workers, Anganwadi employees and representatives of the

Insurance, Banks, Medical Representatives, and Postal Employees' Unions attended. Raghu, City Committee of CITU, welcomed. Hemalata, Secretary, CITU and AICCWW spoke on the

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tasks of the coordination committees of working women at different levels and among different sections of working women. Aruna, Secretary of the City unit of AIDWA told that women in large numbers were engaged in cleaning glass bottles, in the knitwear industry, in Cigar making, in making flower garlands

and many such industries. Almost all of them were unorganised.

The participants discussed issues like unions not paying adequate attention to specific problems of women and not developing women cadres in the union etc. The meeting decided on steps to advance the work among working women, by organising meetings of

women workers in all the unions, by end-February and form sub committees. The convenors of the sub committees would be co-opted as office bearers of the unions and invited to participate in the CITU City Committee meetings. The city committee would also prioritise industries where to start the work of organising the women and take a decision at the earliest.

Jharkhand: DHARNA BY ANGANWADI WORKERS

A dharna was organised by the Jharkhand Anganwadi Sevika Sahayika Mahasangh, affiliated to the AIFAWH, on 18.2.2002, in front of the office of the Santhal Paragana Regional Commissioner's office at Dumka. More than 260 anganwadi workers and helpers from all the six districts in the region participated in the dharna, which was presided over by Santi Mary, President of the union. The demands included cancellation of the illegal suspensions of anganwadi workers in several projects, reinstatement of the women whose services were terminated by the CDPOs

and ending of corrupt practices of the officers. In several districts the anganwadi employees were not paid their honorarium for many months. In Rajmahal project, they were not paid since August 2000 and the CDPO was demanding Rs. 500/- for the payment. The fuel charges were paid at the rate of only 2 paise per beneficiary per day, against 10 paise.

RK Jaiswal, General Secretary of the Jharkhand Anganwadi Sevika Sahayika Mahasangh, Santi Mary, and Hemalata, General Secretary, All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers met the Regional Commissioner in a

delegation. The Regional Commissioner responded favourably and assured to take immediate action.

The Andhra Pradesh Anganwadi Workers' and Helpers' Union had written letters to all the MLAs, besides submitting memoranda to the Women Welfare Minister and other authorities. But nothing has been done till now. On 23-24 January, the State Committee of the union met to take stock of the situation. It chalked out a sustained action programme and decided to sell 10,000 'Save ICDS' booklets among the anganwadi workers and helpers.

ANGANWADI: A.P WORKSHOP ON ORGANISATION

The State level workshop on organisation, as per the decision of the AP Anganwadi Workers' and Helpers' Union was held at Ongole on the 9-10 of February 2002. Around 70 selected activists of the union from 20 districts out of the 23 districts in the State participated in the

workshop. Hemalata, General Secretary, AIFAWH, inaugurated the workshop. M.A. Gaffoor, President, State CITU, hoisted the flag. Hemalata described the various methods by which the Government was trying to weaken the ICDS. She told that the number of the anganwadi centres has

actually come down, though the number of projects has increased. In Jharkhand, services of a large number of anganwadi workers were being terminated on flimsy grounds.

Roja, General Secretary of the AP Anganwadi Workers' and Helpers' Union presented a note

REPORTS & EVENTS

on the organisation in the State, wherein it was pointed out that membership did not increase its in the last two years. She asked the participants to self critically discuss the various factors, which came in the way of expansion of the union and suggest methods to overcome them. After a thorough discussion, the workshop took certain decisions both on organisation and

on agitation. It has decided to complete meetings of all the project committees by the end of February, hold project conferences in all the projects by the end of April, and complete District Conferences before 15 of June. It has decided to identify sector level activists and to give them specific responsibilities in the union activities in the project.

The Union decided to go on a two-day strike during the Assembly session, on 27-28 of March. Concluding the workshop, Gaffoor, exhorted the participants to take more initiative in educating the anganwadi employees and mobilise them in joint struggles with the other sections of the working class.

BHOPAL GAS DISASTER CRIMINAL AWARDED PADMA BHUSHAN!

Keshub Mahindra, the industrialist, who is accused No.2 in the Bhopal gas leak disaster criminal case, the proceedings of which are currently underway in the Court of the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Bhopal has been chosen for the award of Padma Bhushan. It may be recalled that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had proclaimed Keshub Mahindra as accused No.2 in his capacity as the then Chairman of Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL). The UCIL owned the factory in Bhopal, where world's worst disaster took place, killing thousands of people and maiming

tens of thousands. The accused No.1 was Warren Anderson, the Chairman of Union Carbide Corporation, USA, who was let off on bail and allowed to escape to America. But Keshub Mahindra was kept under custody for about a week before getting a bail.

The Central Trade Unions, viz. AITUC, CITU & HMS have protested this. P K Ganguly (CITU), H. Mahadevan (AITUC) and A. D Nagpal (HMS) in a joint statement on 10th Feb., 2002, pointed out that the Supreme Court in Criminal Appeals Nos. 1672-75 of 1996 (Keshub Mahindra and others vs. Union of India) that on 13 September

1996 had ruled that: "We find that on the material led by the prosecution against the accused at this stage, a prima facie case was made out against accused no.2."

It is absolutely incredible that the Government of India has chosen an accused in a criminal case, against whom "a prima facie case was made out by the prosecution for framing of charges", as one of the nominees for the prestigious national award. The Central TUs have urged the Government to revoke its decision and appealed to the President of India to revoke this award.

BSNL DISINVESTMENT: PROTEST BY EMPLOYEES

The BSNL Employees throughout the country demonstrated on 15.2.2002 in front of telephone exchanges/offices protesting against the statement of Pramod Mahajan, Communications Minister, proposing disinvestment of BSNL. The demonstrations were

staged at the call of the BSNL Employees Union.

In addition to the demonstrations, hundreds of telegrams were also sent by branches of the union, demanding that BSNL should not be disinvested as the proposal is neither in the interest of the country nor the people.

The union has planned to organise agitational programmes including strike if the proposal to disinvest BSNL is not reversed. The union had also decided to collect two crores of signatures from public against disinvestment of BSNL for submission to the ensuing session of Parliament.

(Report from V.A.N.Namboodri)

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX NUMBERS FOR INDUSTRIAL WORKERS ON BASE 1982=100

State	Sr. No.	Centre	Month	Nov'2001	Dec'2001	State	Sr. No.	Centre	Month	Nov'2001	Dec'2001
Andhra Pradesh	1	Gudur		455	447	Maharashtra	38	Mumbai		539	536
	2	Guntur		459	460		39	Nagpur		495	487
	3	Hyderabad		447	455		40	Nasik		505	504
	4	Visakhapatnam		458	456		41	Pune		526	522
	5	Warangal		486	483		42	Solapur		484	482
Assam	6	D.D.Tinsukia		391	391	Orissa	43	Barbil		430	428
	7	Guwahati		480	481		44	Rourkela		412	409
	8	Labac-Silchar		381	376	Punjab	45	Amritsar		410	403
	9	Mariani-Jorhat		416	416		46	Ludhiana		427	421
	10	Rangapara-Tezpur		433	430	Rajasthan	47	Ajmer		464	466
Bihar	11	Monghyr		432	433		48	Jaipur		436	438
Chhattisgarh	12	Bhillai		414	407	Tamil Nadu	49	Chennai		502	502
Gujarat	13	Ahmedabad		468	464		50	Coimbatore		452	453
	14	Bhavnagar		484	481		51	Coonoor		458	464
	15	Rajkot		444	438		52	Madurai		461	458
	16	Surat		486	478		53	Salem		457	461
	17	Vadodra		463	459		54	Tiruchirapally		515	515
Haryana	18	Faridabad		478	471	Uttar Pradesh	55	Agra		432	424
	19	Yamunanagar		438	430		56	Ghaziabad		472	465
J & K	20	Srinagar		549	542		57	Kanpur		461	449
Jharkhand	21	Jamshedpur		426	425		58	Saharanpur		430	426
	22	Jharia		374	373		59	Varanasi		493	482
	23	Kodarma		390	386	West Bengal	60	Asansol		460	456
	24	Noamundi		418	419		61	Darjeeling		410	402
	25	Ranchi-Hatia		439	436		62	Durgapur		536	532
Karnataka	26	Bangalore		448	447		63	Haldia		586	580
	27	Belgaum		502	503		64	Howrah		547	538
	28	Hubli-Dharwar		469	463		65	Jalpaiguri		418	416
	29	Mercara		456	460		66	Kolkata		540	526
Kerala	30	Alwaye		464	469		67	Raniganj		417	415
	31	Mundakayam		455	460	Chandigarh	68	Chandigarh		498	497
	32	Quilon		460	469	Delhi	69	Delhi		541	533
	33	Thiruvananthapura		507	516	Pondicherry	70	Pondicherry		496	493
Madhya Pradesh	34	Balaghat		422	421	ALL-INDIA					472 469
	35	Bhopal		510	507						
	36	Indore		482	480						
	37	Jabalpur		471	467						

Additional Series of Labour Bureau

State	Centre	November 2001	December 2001
Andhra Pradesh	1 Kethgudem	476	NA
Himachal Pradesh	2 Himachal Pradesh	454	NA
Rajasthan	3 Bhilwara	469	NA
Madhya Pradesh	4 Chhindwara	446	NA
Tripura	5 Tripura	447	NA
Goa	6 Goa	564	NA

XIV CONGRESS OF THE CGIL, ITALY

S. Dev Roye

The XIV Congress of the CGIL (Confederazione Generale Italiana Del Lavoro) was held on 6-9 February 2002 at the coastal city of Rimini situated in the northern part of Italy.

The major issues, which were in focus in the documents placed before the conference and in the major speeches of the leaders as also the debate on the General Secretary's report, were inter alia the following:

A CGIL conference document says: "Globalisation" is per se an ambivalent process: it may produce new opportunities of economic and social growth for millions of people or, vice versa, additional situations of exploitation. The present phase is marked by liberalist economic and political strategies supporting and reinforcing a society unsustainable and environmentally incompatible model of development, without strategies, rules or democratic guarantees."

Attack on labour laws and trade union rights: The Congress strongly opposed the move of the present 'centre-right' Government to abolish article 18 from the 'Labour Statute' of Italy (this corresponds to Sec. 25 of the I.D.Act in India) and said: "the CGIL is strongly opposed to the idea of altering the first part of the Constitution and reasserts its firm opposition to any and every concept of "Minimum State".

Against massive contractorisation and anti-worker restructuring of the industrial companies, the Congress document noted: "Companies have reorganised themselves towards more service-orientation and resorted to outsourcing and fixed-term employment contracts. This has resulted in abnormal spread of both temporary work and co-ordinated and continuous collaboration contracts (the so-called "para-subordinate" workers). These processes seek to break the chain of contractual, regulatory and wage rights of the workers."

Apart from the issues mentioned above, the other subjects of international importance, which critically figured in the deliberations of the CGIL Congress were the policies of neo-liberalism, the ill effects of the Fund-Bank prescriptions - citing the latest devastating developments in Argentina,

the self-proclaimed role of 'world police' by the USA in the 'unipolar world', the menace of terrorism etc. Further, the subjects of national importance for workers of Italy voiced in the Congress were: the problem of young workers and working women, emigrant workers, and the necessity to have special dialogue with them, trade union rights, pro-rich Budget policy of the Government, regional imbalances within Italy in the matter of economic development, government's utter neglect in consulting the trade unions on labour matters, the anti-people education policy of the government, increasing tax burden on the workers, etc.

In nutshell, the tone and tenor of the speeches and deliberations of the CGIL Congress were directed against the anti-people, anti-developing countries policies of globalisation, the authoritarian role of USA in international matters - including the war against the people of Afghanistan and further threat of war against Iraq, Iran, North Korea etc. - and of course the anti-people, anti-worker policies of the present centre-right Government of Italy. The Congress noted the success of the regional strikes jointly conducted by all the four central trade unions of Italy in the recent past and resolved to organise a national strike to defeat the aforesaid policies of the Government. One point, which was time and again voiced by the General Secretary in his speech, was the necessity for so-called independence of the trade unions from the political parties.

1,173 elected delegates and almost the same number of observers/invitees attended the Congress. More than 100 fraternal delegates from abroad, representing around 55 countries as well as the representatives of ICFTU, ETUC, WCL, ILO, Economic and Social Committee of EU Commission and also the representatives of the Embassies of Chile, Germany, Spain, Palestinian UK and USA, attended the CGIL Congress. CITU was the only trade union from India represented by S. Dev Roye, Secretary.

Sergio Cofferati was re-elected unanimously as the General Secretary of CGIL.

STEEL INDUSTRY IN EXTRAORDINARY CRISIS

Steel industry in India is in a severe crisis. All the big companies are running at huge loss. Workers are made to sacrifice a lot of their earnings, benefits, and services in the face of financial melt down. SAIL employees have to go without Puja bonus/ex-gratia, for the first time in 2001. They had wrested annual bonus even during emergency. Leave travel facilities free medical treatment and many other such fringe benefits have either been stopped or curtailed. In TISCO also, the management have either pruned or bargained for "economising" on wage front.

The champions of "free market" do the opposite when it comes to their own national interests. Recent press reports say that over and above the protectionist steps the steel mill owners of United States have demanded 21 billion dollars in 10 years as 'help' from the Government to take care of the medical and pension benefits of workers. It means more than 200 crores of dollars (or ten thousand crores of rupees) of direct Govt. assistance to the industry every year. In India, steel industry has to pay the highest rate of freight to the Railways, highest in the world, and an exorbitantly high price for fuel. All these are a

Without comments

NEW YORK, FEB. 3. The Union Finance Minister, Yashwant Sinha, has said that the restrictive practices of the developed world are preventing Indian steel-makers from taking advantage of the global market. (He was participating in the World Economic Forum, now in session here.) Sinha said he had not come looking for "any assurances" and pointed to the "new and innovative" methods of restricting steel imports from India. The anti-dumping levies on India had been made on "specious" grounds.

Calling on the rich countries to open up their markets, Sinha gave specific examples of the European countries and the U.S. restricting the import of Indian steel. "Just because manufacturers in India are more competitive, they have been prevented from taking advantage of the markets in the developed nations. That has resulted in a surplus capacity," he said, adding that it would be beneficial for both India and the U.S. if Washington lifted the restrictive trade practices against the Indian steel.

4 major factors are killing Indian steel industry. Firstly, unplanned addition of capacity based on imaginary high demand projection has caused serious over supply of steel. Secondly, free imports with low duty have flooded the market. Thirdly economic slowdown and lack of investment in manufacturing and infrastructure has resulted in lack of demand. Fourthly, exports to US and Europe have totally stopped, as the respective Governments and industry have charged India of dumping. So, both domestic and export markets are choked and there is a price war among the domestic companies. All are losing heavily.

Prime Minister Vajpayee admits that it is a global crisis. But at the same time, he himself mentions that US and European countries are taking all steps to protect their own domestic steel industry. That is why Indian steel is not being allowed entry in their countries on the baseless plea of dumping.

crushing burden to the entire industry.

In United States the Govt has invoked an old piece of pre-WTO law known as "BUY AMERICAN" Act, by which customers are supposed to buy only Made in America (US) products. Now the steel plant owners have demanded that not only this law should be implemented more forcefully but also an import duty of 40% should be charged on steel imported into the US. What is wrong if such steps are taken in India?

In a letter addressed to the Prime Minister on 17.2.2002 the CITU demanded that "extraordinary help has to be given to steel industry in such an extra-ordinary crisis." The CITU letter has highlighted certain home truths, which the country's Finance Minister had admitted on foreign soil (See Box).

Will the PM act?