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THE WORKING CLASS

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B T RANADIVE

Born: 19th December, 1904

Died: 6th April, 1990

OIL PRICE HIKE:

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION IGNORED

Dipankar Mukherjee, Secretary, CITU and Member, Rajya Sabha had written a letter on 4th November 2004, drawing the attention of the Prime Minister, to the report of the Standing Committee on Petroleum and Natural Gas, regarding pricing of petroleum products.

Noting that the report presented in the Parliament on 20.8.2004, had, inter alia, recommended removal of customs duty on LPG & Kerosene, Dipankar Mukherjee argued: "This would involve no financial loss to public sector oil companies which are already supplying subsidized products. The Govt. would not lose any money on Kerosene, as it is not imported. There would be a loss of about Rs. 260 crores to the exchequer on account of zero customs duty on LPG.

Similarly the Committee also felt that charging excise duty on subsidized product is an anomaly. Removal of excise duty on LPG & Kerosene would entail a loss Rs.2600 crore. The total loss of Rs.3200 Crore can be made up by the cess collected by the Govt. on crude oil produced by ONGC and OIL @ Rs.1800/MT (Total Rs.5400 crore).

The only loser, if the above recommendations are implemented, would be the biggest private refinery at Jamnagar whose refining margin would be only reduced marginally. Interestingly since 2001-2002

the profitability of this stand alone refinery of RPL, which is not engaged in marketing, has zoomed high along with hike in global oil prices. The profit after tax of even Govt. oil companies like IOC has gone up from Rs.2884 crore in 2001-2002 to Rs. 7004 crore in 2003-2004, for HPCL from Rs.787 crore to Rs. 1903 crore, for BPCL from Rs. 849 crore to Rs. 1694 crore. Some one should check the bonanza enjoyed by stand-alone Jamnagar refinery as a windfall from the global price hike".

He emphasised that there is an urgent need of scrutinizing the profit margin vis a vis actual refining cost, instead of burdening the consumer and the economy with further price hike, allowing unhindered profit to oil companies especially the giant private sector refinery of RPL.

The Prime Minister was urged to peruse the recommendations of the committee and not to proceed with the reported step to increase the price of petroleum products when the global price is still quite volatile. Though this request had not been acceded to before the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs announced the recent price hike, the recommendation of the Standing Committee, based on sound economic logic, remains valid. Will the Prime Minister reexamine the issue in this light, at least now?

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BTR Centenary Celebration

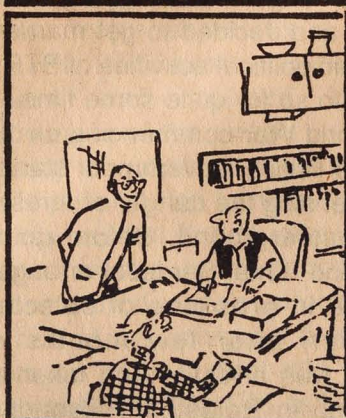
Concluding Session
Shanmukhananda Hall
Mumbai at 4 p.m
20th December 2004

THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

DECEMBER 2004

YOU SAID IT by Laxman



No, don't hike the price by 10%, all at once. People will resent it and protest! Hike it by 20% first and after a week cut it to 10%. People will appreciate your concern for them!

Courtesy: The Times of India

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EDITORIAL

HALT THIS DRIFT TOWARDS DISASTER!

The people of India rejected the phony claim of 'India Shining' under the retrograde NDA regime and trounced that combine in the last general elections. The UPA Government took over the reigns of power at the center, with high expectations from the large sections of the Indian society, who genuinely felt that they have become further disadvantaged and discriminated under the pro-rich policies of the BJP led regime.

The UPA Government started on a positive note with several pro-people commitments in the National Common Minimum Programme adopted by it. The trade union movement surely noted that the basic postulates of the UPA governance remained wedded to 'economic reforms', in vogue for around a decade and half now. Yet, it was believed that the new regime had realized that indiscriminate pursuit of the 'reforms' had disastrous impacts on the livelihood of the mass of the people. The UPA Government was also expected to embark upon significant departures from the framework of policies pursued by the predecessor NDA dispensation.

But, it is distressing to find that while the pro-people commitments in the NCMP have just remained sterile platitudes, the UPA Government, particularly its Finance Minister, is steadfastly treading the footprints of the anti-poor, anti-worker NDA regime.

The piggy-backing of the NTPC's initial public offer in the budget 2004-05 to dilute the government holding in the profit making PSU to below 90 per cent; the drive towards FDI in key sectors of the economy; repeated hikes in prices of petrol, diesel and cooking gas unmindful of the peoples sufferings; reluctance to hike the interest rate on Provident Fund despite the run-away inflation and breach in the self-interest regime; opening the floodgates to foreign banks for fast-track takeover of Indian private banks; dilution of the government holding in the public sector banks; reckless drive to privatize social security pensions; dithering on employment guarantee legislation; stubborn refusal to enact agricultural workers bill or making meaningful changes in the draft bill on unorganized sector - all these are clear signs of the UPA government drifting down the disaster lane.

This line of governance and economic management is not only creating frustration but also leading to acute discontent among the people. The credibility of the UPA government is suffering a serious erosion in the public perception. Failure to stem this trend can prove to be too costly.

We cry a halt to this drift. The working class and trade union movement cannot tolerate this government turning a deaf ear.

B. T. RANADIVE - A LIFE-PROFILE

M K Pandhe

Bhalchandra Trimbak Ranadive was born on 19th December 1904 in Mumbai in Dadar area in a locality known as Dhuruwadi in Dagdi Building. His father Trimbak Moreshwar Ranadive hailed from a middle class family and was an income tax officer.

Bhalchandra passed matriculation examination in flying colours in 1921. He passed BA examination with history and economics as subjects in 1925 and was awarded scholarship for postgraduate studies. BTR joined Bombay School of Economics for MA degree course in 1925. He stood first in the MA examination in 1927 and was awarded gold medal by the Bombay University. Though he received scholarship for 3 years for academic research, Ranadive preferred to join active politics. BTR's cousin G M Adhikari went to Germany in 1925 for his doctoral studies in chemistry where he came in contact with communists. He sent some Marxist literature in a clandestine manner. Ranadive came across Labour Monthly, edited by R P Dutt, from England. He also purchased selected works of Lenin. He was carefully reading whatever was secretly available on Marxism in those days. He was attracted by Marxist ideology and joined the Communist Party in 1928. In the same year he came in contact with leaders of the textile workers and started working among them. In 1928 Ranadive edited Kranti, a Marathi weekly. In 1929 he was arrested by police while addressing workers and was imprisoned for a month. After release, BTR came in contact with railway workers' movement and was elected as secretary of GIP Railwaymen's Union. When the union planned for a general strike he was arrested in December 1929 and imprisoned for one year. He also edited an English journal 'Workers Weekly' in 1931.

When the textile workers movement developed new militancy, a powerful strike of textile workers was organised against cut in Dearness Allowance. Ranadive edited a Marathi weekly Mumbai Kamgar, which became popular among the workers. The British Government detained BTR and G Adhikari for two years. Ranadive studied

Marxist literature in jail extensively despite rigorous jail life. He was released in 1936.

Immediately after his release BTR again plunged into trade union activities in Bombay. The Maharashtra Assembly passed the Bombay Industrial Dispute Bill in 1938, attacking the workers' right to strike. Textile workers in Bombay went on a protest strike against the Bill. Dr B R Ambedkar supported the strike. In other parts of Bombay Presidency the strike was successful.

BTR met Vimal Sardesai in 1939 who also started working among the textile workers in Bombay. During the activities among the workers they came closer to each other and decided to get married. However, due to hectic political activities of BTR it was not possible to do so for quite some time.

With the Second World War commencing on 1st September 1939, the British Government started cracking the whip. Sensing the danger of arrests, leaders had to go underground. Before going underground, BTR and Vimal Sardesai arranged registered marriage in presence of selected comrades. However, after few months of underground life he was arrested and taken to Deoli detention camp in Rajasthan. Ranadive conducted struggles in jail against the harrowing conditions of the detainees. He also conducted political classes of detainees on Marxist philosophy.

While in jail, BTR noted the new turn in international developments, which changed the character of war. On 22nd June 1941, Hitler treacherously attacked Soviet Union. The defence of a socialist country became an important role for the progressive forces all over the country. Ranadive called upon the people to rise in defence of Soviet Union and for defeat of fascism all over the world.

The Government of India lifted the ban on the Communist Party in July 1942 and ordered the release of communists. Ranadive was also released along with others.

The Indian National Congress decided to launch 'Quit India' movement on 9th August 1942. The British Govt arrested all prominent leaders and

Gandhiji gave a call: "do or die". The Communist Party did not agree with the movement in the form and manner and gave emphasis on defeating fascism. In this period, Ranadive played an important role in carrying forward the policies of the Communist Party in such crucial juncture and replying to all slanderous accusations.

The first Congress of the CPI was held in Bombay in May 1943. He played an important role during Bengal famine and Tebhaga movement in Bengal and Warli Revolt in Maharashtra. During this period the struggle of Punnappa-Vayalar peasants in Travancore, campaign to demand release of INA, the upsurge of RIN (Royal Indian Navy) Ratings in Bombay and the struggle of Bombay workers in solidarity, the heroic Telangana peasants struggle against Nizam of Hyderabad were also major landmarks in Indian freedom movement. BTR wrote extensively on these struggles and roused anti-imperialist consciousness of the people.

As a result of valiant struggle of Indian people, British Imperialist had to hand over the power to Indian leaders but the country was divided into India and Pakistan. In this period the Communist Party committed certain reformist mistakes of tailing behind the bourgeois parties.

BTR played an important role in criticising the reformist policies of the CPI. In 1948 in the second congress of the party at Calcutta Ranadive was elected as the General Secretary of the Party. The Congress Government banned the CPI and detained 25,000 of its activities. BTR went underground and remained till 1950. However, the party policy went to the other extreme and sectarian mistakes were committed. It had its impact on trade union movement too. At the intervention of Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) the mistakes were corrected. Ranadive was removed from the post of General Secretary of the Party and membership of the Central Committee. He, however, admitted his mistakes and re-commenced his activities in Bombay as an ordinary party member.

In this period he wrote 2 important books—'India's Five Year Plan - What it offers?' and 'Crisis of Indian economy', which received wide acclaim. He soon became secretary of the Maharashtra State Committee of the party in 1955.

However, BTR was elected as a member of the Central Committee in the fourth Congress of the party. He shifted to Delhi and functioned from the party centre. He was working as editor of New Age monthly, theoretical journal of the party.

Differences in the communist movement emerged in sharp focus during the India-China border conflict. These ideological differences on party programme and revolutionary tactics led to 32 members of the CPI National Council walking out of and deciding to form the CPI (M) in 1964. BTR was elected as a member of the Polit Bureau of CPI (M).

Despite split in the Communist Party in 1964 BTR advocated unity of the TU movement and work inside the AITUC. In the conference of the AITUC in 1966 he strongly advocated a platform of TU unity and stressed the need to work together on the basis of the programme. After consistently fighting for 4 years to build united nationwide struggles, the class collaborationist line and undemocratic moves of the dominant leadership of the AITUC under Dange rendered it impossible to work together and a split became inevitable.

Thirty-two members of the General Council who walked out of its meeting in 1970 decided to call a convention of members of the General Council and State Councils and Committees on 9-10 April 1970 at Goa. The Goa convention decided to hold a National Conference on 28th, 29th, 30th and 31st May 1970 at Calcutta and form a new all India organization of the working class of India. The conference elected BTR as the President and P Ramamurthi as General Secretary of the new organisation, Centre of Indian Trade Unions.

From then on till the end of his life, BTR nurtured and guided the CITU. The admiration and respect that the CITU today commands among the working people of the country owes it to a large measure to BTR's invaluable role and contribution.

Since 1989, BTR's health was showing signs of deterioration. He was suffering from cancer at an advanced stage. Ranadive, the great teacher of the working class and the toiling masses, breathed his last on 6th April 1990 in Tata Memorial Cancer Hospital in Bombay. BTR had passed away but he left behind his rich heritage, which is a guide for the activists in the revolutionary trade union movement for ever.

ALL INDIA MASS CONVENTION OF WORKING WOMEN

The CITU organised an all India mass convention of working women at Ram Lila maidan on 17th November 2004. Thousands of working women from all over India, from Jammu and Kashmir in the north to Tamil Nadu and Kerala in the south, from Assam and Tripura in the East to Punjab in the west participated in the mass convention. They represented a broad spectrum of industries both from the organised and unorganised sector, like banks, insurance, plantation, electricity boards, transport, state and central government departments, construction, beedi, head load workers, anganwadi employees, home based workers, domestic workers etc. A presidium consisting of Arati Dasgupta, Vice President of CITU, P Roja, Secretary of CITU, and Ranjana Nirula, General Council member of CITU conducted the proceedings of the convention. M.K. Pandhe, President of CITU inaugurated the convention and told that the government had no political will to implement even the existing legal provisions and protections for the working women like equal remuneration, maternity benefits etc. He exhorted working women to play a more active role in their unions and also organise the millions of working women who are in the unorganised sector and bring them into struggles. He also called upon all the trade unions to pay more attention to the problems of working women.

Hemalata, Secretary of CITU congratulated the women workers who came from far off places and presented the 'Declaration' (appended at the end), which outlined the demands of working women. Discussions were focussed on six major demands - equal remuneration, maternity benefit and crèche, law against sexual harassment, legal protection for home based workers and domestic workers and no lifting of the ban on night work for women.

Initiating the discussion on equal remuneration, Malati Chittibabu, working committee member of CITU, told that though women worked harder than men, they were paid less wages. This was evident in the lower wages paid to women in construction, agriculture, hotels, shops etc. They were denied opportunities for training and promotion. The labour department was not sensitive to this issue. Very few cases were filed against the offenders and even few were convicted, which made it easy for the employers to flout the Act. She demanded that special cells be set up in the labour department to oversee the implementation of the laws for women workers. She also demanded that wherever possible, women labour officers should be deployed to deal with such cases and that the labour department should be gender sensitised.

Geetha Gopalan from Kerala started the discussion on sexual

harassment. She told that though more than seven years have passed since that the Supreme Court gave its judgment on sexual harassment at work place, no act has been passed. Very few complaints committees have been formed and their recommendations are rarely implemented. She demanded immediate enactment of legislation against sexual harassment covering the working women in the unorganised sector and the strict implementation of the Supreme Court guidelines till such time.

Initiating the discussion on home based workers, Nisha Roy felt that home based work was an attempt by the capitalist class to bring about a change in the organisation of production as a response to increasing competition due to globalisation and their attempt to pass on the burden to the workers. The relationship of employer and employee is also masked and the long chain of contractors and middlemen exploit the home based workers, around 70% of who are women. A large number of products like electric and electronic appliances, shoes, garments, beedi, agarbatti, pappads etc are produced by home based workers who have no job security or social security benefits and are paid very low piece rate wages. She demanded that the government should ratify the ILO convention on home based workers and bring them under legislative

protection.

The discussion on lifting of the ban on night work for women was initiated by Rama. She told that the erstwhile NDA government succumbed to the pressure from the MNCs and the employers in the Export Processing Zones and decided to allow night work for women by amending the Factories Act. While night work affected the health of both men and women, it was more difficult for women who had the domestic responsibilities and find it impossible to take rest during the day time. While opposing the lifting of the ban on night work, she demanded that wherever it was inevitable, night work should be allowed only after discussion and consensus among the women workers and the trade unions. Proper security and transport arrangements up to the residences of women should be provided in such cases.

Lalitha Shenoy initiated the discussion on maternity benefits and crèches. She told that the vast sections of working women in the unorganised sector including those working in agriculture are denied any maternity benefit. Even where it is available, it is not implemented. Women had to work till child birth and go back to work again within a few days after delivery, which affects not only their own health but also that of their children. She demanded that maternity benefit should be provided to all the working women including those in the unorganised sector and a corpus fund should be set up by the government with

contributions from the government and all the employers. She also demanded that the facilities for institutional deliveries should be made freely accessible to all women in the rural and tribal areas and the anganwadi centres be upgraded as crèches.

Shubha started the discussion on domestic workers. She told that the lakhs of domestic workers in the country are denied any social security benefits. They are subjected to several types of harassment including sexual assaults. Whenever there is any theft in the household, the finger of suspicion is inevitably pointed towards them. She demanded that they should be brought under legislative protection with minimum wages and social security benefits.

Delegates from all the states participated in the discussion on these issues and narrated their own experiences, after which the Declaration was passed unanimously. The convention also passed a resolution, placed by Hargobind Kaur, demanding up gradation of the Integrated Child Development Services scheme and regularisation of the anganwadi workers and helpers.

Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary of CITU greeted the convention. Explaining the efforts made by CITU to organise more and more women on their demands, he appealed to the working women to come forward and take more responsibilities in the trade union movement. He told that while the erstwhile NDA

government did not even care to hold any discussions with the trade unions, the UPA government was willing to discuss with them. But this Congress led government was also inclined to follow the same policies. Working women along with the men must intensify the struggles against the globalisation policies.

WR Varada Rajan, Secretary, CITU concluded the convention. He told that the Declaration adopted by the convention is not only a Declaration of working women but of the entire CITU. He assured that CITU would take all the necessary measures to continue the campaign and launch struggles for the realisation of these demands. Tapan Sen, Secretary, CITU, proposed a vote of thanks.

Jana Natya Manch presented an inspiring short play 'Woh Bol Uthi' at the end of the convention after which all the delegates marched with their respective banners, placards and CITU flags, in an attractive procession towards the Parliament to present a memorandum to the Prime Minister with around 2 lakhs signatures collected from working women all over the country. But, as the Prime Minister was out of Delhi, it was decided that a delegation will meet him and present the memorandum.

The convention was preceded by a four month campaign which included collection of signatures, holding group meetings, gate meetings, distribution of leaflets and local and district level conventions, in many states.

ALL INDIA MASS CONVENTION OF WORKING WOMEN DECLARATION

The thousands of women working in the organised as well as the unorganised sector, from all over the country, who have assembled in this Mass Convention, salute the hundreds of thousands of women workers who are fighting along with their brothers against the attacks on their jobs, wages and working conditions perpetrated by the profit hungry employers. We pay homage to the hundreds of working men and women who have laid down their lives in the struggle to improve the lives of their brothers and sisters and end exploitation. We resolve to unitedly march forward in their footsteps.

This Convention of working women resents the discrimination against working women which continues to prevail in our society despite the proclamation of equality of all citizens enshrined in our Constitution. Working women are discriminated in our country at all stages of their working lives - starting from recruitment, in wages, training and promotion up to retirement.

96% of working women in our country are engaged in the unorganised sector- in agriculture, in small enterprises, in home based industries, as domestic workers, as daily waged, piece rated, contract, casual, part time or temporary workers, or 'social workers' (as the anganwadi workers and helpers are called by the Government) etc. Millions of these women have no job security, the minimum wages fixed are very low and even these remain only on paper. Women agricultural workers, without any land, are among the most exploited sections of the society.

The few legislations enacted to benefit working women like the Equal Remuneration Act, Maternity Benefit Act, and some provisions in the Factories Act etc are implemented only in the breach. Millions of women workers, particularly those working in agriculture, construction, etc are not paid equal wages. Jobs are segregated in such a manner that women are engaged mostly in the unskilled and low paid jobs. Women in the unorganised sector do not get any maternity benefits.

The neo liberal economic policies being pursued by successive Governments at the Centre have resulted in the loss of jobs for more and more women workers. Women are the first to be targeted for VRS, as their earnings are still perceived to be supplementary, in spite of the fact that around 35% of the families in the rural areas are women headed. Women in several industries like Banks etc are forced to take Voluntary Retirement under threat of transfer to far off places.

Several State Governments have put curbs on the inspection by the labour officers and are giving a free hand to the employers to flout the labour laws. This has made the lives of the workers insecure and the working conditions risky. Women are the soft target for the attacks of the employers and their living and working conditions have further deteriorated. To satisfy the demand of the multinational corporations and the employers, mostly in the Export Processing Zones and the Special Economic Zones, the erstwhile NDA Government tried to amend the Factories Act allowing night shift work for women workers.

Even more than 7 years after the judgment of the Supreme Court on sexual harassment at work place, no law has been enacted by the Central or any State Governments. A large number of working women face this traumatic and discriminatory practice, which is actually an attack on their human rights, at some point in their working lives. The free import of decadent western culture through the media, as part of the liberalisation process, has led to a rise in the cases of sexual harassment.

Under globalisation, home based work has increased by leaps and bounds. A vast majority of home based workers are women. They have no job security, no social security or other benefits. They do not have any legal protection. Even the employer- employee relationship is difficult to establish and they are subjected to severe exploitation by contractors and middlemen. The Government of India has not yet ratified the ILO

Convention on home based workers.

Thousands of women working in offices, shops, schools and other establishments are denied even basic facilities like rest rooms, crèches for their children, bathrooms and toilets.

This Convention demands that the UPA Government at the Centre take immediate measures to remove all types of discrimination against working women and ensure a decent working environment for them.

WE DEMAND

1. Enact legislation for Unorganised Sector Workers, incorporating the concrete suggestions made by the Central Trade Unions.

2. Enact Comprehensive legislation for agricultural workers.

3. Ensure equal wages and equal opportunities for work for women.

4. Stop discrimination against women in training, promotion, deployment and retirement in both public and private sectors.

5. Provide maternity benefits for all working women including those in the unorganised sector and agricultural working women. This should cover miscarriages also.

6. Ratify ILO Convention on Home Based Workers and enact law for home based workers.

7. Enact legislation against sexual harassment at work place immediately. Till then ensure strict implementation of the Supreme Court judgment on Sexual Harassment, including formation of Complaints Committees as per the

guidelines of the Supreme Court.

8. Stop amending the laws lifting the ban on night work. Ensure women's safety and protection along with provision of proper transportation facilities wherever women are required to work in night shift like in hospitals, Telecom, Fisheries etc.

9. Ensure strict implementation of eight hour working day for all working women including those in the EPZs and in the unorganised sector. Overtime wages should be paid whenever they are asked to work for longer hours.

10. Crèches should be provided near the place of work. Working women should be given time to feed their babies.

11. Lift ban on recruitment and provide more employment opportunities for women.

12. Ban retrenchment of workers in any form. Stop targeting women workers whenever there is downsizing.

13. Fix National Minimum wages as per the recommendations of the 15th ILC and ensure strict compliance.

14. Unemployment benefit should be given to all those who have been retrenched and to those on the employment register.

This convention calls upon all working women to join the mainstream trade union movement to protect the rights of the workers from the onslaughts of the policies of globalisation and liberalisation, which only will facilitate the struggle to achieve the specific demands of working women.

YASSER ARAFAT

We are deeply shocked to learn the sad news of passing away of the legendary leader of the liberation struggle of Palestine people, Yasser Arafat. It is a great loss to the freedom loving people all over the world.

Yasser Arafat played an important role in the revolutionary struggle launched by Palestine liberation organisation against Zionist regime of Israel. Under his legendary leadership the heroic people of Palestine have fought several struggle for establishing their homeland with Jerusalem as the capital.

Despite reign of terror launched by Israel in connivance with U.S. imperialists' Yasser Arafat carried forward the liberation struggle (intifada) with determination and firmness. the entire world acknowledged his significant role in the struggle against imperialist domination.

The CITU conveys it heartfelt condolences to the people of Palestine and the bereaved member of his family.

(From a condolence message dated November 11, 2004, addressed to the Palestine Trade Union Federation, by M.K.Pandhe, on behalf of the CITU)

BEEDI WORKERS GEAR UP FOR STRUGGLE

B. Madhava

The 4th Conference of the All India Beedi Worker's Federation (CITU) held at Mangalore from November 2 to 4, 2004 opened up new vistas in the growth of the organisation and created an abounding confidence among the beedi workers in the path of struggle. In the context of the diversity of the problems and conditions of the industry in various parts of the country and the offensive of the Government manifested in the form of new legislations, which are fraught with the danger of rendering lakhs of beedi workers jobless, the holding of the All India Conference was very vital. And in spite of a situation of great adversities, the Mangalore comrades accepted the responsibility of hosting the Conference and fulfilled it with great success. The delegates indeed carried back with them the pleasant and inspiring memories of the Mangalore Conference.

INAUGURAL SESSION

The Conference began at Comrade P. Ramchandra Rao Nagar (Taj Mahal Multipurpose Hall) on the morning of 2nd November with hoisting of CITU flag by Comrade Tanulal Mandalwar, senior Vice-President of the Federation in the absence of the president C. Kannan who could not attend the Conference due to ill health. After paying floral tributes at the martyrs' column, the inaugural session began on the impressively decorated Comrade U. Janardhan Nayak Manch. The huge Taj Mahal Multipurpose Hall was packed to its full capacity with many workers standing outside for want of space inside the hall. Along with delegates and observers who had reached Mangalore well in advance, hundreds of workers, including large number of women and general public had come to avail the first available opportunity to hear the speeches of the national leaders of CITU. The members of the media came in

full strength with TV Camera headlights continuously illuminating the dias.

The Inaugural function began with revolutionary songs by cultural

activists of CITU and DYFI. Delivering the welcome address the Chairman of the Reception Committee, K. Jayaprakash Hegde, Independent MLA and former Minister, aptly delved on the anti-imperialist traditions of Mangalore and the history of militant struggles of its working class. Tanulal Mandalwar presided. M.K. Pandhe, President, CITU inaugurated. P.K. Ganguly, General Secretary of AIBWF also addressed the inaugural session.

DELEGATES' SESSION

The Delegates Session started in the afternoon of 2nd November chaired by a presidium consisting of Tanulal Mandalwar, Abul Hasnat Khan, V. Kannan, K.P. Sahadevan and Fathima Beg. The General Secretary P.K. Ganguly presented the report and accounts. This followed a lively discussion, which continued till the evening of the next day. Delegates from all the States participated in the discussion.

The discussions were mainly based on the experience of the workers about their ruthless exploitation. The number of days of work was getting reduced with abysmal low wage and want of social security and welfare measures.

The delegates also pointed to the offensives launched by the giant multinational Cigarette Companies to capture the Beedi markets in pursuance of the globalised economy. The manufacture of mini-cigarettes,



reduction of excise duty therefrom, increase in the excise duty in manufactured Beedi, etc. were pointed out.

The issue of the anti-Smoking Act also came under discussion. In a resolution the conference demanded suitable amendment to some clauses of the Act and further demanded alternative pastures for the tobacco growers and jobs for the workers. They condemned the threat given by some employers to retrench workers if the Act is not repealed, also condemned some other employers who resorted to lock outs, and called upon all workers to launch united actions to protect their jobs.

Another resolution called upon all unions and workers to successfully implement the action programmes chalked out by the Joint Action Committee in pursuance of the 10-pt. demands culminating in an all India Convention at Delhi.

Beedi workers of Mangalore have the tradition of participating in innumerable democratic struggles. Befitting the occasion of the Conference, the Working Committee of AIBWF suggested to the Reception Committee to organize a Seminar on "Challenges of Communalism and Imperialism in India Today". Accordingly, the Seminar was organized in Town Hall, Mangalore on the evening of 3rd November. Well known Marxist leader Prakash Karat, Polit Bureau member of CPI(M) delivered the keynote address in the Seminar. Surpassing all expectations of the Reception Committee, the Town Hall was full with intellectuals, workers and

middle class employees, including women, participating in large number. Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary, CITU, M.K. Pandhe, President of

CITU and P.L. Dharma, Chairman, Political Science Dept., Mangalore University spoke in this seminar. G.N. Nagaraj, Secretary, CPI(M) Karnataka state committee, presided.

On the 4th November, the General Secretary's Report and Accounts were adopted by the Conference after the General Secretary's reply to the discussions. The Conference adopted resolutions (1) On the problems of Beedi Industry and of the workers (2) On women's participation in the Beedi Workers movement and (3) On Communalism.

The Conference elected a new Working Committee of 51 members.

MASS RALLY

On the evening of 4th November, the whole of Mangalore city appeared as if it was painted in red. Banners, buntings, flags and



posters had covered the whole city. Nearly 25,000 workers, mostly women, marched in a most colourful procession on the streets of Mangalore. Hundreds of women in white saree and red blouse spearheaded the procession. Folk artistes donning attractive costumes added splendor to this festive occasion. The procession culminated in a massive public meeting in Nehru Maidan, named for the occasion as "Comrade S. Suryanarayana Rao Nagar". Presided by Comrade B. Madhava, the meeting was addressed by Com. P.K. Ganguly, Com. M.K. Pandhe, the CPI(M) MLA of Karnataka Com. G.V. Srirama Reddy, Com. Mohammed



Nizamuddin and Com. Varalaxmi.

The conference had to face many hurdles from vested interests masquerading as protectors of the interests of beedi workers. A Voluntary Organization called "Nagarika Seva Trust" organised a public meeting at Belthangady on the day of our public meeting, hired all the vehicles available in the town to collect the beedi workers for the meeting. Belthangady is an area where the CITU has a powerful trade union movement of beedi workers. Facing the challenges squarely, the CITU beedi workers of Belthangady

came to Mangalore in thousands, managing to get vehicles from other places. All sections of the people of Mangalore including middle class, intellectuals and government officials showed great sympathy to the cause of the beedi workers and encouraged the Reception Committee. Hundreds of women beedi workers and a large number of cadres of CITU worked round the clock to make the Conference a grand success. Cultural activists of CITU and DYFI gave excellent performance on the nights and thrilled the delegates.

New Office-bearers

President: P.K. Ganguly

Working President:

B. Madhava

General Secretary:

Md. Nizamuddin

Treasurer: Paras Basu

Vice-Presidents:

Arati Das Gupta, Tanulal

Mandalwar, K.P. Sahadevan,

V. Kannan

Secretaries:

Chittaranjan Sarkar,

M. Rajangam, A.K.

Narayanan,

K. Shankar, Fathima Beg.

OPPOSING OIL PRICE HIKE, TU AGITATION ON 24 NOV 2004

The Central Trade Union Organisations after a meeting in New Delhi on November 10, 2004, issued a joint statement, as under, which was signed by Rajiv Dimri (AICCTU), Gurudas Dasgupta (AITUC), M.K.Pandhe(CITU), A.D.Nagpal (HMS), G.Devarajan (TUCC) Aboni Roy (UTUC) and R.K. Sharma (UTUC-LS):

"At the call of the Central Trade Unions and All India Employees Federations, the workers and employees all over the country had observed a "National Demands Day" on August 20, 2004 on the burning issues before the working people. While issuing that call we had, inter alia, recorded our total opposition to the hike in the prices of petrol, diesel and cooking gas, announced twice, at that time, and demanded the government to revisit the duty structure on oil prices.

"This meeting expresses its resentment over the indifference manifested by the UPA government in not taking any tangible measures to address the concerns of the workers and common people. Rather, a few of the steps, since taken by the government, had exhibited their negative attitude towards the working people of the country.

"In this backdrop, the stiff hike on petrol, diesel and LPG prices, recently announced by the government, is out and out an atrocious step, which has imposed an unbearable burden on the common people. This is also bound to trigger a further inflationary spiral, as has already been witnessed in the shooting up of the prices of vegetables and other essential articles.

"The government refuses to heed to the suggestions for enhancing the tax-GDP ratio by broadening the tax base and raising resources through levies on the affluent sections of the society.

"This meeting unequivocally condemns the price hike and demands immediate roll back thereof. We demand the government to rework the duty structure on oil products, secure the bulk purchase discount of around 10 per cent allowed to other countries by the crude oil exporters and deflate the profit margins of both the public and private sector refineries, in order to effect the roll back.

"We call upon all the working people, irrespective of affiliations, to stage massive protest actions by organising rallies, demonstrations etc at the state capitals and the industrial centres throughout the country on **24th November, 2004**. "We also call upon the workers throughout the country to prepare for further intensified countrywide united struggles."

LEGISLATION TO SET UP PENSION FUND REGULATOR OPPOSED

The decision of the Union Cabinet, as announced by the Finance Minister, to introduce a legislation in the winter session of the Parliament for setting up a separate authority for regulating pension schemes is ill conceived and against the interests of the workers. It is deplorable that the present UPA government is only pursuing the decisions of the earlier NDA regime, which decided to establish such a pension fund authority.

This proposal for a separate pension authority was first mooted by the 'Project OASIS' report of the Dave committee, set up by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. The tripartite Central Board of Trustees of the Employees Provident Fund had, in a special meeting held on 8.2.2000 under the chairmanship of the then Labour Minister, unanimously held: 'the (said) report is investment centric and not social security or social insurance centric and contains a number of recommendations and suggestions, which are inconsistent with the ground reality or practical considerations'. The CBT was 'unanimously of the opinion that the proposals in the report ... would seriously jeopardise the safety and future savings of the workers as well as the whole concept of social security and social insurance.'

In October 2001, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) also mooted proposals for a new pension fund regime.

Subsequently, the NDA regime decided to discontinue the 'defined benefit' pension scheme applicable to the government employees and introduced a new 'defined contribution' pension scheme, effective from 1st January 2004, for the new recruits in government service. The NDA regime also set up an interim pension fund authority.

The basic thrust of the new pension regime is to channelise pension fund contributions to the equity market in varying proportions under three different options of risk bearing. The new scheme had been made mandatory.

This new contribution defined scheme has no provision for any minimum pension payable and the government will not stand guarantor for the scheme.

It is a cruel joke to term this 'innovation' as a pension reform intended to serve the unorganised sector workers. This is nothing but a ploy to hand over social security contributions of the workers to the speculators in the share market, while the government seeks to abdicate its responsibility to ensure social safety for the workers.

The National Common Minimum Programme had committed: "The UPA Government firmly believes that labour-management relations in our country must be marked by consultations, cooperation and consensus, not confrontation. Tripartite consultations with trade unions and industry on all proposals concerning them will be actively pursued."

In a blatant violation of this commitment, the government is now unilaterally contemplating to proceed with legislative measures to put in place retrograde changes in the present social security arrangements, which are by no means satisfactory or adequate. The CITU urges the government to halt this move and hold meaningful consultations with the trade unions to address the issues of social safety net.

Not At The Cost of Sovereignty & Self-reliance

Chittabrata Majumdar

Cry for foreign investment has been reached to its height. The national bourgeoisie has done away with its post-independence policies of economic development, which was a relatively autonomous path of capitalist development utilising the post-colonial state. It has now been keen in cementing a close link with metropolitan capital. Hence, the big business has been putting all out pressures for further economic liberalisation to appease foreign capital. Simultaneously, the ruling class is eager to make the nation believe that the foreign investment is the only and only organic which the nation requires to make itself industrially, agriculturally vis-à-vis economically developed. And the government officials also during their dialogues with the foreign investors pledged their commitment to the process of liberalisation. To prove the government's sincerity to such commitment, the foreign investments are invited even in the public enterprises in strategic sectors.

But the simple question whether our nation can be really benefited by this unabated influx of foreign capital is needed to be answered in the context of global experience we do have till now. The history of economic development in the world at large has empathetically proved that all the economically developed nations have reached to their present state of self-reliance using their internal resources by capital formation on their own. Time and again it has been established that only the indigenous capital and not the foreign capital, which can guarantee the economic growth and self-reliance.

The presence of indigenous industries especially in the core sector along with the thrust in indigenous research and development are the preconditions for overall economic development of any developing nations. But the dearth of indigenous capital has always posed a serious hindrance to achieve the desired objective. A large number of the developing countries after their independence for their development have

been dependant on the foreign capital. In turn to foster the interest of their own, the developed capitalist countries always exported the outdated technologies to these developing countries. Further to ensure these developing countries' dependence ever lasting those capitalist countries has been debarring the former from the right of research and development through deferent protective international laws. Perpetual obsolescence of the imported technologies and the capital equipments along with the said restrictions on research and development has always debarred the developing nations from attaining the desired self-reliant development.

Thus, to make our nation industrially, agriculturally and thus economically developed, all we need the acceleration of process of internal capital formation for investment in productive activities at the same time the thrust on research and development. For any developing country, the private capital, traditionally proved to be meagre compared to its requirement. Thus, the state intervention, through public investment is the solution to make the independent economic development a reality. Exactly this has been the process, which the government followed in past decades. Imposition of direct and indirect taxes to generate resources, while has been one of the modes of augmenting the national resource, the public sectors created out of the national wealth have largely contributed in building the nation. State sponsored research and development have also been undertaken especially in pharmaceuticals and agriculture sector as well as in the domain of science and technology in the post independence era to attain the self-reliance. Also the assistance from the socialist block proved to be of help to a reckonable extent in this direction during this phase.

In a neo-liberal regime, the national bourgeoisie of our country with its growing affinity with monopoly capital and multinational like its counterparts in many other developing countries

of the third world has abandoned even this path of relatively autonomous capitalist development, since it thinks the same has reached a dead end to serve the class interest. Rather, the indigenous private capital has been willing to integrate itself much more closely with the global capital, which looks for profit only. To this end they demand more and more concession for inflow of foreign capital in the country. But these shifts only ensure the greater dependence negating our long ushered concept of self-reliance for which the entire nation has sacrificed for decades long. We must recognise that such growing dependence on foreign capital being invited in liberalised conditions must move to other places in search of greater profit at an earliest opportunity. Thus the prescription of reliance on foreign investment, denouncing a relatively independent path of economic development as referred above ought to be counterproductive in long term, despite of its enchantress appeal.

The arguments in recent time for 49% disinvestment in favour of foreign capital for

infusion of required fund and technology in public sector as well as private sector, retaining the control of the state or indigenous promoter is not tenable at all. Experiences have established that by its financial power and dominance as well as the superiority in the technology and management in ultimate term the foreign capital inevitability establishes its control over that business, which are not always in the greater national interest. However, this does not negate the idea of inviting foreign capital altogether. We should encourage the foreign investments in our country, but always the same should be in our best national interest. We should always welcome with all our sincerity the foreigners in those areas, where we are still lagging far behind. We shall encourage foreign capital in the sectors, which will truly give a leap to our national prosperity in real sense. But at the same time we must be vigil to resist any sort of invasion by means of the foreign capital in the core sectors as well as in strategic sectors like energy, defence, telecommunication etc, to retain self-reliance of the nation un-tampered, which is the amulet of national sovereignty.

UNORGANISED SECTOR COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEETING

The meeting of the reconstituted ALL INDIA COORDINATION COMMITTEE OF UNORGANISED SECTOR WORKERS was held in the CITU central office on 15-16 November, 2004. Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary, CITU chaired the meeting, which was attended by 15 comrades from 12 states. State Committees like Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Bihar had not sent any comrade, nor any information is available from them.

A discussion note prepared by the CITU Centre was presented and detailed discussions were held on both the days. The participants reported on the situation obtaining in their respective states and made certain useful suggestions for carrying forward our work amongst the unorganised workers. After deliberations by the CITU Centre, the undersigned summed up the discussion. The meeting ended with the concluding address by the Chair.

The following were decided as immediate tasks:

State Committees, which have not so far forwarded the name/s of their nominees for inclusion in the coordination committee, should forthwith send the name/s.

The work in this sector should be planned and implemented under the aegis of the CITU State Committees and for that purpose, the State Committees should ensure that State level Coordination Committees and sub committees, as envisage in the decision of the CITU General Council meeting at Chennai in 1998 is fully implemented.

The Working Committee of the CITU meeting in Agartala on 3-5 December, 2004 will decide the dates of an all India convention of unorganised sector workers to be held for planning campaign on the unorganised sector workers bill and related issues.

State Committees should ensure sending periodical reports to the CITU Centre of the activities among the unorganised sector workers in their respective States and also provide information on the state of the organisation in this sector.

FTA: LICENSE TO RUTHLESS EXPLOITATION

Ardhendu Dakshi

Free Trade Agreements, in the current phase, started being signed almost at the same time the WTO agreement was signed in Marrakesh in early 90s. Globalisation and liberalization were the principal slogans raised before WTO agreement and the main foundation of WTO architecture was claimed to be free trade without any tariff barrier and political interference.

The propaganda hype created by international and national media, who engaged scores of so-called economic experts and other important intelligentsia, created an illusion to many that finally the dawn of prosperity had arrived. Even many belonging to the traditional left forces were also carried away by the propaganda barrage. Many others in the developing countries, either in the government or outside, were simply bribed to fall in. One question is usually asked that when signing of the WTO protocol was in progress and it had all the elements of free trade in its roadmap, what could be the reason to fragment the world into umpteen number of zones, areas, or group of countries to sign parallel Free Trade Agreements. What is the meaning of such trade blocks in a WTO regime is difficult to understand for a common man. In fact after formation of WTO such zonal special arrangements should have disappeared. But the opposite has happened. Today how many Free Trade Agreements are in place nobody cares to count.

FAST TRACK APPLICATIONS

Judging from the above one cannot help but coming to the conclusion that FTAs were, in reality, Fast Track Application of some of the conditions in the WTO agreement primarily aimed to remove tariff barriers and other restrictions within a particular zone or group of countries. The rich and powerful economies controlled by big corporates could not wait for the WTO to conclude lengthy and complicated negotiations or follow the time table set by WTO, to achieve their goals, to capture the market.

So parallelly, bilateral, even sometimes multilateral, discussions were on and the FTAs

came into existence, one by one. For the rich and powerful the target invariably was the market of developing countries, their natural resources and their stock markets. Through FTAs the mechanism has been set in motion to establish complete control over the economy of developing countries. FTA agreements naturally were pushed by the rich and powerful to augment their profits at the cost of the weak and the poor.

But all said and done one important question remains to be answered. Removing tariff walls between the FTA countries may help their interstate trade but that automatically implies that countries beyond the FTA Group do not enjoy the same kind of benefit. Trade between countries beyond the FTA group suffer from impediments caused by tariff and other barriers. It is purely opportunistic if not hypocritical on the part of powerful economies that they practice 'Free Trade' with some countries and "Not-So-Free-Trade" with others while they preach globalisation and liberalisation to all developing countries.

MAIN TARGET IS THE LABOUR

The most important aspect of FTA is the remarkable mobility of capital from one country to another. When NAFTA was signed involving Canada, US and Mexico, skeptics wondered how a poor country like Mexico could absorb surplus American (US) merchandise and rescue the US economy from recession. They did not envisage the great invasion of capital, not by the volume but by its mechanics, that devastated the life of the workers both at home and abroad.

Hundreds of special economic zones, export processing zones, maquiladoras (Mexico) have sprang up all over the world, except in the developed countries, where poor workers work in sweatshops for a paltry wage of one dollar per day or even less. They live a sub-human life to produce goods that would fetch enormous profits to the big companies from abroad.

Workers at home have a different kind of battle to fight. They are at constant threat of factories being shifted to a developing country. Entire

apparel industry, shoe industry in the United States have actually been shut down. Many other industries, institutions are throwing off workers at home either wholly or partially by shifting or changing their method of operations. So Free Trade Agreements are actually a two edged weapon that cuts the labour abroad as well the labour at home.

In India the situation is worse than many other countries. The Government is craving for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). But the foreign capital is conditional. They demand that there should be no trade union, no labour laws and the wages are to be decided by the MNCs, and there is no fixed hour of work. In some units young girls would lose their jobs if they reveal that they are married. They pretend to be unmarried and are forced to live separately for a paltry pittance. Such brutalities are common place in this era of so-called Free Trade.

CITU VIEWPOINT

There are 4 (four) major losses caused by globalisation and liberalisations.

a) loss of jobs; b) loss of bargaining power and consequent depression of wages; c) loss of authority of national governments and d) loss of environmental standards.

The above is true mainly for the developing countries but the developed countries and the workers there are also affected to a varying degree.

After 10 years of WTO or NAFTA the net result in United States is that there have been more job losses than new job creation. Trade balance has worsened alarmingly. Gap between rich and poor has widened. In Mexico, the maquiladoras, the special economic zones have created some jobs but overall job creation dwindled. Income of salaried workers fell by 25%. It had a trade surplus with US but a big deficit with the rest of the world.

FTA would spur foreign direct investment has proved to be a myth. If you exclude China, Hong Kong and Singapore then in all other Asian countries FDI is insignificant. Korea's share was also less than 4% of the total FDI in Asia till a few years back.

When the national governments are enticing FDI at all costs, naturally the environment norms are

being sacrificed at an alarming speed. There are instances galore. Ship breaking yards, toxic dumps and harmful and polluting industries are being shifted to the developing world endangering the health of the majority of the people of the world.

Through these policies power has shifted from workers to owners or managements, profit is supreme not living wages. Governments became subservient to corporate MNCs who set the priorities for the government. Eventually it is profit over people. CITU believes that such a situation is bound to be politically unpalatable and volatile in nature. So prosperity cannot come along with the so-called free trade. Only a few can become rich but at the cost of poor in their own country, in the whole world.

FREE TRADE - CAN IT BE REAL?

Capitalism by its character can never allow "really free trade" to take place and the rich and more powerful enjoys freedom at the cost of subservience of the other. Trade of merchandise was always there between countries of contiguity like India and Nepal or India and Afghanistan and so on. But free trade is a myth. Historically speaking when Romans controlled east west trade they were fabulously rich, when power shifted, then Istanbul was rich, then came the maritime trade and England established their superiority and was lord of the world. Now America (US) and its multinational corporations are getting the upper hand of so-called Free Trade. This proves that it is not trade or free trade that brings prosperity to all. Prosperity comes to them who control the trade. In the present time the method of business and technology has changed dramatically. That have caused the exploitation more ruthless.

Since the Free Trade is not real, the workers all over the world must join hands to end this ruthless exploitation of labour and nature; its undermining of national interests and power of the people.

Globalisation & FTAs have taken away our jobs, decent wage, social security and right of association. CITU is for a global fight against this menace of neo-liberal globalisation and is prepared to join hands with all the progressive forces of the world.

REPORTS & EVENTS

Jammu & Kashmir

CONSTRUCTION WORKERS' STRIKE ENTERED 4th MONTH

The construction workers deployed in the construction of railway track, bridges and tunnels in the Udhampur-Barmulla range have been on continuous strike since 2nd August 2004 demanding implementation of labour laws in respect of wages and social security benefits.

In the fourth month also strike is continuing successfully despite inhuman atrocities and torture on the striking workers by state police and also by the armed forces. Failing to break the strike, the infamous contractor company, Hindustan Construction Corporation (HCC) managed the local police and administration to unleash reign of terror in the entire locality to get the strike fizzle out. But that did not work. On 10th September, police opened fire and brutally lathicharged on the peaceful dharna of the striking workers at Banihal at which, one worker Md Hanif died of bullet injuries and several others severely injured. From that day onwards, the local police forcibly had driven away the workers from the workplace and forced them to take shelter in the adjoining village. The contractor tried to bring workers from outside to start the work but till date work could not be started effectively.

From 20th October onward, the army was also deployed at Banihal along with local police and the

entire force, demonstrating their unflinching loyalty to the contractor, have been carrying on combing operation in the adjoining villages, ransacked the houses in the name of chasing militants and they are also carrying on search-operation in the jungles also to find and beat the striking workers. The police force under the state govt has been working as henchmen of the contractor and their torture has gone to such an extent that the police and the armed forces are chasing the workers in jungles, snatched their woollen garments in these days of extreme cold in that area. As a result one striking worker, named Uma Prada from Orissa died of severe cold in the jungle.

The slavish attitude of the state government there and their shameless loyalty to the contractor crossed all records. The CITU Central leadership met the Chief Minister on 20th October and requested his intervention in the matter; the Chief Minister has been urged upon to ensure just implementation of the labour law in force in his state for the workers and nothing more. Twice, delegation of Members of Parliament from CPI(M), Basudev Acharya on the first occasion and then Amitava Nandy, Sudhangshu Seal and Jibon Roy went to the spot and talked to the state govt officials to enforce labour laws for the

striking workers instead of abetting the contractor in his unlawful activities. CITU President, M K Pandhe also went to Banihal and also talked to Chief Minister to draw his attention to the connivance of the state Govt officials with the law-offender contractor and requested him not to deploy the country's armed forces in torturing the workers.

CITU General Secretary, Chittabrata Majumdar met the Defence Minister of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee and requested him not to allow deployment of country's army in suppressing the constitutional trade union rights of the workers. Although the Chief Minister and the Defence Minister assured to take remedial action on the matter but nothing was done yet.

Despite all brutalities on the striking workers at Banihal in which two workers have already laid down their lives, the struggle is continuing. This struggle also exposed as to what extent the State Govt can go to guard the interest of the contractor for self-serving interests of those in governance. But still the struggle continues, and workers all over the country must come forward in solidarity and assistance to the heroic struggle of the construction workers of Jammu and Kashmir.

REPORTS & EVENTS

WEST BENGAL

JUTE WORKERS TO GO FOR INDEFINITE STRIKE UNITEDLY

Fourteen major trade unions representing overwhelming majority of the jute-mill workers in the state have jointly decided to go for indefinite strike from 29th November 2004. In a joint press conference held on 29th October 2004 at the CITU headquarters in the state, the leadership of fourteen trade unions made this announcement.

The jute workers are being forced to go for indefinite strike action owing to non-implementation of the tripartite agreements dated 5th January 2002 and 8th January 2004. We may recall that in the midst of statewide strike action by the Jute workers from end

December 2003, the Jute mill owners have to come forward and entered into agreement with all the striking unions on 8th January 2004 which envisaged among other things the faithful implementation of the 2002 agreement. But ultimately, the Jute mill owners in the state started violating many provisions of the agreement. In different jute mills the workers are being paid Rs 20 to 40 a day although the minimum wages have been envisaged as Rs 100/-. In violation of the agreement, contract workers are being deployed in permanent work with paltry wages. The payment of DA is being withheld for months

together. Even the payment of gratuity is being denied to the retiring workers. The spate of casualisation has been increasing at an alarming speed despite opposition by the trade unions.

In this background all the 14 trade unions in the jute industry cutting across affiliations have decided to go for indefinite strike on the basis of 13 point demands comprising implementation of the earlier agreements, clearance of dues on account of dearness allowance, unpaid wages, gratuity etc, regularization of contract workers deployed in permanent work and ensuring equal pay for equal work etc.

Madhya Pradesh

MASSIVE DHARNA OF WORKERS AT REWA

Rewa, 26th October 2004, a massive dharna of workers was held which has drawn participation of several hundreds of workers from Anganwadi, head-load, construction, Beedi, PWD and other workers in the town. The main demands of the workers was proper implementation of the labour laws and gross irregularities in the regularization of workers and also termination of contract workers in the Public Works Department. The dharna programme has created good enthusiasm among

the workers to prepare for further struggle if demands are not met. The dharna was held before the office of the Deputy Labour Commissioner. The DLC had to call the leaders for discussion on the issues and a delegation led by Badal Saroj, General Secretary of the MP State CITU alongwith Premlal Mishra, Vidyasankar Mufliis, Kishori Verma, Sankarlal Dahya- all CITU leaders. In the meeting, the DLC has assured the CITU leadership of sorting out the problems in the PWD within 7 days.

The rally was addressed by Badal Saroj, General Secretary of MP State CITU besides Urgabhan Patel, Kishori Verma, Phulbasi, Namdev, Sanjay Nirgun and others.

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PUNJAB

PCMSRU CONFERENCE

4th conference of Punjab Medical and Sales Representatives' Union was held on 18-19 October at Chandigarh. Around 400 delegates from all over the state took part in the conference. The conference decided to launch a sustained campaign throughout the state against the black-marketeering of drugs by the major drug companies taking advantage of the drastic dilution of control on pricing of drugs by the Govt. The Report placed in the conference observed that the share of spurious drugs and blackmarketing of drugs is a whopping 40 per cent of the Rs

20000 crore pharmaceutical market. The Secretary's report also dealt with rampant victimization of the field workers by the drug companies and the casualisation process being aggressively pursued by the employers and called upon the workers to build up organized resistance against the same through united struggle.

18 delegates took part in the deliberation of the General Secretary's Report. The conference was addressed by Raghunath Singh, Vice President CITU, Balwant Singh, CITU State President and R Viswanathan,

President FMRAI. The Conference unanimously elected the new leadership of PCMSRU comprising 11 office bearers with Inderjit Singh as President and Amarjeet Singh Sahney as General Secretary.

On the concluding day on 19th, a massive dharna was organized before the office of the Punjab Labour Commissioner demanding proper enforcement of labour laws and implementation of the Sales Promotion Employees Act 1976. The dharna was addressed by Vijay Mishra, Working President of Punjab State CITU and the PCMSRU leadership.

TAMIL NADU

WORKERS ON THE MOVE ...

On 5th Sept thousands of workers, opposing the move to privatise Tuticorin Port demonstrated in a rally at the old harbour gate. N Sankariah addressed them. The demonstrators led a huge procession who declared to continue the struggle more intensely in future.

A campaign week was observed throughout Tamil Nadu from 15-22nd Sept demanding amendment of Bonus Act, repealing of Electricity Act, restoration of 12% interest on PF and revival of PSUs and cooperatives' and demanding

right to strike.

3 sectors in public undertakings in Tamilnadu registered a partial victory when they decided to go on strike demanding wage revision which is pending for years and annual bonus. Interim relief has been agreed in State Transport and electricity board employees, though not for the entire period for which the new agreement, is to be effected. They and Civil Supply Corporation are to get 10% bonus this year. But employees of many other undertakings were denied bonus. Joint Action Committee organized a convention on 24th

October demanding bonus for all workers of undertakings and settlement of other issues.

Meanwhile govt of Tamil Nadu was forced to concede some of the facilities, benefits which were withdrawn for the State Govt employees and teachers. Most importantly the union recognition was restored under pressure from the employees. Campaign for other issues and demands are going on. More than 30,000 motor pump operators and 20,000 sweepers in village panchayaths have demonstrated in all district collectorates demanding

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implementation of the labour commissioners order to increase their wages from Rs 400 per month to Rs 1980 per month.

On 11th Oct, sugar workers joined a mass-fast demanding their wage settlement and bonus. The old agreement expired in March 2003.

They have formed a Joint Action Committee of all central TUs.

On 16th Oct medical representatives under TNMSRA organized a rally demanding a people oriented drug policy and on the demands of the medical representatives.

On 9th Sep there were rallies by unorganized sector workers in all districts. In Kanyakumari and Coimbatore the participation was particularly good.

Joint demonstrations are being continuously held demanding increase of PF rate of interest.

UTTRANCHAL

SRTC WORKERS TO HOLD DHARNA AND HUNGER STRIKE

On the long pending demands of enforcement of labour laws pertaining to Minimum Wages, ESI, PF, transport Workers' Act etc for the casual/contract workers under State Road Transport Corporation, the CITU union in the corporation has decided to go for indefinite dharna and hunger strike programme before the Corporation Workshop gate at Dehradun from 5th November onward.

Earlier on 10th August CITU staged a massive demonstration before the Chief Minister's office and submitted memorandum on the

demands. There being no action on the part of the Govt, the union decided to go for dharna and hunger strike.

The programme began with enthusiastic response from the mass of the workers. The dharna started on 5th November and the State Secretary of CITU also sat for indefinite hunger strike along with other leaders on the same day. On 8th November 2004, there was a massive demonstration of thousands of workers and hundreds of workers courted arrest. From 5th November onwards various mass

organisations, viz., SFI, AIDWA, Lawyers' Union etc also joined the demonstration to express solidarity and submitted separate memorandums to Transport Minister supporting the struggle.

On 11th November 2004, the Transport Minister of the State Shri Hira Singh Bist himself came down to the place of dharna and assured the leadership of sorting out the demands through bilateral talks with the union in his presence within a short period. After this the indefinite hunger strike was ended but the dharna is still continuing.

RAJASTHAN

POLICE FIRING ON PEASANTS' RALLY

They came for urging upon the State Govt to release more water for irrigation as per commitment. They received bullets. Thousands of peasants rallied before the divisional offices in Gharsana, Rawla, Anupgarh and in many other places at Sriganganagar district of Rajasthan

on 26th October 2004. In return, the Rajasthan police opened indiscriminate fire on the peaceful demonstration of peasants and agricultural workers. Three peasants were killed at Gharsana. Ay Rawla, eight have received severe bullet injuries. And this led to much more widespread outburst

of anger of the people in the form of spontaneous demonstration throughout the district. The Govt declared virtual curfew in all the three town at Rawla, Gharsana and Anupgarh and army has been called for.

The demonstration of the peasants for irrigation water was not a

REPORTS & EVENTS

sudden affair. It was preceded by almost a month-long persuasion by various peasants' organizations for release of sufficient water for irrigation from the Govt canals as committed by the govt earlier.

It was agreed by the Gehlot Govt in Rajasthan earlier to release 5.23 cusec water per 100 acre land for irrigation. But after BJP's coming to power, the new Govt drastically reduced the water to be released to only 3.5 cusec which is totally insufficient. The peasants organization have been organizing deputations to local administrations in Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Hanumangarh, and Sriganganagar etc during last one month but in vain. And that culminated to the joint demonstrations by the

peasants organisations.

Police attack on Tuesdays' the demonstration injured more than 50 peasants and this led to widespread demonstration throughout the district. Rawla, Anupgarh and Gharsana witnessed sea of people on the street on Wednesday the 27th. At Gharsana the police opened fire killing three peasants. This led to spontaneous bandh in all those areas the following day.

The peasants struggle against the atrocity of the BJP Govt in the state is going on. The state administration has resorted to mass scale arrests of the peasants leaders. In Gharsana alone more than 150 were arrested including the district leaders of CPI(M) and

All India Kisan Sabha. The Convenor of the Sangharsh Samity, Lekhram was also arrested along with 20-25 other activists.

CITU has denounced the brutal atrocity of the BJP Govt in the state on the peasantry and stressed upon that if the 5.23 cusec water is not released from Indira Canal as decided earlier by the previous state govt, this may lead to spoiling of the entire Rabi crops and as the Kharif crop has already got spoiled in the current season, the peasantry in the state will be facing a famine like situation.

CITU has also demanded payment of adequate compensation to those killed in police firing and also to the injured. It has called upon the working class to act in solidarity with the struggling peasants.

JHARKHAND

DEMONSTRATION AGAINST OUTSOURCING

Massive demonstration by thousands of workers was held on 3rd November 2004 at Damoda Colliery at Jharkhand against rampant outsourcing and contractorisation. Bihar Colliery Kamgar Union (CITU) took the initiative to organize resistance against the retrograde move of the BCCL management.

A huge procession of workers started from the Damoda Railway siding gate and traveled through Bokaro-Jharia outpost and main road to converge at the Damoda Project headquarters in a massive

rally. Participation of several hundreds of women workers in the demonstration and procession has drawn notice of all concerned.

BCKU has given the call to build up resistance against unlawful outsourcing of work in the colliery in violation of the law of the land. While coal mining was being given on contract, the contract workers are not being paid even the statutory minimum wages, not to speak of other social security benefits.

The rally was addressed by

Bajinath Kewar, Secretary, BCKU and other leaders. The speakers warned the BCCL authority to restrain from unlawful outsourcing and regularize all contract workers already deployed in mining work, as otherwise the workers would be compelled to stop mining by contractors as has been done in some other collieries.

From the rally a memorandum was submitted to the BCCL management through Project officers at Damoda.

REPORTS & EVENTS

DELHI

DEMONSTRATION BEFORE AIRPORT HQ

At the call of Airport Employees Union (CITU) hundreds of workers demonstrated before the Airport headquarters on 11th November demanding end of contract system in the loading-unloading work in the Cargo terminal.

The union has been agitating since long for end of contract system in the loading-unloading work in the cargo terminal and equal pay for equal work. For the loading unloading workers. There being no response from the management, the union had to serve notice for

indefinite strike from 10th November 2004 in the IGL Airport Cargo Terminal. In the process of heightening strike preparation the Labour Deptt have to intervene and joint meeting between the management and the union had to called at the level of Chief Labour Commissioner (Central) on 8th November. In the meeting of 8th both the management and the CLC assured to look into the demands of the workers with a positive approach and sort out in consultation with the union. The strike programme was deferred for

the time being.

The demonstration held before the Airport headquarter at New Delhi was addressed by Mohanlal, General Secretary of Delhi CITU, Ranjit Singh, Ramnaresh and other leaders of the union. The speakers reported the workers the outcome of the meeting at the level of CLC and called upon the workers to strengthen and broaden unity and kept prepared for long drawn strike action if management do not act as per their commitment on the issue of wages of the workers and the contract system.

SEOUL IN TURMOIL, KOREAN PEOPLE ON WARPATH

Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) organized a workshop on the desirability of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that is being planned to be signed between South Korea and ASEAN countries next January. The workshop was held in Seoul on 10th and 11th November last and only CITU was invited from India to attend it. Ardhendu Dakshi, secretary, CITU, attended the workshop which was also attended by senior trade union leaders from Thailand, Malaysia and experts, representatives from Canada, Thailand, Malaysia, Korea. Dakshi placed there a paper which has been carried in this issue.

There was remarkable unanimity of views expressed in the workshop though, in economic terms, all these countries are at different levels of development and export-import relationship vary widely among these economies. The FTA proposal was denounced unanimously. At the end it was decided to develop greater understanding between the trade unions of Korea and of those in

ASEAN countries and organize movements involving workers, peasants, common people, even intellectuals who are willing to join the struggle and through mass movement the proposal of FTA has to be defeated.



REPORTS & EVENTS

On 12th November the delegates visited the cemetery where martyrs and deceased leaders of trade union movement and the pro-democracy movement are lying. Flowers were offered at the grave of Jeon-Tae-II, who immolated himself for the cause of working women in pitiable condition in 1970.

On 13th and 14th Nov there were two massive demonstrations that rocked the apparently calm and orderly city of Seoul. On 13th more than 10,000 peasants supported by workers led by KCTU roared at the City Park near the Governors House demanding withdrawal of free import licence to food grain that killed Korean agriculture.

The demonstration was attacked by a huge force of police armed with lathis and water cannons. Many peasants were injured, one seriously.

On 14th nearly 50,000 workers and govt employees demonstrated at the city center highlighting two major demands. The govt employees demanded recognition of their union and their "Right to Strike" (what a great similarity with the Indian condition).

The workers demanded withdrawal of the bill to "Change

of Labour Laws" which was pending before the Parliament. It



has provisions for "Hire & Fire" policy and employment of contract and casual workers with no benefits. Again the similarity of issues cannot be missed. During all these demonstrations Dakshi, along with other trade union leaders including Japan, was introduced to the assembled workers, peasants, govt employees. Dakshi also visited headquarters of Democratic Labour Party which has a very recent origin but fighting against the media and money backed two-party system the DLP has wrested 10 seats in Korean Parliament. DLP and KCTU are supporting each other.

Dakshi also visited the Seoul University where cultural programmes were organized jointly by KCTU. Foreign trade union leaders were greeted enthusiastically by the large attendance of students, workers and others.

One remarkable feature was noted that below the surface of apparently affluent society a simmering discontent is growing and the trade unions are taking lead in organizing the peasants, students, youth and govt employees.

The govt employees are on a continuous strike from 15th Nov. The workers are on strike from 26th Nov. The peasants and students are supporting them.

There were huge police arrangements all around to arrest the leadership of peasant and govt employees. But workers from industries threw a ring around them all the time and the police failed to arrest them.

Visit by Dakshi has strengthened the relationship between the KCTU and CITU and the working class of two countries. It has also affirmed conclusively the fact that globalisation and the FTA are bringing misery to the toiling masses irrespective of the countries, rich or poor, developed or developing.

In the process a global unity of the working class is growing. That is the silver lining behind the cloud of darkness and is the redeeming feature for the future.

REPORTS & EVENTS

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HEALTH CARE

The International Conference on Impact of Globalisation on health care and access to medicine and intellectual property rights/patent issues was held on 6-8 October 2004 at Paris. The initiative of organising the conference was taken by the Chemical workers' federation under CGT-France.

Jitendra Deshmukh Secretary FMRAI and Bejon Behari Das, General Secretary, CRU represents the CITU. Besides India, trade union delegation from France, Algeria, Cuba, Brazil, Egypt, Italy, Switzerland, USA, Belgium and Libya attended the conference.

Papers were presented by the delegates from various countries followed by lively discussions. The deliberation exposed as to how the

era of neoliberal globalisation has been denying universal access to basic health care and essential medicines at affordable rates to mass of the common people. The onslaught on the right to social security almost every where has also severely undermined the right to basic health care and minimum medicinal access to mass of the workers.

Deshmukh and Bejon Das intervened and detailed the experience of the Indian workers' struggle against neoliberal globalisation. They described as to how following gradual dilution of price control on medicines in India coupled with the introduction of product patent regime, the essential medicines are going beyond the reach of common people and workers. They also

detailed out the grievous impact of the policy of liberalization and privatization on the public health care services throughout the country. The struggle of the working class against blackmarketing of drugs by the big multinational companies and floating of spurious drugs was highlighted by the Indian delegates. The Conference has given a call to unitedly work for 1) mobilizing the people to assert the right to health care as a basic right through united struggle, 2) working together against the designs of the World Trade Organisation to make health a commodity, 3) opposing the designs of the MNCs in the pharmaceutical sector to establish their monopoly power by pressurizing the national governments to change their patent laws.

OIL PRICE HIKE:

UPA GOVERNMENT INSENSITIVE TO PEOPLE'S SUFFERINGS

The hefty hikes announced in the prices of petrol, diesel and cooking gas by the UPA government confirms the popular perception that the present regime meekly continues the traverse the same path as the previous NDA dispensation, unmindful of the sensitivities of the people. It is an irony that the actual hike had come about when the international oil prices are showing signs of decline. That this decision had been hailed as 'biting the bullet' by the reforms-savvy academics and the media, with the same glee as they did with 'India Shining' campaign of the NDA regime is revealing.

The government had chosen to turn a deaf ear to the plea to peg its customs and excise revenues on oil products with zero nominal increase. It seems that the Finance Ministry cannot resist the temptation of utilising the buoyancy in its revenue on account of surging import prices of oil, for its fiscal management. Though the government had spared kerosene from the present exercise of hike in prices, the deadline decided earlier for completely phasing out the subsidy element in respect of both kerosene and LPG stands as it is, confirming the apprehension that this 'benevolence' is also likely to vanish sooner than later. It needs to be reminded that as Kerosene is not imported, there would be no financial loss to public sector oil companies or the government, if its price were left untouched.

The CITU urged the government to roll back the increase the price of petroleum products.

(Press Release dated November 5, 2004)

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

State	Sr. No.	Centre	Month		State	Sr. No.	Centre	Month	
			Aug.' 04	Sept.' 04				Aug.' 04	Sept.' 04
Andhra Pradesh	1	Gudur	491	494	Maharashtra	38	Mumbai	610	610
	2	Guntur	512	512		39	Nagpur	539	540
	3	Hyderabad	518	520		40	Nasik	560	565
	4	Visakhapatnam	505	507		41	Pune	583	581
	5	Warangal	536	537		42	Solapur	532	534
Assam	6	D.D. Tinsukia	432	434	Orissa	43	Barbil	457	466
	7	Guwahati	529	524		44	Rourkela	464	464
	8	Labac-Silchar	414	417	Punjab	45	Amritsar	461	465
	9	Mariani-Jorhat	442	441		46	Ludhiana	474	483
	10	Rangapara-Tezpur	439	437	Rajasthan	47	Ajmer	528	521
Bihar	11	Monghyr	485	486		48	Jaipur	478	477
Chhattisgarh	12	Bhillai	465	466	Tamil Nadu	49	Chennai	558	553
Gujarat	13	Ahmedabad	524	519		50	Coimbatore	496	497
	14	Bhavnagar	556	545		51	Coonoor	502	499
	15	Rajkot	479	479		52	Madurai	502	494
	16	Surat	512	504		53	Salem	490	482
	17	Vadodra	499	502		54	Tiruchirapally	544	551
Haryana	18	Faridabad	547	547	Uttar Pradesh	55	Agra	494	497
	19	Yamunanagar	503	502		56	Ghaziabad	528	527
J & K	20	Srinagar	597	604		57	Kanpur	496	501
Jharkhand	21	Jamshedpur	484	486		58	Saharanpur	485	489
	22	Jharia	420	424		59	Varanasi	546	550
	23	Kodarma	426	442	West Bengal	60	Asansol	494	496
	24	Noamundi	461	467		61	Darjeeling	440	443
	25	Ranchi-Hatia	473	482		62	Durgapur	586	591
Karnataka	26	Bangalore	508	508		63	Haldia	613	618
	27	Belgaum	570	568		64	Howrah	593	605
	28	Hubli-Dharwar	530	531		65	Jalpaiguri	447	450
	29	Mercara	497	497		66	Kolkata	567	577
Kerala	30	Alwaye	519	518		67	Raniganj	454	457
	31	Mundakayam	502	501	Chandigarh	68	Chandigarh	576	577
	32	Quilon	530	536	Delhi	69	Delhi	617	615
	33	Thiruvananthapuram	568	573	Pondicherry	70	Pondicherry	555	557
Madhya Pradesh	34	Balaghat	468	468					
	35	Bhopal	545	545					
	36	Indore	530	529					
	37	Jabalpur	524	522					
								ALL-INDIA	522
									523

Additional Series of Labour Bureau

State	Centre	August 2004	September 2004
Andhra Pradesh	1 Kethgudem	522	519
Himachal Pradesh	2 Himachal Pradesh	496	497
Rajasthan	3 Bhilwara	512	517
Madhya Pradesh	4 Chhindwara	471	470
Tripura	5 Tripura	460	461
Goa	6 Goa	619	617

ALL INDIA WORKSHOP FOR WORKING WOMEN

The All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) held a workshop for working women activists on 18-19 November 2004 in Delhi. 81 activists from 12 states participated in the workshop, which was presided over by Nisha Roy from West Bengal. The workshop took up four issues for discussion in four sessions - continuation of the campaign on the demands of working women, organising the home based workers, domestic workers and fishers and fisheries workers, developing an all India movement of nurses and the formation and functioning of working women's coordination committees and sub committees at the state, district and union level. The background paper on each of these issues was presented by Hemalata, Secretary of the AICCWW (CITU).

The paper presented in the session devoted to continuation of the campaign on the demands noted that the campaign in the last four months met with very good response from the working women, particularly in the unorganised sector. It was necessary to continue this campaign highlighting the specific problems of working women in each sector. The campaign should lead to formation of unions in newer industries and areas and should persuade the unions to address the specific problems of working women. The workshop decided to continue the signature campaign and submit a memorandum to all the Governors on the same day in February 2005.

The second session was allotted for the discussion on organising the home based workers, domestic workers and the fishers and fisheries workers. The note presented in this session pointed out that it was necessary for the state coordination committees to decide priorities in consultation with the state committees of CITU and then make efforts to organise these home based workers. It was suggested that while organising the home based workers, it was necessary to give priority to those in the manufacturing sector. Lakhs of women were working as domestic

workers in the cities and small and medium towns in the country. 99% of these were women. They got no appointment letters, no minimum wages, nor any social security. Often they were subjected to a lot of harassment including sexual harassment, baseless accusations of theft, etc. Because of the serious problems they face, they were ready to join unions and fight to solve their problems. The note also emphasised the importance of organising the fishers and fisheries workers a large number of who were women.

The workshop decided to continue the survey among the home based workers, compile the data wherever the surveys are complete and hold press conference on the occasion of International Women's Day on 8th March 2005 in all the district and state head capitals to highlight the problems of the home based workers. It was also decided to conduct a survey among the domestic workers on the basis of a questionnaire to be sent from the Centre. Press conferences will be held in April in all the district and state capitals to highlight the problems of domestic workers.

The third session of the workshop was devoted to discuss the issue of developing an all India movement of nurses.

It was decided that efforts should be made to organise the private hospital employees including the nurses and CITU would be asked to take a decision on developing an all India movement of nurses.

The workshop observed that there was improvement on the formation and functioning of coordination committees and sub committees of women in several states. The meetings of the state CCWW and some district CCWW were now more regular. While these efforts need to be continued the workshop reiterated the recommendations of the 10th Conference Commission Paper on 'Working Women - A Class Perspective' that women in the various CITU Committees should be more assertive and active in ensuring that the decisions taken in relation to our activities among working women are properly implemented.



ALL INDIA MASS CONVENTION OF WORKING WOMEN