



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

May Day Manifesto Of The CITU—1976

On the occasion of May Day, the great International Day of the working class solidarity, the Centre of Indian Trade Unions conveys its warmest greetings to the working class and toiling millions of India for their valiant efforts to defend their working and living conditions.

Since June end the trade union movement in India had to pass through unprecedented situation. Old forms of trade union functioning are not available.

The CITU pays homage to the memory of Comrade Bhairao Bharatiya.

Following recession in the economy, layoff, retrenchment, and closure became quite frequent affecting lives of lakhs of workers during the last year. The registered unemployment in the urban areas reached a colossal figure of 95 lakhs in addition to which rural unemployment swelled into millions. In several cases employers did not pay even the lay-off compensation. Thousands of badli workers in jute mills in West Bengal have already been thrown on streets.

The closure of textile and engineering factories, small steel factories and tea plantations have snatched

away the only source of livelihood of tens of thousands of workers. The workers in handloom, coir, cashew and building and construction industries are also facing large scale unemployment. Many employees in Central and State services are being compulsorily retired after attaining 50 years of age.

The Amendment to Bonus Act deprived several lakhs of workers their right to bonus. Even the past agreements are being scrapped with the help of official order. The LIC employees have lost their hard-won right to bonus through a legislative enactment. It is estimated that the workers have lost Rs. 250 crores due to the amendment to the Bonus Act.

The scheme of participative management is being utilised to impose additional workload on the workers without giving any genuine powers to the workers or the trade unions.

The Consumer Price Index is falling at a faster rate than the actual decline in prices and workers are deprived of their adequate dearness allowance.

The CITU congratulates the working class of Tamilnadu, Kerala, West Bengal and other States for their protests through various forms of mass action against the Bonus Act. It congratulates the workers of Indian Drugs and Pharmaceutical Ltd., Hyderabad, Bata Workers all over India, J.K. Rayon workers, Kanpur, Maratha Press Workers, Bombay and many other workers for their efforts to protect their living standards.

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May Day Greetings To Readers

The death of over 375 workers in Chasnala coal mine has aroused great indignation among all sections of our people. Before judicial inquiry could complete its Report, another ghastly accident took the toll of 5 workers in the same mine. Over 60 coal miners lost their precious lives between the two Chasnala disasters. All sections of trade unions have raised their voice against the callousness of the authorities towards the safety of the workers.

Though per capita production does not show much rise, the prices of agricultural commodities are falling due to fall in demand consequent to the reduction in purchasing power of the people. There is "glut" of every commodity like steel, coal, cement, engineering goods, textile cloth, etc. While nearly 70 per cent of the people are living below the poverty line, all these commodities have accumulated in huge quantity.

The recent budget has given several concessions to industrialists in order to make it "production oriented". However, unless the purchasing power of the people is increased whatever is produced in the country cannot be sold in internal market. Therefore efforts of the poorer sections to improve their standard of living are just and reasonable.

Taking advantage of the difficulties through which the Indian economy is passing today, the worldwide monopolies are trying to extract maximum benefits to boost their profitability. The surplus generated by the multinational corporations in India has reached all time record. They along with Indian monopolists have made Indian market their hunting ground. There is no wonder that the balance of payments has become most adverse for India to the tune of Rs. 1300 crores and everything has to be exported abroad at throw away prices to meet the deficit balance of payments.

In the villages the landlords have been appropriating all the benefits of a good crop while the poor peasant is perishing for want of remunerative prices. Distress sales of most of the agricultural commodities have been reported from all corners of the country-

On the occasion of May Day, the working class should demonstrate its class unity in whatever form possible, bringing trade unions and workers of all affiliations together for common action. Let the working class demand restoration of civil liberties, right to organise and bargain collectively, recognition of trade unions through secret ballot, withdrawal of the Bonus Act, of impounding DA and other laws that hit the interests of workers. Let the working class demand strong measures against lay-off, retrenchment, closures, increased workload and express their determination to achieve need-based minimum wages and employment relief.

To win these demands the working class unity is extremely important. Let this May Day be a rallying point of workers of all affiliations which alone will enable them to move forward towards fulfilment of their demands.

On this May Day, let the working class express its full solidarity with peasants, students, teachers, doctors, lawyers, artists in their efforts to improve their conditions and for democratic rights. The working class must pay special attention to build worker-peasant alliance so that a common front is built up throughout the country to face the present challenging situation with courage and determination.

The Indian working class should express their international solidarity towards the workers and people of the Socialist countries, workers in the capitalist countries in their struggles against employers' attacks and the working class and the people in the developing countries in the struggle against imperialist machinations and for national independence. The CITU wishes all success to the world-wide struggle against imperialism and for lasting peace.

Capitalist system is bound to fall and socialist system is bound to succeed all over the world. Therefore, the worldwide struggle of the working class is destined to succeed. With this confidence in future, let there be fitting observation of the historic May Day and let the mighty slogan ring everywhere :

"WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE"

An Unprecedented Legislation

Believe it or not, the whole legislative machinery was turned against an agreement between the employer and the employees executed under the Industrial Disputes Act.

It was an agreement between the Life Insurance Corporation and its employees under section 18 of the Act relating to payment of bonus to Class III and Class IV employees. The agreement was entered into on 24 January 1974 and it is to expire on 31 March 1977. Before it could expire, the Life Insurance Corporation (Modification of Settlement) Act., 1976 was passed. It is a three section Act and, under section 3, it is provided that the settlement relating to Class III and Class IV employees whereby they would get 15% of their salary as annual cash bonus shall not have any force or effect and shall not be deemed to have had any force or effect on and from the 1st day of April 1975.

In the Statement of Objects and Reasons, it is stated "It is proposed to set aside, with effect from the first April 1975, these provisions of the settlement arrived at between the Corporation and its Class III and Class IV employees on 24 January 1974 to enable the Corporation to make exgratia payments to such employees at the rates determined on the basis of the general Government Policy for making ex gratia payments to the employees of the non-competing public sector undertakings".

To say the least, it is a blow at collective bargaining. The principle of collective bargaining gained strength throughout the world after the second world war and that principle was embodied as a part of the world wide process in India, also, in the provisions of section 18 of the Industrial Disputes Act. Compared to the experience on the continent, the concept of collective bargaining appeared in a relatively diluted form in section 18 of the Act, because, under its provisions, only those agreements between the management and labour had universal binding effect where the agreements concerned were concluded through the medium of the Conciliation Officer. Thus, without the will of the State agency being superimposed, collective bargaining would not be recognised.

Collective bargaining was a counter attack against the totalitarian control of trade union activities. In the inter-war years, totalitarianism destroyed the freedom and autonomy of the workers. After Nazism and Fascism were destroyed, the workers came into their own and they have asserted their rights through collective bargaining.

Therefore, to strike at collective bargaining in the name of any national policy would be a retrograde step.

Moreover, atomized workers are weak and helpless in the presence of the powerful management, be it the case of a privately managed industry or a State managed industry. Though the full bloom of collective bargaining could be felt after the second world war, the workers have edged towards it in the last hundred years or more and could wrest the right after hard battles, both violent and peaceful, through constitutional and extra-constitutional means. The first fruit in the United Kingdom was in the shape of the Trade Disputes Act, 1906. Sections 1, 3, 4 and 5 of that Act correspond to sections 17 and 18 of the Indian Trade Unions Act of 1926. Under these provisions, no office bearer or member of a registered Trade Union shall be liable to punishment for criminal conspiracy in respect of any agreement made between the members for furthering any trade dispute, unless the agreement is an agreement to commit an offence. Similarly, Trade Unions and their office bearers or members are rendered immune from any civil liability for damages for tort or breach of contract if they, in furtherance or contemplation of a trade dispute, do acts which might induce some other person to break a contract of employment or which may be in interference with the trade, business or employment of some other person or with the right of some other person to dispose of his capital or of his labour as he wills.

These provisions in the Trade Unions Act, 1926, in India were won by the workers after bitter

struggles. And, though they do not imprint the seal of law on the agreement that might result from collective furtherance of dispute, these provisions enable a Trade Union to make a collective effort, free from criminal or civil liability to settle a dispute between it or any of its members and the employer. The workers in India had to wait till 1947 or even later (present section 18 of the Industrial Disputes Act was substantially redrafted in 1956) before collective bargaining was sanctified by law.

The agreement between the Life Insurance Corporation of India and its Class III and class IV employees was also concluded in the spirit of collective bargaining under the provisions of section 18 of the Industrial Disputes Act. The impugned legislation has nullified the agreement with retrospective effect from 1 April 1975.

Concluded contracts like the contract under consideration are not merely executory. They vest in the employees certain benefits in the shape of monetary gains which are not at all contingent, bonus at the rate of 15% of annual salary being payable irrespective of profit and loss. Such vested rights to monetary gains can very well be equated to property right and, under Article 31 of the Constitution, a right to property cannot be taken away except without providing for compensation in the statute concerned or laying down the principles under which such compensation can be granted. Any statute depriving a citizen of his property with-

out providing for such compensation may be declared ultra vires Article 31 of the Constitution. It may be noted that Article 31 of the Constitution has not been suspended under the Emergency.

In United Kingdom, though there is no written Constitution nor any provision similar to Article 31 of our Constitution, whenever by a statute power has been given to nullify or frustrate agreements or contracts, care has been taken to make provision for compensation. Thus, the British Coal Industry Act, Sec. 3, gives the corporation power to terminate certain long-term contracts, including contracts for the employment of a person, "if the Board is of opinion that they are, or are likely to be hampered in the efficient performance of their functions by the operation provisions of a contract". But, in all such cases, the Board is liable to pay compensation which, in default of agreement, is determined by arbitration.

It is not yet clear whether the Life Insurance Corporation (Modification of Settlement) Act of 1976 is a portent of the future. It has now become a fashion to swear by Soviet experience. But, though it is true that collective agreements in the Soviet Union are more directed to ensure maximum production and labour discipline, the individual rights of workers, as W. Friedman says in his *LAW IN A CHANGING SOCIETY*, in regard to wages, dismissal, holidays are protected by an elaborate administrative and judicial procedure.

—Arun Prokas Chatterjee

Anti Social Elements Arrested In Bistrampur Collieries

The Madhya Pradesh police arrested 6 persons from Bistrampur Colliery quarters and one from Churcha Colliery under the Western Coal Fields Ltd. during early half of March for dacoity and raping charges according to *Desh Bandhu Hindi Daily* (12 March) published from Bilaspur. Another Hindi daily *Nay Bharat* from Raipur, published on the same day that the police captured 12 rifles and other ammunition from these dacoits.

The workers in Bistrampur are surprised to know that some of these persons were recruited in the mines directly without approaching the employment exchange. Koyla Shramik Sangha (CITU) Bistrampur wrote a letter to the management on 30th June 1975 protesting against the irregular recruitment of these anti-social elements. The management however showed a deaf ear to the complaint. It is learnt that R. P. Srivastava, Bikram Singh and Basant were on the rolls of Jainagar inclines of Bistrampur Colliery and Karamdeo Singh was

recently transferred to Churcha Colliery in the same region. It is also said that Kameshwar Singh, Dharmnath Giri and another Srivastav were occupying colliery quarters illegally. Recently the management evicted all the unauthorised persons from the colliery but these three persons were not evicted.

Perhaps more details would be available after the investigations are over but workers are perturbed at the manner in which these dacoits received treatment at the hands of the management.

Md. Ismail M.P., Vice-President, CITU has represented the matter to the authorities stating that there are some more anti-social elements recruited in an irregular manner in the Bistrampur Colliery and demanded full enquiry into the manner in which they were recruited and the persons who recommended their recruitment. He demanded that all these anti-social elements should be removed from the rolls of the mines.

Thirty Years of Vietnamese Trade Union

by

Nguyen Trong Con

(Department of the History of Federation of the
Trade Unions of Vietnam).

(*Continued from last issue.*)

American Aggression

The building up of socialism was going on successfully when American imperialism started a war of destruction in the air and on the sea against DRV (Feb 1965—end Oct 1968). Cities, industrial centres, communications, ports, villages and hamlets in almost all the corners of the country were the target of atrocious bombing from the enemy and in some places, they even went on day and night without interruption.

Faced with this situation, the Federation of Trade Unions of Vietnam decided to give a new orientation to trade union work, in conformity with the situation and the new tasks with the aim of assuring defence, and intensification of production and of keeping everyone in a stage of preparedness to fight and to fight heroically. The order "Hold the hammer in one hand and the gun in the other" was given by the Federation and was carried out to the hilt by the working men and women and the trade unions at all levels.

Different echelons of the trade unions organised, in concert with the administrative units, urgent evacuations and dispersion of the enterprises and the services and of the workers and their families with them. And everything was put into

action again in the new locations and life was reorganised and stabilised quickly. Concerning those who had to stay by the side of their machines or to maintain the service in offices, necessary measures were taken for the defence of the material and the equipment and notably of the personnel. The anti-aircraft shelters and communication bays were set up to allow them in the case of necessity to seek refuge or retire to a safe place.

Along with the direction of enterprises and services, the trade unions devised plans foreseeing three situations: "before, during and after bombardment", for being prepared for all eventualities. Self-defence formations, of which the Secretary of the base trade union was one of the chiefs, units of sappers for rendering help to victims of collapse of air raid shelters, were formed, consolidated and reinforced. The workers and employees had their trench and personal shelters, and communication bays at the locations where they lived and worked and places in between for protecting themselves from bombs and shells. Despite atrocious bombing by the enemy, thanks to these measures, one could limit to the minimum possible the loss of life and of goods and assure production.

The transport unions have by ideological campaign heightened the sense of revolutionary heroism among the Truck-drivers who, braving the bombs and shells, have assured the movement of traffic in all circumstances and have, by this action, served the double fronts of combat and production and assured maintenance of the life of the people. The trade unions in commercial establishments made an important contribution to maintain and enlarge commercial resources, to be placed at the service of combat and production and maintenance of the life of the people. Trade unions in educational institutions did their utmost to assure the realisation in all cases of the motto "teach well and learn well" in the schools. Trade unions in other branches likewise made a valuable contribution in the accomplishment of the plan of each enterprise or service in maintaining and improving the level of living of their members.

Everywhere in the North, the workers' self-defence units fought courageously by the side of the regular troops. Unaided, under their own power, they brought down 115 American planes without counting a great number of others destroyed in co-operation with other units of the people's Army. They have witnessed the conferment under collective or individual titles, of the Order of Resistance of different classes. In particular, workers' self defence units—such as those of the port of Hai Phong, of the machine building factory of Quang Trung of

Hanoi, of the coal mines of Hongay etc. have been named—"hero units of the Peoples' Army, the rural militia and self defence organisations".

In such conditions of work and war, so hard and fierce, the trade unions never lost sight of the state of material and cultural life of workers. The artistic mass movement launched with the watch word "that songs may dominate the explosion of bombs", the educational movement, the movement of sports and physical culture—which have been constantly developed with vigour, have contributed to render the lives of workers more healthy and more joyous.

The trade unions paid particular attention to build up "canteens with three merits" (assurance of food rations, maintenance of food hygiene and cooking technique), to the organisation of creches and mater-nelles and of the lodgings of workers in their areas of evacuation etc. They supervised with care the management of social insurance funds, attended to men and women workers in the case of illness, confinement, old age or loss of family support. They managed with success an Institute of Scientific Research on the protection of work and Exhibitions on the work-protection and were constantly pre-occupied with the problem of security of work in bases of production and centres of scientific research.

By these extraordinary efforts of which a few examples have been cited, the workers and trade unions of North Viet Nam

contributed honourably in bringing to a halt the first American Aggression against DRV (1965-1968), which compelled the Johnson administration to stop the bombardment of the North, and to come to the conference table in Paris to discuss a political solution of the Vietnames problem.

Second American Aggression

April 1972, while the workers and the toiling masses of North Viet Nam massed all their forces to heal the war wounds, to improve the economy and to stabilise life—Nixon resumed bombardment of DRV. This was the second American war of destruction, more atrocious and more devastating than the first, which culminated in the surprise strategic attack by B-52 super-bombers on Hanoi, Hai Phong and other localities in last 12 days of December 1972. But this time, US imperialism experienced a much more poignant and humiliating defeat. By the resounding exploits of Hanoi, by the "aerial Dien Bien Phu" the Vietnames people and the armed forces broke this surprise strategic attack and at the same time crushed the American imperialism's will to attack, forcing the Nixon administration to sign on 27 January 1973, the Paris Accord, in virtue of which the USA pledged to respect the independence, sovereignty, unity and integrity of Vietnam and the right of the population of South Vietnam to self determination, and to recall their troops stationed in the territory of South Vietnam.

In course of the fight against the second American war of destruction as in the first, workers and trade unions of Vietnam played a considerable role in defence and intensification of production, and gave proof of courage in the battle against air pirates, and served effectively the needs of combat and production and maintenance of life of the people.

After the signature of the Paris Accord, they consecrated all their forces to healing the war wounds, to the restoration of the economy and intensification of the building of socialism.

New Task

Concerning the general tasks of the trade unions in this new stage, the 3rd National Congress of Trade Unions held in 11-14 February 1974 with the participation of 507 delegates of more than 6000 base trade unions totalling 1,300,000 adherents, defined them as follows: Elevation of class-consciousness, essentially the awareness of being collectively the master of the society and the State, defence and development of the role of collective mastery, which reinvigorates the workers and employees to promote among them the 'effervescent movement of emulation for production, work and the practice of economy, keeping in view the building up of socialism, participation in the management of the enterprise, of the economy, of the State, to effect the three revolutions (revolution in the rapports of production, technical revolution and ideological and cul-

(See page 12)

Apartheid on the High Seas

The inhuman conditions of Indian seamen in the matter of employment, wages and living conditions and the discriminations meted out to seamen employed in foreign ships were brought out in detail in several earlier issues of this journal. Unfortunately things have changed very little upto now in spite of repeated demands from the seamen and their Trade Unions. Recently, these questions again figured prominently in Press reports as well as in the Rajya Sabha.

Discrimination in Wages

In a recently published bulletin, the Forward Seamen's Union (CITU) alleged that the private Indian ship owners have sent a confidential appeal to their foreign counterparts requesting them to pay less wages to Indian seamen than others. Although the organisations of private Indian and foreign shipowners are reported to have denied this allegation, the fact remains that Indian seamen have all along been discriminated against in the matter of wages.

The Joint Maritime Commission of the ILO recommended in 1972 that all Asian crew and seamen should be paid £48 per month along with a number of other amenities. Most shipping lines in the world pay their crew as much as £110 per month. The rate of wages of Indian seamen employed on foreign ships and their service conditions are settled by agreements of the National Maritime Board of India which is a bipartite body

of shipowners and seamen. Until recently, Indian crew and seamen employed in foreign ships were being paid only £32 per month according to NMB agreement, the balance going to a Seafarers Welfare Fund. It is only from January 1, 1976 that the seamen's wages were raised to approx. £44 per month according to the latest NMB agreement.

While replying to a question on this point in the Rajya Sabha, the Union Minister for Shipping and Transport, G. S. Dhillon, admitted that the Government had so long resisted the demand made by the International Transport Workers Federation that Indian Seamen be paid the ILO minimum wage of £ 48 per month. Strangely enough, it was done on the ground that "it would result in the reduction of the employment opportunities for Indian seamen and also adversely affect the competitive character of Indian Shipping". He further claimed that under the Indian manning scales more men have to be employed than under the regulations of foreign companies. This seems to echo the traditional objections of British and other foreign maritime nations to parity of wages for Indian seamen on the ground of efficiency.

During the annual meeting of the International Shipping Federation held in January last, the same arguments were put forward by the representatives of the Indian Shipowners Associa-

tion and Shipping Corporation of India, as well as the Union Minister of State for Shipping H. M. Trivedi, to rebutt the demand for uniformity in wages for all seamen. Sri Trivedi had then argued that the ILO standards are unrealistic and there can be no parity between developed and developing countries, and that India's embryonic merchant navy needs special protection.

Apalling conditions of living

The Forward Seamen's Union also alleged that compared to foreign ships, where there is virtually no difference in the living conditions of officers and crew, the living conditions of seamen employed in private Indian ships is not only inhuman they are highly discriminatory between officers and the crew.

In private Indian ships, the living conditions of seamen and crew are wretched. They have to face extremes of temperature ranging from 20 degrees Centigrade in winter to 120 degrees Centigrade in summer. Their food rations have been steadily reduced from 50 grams to 250 grams of rice per day, although their workload remains the same. Besides first aid, there are no medical arrangements for ailing crew and seamen.

... ..

Increase in work load

As the manning scales for different classes of ships, as required under the Indian Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, have not yet been prescribed by

(See page 12)

CITU'S Statement Before Chasnala Court Of Enquiry

[As a party to the Court of Enquiry on the Chasnala mine accident of 25th December, 1976, the CITU submitted a statement before the Court of Enquiry on 10th March, 1976 giving in detail its views on the causes leading to this ghastly tragedy. Extracts of the statement are reproduced below.]

Subsequently, the Court of Enquiry sought some clarifications to the CITU's statement. Accordingly, another statement was submitted on 12th April, 1976 supplying the required clarifications.]

The Chasnala Colliery situated at 20 k.m. from Dhanbad is one of the most modern collieries in the country. The mining was started as early as 1917 by M/s. Lodna Colliery Co. Ltd. which was subsequently transferred to M/s. Lodna Coal Co. in 1920. M/s. Chasnala Coal Co. purchased the rights afterwards. The IISCO came into the picture in 1938 when it acquired the property.

Since the mine contains metallurgical coal of high grade quality and IISCO's desire to exploit the deposits to the fullest extent, the management used in 1958 the services of Mr. N. Barraclough, retired Chief Inspector of Mines in India. He prepared a feasibility report in 1960 and suggested working the mines by horizon system. The world Bank offered loan and at its instance M/s. International Construction Co. (ICC) U. K. was given the work of the planning, co-ordination and execution of the coal development project of Chasnala and Jitpur. Even though the Project Report was ready only in 1966 the management had given the contract for sinking of shaft to a foreign company in the year 1964 itself.

The daily production of the mine was about 400—450 tonnes on the eve of the accident, while the design of the plan is for a daily output of 3800 tonnes. The total strength of underground workers was about 1200 divided into 3 shifts.

A calculated risk

The Chasnala mines in general are admitted to be very watery. The old workings had to be discontinued since they contain water which remained accumulated by percolating from the Coal measure strata. Since 1949 the inclines were under water till 1963 when de-watering started through 3/4 inclines but several difficulties had to be countered. A collapse of the mouth of H. K. incline, subsidence, detection of active fire inside the incline were the problems faced and restricted dewatering was resorted to since 1967. The level of the water was however maintained upto 'C' level roof of 3/4 inclines due to the susceptibility of fire. The fact remains that the inclines could not be operated since 1949 due to accumulation of huge quantity of water and the existence of active fire inside the inclines. When the water was

accumulated in the incline from the percolation from the coal measure strata, its possibility to further percolate in the lower horizon was not adequately taken into consideration by the management. When the water was accumulated over a period of decades the possibility of inundation was never taken into account by the management.

The management provided 3 pumps with total pumping capacity of 1500 gallons per minute in the first horizon, while 3 pumps with a total capacity of 2500 gallons per minute was in the second horizon which is far from adequate in case of inundation. The management also did not take into account the possibility of submerging of the pumps in case of inrush of water as happened in earlier mine accidents.

Warning Unheeded

Annual Report of the Central Mining Research Station (CMRS) for the year 1974-75 has made the following observation.

"In Chasnala Coal-mine, the combined XII/XIII/XIV seam which is steeply dipping at 35° is being worked by horizontal slicing in conjunction with hydraulic stowing. The working above the first horizon are on the dip side of the old working of no. 2 incline which is filled with water. The seam is highly dipping and has fireclay floor. It is likely to slide down in case the present workings reach very close to the old workings. As a

result, the present working will be inundated" (emphasis added).

Thus the danger of inundation was noted in a clear cut manner. On the one hand, the management did not pay sufficient attention to avoid inundation while on the other it was totally unprepared to meet the situation arising out of inundation.

Inaccurate Maps

In most of previous major accidents in mines due to inrush of water the maps were found to be not accurate. Mines regulation 127 (3) which provides for a barrier of 60 metres between the two workings has validity so long the maps are correct. No mines regulation can save the workers if the maps are not accurate. Hidden galleries have become a regular feature of the mines and in case of Chasnala disaster also the hidden gallery has played its cruel role.

The phenomenon of hidden gallery perhaps arose out of the attempts of the former mine owners to resort to secret mining. They could quietly sell the coal through contractors and evade taxes to be paid to the Government. Since they were kept secret from the Chief Inspector of Mines they did not find place in the maps. The Inspectors also failed to spot these secret mining and perhaps some of them have connived at such irregular procedure.

In view of the fact that the earlier mine was abandoned without proper verification of the maps, some margin should have been given before undertaking the blasting operation. Though the percolation of the water was excessive and the existence of hidden gallery was observed in earlier accidents it is difficult to understand why the Mining Inspectors have not visualised the possibility of hidden gallery in this case also. At least this aspect should have been taken into account while permitting the management to reduce the barrier to 80 ft. when normal barrier was expected to be 60 metres. It is clear that mining Inspectors relied too much on the maps supplied to them by the mine owners and thus failed to prevent this disaster.

We have no knowledge of the Reports submitted from time to time by the Mining Inspectors and what directives they gave on the spot and to what extent they were implemented by the management. After getting all details on this issue we will be in a position to express our views more concretely.

Meanwhile, a question arises whether there are any more hidden galleries in Chasnala mine which have not come to light so far. This aspect should be properly checked up before going ahead with further development of the mine. Otherwise there is every possibility that the danger of inundation may occur

again with equal ferocity.

Whither Mines Safety

The condition of the mines safety organisation is most pathetic which only shows the callousness on the part of the Government towards safety in the most vital sector of our economy. When there are about 500 Coal mines and 3600 non-coal mines the total staff under Directorate General of Mines Safety according to our information is only 844. There are 100 class I officers for inspection and Head Office work of which 20 are stationed in the Head Office. The number of Class II staff meant for inspection is only 12 while the class III and IV staff accounts for 501 and 281 employees respectively. While it is advisable that a mine should be examined from the point of view of safety at least once in a quarter, the present staff is inadequate to inspect every mine even once in a year. There are some mines which are visited after a lapse of couple of years. Even the inspections cannot be organised in sufficient details and at times they become formal affairs. Though Court of Inquiry on Jitpur accident recommended quarterly inspection of mines but no steps have been taken by the Government on this recommendation. With more and more sophisticated machines being brought in the mining industry the question of their regular check up assumes increasing importance. Their failure at times leads to serious accident but this aspect still continues to be neglected.

The rescue stations continue to be highly inadequate. Despite existence of large number of mines the total number of rescue stations is only 11. The report of the Court of Enquiry on Buro Dhemo Colliery accident (1956) recommended that all rescue stations should have dewatering equipments but it is still not being implemented. In case of Central Bhowrah accident even after one month of the occurrence of the accident the Court could not visit the punctured hole since it was under water. Yet no efforts were made to arrange for high powered booster pumps or submersible pumps.

So far three Conferences on Mines Safety have been held. However, the decisions of these Conferences are being shelved and largely remain unimplemented. Our organisation had participated in the recent safety Conference and this point was specially emphasised by our representative, but conditions do not seem to have improved much after that.

Industrial Relations

The industrial relations in the colliery were extremely bad on the eve of the accident and the management was resorting to several unfair labour practices. Under its leadership, Bihar Colliery Kamgar Union had to organise a 7 day strike even after promulgation of emergency in June 1975 in which about 1500 workers participated. The strike ended in a settlement with our union and an agreement was signed accordingly. The agreement speaks for itself. It

provides for ending the practice of under-payment, working without identity cards and records, keeping of private armed men etc. The under payment to the workers was estimated to be of the order of Rs. 5 lakhs but the local authorities failed to take any action against the culprit for obvious reasons.

The agreement, however, was not implemented. It is necessary to look into these aspects of the working of the mine to find out the colossal misappropriation in the concern which continued unabated even after Government take over of the company.

The anti-labour attitude of the management was also responsible for ignoring of safety rules. The major accident in Jitpur Colliery in 1973 in which 47 workers were killed is still fresh in the minds of the people. It is not just coincidence that the management of both the mines is the same. The management did not pay any heed to the findings of the Enquiry and continued its gross negligence towards safety of the coal miners.

Violation of the Mines Act

Shri Samar Mukherje, M.P., Secretary CITU who visited Chasnala soon after the accident stated in Parliament on 12 January 1976 during the debate on Chasnala tragedy—"I was told that these workers struck work in the midnight shift on 26th. They refused to cut Coal at that point. It is also heard that there was a blast. I do not know whether there was actually any

blast or not but everybody admitted that there was such a big sound it appeared that there was a big blast." It is also said that the over man of the night shift duty refused to blast and complained about the unsafe condition, but no attention was paid to it by the management. Workers also point out that during the shift, prior to the accident, there was abnormal seepage of water but no precautionary measures were taken by the management.

When the excavation was dangerously approaching the reservoir containing two million tons of water, the Mines Inspectorate thought it was sufficient to bore advance hole of only 3 meters while in some countries, there is a provision of 20 meters advance bore hole. The need for a longer depth was particularly necessary in view of the possibility of hidden gallery as was seen in previous accidents. Perhaps a deeper hole would have given sufficient prior warning of the inrush of water. It is difficult to understand why this was not done by Mining Inspectorate. Or were they dragged into giving green signal to the management by the higher-ups?

Section 64 of the Mines Act provided penalty for falsification of plans or records and in this case the management failed to submit before the office of Mines Safety accurate maps of the abandoned mine. The management has clearly violated this Section of the Act. However, the official responsibility does not end

here because wide powers have been given to the authorities under Section 57 (U).

The management was frantically making attempts to boost production, perhaps with the idea of making the mine "economical." They have suddenly increased their daily production target for the month of January, 1976 to about 700 tonnes. A big jump of 40 to 50 per cent in such a short time. Their anxiety to increase production by any means made them overlook safety provisions. Industrial Safety thus became a casualty at the alter of productivity. Hundreds of workers had to pay a very heavy price for this.

It is said that in the original plan, the drivages were to be constructed in stone but the plan was changed and the drivages were cut in coal to save cost. Moreover, the management got some coal by cutting the drivages in this manner through the seam. It is worth noting that the accident occurred while cutting the drivages between the hang-wall and foot-wall galleries for establishing connection with second horizon chimneys.

Scuttling Improvements In Act

The present Mines Act, 1972 is highly inadequate to meet the safety requirements of the growing mining industry. It awards only token punishment to the management for violation of the Act and the management does not mind to pay the penalty which is much cheaper than implementing the Act.

The Government itself admitted the inadequacy of the legal

framework and an Amended Bill was introduced in Parliament in 1972. It was referred to the Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament and a Report of the Committee was submitted sometime in 1973. Though the improvements in the Act suggested by the Committee are not fully adequate, it provided some machinery for better implementation of the Act. Though 2 years have passed after the submission of the Report of the Parliamentary Committee, the Government did not find it worthwhile to bring the Amended Bill before the House for consideration and adoption.

Main Causes of Disaster

Shri Samar Mukherjee about whom a reference has already been made earlier stated in Parliament. "I was told that immediately after the disaster, the attendance register was removed and the workers are very much suspicious that there will be tampering. That is why the workers got enraged and they assembled before the office of the Manager Mr. Ohri. I was told that the Manager through some of his assistants removed that attendance register.

Shri Samar Mukherjee further said, "there is one name of a contractor Ajit Singh, but the names of his men are not there. So it is evident that more men are trapped in this tragedy. Sir, the local management is trying to under-estimate the number of these casualties". The manner in which the management behaved on this question

makes one feel apprehensive of its motives. As we are preparing this statement, the total number of casualties is still not known.

From what we have said above, it appears that the following factors were responsible for the mine disaster in Chasnala :

1. Gross violation of the Mines Regulations by the IISCO management.
2. Managements drive for higher productivity by resorting to reckless mining ignoring protests from the workers.
3. Wrong maps of the workings which failed to mention the hidden gallery.
4. Inadequate supervision by the Mines Safety Department and its failure to check the malpractices of the management.
5. Delay in effecting improvements in the Mines Act by the Government and failure to implement the legal provisions of the Act.
6. Non-implementation of the recommendations of the earlier court of Inquiries.

CITU Worker Murdered In Bihar

A leading activist of Bihar Colliery Kamgar Union (CITU) Lalchand Rajbhar has been shot dead on 25th March by some miscreants near Datriyana village of Nirsa police station. Alok Sinha who was accompanying him managed to escape. A murder case has been registered by the police but nobody has been arrested so far.

The CITU has condemned the ghastly murder and demanded immediate arrest of the culprits.

Vietnamese Trade Union

(From Page Six)

tural revolution), to heighten constant vigilance, to remain ready to crush all the plots of American imperialism and its valets, fulfil their duty towards their blood-brothers in the South, and to apply themselves to reinforcing the solidarity to combat with the workers and the people of Laos and Khmer, to continue to work for the solidarity and unity of workers and of the world trade union movement in their struggle against imperialism led by American imperialism, against

monopoly capitalism, for the interest of workers for peace, national independence, for democracy and Socialism".

For the two years 1974 and 1975, "the central task of the trade unions consist in launching a movement of emulation in production, work, practice of economy in view of the building up of socialism, effervescent and large, with the aim of obtaining high production, economic efficiency, to accomplish from all points of view and surpass, the state Plan, accomplish victori-

ously the restoration and development of the economy, contribute in a positive manner to the progressive stabilisation of the living condition of workers and employees.

On the occasion of the National Congress of trade unions, after recording a high appreciation of the contribution of the trade unions in the building up of the defence of the country, the National Assembly conferred to the Vietnamese trade unions the order of Ho Chi Minh, a high distinction of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.
(To be continued.)

Apartheid On High Seas

(From Page Seven)

the Govt, Indian seamen are at the mercy of shipowners. The workload on Indian crew and seamen are much more than their foreign counterpart. In many Indian ships, crew and seamen with certificates of fitness from Government doctors are being declared unfit by the company's own Medical Unit and refused employment. As a result, ships are being run with reduced complement of seamen leading to increase in work-load of others. This practice is being brazenly followed in the Calcutta port.

... ..

This is also resulting in gradual decline in recruitment of Indian seamen. At present there are only about 41,000 Indian crew and seamen of whom one-third are working

in Indian ships and the rest in foreign vessels.

Poor medical facilities

Bad food and inhuman living conditions in ships and increased work-load often result in sickness and diseases for crew and seamen. But medical facilities on the ship or ashore are either poor or nonexistent. This is particularly true of the Calcutta port.

Seamen are medically examined at the Marine House, Calcutta by an organisation set up by the Central Govt. If any seaman is found unfit, he is sent to the Seamen's Clinic for treatment. Medicines are often unavailable at the clinic and the seamen are merely advised rest and good diet. In this way many seamen, because of lack of treatment, remain unfit for a long time and lose their regis-

tration and chance of employment. Many seamen complain that they do not even get timely relief from the Welfare Fund, although the Fund has been created out of their money. The system of medical examination is also utilised by shipowners to penalise those seamen who dare to protest against this inhuman exploitation. Complaints lodged by seamen to the Shipping Master against these conditions are not properly looked into.

The Minister for Shipping and Transport had to assure members of Rajya Sabha recently that an official probe would be held into the living conditions of Indian seamen, particularly the discrimination meted out to them in foreign vessels. It is hoped that such probe, though belated, will produce effective steps to stop this inhuman exploitation of our seafarers by Indian and foreign shipowners.

Whither National Apex Body ?

The Government of India constituted the National Apex Body on 29th July 1976 "in order to sort out the general problems of industrial relations in private sector and to motivate the workers to increase production and productivity as well as help the Government to solve other problems during the present emergency". The Committee has 23 members at the central level, 12 from the T.U. organisations and 11 from the employers organisations. As far as the trade union organisations are concerned only the INTUC and AITUC and the recognised wing of the HMS have given representation on the Body, the number of representatives to each of the organisations has been decided by the Government.

In addition to this a "compact Bipartite Committee" of the National Apex Body has been set up consisting of three representatives each from the employers and the recognised trade unions to go into the questions of lay-off, retrenchment and closure referred to it by the NAB.

National Industrial Committees in respect of the textile industry (one for private sector and one for National Textile Corporation), banking, engineering, chemicals and plantation industries have been set up to look into general problems relating to the "health of industries concerned". An "Expert Committee" for the National Industrial Committee on textiles (private sector) as also a "Compact Bipartite Standing

Committee" for the textile industry have also been set up. The "Expert Committee" consists of 4 representatives each of the employers and recognised central trade unions and 4 official nominees, one each of Ministry of Commerce, Department of Banking, Department of Revenue and Insurance and the Reserve Bank of India. The "Compact Bipartite Committee" consists of 4 members from the recognised central T. U.s and an equal number from the employers side which is supposed to go into the cases of apprehended closures, retrenchment and lay-off. Two meetings each of the National Industrial Committee for private and public sectors have been held while meetings for other Committee have been planned in April. The National Industrial Committees for another five industries namely sugar, paper, construction, jute and automobile industries are also likely to be set up soon, according to the announcement of the Union Labour Ministry.

Seven meetings of the NAB have been held so far. In the sixth meeting held on January 10, 1976, it adopted the following resolution :

"The National Apex Body at its very first meeting expressed its anxiety over the wide-spread lay-off, retrenchment, closure, lock-out, strike, go slow, work to rule etc in the country. The NAB decided that there shall be no unilateral lay-off or retrenchment or closure. *It was decided that bonafide lay-off, retrenchments,*

closures will have to be treated differently from other kinds of lay-off or closure. (emphasis added)

The NAB has thus classified lay-offs, retrenchments and closures in two parts i. e. bonafide and malafide and recommended different approach towards them. This signifies a departure from the earlier stand taken by the trade union movement in the country. Instead of unilateral lay-off, retrenchment or closure it evolves a concept of bilateral lay-off retrenchment and closure.

When the Union Labour Minister was asked to review the work of the NAB during the Consultative Committee meeting of M. P.'s held in New Delhi on 31st March 1976, apart from the record of holding of meetings, he could give the following lone example of the work of the Committee :

"At the instance of the National Apex Body a long pending dispute in M/s. Warners Hindusthan Ltd. Hyderabad, where 20 workers had been dismissed was resolved. This matter had been brought to the notice of NAB which discussed the same in the 4th meeting held on October 18, 1975. A small Sub-Committee of two members, one each from the employers and workers side was set up to look into the parties and promote settlement. The Sub-Committee was successful in resolving the dispute with the assistance of the State Labour Minister".

Some State Governments have not shown much enthusiasm to form State level Committees and the 7th meeting of the NAB had

to request the Union Labour Minister to pursue the matter with the State Governments and "intimate the progress made in this direction at their earliest".

The Constitution of the NAB should be viewed in the context of non-convening of the Indian Labour Conference for nearly 4 years. It is also not clear what would be the status of earlier constituted State Labour Advisory Committees since no meetings of these Committees have been held for nearly one year.

If the solution of the contemporary problems of industrial relations would have been solved by merely forming series of Committees at different levels the task would have been very easy. What is most important is a proper industrial relations policy.

Closures, lay-off and retrenchment continue to haunt our economy. According to "available information" with the Central Government the position regarding lay-off and retrenchment in different States from July—December 1975 was as follows :

| State | Lay-off | retrenchment |
|--------------|----------|--------------|
| Andhra | | |
| Pradesh | 21,467 | 517 |
| M. P. | 45,948 | 48 |
| Maharashtra | 41,521 | 2960 |
| U.P. | 19,895 | 2655 |
| West Bengal | 2,21,209 | nil |
| Other States | 41,681 | 3680 |

This does not include data from Assam, Tamilnadu, Goa, Jammu and Kashmir and several other States. The Labour Minister in the meeting replied that "The requisite information regarding the number of workers

Big Victory For CITU Union In Durgapur Co-operative Elections

In the elections to the Board of Directors of Durgapur Steel Employees Co-operative Credit Society held on 6th March last, candidates put up by the Hindusthan Steel Employees' Union (CITU) secured 71 out of 72 seats by overwhelming majority of votes.

There are 15000 members of the co-operative society who were to elect 72 members of the Board of Directors. The CITU Union put up candidates for all the seats, whereas the INTUC Union put

laid off and retrenched in different industries during the last three months is not available". This only show the inadequacy of the machinery to collect necessary information, let alone the question of solving the problem. The workers of West Bengal will certainly be amused to learn that according to official figures there has been no retrenchment in the State during July—December 1975.

The performance of the NAB will be judged not by the number of meetings held or by the claims made about its achievement but by actual steps taken to solve the issues faced by the workers. Without going into controversy at the manner of nomination of workers representatives on this body we would like to state that unity of all the central trade unions to face the problems facing the workers squarely will alone advance the interests of the working class.

up candidates in 18 seats. 40 candidates of the CITU Union were returned un-oposed, while elections were held for the remaining 32 seats. CITU candidates won in 31 seats by defeating INTUC candidates. In most of the seats CITU men secured 92 to 95 per cent votes. In the remaining one seat, the nomination paper of the CITU candidate was cancelled leading to the election of the lone INTUC candidate.

Mines Or Death Traps

According to the information given by K. V. Raghunatha Reddy, Union Labour Minister to the meeting of the Consultative Committee of M. P.s held in New Delhi on 31st March, there were 52 fatal accidents in Coal mines in India taking a toll of 60 workers after the first Chasnala disaster till 23rd March 1976. During the same period, in mines other than Coal, there were 22 accidents in which 25 workers lost their lives.

While to the Court of Inquiry was investigating the December Chasnala disaster, another accident occurred on 5th April in the same mine taking the toll of 5 persons. Samar Mukherjee, Dinen Bhattacharyya, Ajit Saha and Biren Dutta raised a calling attention in Lok Sabha on the question. Two Survivors killed in the Second accident were the key witness of the Chasnala Court of Enquiry.

Two more accidents have occurred in coal mines in April. The mines have virtually become death traps in the country.

According to a letter addressed by Koyla Shramik Sangh, Bistrampur to the Safety Officer, Eastern Coal Fields Ltd. 19 workers were injured during the crash production programme for productions during February-March.

Joint Convention Of W. Bengal Municipal Employees

The West Bengal Assembly has recently passed an Act which gives power to the authorities to compulsorily retire any employee drawing a salary of Rs. 250/ p. m. and above, if he has attained the age of 50 years. A provision of this Act is that no reason has to be assigned if any employee is retired under this Act. This Act covers all the municipalities of West Bengal including the Calcutta Corporation and Howrah Municipality.

Under the auspices of CITU, AITUC and other Left Trade Unions, the different unions of Calcutta Corporation and West Bengal Municipal Workers Federation met in a joint Convention on 11th April last in Calcutta to protest against this Act. The Convention considered this Act to be against the interests of the municipal employees and as arbitrary and undemocratic. Through this Act, the municipal authorities seek to curtail the existing rights and privileges of the employees, and to break their solidarity. The Convention demanded repeal of the Act, payment of D. A. at Central Government rate and withdrawal of DIR.

The Convention adopted programme for leading a deputation to Government and for organising simultaneous mass deputations to respective municipal authorities on 12th May next.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX NUMBERS

(Industrial Workers/Base 1960=100)

| State/Centre | 1975-76 | | | State/Centre | 1975-76 | | |
|-----------------------|---------|------|------|------------------------|---------|------|------|
| | Dec. | Jan. | Feb. | | Dec. | Jan. | Feb. |
| Andhra Pradesh | | | | Punjab | | | |
| Gudur | 323 | 290 | 273 | Amritsar | 326 | 319 | 316 |
| Guntur | 323 | 311 | 305 | Rajasthan | | | |
| Hyderabad | 324 | 308 | 294 | Ajmer | 299 | 294 | 286 |
| Assam | | | | Jaipur | 308 | 306 | 299 |
| Digboi | 305 | 302 | 302 | Tamilnadu | | | |
| Doom Dooma | 250 | 242 | 239 | Coimbatore | 302 | 299 | 293 |
| Labac | 231 | 235 | 244 | Coonoor | 298 | 295 | 288 |
| Mariani | 254 | 250 | 238 | Madras | 304 | 286 | 280 |
| Rangapara | 240 | 232 | 234 | Madurai | 303 | 301 | 295 |
| Bihar | | | | U. P. | | | |
| Jamshedpur | 289 | 279 | 277 | Kanpur | 288 | 283 | 277 |
| Jharia | 307 | 293 | 283 | Saharanpur | 306 | 304 | 301 |
| Kodarma | 327 | 327 | 315 | Varanasi | 329 | 327 | 318 |
| Monghyr | 310 | 311 | 308 | West Bengal | | | |
| Noamundi | 292 | 281 | 286 | Asansol | 315 | 310 | 304 |
| Gujarat | | | | Calcutta | 287 | 277 | 271 |
| Ahmedabad | 289 | 281 | 273 | Darjeeling | 247 | 240 | 238 |
| Bhavnagar | 312 | 302 | 294 | Howrah | 292 | 281 | 276 |
| Haryana | | | | Jalpaiguri | 238 | 240 | 237 |
| Yamunanagar | 320 | 315 | 313 | Raniganj | 306 | 301 | 291 |
| J & K | | | | Delhi | 328 | 325 | 326 |
| Srinagar | 268 | 269 | 268 | Other Centres* | | | |
| Karnataka | | | | Berhampur ('49) | 424 | 405 | 390 |
| Ammathi | 322 | 314 | 294 | Cuttack ('49) | 380 | 367 | 356 |
| Bangalore | 332 | 322 | 312 | Jabalpur (1949) | 401 | 393 | 384 |
| Chikmagalur | 320 | 315 | 302 | Beawar ('51-52) | 341 | 331 | 311 |
| Kolar G.F. | 327 | 319 | 309 | Tripura (1961) | 254 | 268 | 276 |
| Kerala | | | | H. P. (1965) | 236 | 230 | 229 |
| Alleppey | 373 | 359 | 342 | Goa (1966) | 206 | 204 | 201 |
| Alwaye | 346 | 333 | 318 | Bhilai (1966) | 207 | 196 | 189 |
| Mundakayam | 330 | 327 | 311 | Bhilwara ('66) | 182 | 182 | 179 |
| Madhya Pradesh | | | | Chhindwara | | | |
| Balaghat | 312 | 294 | 286 | ('66) | 172 | 167 | 161 |
| Bhopal | 300 | 288 | 279 | Kothagudam | | | |
| Gwalior | 321 | 305 | 298 | ('66) | 199 | 187 | 181 |
| Indore | 320 | 315 | 305 | Rourkella ('66) | 211 | 204 | 203 |
| Maharashtra | | | | All India ('49) | 372 | 362 | 352 |
| Bombay | 296 | 292 | 288 | —do—('60) | 306 | 298 | 290 |
| Nagpur | 329 | 304 | 286 | | | | |
| Sholapur | 338 | 324 | 301 | | | | |
| Orissa | | | | | | | |
| Barbil | 285 | 284 | 276 | | | | |
| Sambalpur | 308 | 297 | 295 | | | | |

* Figures in bracket indicate base year.

(Labour Bureau, Simla)

Andhra Newsletter

CITU Criticises Agreement at Hindusthan Shipyard

Although negotiations have been going on for two years, only a partial agreement has so far been arrived at the Hindusthan Shipyard Ltd., Vishakhapatnam. The agreement, still awaiting ratification by the Union Shipping Ministry, provides for conversion of daily rated workers (who form 75% of the work force) into monthly rated workers, 26 days' wages becoming their monthly wages. In addition, annual leave will be extended to 51 days and one-third of the skilled workers will be promoted as highly skilled workers.

The CITU has strongly criticised the agreement as detrimental to the interest of the workers. As the workers will get only 26 days' wages per month they will lose about Rs. 120 per month, as they get overtime work for 3 days in a week. The extension of leave is also of superficial advantage.

There was no agreement on the D. A. formula. As a result the existing D. A. formula, which is advantageous to the workers, is now open to downward revision.

CITU leaders of State Transport Union victimised

After the Tirupati—Tirumalai Devasthanam Bus service was taken over by the Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC), the workers were asked to sign declarations agreeing to accept State Transport service conditions. The workers demanded continuation of their rights and privileges enjoyed under Devasthanam service. The CITU Union rejected the conditions imposed by the State Transport authorities and went to High Court for a writ. Ultimately, the authorities had to agree to amend the declaration but six leaders of the CITU Union, detained under MISA, were suspended.

The six leaders were released in December 1975 but the authorities refused to take them in service. After the workers agitated for their reinstatement, they were taken back in service but were transferred to various places.

Election Victory

At the elections to the Coromandal Fertiliser Employees Union held in February 1976, S. Gangadharreddy, the local CITU leader, was unanimously

Jute Workers Submit Memorandum

On April 2 last, more than a lakh Jute workers in 62 Jute Mills of West Bengal submitted memorandums to the State Labour Minister through their respective Mill managements on their 10 point demands. The programme was organised under the leadership of CITU, UTUC, TUCC and a section of HMS. Copies of the memorandum were sent directly to the State Labour Minister on behalf of these unions. Earlier, for several days thousands of workers in each mill and workers' bustees took part in the mass signature campaign when the significance of the demands was explained to the workers.

The memorandum also urged the State Government to hold immediate talks with Mill managements and Trade Unions to consider the question of safeguarding jobs and earnings of Jute workers and their Trade Union rights.

No May Day Rally This Year

For the first time since independence, no joint May Day Rally can be held in Calcutta this year by CITU and other Left Trade Unions.

In a statement, five Trade Unions CITU, UTUC, TUCC, HMS and HMP have called upon their affiliated unions to observe the Day jointly in a fitting manner.

Starvation Deaths In Assam

The 3-year old daughter of Nabi Khan and 29-year old wife of Hazarilal Chowdhury died of starvation on 12 and 15 April last. This is the result of the inhuman action of the management of Assam Hardboards, which lies under closure since June 1975 last. Both Khan and Chowdhury, along with several hundred other workers, were thrown out of work due to this closure and even the earned wages of the workers were not paid by the management. The Assam Hardboard Employees Union has demanded immediate steps by the State Govt. for the opening of the factory and payment of workers' wages.

re-elected President against determined opposition of the AITUC. The panel set up by the Union was elected unopposed except the post of a Vice-President which was contested by a AITUC nominee who lost.