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THE WORKING CLASS

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"Carrying Anti-Privatisation Fight Amongst The People"



Mass signature campaign against privatisation of HPCL & BPCL by the CITU unions in Oil PSUs, Kolkata

WORLD ECONOMY

The latest economic journals and authentic reports are projecting a gloomy scenario on world economy. The growth rates in advanced countries are at a low ebb with a declining trend. Growing Budget deficits, trade imbalances, debt burdens besides deflationary virus are haunting the developed economies. The United Nations Economic and Social Survey 2003 speaks of a persistence of a slow down in investment trade growth and rising unemployment. The Bank of International Settlements, in its annual report for 2003, observes that during the past year, "economic disappointments, interrelated developments in the geopolitical, economic and financial spheres held back growth and led to great uncertainty about the future." It also said that "the weakening of the dollar may set off fundamental changes in the global economy." The US economic growth last year was 2.5% but in the first half of this year it has come down to 1.5%, though it has been predicted to improve in the second half. The US budget, which was in surplus of 1.4% in the year 2000 is now showing a deficit of 4.6% of the GDP this year and the current account deficit crossed 5 per cent, that is 86.4 trillion dollars. The US Federal Bank has slashed the interest rates by a quarter to one per cent on June 30th which is a highest interest

reduction in the last 45 years to help the ailing US economy. The official rate of unemployment is about 6%.

The economic growth in Germany for the last three years on an average is below 1%. It is predicted that it will be negative by 0.1% for this year. The current account deficit is above 3%. The rate of unemployment is 10.7%.

French economic growth was 2.5% in the year 2002. For 2003 it was estimated to be 1.3 and is again reduced to be 0.8. The unemployment rate is 9.3%.

The Japanese growth was only just over 1% per year. They are taking many steps to ward off deflation. The Unemployment is high as per Japanese standards and it is 5.4%.

The above small description shows that the mighty US economy and the strong economies of the world are facing economic slow down and crisis. The US economic slow down force them to restrict imports and will have serious consequences in east Asia and other countries which are depending on export to US. Therefore the deceleration in US economy will have serious impact on world economy. This may lead to raising of import tariffs, creation of non-tariff barriers which will lead to increasing competition. However this will not open an escape route for the crisis which is built in the system.

The US will try to amass huge funds from the sale of Iraqi oil which will be used to get over the financial crisis and to keep up their economic hegemony.

In the name of meeting the crisis in economy and of improving efficiency an all round attack is being unleashed against the working class. The slashing down of employment, cutting down of wages and other privileges has become the order of the day. Working class resistance is developing everywhere against reforming pension schemes by raising the contribution, reducing the benefits, stopping overtime payments for night duty and Sunday work etc, dropping tax exemption.

(Excerpts from the Presidential address to the CITU General Council)

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THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

AUGUST 2003

BUSINESS AS USUAL

by UNNY



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EDITORIAL

MESSAGE FROM TAMILNADU...

The magnificent strike by the employees of Tamil Nadu state Government and teachers continued for 11 days. The developments centering round the strike has got multi-dimensional message and implications for the trade union movement.

The strike was in effect imposed on the employees by the authorities. The strike was not for realizing any new demand but for protecting the decades old benefits including pension and service conditions of the employees. Therefore, the employees had to resort to strike to defend the service condition from unilateral attack.

The naked ferocious attack let loose on the striking employees by the Jayalalitha Government has reminded us of the black days of 'Emergency'. Saving physical annihilation, all barbarous measures have been applied on the employees. Under the draconian provision of the black law - Tamil Nadu Essential Services Maintenance Act (TESMA) thousands of striking employees were thrown into the prisons. Even before the strike commenced entire top leadership were arrested with the evil intention to terrorise and prevent the commencement of the strike. When all these brutality failed to demoralize the strikers, the authoritarian regime of Jayalalitha brought out an atrocious Ordinance to amend TESMA empowering the Govt to go for en- masse summary dismissal. Thereafter, a few lakhs of employees were summarily dismissed.

Some of the State Govts, known for their ardent bias to the liberalized policy regime, commented in favour of the sadistic repression on the employees in Tamilnadu citing it as exemplary. This is an ominous signal for the democratic movement. Also notable is the opposition voiced in the West Bengal Assembly against such barbarism, which marks a demarcation in the policy approach.

The dictatorial (mis)use of state powers against the striking government employees at Tamilnadu brazenly demonstrate the total contempt on the basic democratic principles. Such ugly face of the Govt. can not be viewed in isolation of its total commitment to the policies of imperialist globalisation in collusion with the rabid communal Government at the center. It is once again proved that the champions of market economy prompted and promoted by the most reactionary finance capital is bound to be destroyer of democracy. Therefore, the fight against the onslaught of market economy is necessarily a fight to defend democracy as well.

The Tamil Nadu Govt. employees have set an emulative example of bravery to fight against the autocratic regimes. While extending solidarity to them, the trade union movement must read the ominous signal of the Tamilnadu happenings and prepare for bitter struggle against the forthcoming onslaught, emerging from the neo-liberal policy regime, on their livelihood as well as their democratic rights.

CARRY FORWARD THE STRUGGLE TO NEW HEIGHTS

M. K. Pandhe

The world-wide struggles against imperialist globalisation has been spreading fast in intensified shape. The working class of the world is realising through their own experience that the policy of globalisation shall continue to bring more and more miseries to them. The worldwide euphoria prevalent about globalisation is no more visible now. The former Vice President and Chief Economist of the World Bank, Joseph Stiglitz, has vividly exposed the World Bank prescriptions, which according to him hit the interests of the developing countries, adversely impact the working class and mass of the people all over the world. It is significant to note that the pinch of imperialist globalisation is increasingly felt by workers in the advanced capitalist countries. The employers in the advanced capitalist countries are threatening the workers that they would shift their factories to EPZs if they do not accept wage cut.

Several strikes in Europe has taken place in the recent past. In France, several one day strikes were organised during June this year, in which over 1 million workers participated. Massive demonstrations were held throughout the country and the entire country was practically paralysed. Similar industrial actions have been reported in many other countries in Europe

against cut in social security benefits. A 2-million strong demonstration was held in Rome against globalisation, which also indicates the new wave of militancy coming among the European workers. Wherever, World Bank, IMF and WTO meetings take place, popular demonstrations in large numbers oppose the policies of globalisation. The massive demonstration at Evion in Switzerland in front of World Economic Forum - a gathering of financial tycoons from all over the world - witnessed the rising discontent amongst the working people, even in the advanced capitalist countries

Saga of Anti-globalisation fight in India

Since 1991 we have been conducting several struggles and mass actions against the policies of the Government of India. We have also organised eight nationwide strikes engulfing larger and larger sections of workers. The strikes were the outcome of nationwide campaigns against the economic policies of globalisation. Several local, industry level and State level actions were organised prior to the nationwide strike actions. These strikes reflected the growing unity among the working class. In each consecutive strike, newer and newer sections of workers participated. Many organisations, which were

not part of the united movement earlier, joined the strike.

Increasing participation of workers from the strategic sectors of the economy gave these strikes a capacity to paralyse the economy to a certain extent. Public sector workers as well as Central and State Govt. employees, port and dock employees, defence employees and financial sector employees participated in good strength, which had a big impact on the strike action. In several undertakings, all-in-unity of the workers at the undertaking level could be achieved irrespective of affiliations, which resulted in making the strike cent per cent successful. It reflected a growing urge among the working class at local levels to resist the capitalist offensive.

Areas Requiring Special Attention

However, without undermining the success of our fight against the Fund-Bank dictated economic policies and the misrule of the BJP-led NDA Government, we must not fail to objectively identify our weaknesses and failures. The vast masses of unorganised sector of the working class could not be sufficiently drawn in the vortex of strike action. The intensity of the strike was not even in all parts of the country and in some pockets the strike was very weak. The reformist unions in some parts of the

country exerted their influence, which adversely affected the impact of strike.

A sizable section of the working class is still getting confused due to misleading capitalist propaganda about the economic policies. This section thinks that the path of globalisation is inevitable and cannot be fought effectively. It feels that we have to work within the framework of globalisation, reversal of the policies is, perhaps, not possible and hence try to minimise the damage to the working class. We have to effectively expose this conspiracy and confusion. Our organisers, who have better exposure to the grass root level workers must continuously update themselves with the persistently increasing world wide struggles against the imperialist globalisation.

Our campaign must be enriched and convincing with proper facts and figures that the euphoria spread at the time of launching of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation has vanished. The mantra of 'market economy' has inevitably failed to address the ills of the capitalist economy. On the contrary, it has pushed the market to the yoke of severe ever elongating stagnation. Such failure has made the international finance capital desperate and furious. Therefore, the imperialist onslaught against the developing countries is increasing. World peace and integrity is really under serious attack. The conflict between

labour and capital is increasing. We have not yet been able to involve non-working class strata of the society in our action programmes, though these sections also were hit hard by the policies of globalisation. We have not been able to build up a powerful propaganda machinery to reach these strata so that they also understand the dangerous character of the policy of globalisation, privatisation and liberalisation. This creates hurdles in converting TU struggles into popular mass movements against the onslaughts of MNCs and capitalists class within the country.

We have to overcome all the shortcomings that have cropped up during the last 12 years, so that our struggles will be intensified and become more effective instruments of class struggles.

Strategic Structuring

We have also to address the growing feeling among the workers that our programmes are becoming repetitive. Given the severity of the offensive of the ruling classes against the working class, the mass of the workers desire some militant action programme that would bring more pressure on the Government to change its anti-people economic policies. The Government is also characterising the strike action as an annual ritual.

We must address these aspects of the weakness of our movement, as otherwise, we

may have to suffer from erosion in the confidence and enthusiasm of our rank and file cadres in pushing forward our struggles against the policies of the Government. We must plan our future programme of action that will effectively address the ground reality. We must ensure that our strategy succeeds in instilling greater enthusiasm and confidence in our cadres, inspire the working class and create confidence in their minds for further actions and at the same time can mount effective pressure on the Government to change the policies.

In our perspective for a long drawn action, we must keep in mind the role of the strategic sectors in paralyzing the capitalist economy. The major sectors can be identified as follows:

- a) Energy Sector: Coal Mines, Oil & Natural Gas Industry and Power Sector
- b) Financial Sector: Banks, Insurance and other Financial Institutions in Public and Private Sectors
- c) Transport Sector: Water Transport, Air Transport, Road Transport and Railways
- d) Communication Sector: Tele Communications and Postal Services

If the workers in these sectors can be mobilised for long drawn simultaneous actions, the major operation of the economy is bound to come to a standstill, thereby compelling the Government to give up their deliberate indifferent attitude

towards the democratic movement of the workers opposing the suicidal policies. It will force the ruling polity to take cognisance of the action programme. At the same time, the other sections of the working class can be brought in action along with them for a longer period.

The pioneering initiative of the workers in the crucial sectors of the economy combined with the movement of the working people of different other sectors, particularly in the unorganised sector, can produce desired result of the fight against the Fund-Bank-WTO dictated policies imposed on our country. The huge numerical power of the workers in unorganised sector confronting crude exploitation due to the hostile policy measures of the Government deserves our special attention. Without the participation of the workers of this sector, no struggle of the working class can attain the desired dimension.

Such a strategically structured, well-prepared, long drawn, united action of the working class is the need of the hour. The deepening deterioration in all segments of the economy resulting in increasing sufferings of all sections of the people is the direct consequence of the ever growing pro-imperialist tilt in the policy perception and persuasion of the BJP-led NDA Government. It is imperative to add a new strategic dimension to the on going anti-globalisation fight in our country. Today, the pressure of the

World Bank and the IMF is much more on the Government of India than our pressure. This hard reality of the present situation cannot be ignored by us. Therefore, a long drawn action, in which strategic sectors will play a major role, should be planned by the united movement of the working class.

Sector-wise Initiative

As a preparatory stage for all strategic sectors coming in for a long drawn action, sector-wise actions may have to be organised. All these sectors are earmarked for privatisation by the Government. Hence, possibility of sector-wise as well as concerted action is very much needed and possible.

It is extremely necessary that other sections of mass organisations like Kisan Sabha, Agricultural Workers Unions, the organisations of students, youth, women, teachers, lawyers, service sector employees, scientists, artists etc. should also be mobilised for direct action on their own demands, which are also directly or indirectly related to the policies of globalisation. The working class has to play major role in bringing together all mass organisations so that a powerful people's movement can be generated in the country to defeat the policies of the NDA government.

It would be important for the CITU to independently launch vigorous campaign on our own platform so that the concept of long drawn strategic struggles is accepted by all. The length of

the struggle has to be decided by the consciousness of the workers all over India. In our enthusiasm, we should avoid making adventurist mistakes, which will only help the Government to resort to repressive measures.

To achieve the identified strategy, it is of utmost necessity to strengthen the united movement both at sectoral as well as State and National levels. Powerful unity for pursuing struggles is an essential requirement to push forward the fight to achieve desired result - immediate and ultimate. We have also to take steps to establish and strengthen close co-ordination among our own trade unions functioning in these strategic sectors. Our initiative and steps in bringing together our own trade unions pertaining to the different strategic sectors, noted above, shall herald a new phase, enabling our unions to effectively play their role to bring other trade unions for the sector-wise joint movement on a massive scale.

Two key organisational tasks, which must always receive our priority attention are consolidation of our organisational strength and unleashing our independent activities, with the definite purpose of contributing to fortify the united fora and intensify the struggles. It is under this condition, we have to pay special attention to strengthen our organisation and overcome all weaknesses pointed out in our Bhubaneswar document.

HEROIC FIGHT BY GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

W. R. VARADA RAJAN

The indefinite strike by over 13 lakh employees of the State Government and teachers, which commenced on 2nd July, 2003, witnessed the unprecedented terror and scores of vindictive actions unleashed by the authoritarian AIADMK regime in the State. The strike by the employees and teachers was against the Government's retrograde move of downsizing and drastic curtailment of pension and other benefits.

The Tamil Nadu Government had armed itself with a lawless law in the name of the Tamil Nadu Essential Services Maintenance Act (TESMA) 2002, which itself is a draconian law. For the first time since the Act was enacted, the Government invoked its stringent provisions and detained the leaders of the JACTTEO-GEO and COTA-GEO, two federations of staff and teachers' unions, at midnight on 30th June, 2003. This was a preemptive move to prevent the indefinite strike called for from 2nd July. The Government threatened that the union functionaries arrested for inciting the strike would be soon suspended from service and if convicted under the ESMA, which provides for a maximum of three-year imprisonment or a Rs. 5000-fine or both, would be dismissed.

But, the employees of the Tamil Nadu Secretariat, under the very nose of the Chief Minister, J. Jayalalitha, bravely responded by commencing the indefinite strike a day in advance. The functionaries of the federation of JACTTEO-GEO and COTA-GEO, condemned the arrests and said it would not help to end the impasse but would only prompt them to protest with increased vigour. The indefinite strike, totally crippled the normal functioning of the Secretariat at Chennai and government offices, schools, colleges and universities throughout Tamil Nadu. The administration reeled under a state of utter paralysis.

The actions embarked upon by the State Government was so reprehensible that it provoked a senior Judge of the High Court of

Chennai to comment that such "imprudent" behaviour would lower the State's image. He even directed: "You should stop midnight arrests, videographing and conducting searches at their (employees') houses. If they are at fault, proceed against them departmentally".

DRACONIAN ORDINANCE

The Government had by then come up with an ordinance giving itself the summary power of dismissal en masse, without any application of mind and without giving the employees an opportunity to be heard. The ordinance, which amended TESMA (Section 7), provides for treating any absence from workplace after the promulgation of the Ordinance as "deemed participation" in the banned strike irrespective of the actual reason for such absence. The ordinance was given retrospective effect from 23rd April itself.

The key features of the Ordinance amending the Tamil Nadu Essential Services Maintenance Act, 2002, are draconian to say the least. The explanatory statement on the ordinance said that apart from the possible prosecution under Section 4, the Government "though it fit" that at present further powers were needed to deal with such defiant persons in a manner effectively affecting their service conditions.

The newly-incorporated Section 7 (1) of the ESMA: "... if any notification under Section 3 of the Act has been published by the Government in the official gazette expressing its intention to prohibit strikes in respect of the service defined under Section 2 of the Act, any government servant to whom the Act applies shall at once report to duty where he/she was reporting prior to the strike prohibited by the notification. In case of failing to do so, the said Government servant is deemed to have admitted having committed the misconduct knowingly and voluntarily warranting the punishment."

And, the penalty for the "misconduct" could be "dismissal from service, or in the alternative, a

break in service, as the case may be, without conducting any enquiry."

The Ordinance added an explanation, which said: "It will not be obligatory on the part of the appointing authority or the Government as the case may be to individually serve the order of dismissal or the order of break in service or any other punishment on the employees by issuance of separate order and it will be sufficient if the said order is published in the notice board of the office where he/she was working, or if a newspaper publication is made indicating either en masse or individually stating the decision made in terms of sub-section (2) in respect of the said employee". The right of the government servant against whom an order of dismissal or any other punishment has been passed, was restricted to just approach the Appointing Authority and "prove that his/her non-reporting to duty was not due to his/her participation in the strike but due to bona-fide reasons other than participation in the strike".

COURT INTERVENTION

The Government did not pay heed to the sane advice of the High Court. It continued with its spree of repressive measures. Midnight arrests of employees and their leaders continued and the figure crossed 2200. Summary dismissal, without even giving individual notices, of around 2 lakh employees, was resorted to in a brazen display of authoritarianism. The Government was intent upon crushing the strike by any means.

The Government also asked heads of departments and Collectors to "freeze the attendance registers" as on July 3 and not to allow those who turned up for duty today to sign attendance.

The single Judge of the High Court, who continued the enquiry at his residence even during the week end holidays entertained petitions challenging the Ordinance and consequent arrests and dismissals. The Court passed orders advising the employees to return to work and the Government to release employees and withdraw dismissal orders.

But, the Jayalalitha Government bent on arm twisting its own employees decided to challenge the order of the single judge and went on appeal before the Principal Bench of the same High Court. The High Court Bench, presided by the Chief

Justice himself, held a protracted hearing in the case as more parties came up with further petitions. The judgement, delivered after a long wait on 11th July, upheld the plea of the State Government on jurisdictional issue. It came as a rude shock and caused deep disappointment not only among the employees but also among the people in general. The Court's order to release arrested employees on bail was nothing more than a relief that could be granted by any judicial magistrate. The judgement has not addressed even the issues raised by the Judges themselves in the course of the hearing. It chose not to delve on the State Government unleashed terrorism on its employees, by throwing to the winds the Constitutional mandates of democracy, fair play and justice. It only relegated the employees to the Statutory remedy under the Administration Tribunal Act.

Even 'The Hindu' editorially commented that the 'substance of the ruling in this landmark case amounts to denial of justice'. It described the AIADMK Government actions as "an extraordinary case of deployment of State power against its own employees" and "summary dismissal and the overnight arrest of hundreds of thousands of employees ... are in profound conflict with fundamental rights, the basic norms of democracy, and enlightened self-interest".

POPULAR SUPPORT

The authoritarian handling of the strike by Tamil Nadu Government evoked all round protest in Tamil Nadu and throughout the country. All trade unions staged protest actions, courting arrest throughout the State. The All India State Government Employees Federation called for solidarity actions in all the States. The Central trade unions also condemned the repressive actions and joined the protest.

All the opposition political parties in the State demanded the Government to end the repression and resolve the issues through negotiations. The solitary exception was, of course, the BJP. The BJP State president, C.P. Radhakrishnan met the Chief Minister, Jayalalitha, and hailed her Government for acceding to "major demands" of the unions. He wanted the unions not to go ahead with their strike plan in the interests of the public and the State. Later, even as the Government

was going ahead with its arrests, dismissal, eviction of employees from their quarters and the like, he came out with a statement accusing the CPI(M) and other opposition parties of inciting the strike 'for political ends'.

REPRESSION CONTINUES

The federation of JACTTEO-GEO and COTA-GEO, under the changed circumstances after the High Court judgement, decided to end the strike after eleven days. It appealed to the Chief Minister to restore the status quo ante prior to 1st July to usher in a conducive atmosphere for cordial discussions to resolve the issues. But, the appeal fell on deaf ears.

The refusal of the Tamil Nadu Government to permit the employees to report back to work and the arrogant attitude towards the plea for restoration of normalcy by engaging the unions in talks, all smack of a high and mighty stance. The arrogance and highhandedness of the

Jaylalitha Govt of Tamilnadu as reflected in its vindictive designs against the striking employees and teachers bear an ominous portent not only for the trade union and labour rights but also for the democratic rights and institutions as well. The democratic forces and the trade union movement in the country cannot remain a mute spectator to such an onslaught by a State Government against its own employees.

Even at this stage the Government of Tamil Nadu will be better advised to roll back its vindictive measures and initiate the process of dialogue to find an amicable solution to the issues at large.

The unprecedented situation in Tamil Nadu mandates all sections of the workers and democratic forces to stand firmly in solidarity with the struggling employees and teachers and unitedly resist the authoritarian incursions into their fundamental rights and defeat the ESMA and the related Ordinance in Tamil Nadu.

KOREAN RAILWAY WORKERS ON STRIKE

Korean Railway Workers' Union embarked a strike at 4:00 a.m. on June 29!

The reason why rail workers have embarked upon a strike is that the government broke the agreement that was made between trade union and the government on April 20, 2003. The key points of the Agreement are : "reform of railway' should be propelled with full consultation and social agreement among social partners of interest including trade union", "the aims of 'reform of railway' are the development of railway industry, strengthening of public value, the progress of general services to ordinary people". Despite this trade union-government agreement, the Legislation & Judiciary Committee of the National Assembly passed the "law on the reform of railway construction" on 27th June without any social dialogue or agreement. This law denies the essence of the Agreement and merely encourages the privatisation of railway. That's why rail workers embarked upon the strike. The demands highlighted by the striking railway workers are:

Firstly, the government should undertake the whole expenditure for the construction of Korean High Speed Rail(KHSR) from the viewpoint of Public Service Obligation(PSO).

Secondly, workers oppose the separation of management of the railway infrastructure from the operation of trains. Because it only results in more accidents and threatens the lives of passengers as well as rail workers.

Thirdly, Workers oppose another 'commercial' public corporation which is controlled by Government Investment Organisation Law. Alternatively, KRWU has argued the Korean Railroad Special Public Corporation(Authority system) through the enactment of Special Law which guarantee public value of railway. KRWU believes that this is the best way to implement true 'reform' of railway construction in Korea. There should be no privatization of railways.

WAR AGAINST IRAQ AND ITS AFTERMATH

E. Balanandan

In spite of the unprecedented world wide opposition the US and its allies did not waiting for the United Nations clearance, and went to war against Iraq on 20th of March, 2003. Using the Mighty Military power of US and Britain they could take over Iraq within a short period of 20 days. Many thousands of citizens and military personnel have lost their lives in this war. The following features of this war need our attention.

1. There was unprecedented opposition and people's fury against the attack on Iraq. 2. The United States and their allies went to war against Iraq, ignoring the United Nations and against international law. 3. The allegation and the claim that Saddam Hussein was possessing "arms of mass destruction" has proved to be false. 4. This is the only war where reasons are sought after the war is over. 5. The intention of this war is quite clear that it was for capturing the oil wealth of Iraq and to impose US hegemony over the Middle East.

END OF THE WAR

On June 15, the last day notified for the surrender of weapons, the Iraqis had handed over only 123 pistols, 76 semi-automatic rifles, 435 automatic rifles, 46 machine guns, 11 anti-aircraft weapons and 381 grenades and bombs - a very negligible portion of the weaponry they had - to the US military officials. It is assumed that they have shifted their sophisticated weaponry to the hinter lands of Iraq, to be used against the occupying enemy forces. The American and British forces are facing Iraqi bullets and missiles in different parts of Iraq daily with increasing casualties. The American army commanders are crying for additional forces since they find that the present strength of the army of 1,46,000 are insufficient to cope up with the job.

The Iraqi people realised that the allegation that Saddam Hussein had a big store of arms of mass destruction was a fiction and it was only an alibi for taking over their country. Even those sections of the Iraqi people, who were critical of Saddam Hussein, joined in the opposition against the occupying forces.

THE UN RESOLUTION

The United Nation Security Council has adopted a resolution 1483 on May 22nd legitimising the occupation of Iraq by the US and its allied forces. It was passed almost unanimously with 14 votes. Thus, the occupation of Iraq had got the stamp of legality. It is surprising that those countries who took a firm position against the war have now come around to accept this resolution. Perhaps, the expectation of obtaining a share in the oil wealth and of reconstruction projects had weighed with them. In the UN discussion, the US refused to give a decisive say for United Nations in the future governance of Iraq. It is apt to quote here an American official comment that "the UN too has become an effective instrument of US policy".

The Development Fund Board, constituted as per the resolution to disburse billions of dollars earned from oil will, consist of IMF, World Bank and WTO among others and in effect it will be completely under American control.

BLAIR AND BUSH IN THE DOCK

Public criticism is on the rise in Britain and the United States over the failure to discover the arms of mass destruction during the war or after in Iraq, though the authorities promised that they would unearth them without delay. However, a new situation has arisen since the veracity of the intelligence dossiers on which they have relied is under cloud. The White House officials themselves have now acknowledged that "President Bush was relying on incomplete and perhaps inaccurate information from American intelligence agencies" when he declared in his State of the Union address that Saddam Hussein has purchased Uranium from Africa. Thus, the main contention of Bush that this Uranium was being used by Saddam Hussein for making Nuclear weapons is now exploded.

In Britain too the story is almost the same. The high power Cross Party Committee of MPs of Britain, which enquired into the accuracy of the intelligence report, based on which Mr. Blair built a case for the war and put Mr. Blair in the dock for

placing before the Parliament an intelligence report, which was inaccurate and 'misrepresenting'. This put the British Government in an embarrassing position. Many members of the Parliament and public at large are openly questioning Mr. Blair for the inaccurate facts placed before the parliament. The organised trade unions too are coming out openly against Mr. Blair. One of the biggest trade unions - the Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMT) which created the Labour Party and control the rail and transport workers threatened to disaffiliate from the Labour Party accusing the Prime Minister Tony Blair for cheating the workers. Many other trade unions too are openly coming out against the British government's policy in Iraq war and demanding that British forces should be withdrawn. Sensing the mood of the British people a renowned press commentator noted "one of the saddest results of our war in Iraq is that it may finish off Tony Blair before Saddam Hussein" (New York Times, July 8, 2003)

FALL-OUT OF IRAQ WAR

The Iraq war brought to the fore the fact that the US is bent upon imposing its dictat over the world using its military and economic might in the name of protecting its so called "national interests" ignoring the collective opposition of other nations. This provoked a rethinking among European powers, Russia and China and others to prepare for multipolarism. Though the countries of the European Union have divergent views on many questions, they want the strengthening of Euro against US dollar. The dominant powers in European Union, France and Germany are for strengthening their military power. Steps are being taken in this direction. Russia and China are coming closer and trying to strengthen their defence ties. The Shanghai-7 which met recently has decided to set up a permanent secretariat in Beijing. Russia has also taken steps to unify its military commands with Kazakhstan, Belarus and Uzbekistan while keeping up its relations with France and Germany, which developed during the Iraq war. In short, American hegemonism is sought to be opposed by different formations and moving towards a multi polar setup. However the inter imperialist rivalry is in ascendancy in many ways which needs to be carefully taken note of.

THE CONTINUING OFFENSIVE

The US imperialists are now threatening Syria, Iran, Korea and intensifying attacks against Cuba based on many false and unsustainable allegations, the details of which I do not wish to go into now. However the double standards being practised by the US in the case of Israel and North Korea needs a reference. It is public knowledge that Israel, "the war horse" has been developed and maintained by US as its forward post for West Asian domination. As per the reports appearing in the journals they have a huge stock of nuclear war heads including about 300 to 400 neutron bombs. They have the fifth largest stockpile of nuclear war heads, which is more than that of Britain. The US administration is "ignoring this huge stock of arms of mass destruction and finding fault with North Korea for attempting to make nuclear bombs" which shows the imperialist double standards.

The new proposals of US for Palestine peace are another ploy to impose a fake settlement on them with ifs and buts. As per the plan all the illegal Jewish settlements up to 31st March'01, will remain in the West Bank at Gaza till 2005. This means that the Palestinians will be given in the name of a State, three enclaves separated by Jewish settlements. However this proposal which has the approval of European Union and Russia might perhaps be sold to them. A free motherland for Palestinians will still remain as a question mark. All these shows that the US imperialism is out to impose its hegemony over the world. Therefore, the trade unions of the country need to expose all these imperialist maneuvers and strengthen our fight against it.

INDIAN TROOPS TO IRAQ?

The Bush administration wanted 17,000 of our army men to serve in Iraq to suppress the daily increasing people's resistance, with increasing causality for American forces. The Indian big business wanted to oblige US by sending Indian troops to Iraq, in order to get big reconstruction contract and they are pressurizing the Government.

The Government of India was vascillating for long over taking a decision on sending troops to Iraq for "peace keeping" (suppressing patriotic

(Cont. on page 16)

ELECTRICITY ACT 2003: AN ATTACK AGAINST TOILING MASSES

Shyamal Chakraborty

Of all the anti-people legislations passed by the parliament over the past fifteen years, the Electricity Act 2003 shall prove the most disastrous for the common people. The Act seeks to remove all powers in the electricity sector from the hands of the state governments and place them in the control of the union government.

The Act seeks to sacrifice the interests of 90 per cent of the 16 crore of electricity consuming families of the country in the name of equal price and equal competition. This Act will benefit the remaining 10 per cent of the power consumers. Thus, it would be the workers, the agricultural workers, the rural poor and the landless, the urban poor, the slum dwellers, and the lower middle class who will stand to suffer most. With the removal of cross subsidy, everyone shall be compelled to purchase electricity at the same rate.

The cross subsidy had helped the increase in the number of electricity consumers among the toiling masses. The Act will effectively put an end to that prospect in the future.

The electricity charges will increase by 3-4 times in the agricultural sector. The agricultural economy itself will be hit very badly. The cost of agricultural produce will shoot up. The withdrawal of subsidy in the fertiliser sector has

already left matters heavily biased against the small farmer. The scenario is complicated by the introduction of foreign imports in the agricultural market. Two forms of disaster will happen. First, large numbers of farmers will be driven off from the market once their produce do not get to be appropriately sold. Suicides among peasants are bound to go up in the circumstances.

Second, with the entire food crops market of the world being under the control of five big multi-national corporations, the profit-hunting by the MNC's will leave the small farmers gasping for relief even as prices would soar.

With subsidies withdrawn from electricity supplied to the small and cottage industries, thousand upon thousands of small industrial units will close down, and the number of the unemployed would keep increasing.

In the education and health sectors, the effects will be another disaster. The cost of education and of health care at every level will increase, affecting not only the state governments but also the voluntary organisations, which too provide at least some amount of amount of health service at a low cost.

For the production of machineries for electricity generation, we have the big

state sector enterprise, the Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL). BHEL's efforts are supplemented by three thousand-odd industrial enterprises. Together they produce 90 per cent of the machineries and the allied engineering and infrastructural articles required for the generation and distribution of electricity, making the country self-sufficient for all practical purposes in this regard. The bottom-most layer of the production facilities are made up of thousands more of small enterprises. Once the Electricity Act 2003 is brought into effect, the bulk of this structure will be gone, replaced by powerful MNC groups that will supply the required equipment. Unemployment will further go up even as the country will become dependent for electricity generation processes.

Of the five lakh 80 thousand villages, a large number of the population of close to five lakh villages consume electricity. For the rest, availing themselves of electricity connections now will be a very costly exercise, in terms of purchasing poles, wires, and transformers. The cost of running pump sets will also go up. Rural electrification will be halted. The rural people will be pushed back to the pre-electricity days. What will happen to the process of

(Cont. on page 17)

FORTHCOMING WTO MINISTERIAL MEET

TAPAN SEN

In fact the liberalized policy regime has led to an overall distortion in the country's economy putting it in the track of terminal decline and erosion of its productive capacity, sectors alike along with aggravating unemployment and accompanying social tensions. That is how the NDA combine at the centre is serving their imperialist masters. It is the agenda of the economy of the developed nations being pursued by the Vajpayee Govt in the Indian soil.

Further distortion in t (Mexico) on 10-14 September 2003 is coming nearer which is slated to discuss further liberalization of trade in services, agriculture and investment regime and a host of procedural and other issues aimed at further subjugating the interests of the developing nations in the interests of the few richer ones.

In the last WTO ministerial meet at Doha, the developing countries including India insisted on a thorough review of implementation and impact of the provisions of the first WTO agreement at Marakesh, before taking up any new agenda. But they could not stick to that position and had to concede to Doha declaration drafted basically on the agenda of the developed countries. As the eminent International Trade Analyst Helleiner observed, "Consensus achieved at Doha, as ever before, was through bilateral, behind the scene pressures, dealing and bullying." And the said Doha declaration was drafted in a manner that allows the richer countries in particular, to interpret as per their convenience to impose their agendas on the developing countries in subsequent WTO meet. As the Govt of India had also to admit, "Varying interpretation to the Doha mandate continue to be made, especially from the proponents like European Commission" (Economic Survey 2003-03).

In the forthcoming WTO Ministerial meet at Cancun, the powerful block of the developed countries are slated to impose many contentious new agendas, much to the detriment of the real interest of the developing countries and the latter's demand for objective review of the merits and implementation status of the already agreed

decisions has been already sidelined.

The issue of Trade-facilitation supposed to be taken up in the Cancun meeting is aimed at so called "easing out" all provisions of procedural controls, checks and examinations of the merchandise-the foreign import in particular, before their entry and to practically replace the mechanism of physical checks and controls by so called system of "relying on self compliance." 'The proposed measures would involve huge cost for the developing countries, much more than the benefits gained from trade.' (Economic & Political Weekly) Further, given the endemic corruption among the multinational corporate giants like Enron, World.Com and many others, allowing the foreign imports to evade checks at entry points and reliance on self-compliance will be disastrous for the developing economies.

Similarly, the agenda of Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) is also aimed at removing all controls and regulations, not only on investment but also on the FDI companies operating in Indian soil, both new and taken-over units in respect of their operations, imports and almost every other thing to take them out of the purview of the laws of the host countries. This would not only damage our economy but also weaken the national security.

Closely linked with the issue of MAI is the issue of Competition Policy which is expected to be imposed as an agenda at the Cancun meet. The Govt of India has already enacted Competition Law, which if read between the line, bears ominous portent for all state-promoted economic and welfare activities, which has already been in the process of dilution in the liberalized policy regime. But that is not enough for the developed countries. The issue of competition policy as conceived by the rich nations and the multinational giant companies. is aimed at marginalizing the domestic industries from the domestic markets itself. This will be achieved by way of forcing the developing countries to change their laws to put both small and big, stronger and the weaker entities at par and also to forbid the concerned Governments

from giving any promotional assistance/treatment to domestic industries, under the garb of impartiality, adequacy, transparency and least intrusiveness. This would ultimately lead to ruin of the smaller and the weaker, mostly in the developing countries.

The issues relating to proposed agreement on Govt procurement is aimed at grabbing the market of Govt supplies and contracts in the developing countries by the multinational corporates. The roadmap is to force the Govts of the developing countries to go for global tender on all govt-financed development projects and not to allow any special dispensation to domestic industries in that regard. It is an irony that while the richer nations are insisting to open the Govt procurements in the developing countries to foreign companies, the rich nations are still continuing with protectionist measures in their own countries in respect of their Govt procurements, for example, the USA has in operation the "Buy American Act" which allows the domestic steel industries to be the sole supplier of steel in all Govt-funded projects, forbidding import.

The issue of increasing market access for agricultural products is another area where pressure, both direct and indirect, will be mounted on the developing countries for more deregulation, lowering of tariff and reduction of subsidies, which would spell further disaster in our already ailing agricultural economy. At the same time, the demands of the developing countries under the development agenda for greater access to the market of the developed countries by way of reduction of subsidies in their agricultural products are being stonewalled not by any argument but just by muscle power. The irony is that the developed countries who are giving sermons to us for reduction of agricultural subsidies are themselves allowing subsidies to their agriculture to such a high extent that for every dollar of profit earned by their agricultural business, the subsidy component is more than 3 dollars on the average. Can hypocrisy go further?

Opening up of the service sector including the public utilities in the developing countries is another contentious issue that will be thrust upon

by the rich countries for negotiation under General Agreement on Trades in Services(GATS). This is aimed at privatization, rather multinationalisation of crucial public utility services in the developing countries along with other profitable service businesses, much to the detriment of the interests of the mass of the people in the third world countries. Education, health, water supply, municipal services and almost all public utilities in the developing countries are the targets of the profit hungry multinational sharks sometimes in partnership with domestic private monopoly houses.

The atrocious muscle-flexing by the Govts of the developed countries backed by the Multinational giant corporates in the WTO and its anti-people and pro-corporate bias has been getting exposed all over which is visible from worldwide massive and militant protest demonstrations during every WTO meet since last couple of years. The truth is coming to light that WTO is neither for development nor for progress of the people, It is for the corporates and run by the corporates that too from the richer countries.

Given the already visible bending postures of the NDA Govt before the imperialist powers on several political and economic issues, the Govt of India's role in the said ministerial meet cannot be relied upon unless people's pressure can be built up against the possibility of further surrender of national interests by this anti-national Govt. It is learnt that during the recent visit to USA, the Indian home minister has already given an understanding to US president to cooperate in the forthcoming WTO meet, with a request that the outsourcing of the IT jobs from USA to Indian market should be allowed to continue, which, of late, is being opposed by the American trade union movement.

We must make serious effort to mobilize all sections of people in the forthcoming days to build pressure on the Govt of India not to surrender to the pressure of the imperialist countries in the ensuing WTO meet. In the month of September, several working class actions worldwide are also expected to take place. We should organize massive mobilizations along with other mass organizations on those occasions throughout the country.

Tamil Nadu:

7TH STATE CONFERENCE OF WORKING WOMEN

The seventh State Conference of the Tamil Nadu Coordination Committee of Working Women was held at Suseela Gopalan Nagar (Chokkalingam Kalamandapam) in Madurai on the 21-22 June 20. The dais was named Janakiraman Manch, after the veteran leader of CITU in the State and the Office Bearer of CITU State Committee in charge of the State CCWW, who died some time back.

195 delegates from around 33 industries/occupations both in the organised and unorganised sectors - Government employees, teachers, anganwadi and noon meal employees, Bank, Insurance and BSNL employees, Corporation, Municipal workers, Electricity Board employees, Tea Plantation workers, Factory workers, tailors, salt pan workers, home based workers like Appalam, garments, beedi, vendors etc - actively participated in the Conference. They came from 30 districts out of the 34 districts in the State. 78 of them were office bearers in their respective unions, 53 had district level and 22 State level responsibilities. The State Conference was preceded by district level conferences in 26 districts. 4 more districts have decided to hold their conferences after the State Conference. Contrary to the trend in the previous conferences where working women from non CITU Unions and middle class employees formed the bulk of the delegates, this time 154 out of the 195 delegates were from CITU affiliated unions. Even those who belonged to the non CITU affiliated unions were actively associated with the CITU activities in the districts and some of them were also office bearers or members of the district committees of CITU.

The Conference started with the hoisting of the CITU flag by Indira, Vice President of the CITU State Committee and one of the Co convenors of the State CCWW. Raji, Malliga (Electricity Board), Eswari (Textiles), Palaniammal (Handloom), Muthu Lakshmi (Beedi) and Mary Pushpa (Virudhnagar) acted as the presidium.

All the delegates were given a traditional welcome with flowers and sandal paste, sponsored by the local branch of AIDWA. Tamilselvi, Vice President

of the Tamil Nadu State Government Employees' Association and Chairperson of the Reception Committee welcomed the delegates.

TK Rengarajan, General Secretary of the TN State Committee of CITU inaugurated the Conference. He explained the background of the formation of the State Coordination Committee of Working Women, after the formation of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women at the 4th Conference of CITU at Chennai in 1979. He told that the deliberations and the suggestions of the Conference would be discussed in the State Conference of CITU.

Malati Chittibabu, Convenor in charge of the State CCWW presented the report. She told that the Tamil Nadu State Government under the leadership of Jayalalitha was pursuing anti worker and anti people policies and trying to suppress the trade union movement by invoking ESMA etc. But workers including the working women in several industries were coming out in struggles. She cited several instances of intervention by the CCWW on the specific problems of working women like sexual harassment, maternity benefits, night work, crèches, rest rooms etc. The functioning of the State CCWW has improved as there was now a functioning team at the Centre and a full time cadre for the work of the CCWW. District level conventions on the issues of working women, trade union classes for activists, and formation of industry wise women's subcommittees were some of the activities of the CCWW. She also referred to the two Non Formal Education Centres for Child Labour being run by the CITU with the support of ILO. She told that the CCWW was given the responsibility to monitor the functioning of these Centres. The Insurance employees' association was so impressed by the NFECs that it has donated new clothes and crackers to the children on Diwali. In Sivakasi, in Virudhnagar district Collector was very much impressed by the functioning of these centres and he sanctioned two more centres to the CCWW. The parents and the people now call their village 'CITU Village'.

The report suggested a charter of demands which included equal wages, law against sexual harassment at work place, welfare boards for unorganised sector workers, separate buses for women employees during peak hours, women doctors in ESI hospitals, Working Women's Hostels by the State Government at affordable charges, medical facilities at work place, crèche facilities and 33% reservation for women in legislative bodies. The report opposed the anti worker recommendations of the Second National Commission on Labour and unrestricted permission to employ women in night shift.

42 delegates participated in the lively discussion that took place on the report. They made several important suggestions and shared their experiences in struggles, where women faced police lathi charge, were arrested and kept in jail, while fighting for their rights.

The Conference adopted the report unanimously. Several resolutions - supporting the indefinite strike of the State Government employees from 2nd July, Opposing reduction in the PF interest rate, and ESMA, the Electricity Bill and the hike in the electricity tariff etc - were adopted. It has also taken up some future tasks which include identifying the sectors in which women work in large numbers and concentrating on organising them; conduct trade union training classes for working women, the district and local coordination committees to meet at least once in 2 months and concentrate more on addressing the problems of working women and to increase the subscriptions of 'The Voice of the Working Woman'.

The Conference also discussed a special paper on the 'Conditions of Working Women in Tamil Nadu' presented by TA Latha, Co convenor of the State CCWW. The paper dealt with the conditions of women in garments, EPZ, Handloom, Match and Crackers industry, nurses, corporation workers, fishing and other industries in the unorganised sector. The delegates were divided into six groups and the observations of the groups were presented to the plenary by their representatives. It was decided to observe a 'Demands Day' on 16th July by holding dharnas in all the district headquarters to focus the problems of working women in the State. It was decided to finalise the detailed campaign

programme taking the suggestions of the delegates into consideration.

Hemalata, Secretary, All India Coordination Committee of Working Women greeted the Conference. She noted that the Conference was much disciplined and the discussion was of a high level. She congratulated the State CCWW and the State Committee of CITU for their efforts to organise working women and train the activists to develop them as leaders. She told that these efforts need to be continued with much more vigour as the working women bore the brunt of the adverse policies of the neo liberal policies pursued by the NDA Government at the Centre and the AIDMK Government in the State at the behest of the World Bank and IMF, which served the interests of the Multinational Corporations and imperialists.

The Conference was greeted by Bala Bharati, MLA and State leader of the All India Democratic Women's Association, Thamilarasi, General Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Anganwadi Employees' Association and Kannagi Suresh Kumar, General Secretary of the State Nurses' Association.

AK Padmanabhan, Assistant General Secretary of the Tamil Nadu State Committee of CITU made the concluding remarks. A 44 member State Coordination Committee with Malati Chittibabu as the Convenor and Raji, TA Latha, Indira, Malliga, Bhagawati, Prema as Co convenors was formed in the Conference. It was also decided to include members from some industrial federations when women's sub committees were formed in those unions.

(WAR AGAINST IRAQ cont. from page 11)

resistance) to serve under US command. In spite of the fact that the Parliament of India had unanimously passed a resolution before the end of the war that US troops should be withdrawn from Iraq, the Vajpayee Government was inclined to send the troops. But ultimately, it had to decide against sending our troops, because of mounting public pressure.

Human Development Report 2003

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT FACING REGRESSION WORLDWIDE UNDER IMPERIALIST GLOBALISATION

The efficacy of the policy of neo-liberal imperialist globalisation stand exposed. Major part of the developing world got poorer as exposed by the Human Development Report (HDR)2003. India slipped down below the occupied Palestinian territory and Botswana in terms of human development index, despite the fact the incidence of poverty in India as weighed by the HDR is a gross underestimate.

But it is not just the case of India, but also the developing countries in general. Given below the observation made in the HDR, region-wise.

South Asia: South Asia remains one of the world's poorest regions. The task is enormous...one third of south Asians lacking access to improved sanitation, one third in poverty, one quarter hungry, one-fifth of children out of primary school, and almost one-tenth of children dying before age five....Progress was made in all these areas in the 1990s..as in the case of Bangladesh, Nepal..India's performance varied enormously across the States, with inequality increasing between several.

Sub-Saharan Africa: Left behind..Almost across the board, the story is one of stagnation. Economies have not grown, half of Africans live in extreme poverty and one-third in hunger and almost one-sixth children die before age five - the same as a decade ago.

Latin American and Caribbean: Stalled progress..slow growth in per-capita income

East Asia and Pacific: Performing well across the board...China has been pivotal in region's success. With 1.2 billion people, it accounts for about 70 per cent of the region's population.... Other success stories include higher enrolment rate in Lao Peoples' Democratic Republic and lower under-five mortality rates in Indonesia...Still many countries in the region did not enjoy similar progress in the 1990s. Income growth was slow in Philippines-and negative in Brunei, Darussalam, Mongolia, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. And in Cambodia, the under-five mortality rates rose 2 percentage points.

Central and Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States: Increasing poverty and declining life expectancy...People in this region ended the 1990s less healthy and with lower average incomes than people in Latin America and Caribbean. Poverty almost tripled to almost 100 million people-25% of the region's population.... The CIS Seven—Armenia Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, , Moldova, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan-ended the 1990s with incomes close to least developed countries.

Arab States: In the Arab States, high incomes have improved many aspects of human development...Yet, of all regions the Arab States have the widest gaps between incomes and other aspects of human development.

(ELECTRICITY BILL Cont. from page 12)

reading and writing for the children residing in the rural areas?

India has a population of eight crore tribal people. The Lokdeep Prakalp project provides electricity to many households of these people at a low cost. This has been possible because of the existence of cross subsidy. Once the process of privatisation of electricity sector starts, the households of the tribal people will get plunged into darkness. The effort going on towards providing them with equality of dignity as well as improving their economic conditions and standard of education will stop. Alienation and separatism will gain ground strengthening the hands of the imperialists.

Electricity had remained a part of the service sector. Electricity has been an article of essential consumption of the people. The Electricity Act 2003 will make electricity a commodity. In other words, those with higher incomes will be benefited; those without will face a disaster.

ALARMING AGGRAVATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT SITUATION

Swadesh Dev Roye

The desperate pursuit of the Fund-Bank dictated policies by the BJP led NDA Govt has led the unemployment situation in the country to attain alarming dimension.. Several factors have been contributing to such serious development. The persisting crisis in the capitalist economy all over the world and the onslaught of so-called market economy under the regime of imperialist globalisation are the two major factors.

While new jobs are not being generated in the regime of 'jobless growth', existing workers are thrown out of employment in the name of cost-cutting and restructuring of commercial activities. Deepening unemployment problem is the consequence of imposing the burden of the capitalist crisis on the labour.

On the one hand the young generation is affected by severe dearth of employment opportunity, on the other hand the existing workforce is becoming victim of closure and retrenchment. In such a situation the trade union movement will have to take up the issue of unemployment as one of the priority task and must provide leadership to the united fight against the menacing problem of unemployment.

Expressing serious concern at the galloping rise in unemployment the ILO has observed, "Economic slowdown have produced deterioration in the global employment situation. With uncertain prospects for economic recovery, a reversal of employment trends is unlikely in 2003." As per ILO estimates world unemployment reached to about 180 million at the end of 2002. In true reflection to the linkage between unemployment and poverty, according to ILO, "550 million workers living on US\$ 1 or less a day at the end of 2002. As per the results of the 55th round (1999-2000) of National Sample Survey Organisation on Employment and Unemployment, the number of unemployed rose from 20.13 million in 1993-94 to 26.58 million in 1999-2000. The unemployment rate increased from 5.99 per cent to 7.32 per cent. So far the growth of employment in the country

on current daily basis status is concerned; it declined from 2.7 per cent per annum in 1983-1994 to 1.07 per cent per annum in 1999-2000. The disturbing fact is that unemployment has increased despite relative growth in output and slower growth in labour force. As per the 10th Five Plan document on Employment Perspective, "the decreased in employment intensity of output growth can be explained by either an increase in capital intensity or increase in labour productivity, releasing labour ... - capital substituted labour" calling for "strategies to look for labour intensive areas and technologies."

Although it is not a healthy phenomenon for any developing country, it is a fact that in our country still 60 per cent of the employment comes from agriculture. Now as per the Economic Survey 2002-2003 "the decline in the overall growth rate in employment in 1994-2000 was largely attributable to a near stagnation of employment in agriculture. As a result the share of agriculture in total employment dropped substantially from 60 per cent in 1993-94 to 57 per cent in 1990-2000." Yet another disturbing feature is that "about 75 per cent of the unemployed are in rural areas and 60 per cent of these unemployed people are educated." (Economic Times:23.01.03)

Huge Job losses in the public sector are contributing in a big way in aggravating the unemployment problem in the country. The public sector constitutes about 69 per cent of the total employment in the organized sector. Now due to the downsizing onslaught the public sector has suffered job losses in a very big size. As per a study report the total employment in the public sector as on March 31, 2001 was over 27.75 million, which came down to 27.33 million in March 31, 2002 (PTI May 16, 2003). Thus in absolute term 4,20,000 public sector employees have been thrown out of employment during the period noted above. But far more disturbing data springs from the report of the Special Group on Employment

during tenth Plan period headed by Dr. S. P. Gupta which assessed that nearly four million excess labour is likely to be shed only in the public sector units and Govt sectors during the Tenth Plan itself.

Against the argument that the organized sector could be made more employment-friendly and employment generation in this sector can be improved if the right to 'hire and fire' is granted to the employers, the Special Group noted, "...in this sector (specially the public sector segment) ...the immediate effect will be more firing than hiring." In this background, the Tenth Five Year Plan document has adopted a goal to generate ten million employment opportunities per year of the Plan period and fifty million during the entire plan period, which is totally absurd and more aimed at publicity. The Special Group, headed by a planning Commission member has contested the same and noted that, "an 8 per cent GDP growth per year with unchanged patterns and continuance of the increased capital intensity of production, especially in the organized sector, will generate only around six million jobs a year on an average, much below the targeted 10 million jobs annually." The absurdity of realizing the projected 8 per cent growth per annum over the Tenth Plan in the NDA Government's present policy dispensation has also been argued from many quarters. Therefore, even creating six million jobs a year is rather impossible. According to estimates, the number of jobs created over 1994-2000 was only around three million per annum. (Business Line 15.04.03) Considering the aforementioned facts, figures and formulations coupled with the experience of the past one decade, it is clear that the BJP-led NDA Government is hoodwinking people of the country on the question of employment generation. This Government is rather pursuing policies which are bound to aggravate the unemployment problem in the coming period.

In our country the problem has attained new dimensions because of the fact that in one hand lakhs of employed are thrown out of job and on the other hand crores of unemployed are unable to find job. Further, the employer class is engaged in deep conspiracy and instigating the unemployed people against the trade union movement by unleashing a vilification campaign

that the trade unions are responsible for stagnation in employment generation by opposing to the 'hire and fire' doctrine.

The balance-sheet of the disastrous regime of liberalization, privatization and globalisation vigorously being pursued by the NDA Govt in respect of employment generation thus reflects a negative result. It killed more jobs than generated, thus exposing a situation of erosion of employment generating potential of the economy. This got revealed in a recent study by Prof S K Bhowmik of Kolkata University (Indian Journal of Labour Economics, Vol-46, Jan-March 2003). It has been noted that "The fact that the unemployment situation in India worsened during the post reform period becomes clear when we examine the growth rates of the unemployed in all India as well as the states. At all India level, while the annual compound growth rate of the total unemployed was minus (-)0.62 per cent during the pre-reforms period, this increased significantly to plus 4.55 per cent during the post reforms period....And in particular, the increase in growth rate of the rural unemployed during the era of economic reforms indeed becomes a matter of great concern."

The study carried on at a disaggregated basis on the growth of unemployment and the economic growth at the states and sectoral level also exposes the absolute bankruptcy of the so called growth strategy led by the neo-liberal paradigm. The study reveals that while during the pre-reforms period (1983-93) the growth of the Net state domestic products(NSDP) was associated with the decline in the growth rate of unemployed both at the state and all India levels, the experience of the post reforms period (1993-2000) has been just the reverse. During the post reforms period whatever growth in the NSDP could be achieved, it was accompanied by increase in the growth rate of unemployed and not decline, thus signifying a jobless or to be more appropriate a job-killing growth. The study commented in concrete terms, "This finding leads us to the conclusion that to effect a reduction in unemployment, growth alone is not sufficient. What matters most is perhaps the quality and composition of growth from the viewpoint of employment expansion....In any case, in regards to the efficacy of economic reforms policy in

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after 55 years of independence, the central government has failed to announce minimum wage for the sales promotion employees. Along with these employees' demands on these scores, reduction of drug prices, stoppage of black marketing of medicine, ban on spurious drugs, production of rational drugs, halt to the process of dismantling the public sector, halt to retrograde changes in labour

laws, etc, were also among the demands put forward by the FMRAI. All these ignited the field workers of the country to go in for this strike programme. This and a half month long relay strike by the medical and sales representatives got the support from the other trade unions and mass organizations of students, youth and women besides other democratic organisations. During

the entire period of strike, doctors and their organisations as well as chemists and their organisations generally extended support to the cause of the striking workers.

The working committee meeting of the FMRAI, to be held at Ranchi on July 12 and 13, will finalise the details of future programmes including a march to parliament and a demonstration in Mumbai.

Steel Workers' Federation Plan for All India Conference

The working committee of the Steel Workers' Federation of India met on 13th July at Kolkata to finalise the preparation of their all India conference to be held on 16th and 17th August at Durgapur. The meeting was presided over by M K Pandhe, President, SWFI. The meeting deliberated on the draft report of the General Secretary which was placed by P K Das in the meeting for consideration. The report dealt at length the international economic and political situation which is affecting the Indian steel industry as well as the workers in a big way. Coupled with that, the anti-national policies of the NDA Govt

is also acting in severely weakening the domestic steel industry and those units in public sector in particular, the report noted. The steel workers are also being adversely affected owing to the policy of downsizing and attack on their existing rights and facilities. The report also took stock of the activities of the federation since last conference with particular reference to the steel workers role in the countrywide struggle against the economic policies of the Govt and also reviewed the industrybased struggles, including achievements and weaknesses. It also took special note of the struggles

launched by the workers of Salem Steel Plant against privatization, the workers of iron ore mines against closure and also by the workers of Bokaro Steel plants on the issue of bonus along with the workers of other plants. After thorough discussion, the working committee authorized the Secretariat to finalise the report for placement in the conference.

The conference is going to be attended by around 450 delegates from all the steel plants in the country and also from mines and offices. The reception committee for the conference has already been formed under the chairmanship of Sisir Banerjee.

Kisans, Agricultural Workers Stage Massive Demonstration

The Bihar unit of the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) organised a massive demonstration

at Patna on June 12, calling for an immediate solution to the all-pervasive agricultural crisis and

warning the government to be prepared to face the repercussion. The call for protest was given in

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the 31st AIKS state conference held in Supoul district, recently.

K Varada Rajan, general secretary of the All India Kisan Sabha, while addressing the protestors, called for a massive agitation for food in the coming times, in accordance with the call given by the Central Kisan Council meeting at Kolkata. Hannan Mollah, joint secretary of the Khet Mazdoor Sabha, said that while the days of employment for agricultural workers were dwindling, the central government has been constantly refusing to enact a comprehensive legislation for them. He strongly castigated the impotence of the Bihar government in not making efforts to curb the increasing atrocities on Dalits. CPI(M) Polit Bureau member Sitaram Yechury also addressed the rally and narrated the all-around crisis created by the agricultural policy, drafted under pressure from the imperialists, which was devastating agricultural and the poor and gave a clarion call to intensify the struggle.

The protest demonstration was preceded by a massive campaign organised in form of general body meetings, processions and rallies across three districts in the state. Bihar has been following the new agricultural policy since the beginning of the nineties. As a result, the outlay for agriculture has declined consistently. In the eighties, the expenditure on irrigation and flood control was Rs 1600 crore, but this declined to a mere Rs 400 crore by 1997. Not an inch of irrigation canal has been

dug up since 1991. With the sole exception of repair of the Son canal under a World Bank programme, all work on the facilities for irrigation and flood control, canal boring, barrages and cheap dams has been abandoned. It is an irony that property and crops worth Rs 900 crore are destroyed every year. The government has gradually abandoned all relief schemes meant for farmers. According to a report presented by a committee of state legislature, almost all fertilisers, seeds and pesticides sold in Bihar are counterfeit. Most of the traders selling them are BJP supporters, but the state government has not taken any action against them. The maize sold at Rs 135 by Kargil, a multinational, has broken the back of the farmers on the one hand while, on the other, the credit flow from banks and cooperatives has almost dried up.

As a result of reduction of the subsidies, diesel, fertilisers, seeds and agricultural implements have become costlier. This, coupled with a decline in the prices of agricultural produce, has devastated the farmers. Though it declared the support prices for agricultural prices, the government did not procure wheat, paddy, jute, potato or tobacco. Sugarcane sown over lakhs of acres is drying up and farmers, under extreme pressure, have been forced to sell their produce at unrealistic prices. Water is being sold at Rs 10 per litre, dairies are purchasing milk at

Rs 7- 8 and farmers have been compelled to sell potatoes at Rs 150 a quintal.

The poverty alleviation schemes are also in a deplorable state due to cuts in allocation. Last year, of the total allocations, the amount spent in Jawahar Rozgar Yojana was 43.7 per cent, in Annapurna 47.6 per cent, in Indira Awas Yojana 73.8 per cent, for guaranteed employment 44.5 per cent, and 51.6 per cent in self-employment schemes. The remaining could not be spent. Only 63 per cent was spent out of total allocation for the 8th five year plan, and same story was repeated in the 9th five year plan. There are no traces of the water distribution system.

The Kisan Sabha has been protesting on various issues related to the all-round agricultural crisis and the June 12 action brought these issues to the forefront.

The rally was presided over by Subodh Roy, president of the Bihar state Kisan Sabha. The rally passed a resolution deciding to observe a protest week from August 16 to 31 and organising protest actions in blocks on August 18 and at district level on August 28, 2003.

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Anti-Privatisation Campaign by Oil Workers Amongst the People

The all India convention oil PSUs trade unions under the banner of NATIONAL UNITED FORUM Against Privatisation of Oil PSUs held in Kolkata on 1st June, 2002 decided to undertake massive signature campaign all over the country by organising street corner meetings, door to door etc. The signatures so collected shall be submitted to the Speaker of Lok Sabha. Accordingly, as per

report received from different regions of the country, signature campaign is going on in full swing. The regional conventions for NER and SR have been fixed.

In the meantime the next all India convention of the Forum has been fixed for 24th August, 2003 in New Delhi. The Kolkata convention understanding to launch the next action programme from the proposed Delhi

convention has attained further urgency in view of the announcement of the Vajpayee Government to start the due diligence of HPCL and initiate IPO for BPCL. It is, therefore, obvious that the forthcoming Delhi convention of the Forum shall launch the next course of action programme against the privatization of oil PSUs.

Supreme Court on Air India Hostesses

The All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) has viewed with concern the recent (11 July) Supreme Court judgment that upheld the decision of Air India to reduce the retirement age from flying duties for air hostesses, from 58 to 50 years. Setting aside the Bombay High Court judgment increasing the flying age of air hostesses from 50 to 58 years, the Supreme Court ruled that as the air hostesses had the option to accept ground duties after 50 years, it was not discriminatory. Not only is the Supreme Court judgment discrimination against the air hostesses on the basis of gender and is against the Constitutional right of equality, the justification given for upholding the early retirement of airhostesses is also objectionable. As per the reports

in the media, the Supreme Court noted 'Air India is a travel industry. Pleasing appearance, manners and physical fitness are required for members of crew of both sexes'. It has also told that for services on board an aircraft, both men and women members of the crew were expected to be smart, alert and agile.

On what basis did the Court conclude that air hostesses become less agile, less alert and less smart than their male counterparts above 50 years? Air India's decision to retire air hostesses at 50 is a reflection of the attitude in this capitalist society, to use women's physical appearance to promote commercial interests. It has nothing to do with efficiency or agility but is blatantly discriminatory and offends the dignity of women. This is already

evident by the comments in a section of the media welcoming the judgement that this 'will improve the in flight look of Air India.' According to reports around 80 airhostesses would be immediately affected and a lot of airhostess would be retired in a few years. The process to recruit around 200 air hostesses on contract basis has already started. Air India officials hope that with fresh recruitments the average age of Air India crew would be nearly halved in a couple of years. So, what Air India wants is to replace older women with young and attractive women to promote its commercial interests. It has nothing to do with ability to carry out the responsibilities due to age. It is unfortunate that the learned judges of the Supreme Court allowed themselves to get

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convinced that women above 50 are less agile or less alert than men of the same age.

The AICCWW statement issued on 13th July demanded that this retrograde judgment be reversed

and airhostesses be continued to fly till 58 years.

Seminar on 'Challenges Before Working Women'

The Women's Sub Committee of the Coordination Committee of Central Government Employees' Associations in Bangalore has organised a seminar on 'Challenges before the Working Women in the Era of Globalisation' at Bangalore on the 27th of June 2003. Around 50 women employees from Central Government departments like Survey of India, Income Tax, Geological survey of India, AG's Office, GPO, Ground Water Board, and RMS etc participated in the seminar. The gathering was welcomed by Muthu, leader of the Postal employees. Acted as the coordinator. Hemalata, Secretary, All India Coordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) was the chief guest. Kathyayani, a noted journalist of Bangalore and Varalakshmi, Convenor of the Karnataka State Coordination Committee of Working Women participated as speakers.

Speaking in the seminar, Hemalata told that when the process of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation were initiated in our country, the proponents of these policies told that employment opportunities, particularly for women would increase, the growth rate would increase and the

accompanying benefits would trickle down and eradicate poverty. But what one witnessed today, after twelve years of globalisation and liberalisation is that the economy has slowed down. All the sectors, including agriculture and manufacture were affected. Women bore the brunt of the adverse impact of these policies. Employment opportunities for a small section of women who come from upper middle class families and are well educated have widened but for the majority of women, opportunities exist only in the vast expanding unorganised sector where there is no job security, no social welfare, no minimum wages or any legal protection. The small section of women working in the organised sector, particularly in the Public Sector is being sent out on VRS. With the Government encouraging private participation in higher education it has gone out of reach of even the middle class sections. The Special Economic Zones which the Government was promoting provided some job opportunities for women but the conditions are very exploitative and the labour laws though applicable are not being implemented. The Government

has decided to allow night shift for women. The proposed Unorganised Sector Bill does not provide any job security to the workers in the unorganised sector, a large section of who were women. It was only aimed at forming some Welfare Boards to provide welfare measures. The workers have to contribute for these welfare benefits. Congratulating the women for their participation in the 21st May All India General Strike, she told that the only way of facing these challenges posed by neo liberal globalisation was united struggles of all the sections of the working class along with the other sections of the people affected by these policies. She urged the women Central Government employees to play a more active role in their union activities and also help in organising the women in the unorganised sector.

Kathyayani explained the problems faced by the women in the unorganised sector and told that the Central Government employees should not be selfish and confined to their problems only.

Radhakrishnan, leader of the Central Government employees' association told that the percentage

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

State	Sr. Centre No.		Month		State	Sr. Centre No.		Month		
			Apr.' 03	May.' 03				Apr.'03	May.' 03	
Andhra Pradesh	1	Gudur	464	467	Maharastra	38	Mumbai	585	586	
	2	Guntur	507	510		39	Nagpur	496	501	
	3	Hyderabad	492	495		40	Nasik	531	535	
	4	Visakhapatnam	478	481		41	Pune	553	556	
5	Warangal	530	536	42		Solapur	491	491		
Assam	6	D.D. Tinsukia	412	411	Orissa	43	Barbil	426	438	
	7	Guwahati	492	493		44	Rourkela	425	428	
	8	Labac-Silchar	377	377	Punjab	45	Amritsar	429	428	
	9	Mariani-Jorhat	425	425		46	Ludhiana	437	442	
Bihar	10	Rangapara-Tezpur	419	415	Rajasthan	47	Ajmer	491	487	
	11	Monghyr	454	448		48	Jaipur	451	450	
	Chhattisgarh	12	Bhillai	433	431	Tamil Nadu	49	Chennai	536	536
		Gujarat	13	Ahmedabad	490		491	50	Coimbatore	500
14	Bhavnagar		503	504	51	Coonoor	501	509		
	15	Rajkot	459	461	52	Madurai	481	480		
	16	Surat	495	492	53	Salem	484	485		
	17	Vadodra	470	473	54	Tiruchirapally	559	573		
	Haryana	18	Faridabad	494	494	Uttar Pradesh	55	Agra	449	447
19		Yamunanagar	457	458	56		Ghaziabad	490	493	
J & K	20	Srinagar	574	567		57	Kanpur	465	463	
Jharkhand	21	Jamshedpur	452	453		58	Saharanpur	450	449	
	22	Jharia	379	384		59	Varanasi	498	498	
	23	Kodarma	395	401	West Bengal	60	Asansol	467	471	
	24	Noamundi	434	433		61	Darjeeling	420	424	
Karnataka	25	Ranchi-Hatia	431	434		62	Durgapur	566	563	
	26	Bangalore	475	475		63	Haldia	584	584	
	27	Belgaum	527	530		64	Howrah	557	555	
	28	Hubli-Dharwar	491	495		65	Jalpaiguri	411	416	
Kerala	29	Mercara	470	471		66	Kolkata	545	542	
	30	Alwaye	488	485		67	Raniganj	419	424	
	31	Mundakayam	486	489	Chandigarh	68	Chandigarh	516	519	
	32	Quilon	513	514		Delhi	69	Delhi	568	568
Madhya Pradesh	33	Thiruvananthapuram	563	555	Pondicherry		70	Pondicherry	544	547
	34	Balaghat	433	438						
	35	Bhopal	520	524						
	36	Indore	513	514						
37	Jabalpur	475	480	ALL-INDIA			493	494		

Additional Series of Labour Bureau

State	Centre	April 03	May 03
Andhra Pradesh	1 Kethgudem	505	509
Himachal Pradesh	2 Himachal Pradesh	459	462
Rajasthan	3 Bhilwara	486	485
Madhya Pradesh	4 Chhindwara	434	436
Tripura	5 Tripura	440	442
Goa	6 Goa	589	589

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of Government expenditure on the wages of employees has in fact come down, contrary to the propaganda in a section of the media that because of the recommendations of the Fifth Pay Commission, the Government could not spend on welfare of the people.

Varalakshmi asked the women to have self confidence and work

actively in the unions. She told women's sub committees were not parallel bodies to the unions rather they would help the unions in mobilising more women into the unions. Representatives of all the participating organisations congratulated the Bangalore Coordination Committee of Central Government Employees' Associations for the effort and

promised that they would work for formation of women's sub committees within their own unions. It was generally felt that the fact that a women's sub committee exists itself gives confidence to women employees and acts as a deterrent to the authorities and others who tend to misbehave with the women employees.

Airport Authority Employees Oppose Privatisation

The All India Conference of Airport Authority Employees Union was held at Salt Lake Stadium at Kolkata. 370 delegates and observers attended the Conference. S.R. Santhanm President of the union presided over the conference.

M.K. Ghoshal submitted a report of activities of the union.

Md. Salim Minister for Wakaf and Youth Affairs, West Bengal

inaugurated the conference.

M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary CITU while addressing the conference criticised the policy of privatization of the NDA Government and called for united movement to oppose the policies of privatization.

He condemned the proposal of the Government to form a joint sector company to perform the ground handling of the aircrafts and traffic

at the airports. He appealed to the workers to implement the decisions of the CPSTU so that the public sector employees movement is strengthened.

The conference decided to oppose the policy of privatization of airports and appeal for formation of confederation of all civil employees union to fight privatization policies of the Government.

General Strike in Nigeria

Nigerian cities and towns were practically shut down on 1st July 2003 onward after the workers responded overwhelmingly to the all of the Labour Congress (NLC) for continuous strike in protest against the fuel price hike.

The oil multi-nationals claimed that production had remained unaffected, but oil prices moved up in early trading yesterday as international traders kept a wary

eye on the strike in Nigeria. Across the country, various markets were empty, while banks and offices were shut. The roads were virtually empty save a few private vehicles. The strike was generally peacefully, although there had been some confrontations at Ketu, Mushin and Iyana-Ipaja, all suburbs of Lagos.

Addressing workers, NLC President, Adams Oshiomhole said labour would not agree to

continued increase in prices of petroleum products in the country because the Federal Government had refused to make the refineries work.

Addressing newsmen later, the NLC President warned that if the government should victimise any worker, who absented himself or herself from work yesterday, the NLC have the capacity to call as many strikes as government wants.

CONGRATULATIONS NALCO COLLECTIVE FOR MAKING THE GOVT RETREAT

CITU congratulates the NALCO workers for their firm resolve to resist privatization of this blue-chip public sector unit as reflected in their spontaneous strike actions on 12th and 13th July at Angul and Damonjodi plant to blockade the visit of the NDA minister of mines.

In the face of prolong and mounting resistance by the Nalco collective-the workers and the officers together, firmly backed by the working people of Orissa, no one less than the Prime Minister himself had to declare ultimately that the NALCO will not be disinvested for the time being, in his brief speech at the foundation stone laying ceremony of the All India Institute of Medical Science at Orissa on July 15. The announcement of the Prime Minister marks a clear retreat by the Govt from its hectic move to privatize NALCO within this year itself.

The announcement by the Prime Minister did not come of its own. The continuity of the resistance struggle by the NALCO collective from the day one of the initiation of the privatization move and the increasing support by the toiling people of Orissa, adding strength and fuel to such statewide militant resistance could create the situation of compulsion for the chief executive of the NDA Govt to backtrack in respect of privatization of NALCO, may be for the time-being.

The Nalco collectives' initiative to fight the privatization-move reflects the total unity of the entire NALCO workforce in the state, right from each worker to every officer. The united determination to fight by all means, demonstrated by the NALCO collective along with the initiative taken by the trade union movement in their support involving mass of the toiling people of Orissa could create such a charged atmosphere in the state that even the BJD led State Govt which is otherwise a NDA partner and even those organizations and agencies supporting the privatization in general, had to either keep quiet or lend support, however feeble it may be, to the militant expression of the workers and people against privatization of NALCO.

The NALCO collective did not rest in their fight against the sell-off move. Strike actions and blockading demonstrations in thousands took place. Trade Unions of almost all affiliations joined them and the horizon of struggle got expanded to entire state leading to a massive Orissa-Bandh last year. And then the sell-off initiative was shelved temporarily.

Again this year, when the Shouri's bandwagon restarted the initiative and finalized the time frame for the sell-off to be completed by this September, the NALCO collective along with the trade unions in the state responded with quick reflex. They sent back the prospective customers with consultants from the Airport itself on 16th June through huge blockading demonstration followed by massive dharna at Bhubaneswar. And the entire State was preparing for a massive militant show-down to the Central Govt on 18th July, the day fixed for concluding the MOU on NALCO sell-off. And all these brought about the backtracking announcement by the Prime Minister that the NALCO will not be privatized.

The NALCO experience shows that privatization can be defeated, the so called neo-liberal policies can be reversed if working class could be made to move effectively with the people at large and the struggle could be elevated to determined resistance. The working class of Orissa did that. CITU also congratulates the trade union and democratic movement in the state and the Orissa State Committee of CITU in particular for their pioneering initiative for expanding the horizon of NALCO workers' struggle throughout the entire state. Anti-privatisation struggle in the country got a big boost from their achievement. However, we must remain alert and keep the powder dry. Anything is possible for this anti-national Govt. The privatization initiative may come back again in Nalco as this retreat was a temporary one. We must be ready to respond through mass action with quick reflex. We shall overcome.