



# THE WORKING CLASS

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## National Convention of Mass Organisations Calls for Countrywide Picketing and Rail Roko/Rasta Roko against NEP

□ P K Ganguly

The National Convention organised by the National Platform of Mass Organisations at Constitution Club ground, Delhi on 16th December unanimously adopted a Declaration calling for National Picketing before all Central Government offices on 25th February, 1997 and Rail Roko and Rasta Roko all over the country on 28th March, 1997 from 9.30 AM to 11.30 AM against the retrograde economic reforms pursued by the Deve Gowda Government. As a preparation for these action programmes district level and state level conventions would be completed by 15th February.

The convention was attended by about 2000 delegates from all the states representing the various central trade unions, national federations, and the organisations of the peasantry, agricultural workers, students, youth and women. About 50 organisations of the country were represented in the convention. The convention was presided over by a 15-member presidium representing the various organisations.

The Declaration pointed to the deteriorating conditions of all sections of the people as a result of the economic reforms in pursuance of the so-called policy of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. It specified 15 major demands of all the mass organisations.

About 30 delegates representing all the mass organisations spoke on the Declaration. The speakers severely assailed the Deve Gowda Government

for pursuing the same imperialist dictated policies which were followed by the Narasimha Rao Government also, despite its commitment to some positive features in its Common Minimum Programme.

The delegates representing the trade unions pointed to the accentuation of the situation due to continuing closures, sickness of industries, further reduction in workforce, disinvestment in the most profit making public sector units and privatisation and opening of the vital sectors like banks, insurance, power, telecom, etc to the private sector, both foreign and Indian, thus accelerating the process of dismantling the public sector. They further warned the Government against amendment of the Patent Act. Secret ballot for recognition of trade unions and workers participation in management still remained a far cry despite the Govt's commitment in its CMP. The workers of the vast unorganised sector, covering over 90 per cent of the Indian workforce remained pauperised getting wages below the poverty line despite commitment by the UF Government to improve their lot.

Representatives of the peasantry focused to the deplorable condition of the poor peasants due to lack of land reforms. Abject poverty forced them to resort to distress selling of their produce, coupled with the fetters of usury in which they were trapped by the landlords.

Delegates from agricultural labour assailed the

Government for its failure to enact a Central legislation for them despite the Govt's promise made in the CMP. Even the most vital issue of minimum wage was put in the cold storage.

The students and youth pointed to the same pursuit of privatisation and commercialisation of education and demanded for education and jobs for all.

All the speakers from the Women's organisations were unanimously vociferous against the apathy of the Government in enacting the Bill for 33 per cent reservation for women in the Parliament and Assemblies. They further pointed to the growing atrocities on women, growing unemployment among them and continuation of the blatant discriminations in wages and neglect of their other specific demands. The Government stood as mere onlooker to these vital issues.

All the delegates pointed to the most burning issues of sky rocketing price rise of all commodities and failure of the Government to strengthen and expand the public distribution system or even to distribute the essential commodities to the poorer sections at half price from the Ration shops as announced by it.

Similarly, the galloping unemployment, both in the urban and rural sector, which has reached the alarming figure of over 10 crores in the country, and lack of any genuine or concrete programme of employment generation, was pinpointed by all the delegates. It was the common experience of all that the growth of unemployment was the direct result of the policy of liberalisation and privatisation and the dominance of the multinationals in the globalised economy.

The delegates further expressed their deep anguish and hatred over the rampant and blatant corruption pervading in the top hierarchy as a result of the policy of liberalisation and demanded speedy and stringent punishments for these social outcasts and enemies of the country and the people.

The BJP-RSS and Siva Sena came under severe attack by the delegates for their communal and fascist portends. They recalled the demolition of the Babri Masjid and the communal blood bath these forces resorted to, and vowed to safeguard the unity and integrity of the country and unity of the toiling masses, so that the united struggle against the retro-

grade economic policies at the behest of the western powers could be consolidated and a self-reliant economy free from the troika of IMF-World Bank-WTO could be ensured.

The delegates were unanimous in their experience that the globalised economy under the dominance of the transnationals had made deep in-roads into all sectors of the Indian economy,—in public sector, in heavy industries, in small, tiny and unorganised sectors of economy, in agriculture, in service sector and in the common lives of the people. The net result of the transnationalised economy, with so-called high technology was growing unemployment, loss of secured jobs, price rise and poverty, while the monopolists, both Indian and foreign reaped the harvest with huge and rising profits.

It was the first national convention after installation of the UF Government and the first salvo was declared in the form of national picketing and Rail Roko/Rasta Roko to be culminated in a march to Parliament and break the ban on Boat Club during the latter part of the forthcoming Budget session.

The pronouncements of the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister like their predecessors—the Congress—that the economic reforms were irreversible, were condemned and a chorus declaration was made that the united struggles of the mass organisations and the toiling people were also irreversible and destined to be intensified. While the communal outfit, the BJP would be kept at bay, there cannot be any compromise with the anti-national and anti-people economic policies. In this respect the delegates hailed the public sector workers and supported their countrywide strike decision on April 2, 1997.

Prominent among the central leaders who spoke were Hannan Mollah (AIAWU), K L Mahendra (AITUC), R A Mittal (HMS), Y Reddy (BKMU), Brinda Karat (AIDWA), Amarjeet Kaur (NFIW), Krishna Prasad (SFI), Dipankar Bhattacharya (AICCTU), D P Dubey (FMRAI), Harish Sharma (BEFI), Vimal Paliwal (AIEA), etc.

M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU concluded the convention with a clarion call to implement the action programmes unitedly and with full militancy all over the country and after the march to Parliament, prepare for a national strike if there is no reversal of the policies.

## DECLARATION

The National Convention of the National Platform of Mass Organizations held on 16th December 1996 at New Delhi expresses its anguish over the non-chalant pursuasion of the retrograde policy of "liberalization" by the UF Govt. creating severe adverse impact on the life of the common people.

The Convention notes that the policies of the Govt of India as reflected in the last budget and the subsequent measures led to deterioration of the economic situation. Despite tall commitments, nothing has been done to check the price rise leading to impoverishment of common people arising out of failure to ensure expansion of public distribution system. Nor

any radical step has been taken for upliftment of the lot of poor people particularly in unorganised and rural sector. It is also noted with concern that there has been a consistent decline in the real minimum wages all around. Growing casualisation and contracterisation of labour and decline in the proportion of permanent workforce has become the order of the day.

Despite assurances the comprehensive central legislation for Agricultural labour has not yet been introduced in the Parliament. Neither any concrete step has been taken for radical land reform. What has been done in the name of rural development is to channelise some concessions which can be availed only by the rural rich.

The convention further notes that in the background of phenomenal rise in unemployment no concrete measure has been taken for employment generation. On the other hand, economic policy measures are bringing gloom to domestic industrial economy making further bleak the prospect of productive employment generation. The Growth of industrial production has already marked a decline during the first six months of the current year. Nothing has been done to revive the vast number of sick industrial units. On the contrary the so called economic reforms have led to closures aggravating the unemployment situation. Side by side, inspite of total opposition by the T.U. movement the Central Govt is proceeding with the process of reckless disinvestment of PSU shares, which if allowed to continue as per the design of the Govt would end in dismantlement of 90% of the PSU network in the country. Further opening of the vital sector of the economy like

Telecom, Insurance, Power etc. to foreign and private monopoly capital would also severely endanger the self-reliance, besides adversely impairing the indigenous units in those areas.

Long standing demands of the trade union movement regarding removal of bonus ceilings, raising of gratuity ceiling to Rs. 2.5 lakhs for all workers and the higher exemption limit for income-tax payment are being ignored by the Govt. The Govt of India has also been dragging feet for fulfillment of its commitment on legislation of 'Secret ballot'. Finalisation of the recommendation of 5th Pay Commission for Central Govt. Employees is being made to delay inordinately in clandestine manner. In the field of education as well, the steps being taken by the Govt indicate a clear tilt towards greater commercialisation of education taking education beyond the reach of the poor people. The patrons of globalisation remained mere onlooker to the desperate invasion of international media network through electronic media and other means with their merchandise of degenerated culture immensely harming the cultural fabric of the country.

Women became the worst victim of the so called policy of liberalization. The women workers in thousands in the unorganised sector lost jobs; atrocities of women increased with impunity; rights of women get the least priority in the society. Despite commitment from all the political parties, 33% reservation for women in Parliament and assemblies could not be ensured as yet.

The Convention also expresses anguish at the phenomenal increase in high level corruption. Involvement of the majority of ministers in the Narasimha Rao government in scandalous deals have already come to light. Added to this is the reckless financial irregularities in the big corporate houses. The policy of liberalization which encourages corruption involved several captains of big corporate houses, who are demanding leniency towards offenders. The Convention demands that, economic offenders and corrupt officials and ministers, however highly placed he may be must be punished exemplarily, their ill gotten wealth should be confiscated forthwith and enforcement of law in this regard must be made more stringent.

The National Convention notes that the IMF-World Bank dictated policy measures must be squarely defeated if the national as well as common people's interests are to be defended. It is therefore of paramount importance that the National Platform of Mass

Organizations should pledge to fight for reversal of these disastrous Economic policies of the Central Govt. which are solely responsible for the present debacle. The Convention therefore resolves to build up popular movement to mount pressure on the Govt of India on the basis of following demands.

1) Concrete measures of Employment generation and Right to work for all.

2) Expeditious step for checking the price rise and expansion and strengthening of Public Distribution System (PDS) as committed by the government.

3) Minimum wage to be set above the poverty line and Minimum Wage Legislation to be suitably amended to ensure compulsory periodic revision of minimum wages and its automatic linkage with Price Index.

4) Immediate enactment of comprehensive Central legislation for Agricultural Labour as per commitment.

5) Land reforms should be accelerated and completed within a time frame.

6) No Disinvestment of PSU shares and scrap the Disinvestment Commission.

7) No privatisation of telecom and Power sector and no opening of the Insurance Sector to Foreign and Private Capital.

8) No further decline in customs duty on finished goods and machineries which are produced indigenously, and more restrictions to import in those areas.

9) Move to amend the Patent Act to be withdrawn.

10) No commercialisation and privatisation of Educational institutions. More funds for spread of primary education covering the entire population.

11) Immediate enactment of the law for 33% reservation of women on Parliament and Assemblies.

12) Complete ban on deployment of Contract Labour in permanent nature of work and regularisation of contract workers in permanent area of work; suitable amendment of the concerned Act and its strict enforcement.

13) Immediate enactment of the law on 'Recognition of unions through Secret Ballot'.

14) Strong administrative and legislative measures to prevent

and punish atrocities on SC/ST and weaker section of the society.

15) Stringent Punishment of the persons involved in corruption in high level and confiscation of their ill gotten wealth.

The convention adopts the following programmes to press for the above demands.

1) State/District level conventions to be completed with 15th February '97.

2) Picketing before Central Govt offices on 25th February '97 all over the country.

3) Rail Roko/Rasta Roko all over the country on 28th March '97 from 9-30 to 11-30 AM.

4) March to Parliament during second part of the Budget Session; date to be notified later on.

The Convention also extended its support to the phased action programme adopted by public sector workers against the anti PSU policy of the Govt of India, culminating on one day strike on 2nd April 97.

The Convention calls upon workers, employees, peasants, agricultural workers, students, youth, women and professionals

and all toiling people to get united and rally round the programmes of movement adopted by the Convention to fight for reversal of the anti-people policies.

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## FIFTH PAY COMMISSION

A delegation of JCM Staff side consisting of Com. J.P. Choubey, K. Adinarayana, O.P. Gupta, S.K. Vyas, K.K.N. Kutty and G.L. Dhar met the Chairman and Member secretary Fifth Pay Commission on 16.12.1996 and expressed the anguish of the employees on inordinate delay caused in finalising their report. In the past the commission had indicated 2nd April '96, 30th June 96 and 30th Sept.,96 but the report has not so far been submitted. The Chairman indicated that the report will be submitted latest by 31.1.97. However, he did not indicate the date of effect from which these recommendations will be operative.

The Commission will also finalize their recommendations of the issue of extending Productivity Linked Bonus to these employees who are at present getting Adhoc Bonus. For this purpose, they would obtain from the Government the report of Group of Officers headed by Shri Bazle Karim in which such a recommendations had been made but Government could not decide the parameters for grant of productivity linked bonus to about 1 million left out employees. The confederation representatives would be submitting a memorandum on this issue soon and will also tender evidence.

## **PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS DECIDE STRIKE ACTION**

*(In the meeting of Extended Session of Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions comprising CITU, HMS, AITUC, Joint Action Front, Bangalore, Co-ordination Committee of Public Sector Unions, Hyderabad, decision has been taken to go in for phased agitation culminating in one day countrywide strike in public sector on 2nd April 1997, against the anti-PSU policy of Govt. of India.*

*Meeting was presided over by a presidium consisting of MK Pandhe (CITU), Md. Shafique Khan (AITUC), B D Nagpal (HMS), Michel Fernandez (JAF Bangalore) and S. Narasimha Reddy (PSU Co-ordination Committee, Hyderabad).*

*Meeting was attended by more than 250 delegates from almost all the public sector units all over the country.*

*The declaration detailing the programmes of action and the demands adopted by CPSTU is reproduced below.)*

### **DECLARATION**

The extended meeting of the Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions (CPSTU) held on 5-6 Decmeber, 1996 at New Delhi has noted with serious concern the mounting attack on the Public Sector as a whole stemming from the continuation by the United Front Governemnt of the Economic Policy of liberalisation and structural adjustment.

Every aspect of the Economic Policy measures right from liberal concessions to Multinational Companies of Corporate Sector, taxation policy, liberalisation of import duty, non placement of Orders to Public Sector Units, counter-guarantees to the Foreign Companies etc. continued to be discriminatory and hostile to the Public Sector Units posing a severe threat of sickness even to the profit-making and still-viable PSUs. Vital Sector like Petroleum, Insurance, Defence, Telecom, etc. are being thrown open to foreign capital endangering the Economic Sovereignty of the country.

Despite commitment in the CMP, sick industrial Units in PSUs are not being revived and even revival package sanctioned by BIFR and agreed by all concerned as in the case of NTC, Tyre Corporation etc. are not being implemented. In this background, Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act (SICA)

is being sought to be amended to make BIFR a fast track liquidating mechanism. The employees of Sick PSUs remain to be the worst sufferer and have been deprived of wage revision and even the enhanced D.A. rates and a blanket ban was imposed by DPE on the plea of sickness.

Inspite of total opposition by the entire Trade Union movement, Govt. of India is proceeding non-chalantly with their Scheme of Disinvestment of PSU shares. The Govt Scheme already made public on disinvestment, if implemented would dismantle most of the PSU net-work in the country. It is ironical that proponents of PSU disinvestment have been pleading for disinvestment as a means for reforming the PSU management to make it autonomous and efficient. After disinvestment of 51% of 74% shares, in the PSUs as being proposed by the Govt. they will no more remain PSUs and nothing would remain to be reformed.

Despite commitment and cooperation by the Trade Unions and Workers of the PSUs for improving the performance of the PSUs by improving productivity, quality, cost reduction, delivery time etc., the Govt. is still pursuing policies harmful to the Public Sector.

The CPSTU Meeting noted that the policy of total hostility towards Public Sector besides having damaging impact on the self-reliance and country's Industrial Economy, would also adversely affect the basic interests of the employees and Public Sector Trading Union movement must prepare to face the challenge. Wage Agreements in PSUs approaching the expiry, CPSTU must prepare for struggle for new wage revision.

At the same time, it must take serious note of the rising discontent among 90% of the PSU employees for being deprived from Bonus owing to various irrational ceilings on Bonus payment and entitlement. Discrimination against the PSU employees in respect of ceiling on gratuity payment vis-a-vis the Central Govt. employees has also caused severe resentment among them. Genuine demand of the employees for enhancement of the exemption limit of Income Tax has also remained unheeded by the Govt. Further on the plea of the upward revision of ESI to Rs.6500/- many PSU employees are being deprived of free medical facility so long available in PSUs.

Long pending demand of PSU employees for their own Company based Pension Scheme are still unresolved creating unrest amongst the PSU employees. Govt. policy and DPE's irrational conditionalities are creating hurdles in evolving Company based Pension Scheme through collective bargaining by contribution from employees and employers also.

After detailed discussion in its extended meeting in which about 250 representatives from entire Public Sector industries throughout the country participated, CPSTU decided programmes of movement to press for the following demands:

1) Expedious revival all sick PSUs; Govt. must act as promoter and give necessary financial assistance.

2) Embargo on wage revision for the PSUs referred to BIFR and also on payment of revised DA should be removed immediately thereby allowing revision of wage due from 1.1.1992 and revised rate of DA.

3) No privatisation of Public Sector Units.

4) Stop disinvestment of PSU share and scrap Disinvestment Commission.

5) No deployment of contract workers in permanent perennial jobs; regularisation of contract workers in regular jobs.

6) Removal of ceiling on Bonus by amending the Payment of Bonus Act; upward revision of exemption limit of Income Tax to Rs.60,000/-.

7) Enhancement of ceiling on Gratuity payment to Rs.2.5 lakhs by amending the Gratuity Act as in the case of Central Govt. employees.

8) Existing medical and other benefits in PSUs should not be curtailed/withdrawn on the plea of extension of ESI coverage and deduction should not be made from the salary.

9) PSUs should be allowed to devise separate Company based Pension Scheme by contribution from employees and Employers.

To achieve these demands the CPSTU appeals to all unions in public sector undertakings to implement the following programme of action.

1) To hold local, regional, state level conventions in major public sector centres before the end of January 1997 to popularize the issues faced by the public sector in India and the workers.

2) To hold a National Workshop on wage negotiations on 27-28 January 1997. The venue will be announced later on.

3) To organise a National Convention on sick industries in public sector in New Delhi on 12-13 February 1997 and hold a Day long Dharna on 14th February 1997.

4) To organise All India Protest Day on 10th March 1997 by holding rallies in all public sector undertakings.

5) The CPSTU constituents should approach all members of Parliament including those from constituencies where public sector undertakings are located to highlight the problems of public sector in the next session of parliament.

6) To organise one day All India strike on 2nd April 1997.

7) The CPSTU will organise a Workshop to discuss and workout details and guidelines on separate Pension Scheme to PSU employees.

The extended meeting of the CPSTU will meet again in April 1997 to chalk out further programme of action.

This meeting calls upon all the workers in all public sector undertakings to rise to the occasion and mobilise all public sector workers in a countrywide action programme so that the Government of India's policy towards public sector is changed so that public sector is saved from annihilation and it can play a positive role in developing a self reliant national economy in the country.

The CPSTU appeals to all the trade unions outside the CPSTU to join hands with it so that a powerful campaign of all the public sector workers can be launched all over the country to save the public sector and reverse the Government of India's policy towards the public sector.

The meeting extended its full support to the decision of strike by the Insurance Employees on 9th Dec. against the attempt of the Govt. to open the Insurance Sector of foreign and private capital. It also demnads that the Central Govt. withdraw the proposal to allow entry of multinational companies and the Indian business house.

The CPSTU call upon all the Unions to express solidarity to the Insurance Employees on 9th December all over the country.

The meeting note with concern the devastation and the destruction caused by report Cyclone in the Coastal Areas of Andhra Pradesh resulting loss of lives and properties.

CPSTU while condoling the death of thousands owing to the natural calamities appeals to the Public Sector employees to donate at least one day's wage for relief of the Cyclone affected people.

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CITU

H. MAHADEVAN  
AITUC

B.D. NAGPAL  
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S. NARASIMHA REDDY  
Co-ordination Committee of Hyd. PSU.

## • Urgent Action for Revival of Sick PSUs Demanded by MPs • Policy on Disinvestment flayed

19th December 1996, MPs cutting across political lines demanded urgent action on revival of PSUs and assailed disinvestment of PSU shares for bridging the fiscal deficit.

In response to a call attention motion in Rajya Sabha, moved by Dipankar Mukherjee of CPI(M), on the indecision/inaction of the Govt in reviving the sick PSUs vis a vis disinvestment of shares of profitable PSUs, the members cutting across party affiliations stressed upon the need to strengthen the public sector industries and urged for urgent action for revival of sick PSUs. Sri Dipankar Mukherjee, MP and working committee member of CITU pointed out that non-revival of sick PSUs leading to aggravation of sickness and simultaneous off-loading of shares of profit making PSUs to private hands act in weakening the PSU network in the country in totality and run counter to the commitment made by the UF Govt in the Common Minimum Programme on strengthening of the public sector. Govt's action in totality militates against the PSUs, he reiterated. While pointing out that fifty per cent of the PSUs fell sick after the introduction of New Economic Policy of liberalisation, he demanded permanent funding arrangement through a provision of rotating fund in the budget for revival of sick PSUs.

Jibon Roy MP, and secretary, CITU, while referring to the inaction of Govt in the matter of revival of sick units pointed out that owing to govt policies during last five years, sickness in public sector got aggravated. But unfortunately present UF govt is also continuing with the same policy. He demanded that Govt must come out with a 'white paper' on public sector, spelling out their policy on public sector vis-a-vis what they are doing actually. Whatever statements being made by govt in different forums, in reality, they are pursuing a policy of hostility to PSUs, he reiterated.

Margaret Alva of Congress, stressed on the social responsibility being discharged by the public sector in the country's economy and maintained that PSUs must be strengthened and revived.

Irony is that, in the face of complaints of aggravation of sickness in PSUs and Govt's inaction on the revival of sick units, alongwith its decision to reduce its share in the profit making PSUs, the industry minister Murasoli Maran repeated before the house

the same statement that Govt wants to "support public sector companies and strengthen the profit making PSUs further" and would "try to rehabilitate sick or potentially sick PSUs." But he did not tell how he is going to do that while not giving financial support for the revival of most of sick PSUs or gradually selling shares of PSUs to private parties to meet the fiscal deficit.

While Vayalar Ravi (Congress), V Narayanswamy (Congress) demanded concrete action for revival of sick PSUs, S K Singla of the same party wanted the Govt to move towards faster privatisation.

Among others, VP Duraiswamy (DMK), Jalaluddin Ansari (CPI), R Kumar (AIADMK) T.N Chaturvedi (BJP), while making critical observation on Govt's failure in respect of sick PSUs, urged for active financial support for the early revival of the sick public sector units.

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### AMIDST PROTEST

### **INSURANCE REGULATORY AUTHORITY BILL INTRODUCED IN PARLIAMENT**

On 20th December 1996, the Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill has been introduced in both the houses of Parliament amidst protest from the left MPs.

Govt of India has been planning to open the insurance sector to private and foreign capital despite opposition from the entire trade union movement and various political parties.

The formulation of the IRA Bill, exercise on which has been going on since long is conceived as a step towards that direction.

The workers of insurance sector irrespective of affiliation have already expressed their firm resolve to fight back such disastrous move through number of massive strike action, the latest being on 9th December 1996.

Notable is that, in the background of massive protest and opposition against the move to open insurance sector to private and foreign capital, the particular clause stipulating provision for granting license to private insurance companies has been dropped from the IRA BILL.

The All India Insurance Employees Association (AIIEA) described this as a 'tactical retreat' by Govt of India, although temporarily, but danger still remains and the TU movement must remain vigil and carry forward the struggle.

## 2nd ALL INDIA CONFERENCE OF BEEDI WORKERS CALL FOR MARCH TO PARLIAMENT

□ P R Krishnan

A successful 3 day all India Conference of Beedi Workers under the auspices of all India Committee of Beedi workers was held in the textile city of Solapur in Maharashtra on 29, 30 November and 1st December. The concluding rally on 1st December with the newly elected leaders have given a stirring call to the Beedi workers to make all-out preparations for a mammoth March to Delhi and demonstration before Parliament on 3rd March 1997. The demands to be highlighted for mobilisation of this all India action programme are such, that, there should be an uniform wage for workers in Beedi industry all over the country at the rate of Rs 50/- per thousand beedies, with variable dearness allowance of 5 paise per point over all India Consumer Price Index No: 1300 (1960 = 100) pending finalisation of need based wage, strict enforcement of the provident fund scheme throughout the country; introduction of pension scheme for all beedi workers without deviating their existing provident fund subscriptions; withdrawal of concessions of excise duty presently given to mini cigarette companies; drastic amendments in the Beedi and Cigar Workers Conditions of Employment Act; assurance of statutory benefits to all beedi workers including in the home-based sectors. The Solapur District Committee of Maharashtra State CITU hosted the 3-day conference.

The delegates session on 29th and 30th Nov was held in Mahavir Cultural Hall and the open rally on 1st December was held in Bapuji Nagar Maidan.

It needs to be mentioned here that the workforce in the Beedi industry in India is about 60 lakhs. Amongst these 60 lakh workers Madhya Pradesh tops with 10 lakhs workers, followed by West Bengal with 7 lakhs, Andhra Pradesh with 6 lakhs, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh each with 5 lakhs, Bihar and Maharashtra each with 4 lakhs, Orissa, Gujarat and Rajasthan each with 3 lakhs and Kerala with 2 lakhs. The rest of the Beedi workers are spread over in other states and union territories like Assam, Tripura, Pondicherry and other states. Each of these states has its own peculiar wage pattern having no regard for fixed working hours and welfare facilities except in some cooperative sector. Women and children form the major chunk of the work-force in

Beedi industry. Contract system is very rampant. Wages vary from state to state, region to region, zone to zone and even districts to districts in majority of the states. Many of the Beedi workers are infested with diseases like asthma, cancer and tuberculosis.

The delegate session of the conference was preceded by a meeting of the working committee on 28th December in the office of the National Railway Mazdoor Union. The report of the working committee to be presented by Secretary P K Ganguly was fully discussed and the agenda of the conference programme was decided in this working committee meeting.

Of this 3 day conference, 2 days i.e. 29th and 30th November was exclusively set aside for delegate session and 1st December for the open rally. The venue of the delegate session, the Mahavir Cultural hall in Central Solapur was named "Com. Godavari Parulekar Nagar." The gates to the conference hall were named in memory of Meenakshital Sane, and the martyrs of Solapur Revolt Kurban Hussein, Mallappa Dhanshethi, Jagannath Shinde and Kisanlal Sarda. The city of Solapur which is famous for its many anti-imperialist struggles presented a colourful look with red-banners, arches, posters, wall-writings and numerous flags reflecting the glory of its revolutionary past with many a successful working class struggles to its credit.

The conference was attended by 280 delegates and observers representing the different unions and workers in Beedi industry. It overshoot the quota of 250 delegates. The session in all reality represented the entire workers in the Beedi industry. The problems discussed, the resolutions passed and the demands made have not left any of the problems facing the industry and the workers untouched or unrepresented.

The proceedings of the delegate session started with flag hoisting by the President of the all India Committee of Beedi Workers Com C Kannan in the morning of 29th November followed by floral tributes to the martyrs. A cultural squad comprising of the girl students of the "Narayan Adam Memorial Institute" rendered traditional songs. Prof Vilas Beit, Chairman of the Reception Committee welcomed the

delegates.

The delegate session was inaugurated by Com.M K Pandhe, General Secretary of CITU. In his speech Pandhe pointed out that "India is facing a grave situation due to the new economic and industrial policy introduced by the previous Narasimha Rao government and which is being adopted by the present Deve Gowda government. As a result, the country's economy is getting indebted to World Bank, International Monetary fund and Multinational Corporations endangering sovereignty of the nation. We have to fight against this policy in unity with other organisations," he said.

Com.C Kannan in his presidential address drew the attention of the delegates to the many sided plight of the beedi workers. He stressed the necessity for the organised trade union movement to widen the field of their activities and come to the unorganised sector and concentrate their attention to Beedi workers. This, said Com.Kannan will widen their proximity to and contact with the family members of the Beedi workers which is very essential for building up a revolutionary moment in the country.

The conference, after the presidential speech elected a 5-member resolution committee consisting of VJK Nair (Karnataka) S Chandrasekharan (T.Nadu), Smt Vinaya Deshpande (Maharashtra), U K Mani (Kerala) and Ajit Saha (W.Bengal). The Conference also elected another 5-member credential committee comprising of Dr Vivek Monteiro (Maharashtra), K Balakrishnan (Kerala), Nityananda swami (Karnataka), Kinkar Pashav (Bihar) and Sarangapani (T.Nadu).

Com.P K Ganguly, the Secretary of the All India Committee of Beedi Workers placed a draft report for discussion by the delegates. In his speech Com Ganguly pointed out the different aspects of Beedi industry in India and the miserable conditions of Beedi workers concerning low wages, Identity Cards, housing, pension, ESI, PF, health and medical facilities, etc. He mentioned the various forms of agitations conducted by the Beedi workers under the auspices of all India committee of Beedi Workers in different states. He said that the entry of multinational mini-cigarette companies in the Beedi markets in India is the biggest danger facing the industry. Coupled with this onslaught of the foreign companies is the dubious role of some Beedi business houses to rob the nations' exchequer and the poor beedi workers in the name of excise and tax concessions. In addition they go on looting the poor beedi workers by under payment through contract system etc. Com.Ganguly

therefore wanted districtwide, statewide and countrywide campaign and agitation against this exploitation and for that purpose to plan joint actions. His report highlighted 21 point demands to be conceded by the state and central governments and by the Beedi industry. He stressed the need to strengthen the organizational position and also to build up fraternal unity with other unions and federations and central trade union organizations.

In all 21 delegates participated in the discussion on the Secretary's report. In addition, the conference also took up other important issues involving national importance in the form of resolutions. In this series the resolution on problems of Beedi Industries was moved by S. Chandrashekar of Tamilnadu. It was seconded by Mr. Abul Hasanat Khan from West Bengal. The resolution on housing problems was moved by Nityanand Swami of Karnataka which was seconded by Boby John of Kerala. The resolution on exemption of cess duty was moved by V.J.K Nair of Karnataka and was seconded by P.Aruna of Andhra Pradesh. And the resolution for uniform applicability of bonus to all industrial workers and employees in the service sector was moved by P.R. Krishnan of Maharashtra. It was supported by K.Moosaba of Karnataka. Other resolutions passed by the conference were moved from the chair. And these pertained to and called for proper implementation of Welfare Measures; extension and enforceability of provident fund scheme for all Beedi Workers; need based minimum wages; equalisation of Cess and Excise Duty in regard to all hand-made beedis and strong objection to the new pension scheme.

After a detailed reply by Com. P.K.Ganguly on the points raised by the delegates during their discussions, the report was unanimously adopted. The delegate session then resolved that the name of their organization shall hereafter be "All INDIA BEEDI WORKERS FEDERATION". It was further resolved that the federation will have one president, 4 Vice Presidents, one Gen.Secretary, 4 Secretary and one Treasurer. These newly elected office bearers elected are C.Kannan President; Vimal Ranadive, Tanu Lal Mandalwar (M.P), M.Rajangam (TN), Abul Hasnat Khan (W.B) Vice President; P.K.Ganguly—Gen. Secretary and V.J.K. Nair (Karnataka), Mohamed Nizamuddin (W.B), S. Chandrasekharan (T.N), Smt Vinaya Deshpande (Maharashtra), as Secretaries and R K Swami (Rajasthan) as Treasurer. The delegate session also elected a 46 member working committee. Among them 9 are from West Bengal, 6

# ANGANWADI WOMEN MARCH TO PARLIAMENT

□ VIMAL RANADIVE

Ten thousand Anganwadi Workers and helpers assembled at Jantar Mantar on November 28, under the banner of Samyukta Sangharsh Samithi to submit a memorandum to the Prime Minister listing their demands, in particular regularisation of employment for Anganwadi women, a minimum wage and no privatisation of IDS projects. The SSS comprises the CITU, AITUC, HMS, HMKP, NFTU and Lal Nishan. The anger of the women over unfulfilled promises was seen in the unexpectedly large numbers who turned up for march to parliament, exceeding the expectations of the organisers. In September when a delegation met the prime minister, finance minister and human resources minister, all of them agreed that the "Rs.400-200 a month being paid was too little, and had recommended an increase. "Even after two months, no announcement had been made.

From the All India Federation of Anganwadi Women (CITU) 4000 women came Punjab (1010), Haryana (1400), M.P (689), Andhra Pradesh (200), Rajasthan (50), Himachal Pradesh (30), Bihar (1000) and a few from West Bengal. It had already been decided that the far away states like Kerala, Tamilnadu, Andhra would hold demonstrations in their own states on the same day. According Karnataka, Andhra and West Bengal held their, demonstrations at the project level, and at their assemblies.

The procession was led by Vimal Ranadive (CITU), Amarjeet Kaur (AITUC), Kiran Aurora (HMS). Jaya Jaitly (HMKP) and Rajkumari (NFTU), Nilima Maitra, Nirupama Chatterjee, Bhavesh Roy and many others from the AIFAW participated in the March.

Stopped by the police when the huge demonstration reached Parliament Street women squaed on the road, and the demonstration became a mass meeting.

The meeting was addressed by the various women leaders. Vimal Ranadive, convenor of the Samyukta Sangharsh Samithi welcoming all the women who had come from different parts of the countries, referred to their working conditions.

Sevikas, she observed, are supposed to work for four hours, but over and above that they are given extra work such as pulse polio campaign, Mahila Samrudhi Yojana, family planning, and so, on for which they re not paid! Can anyone she asked, live on the wage of Rs.200 wheat the prices of all essentials, dal, price, milk, vegetables, have gone sky high! Concluding she pointed out that if the demands were not met within a reasonable time, the SSS

would given a call for a one-day strike a call; which was received with enthusiasm by the women.

Geeta Mukherjee, MP and leader of the CPI congratulated the women while promising to do her best to achieve their demands. Jaya Jaitly, HMKP took up the issue of the beauty contest held in Bangalore and condemned it saying that "if at all the 'beauty contest' prize is to be given, why not for these women who are giving good service to women and children?" BK Prasad on behalf of NFTU supported fully the cause of women and the slogan of one-day strike. K.L. Mahendra of AITUC, Jibon Roy CITU, Sunderi Tirky HMS and KC Basavraj HMKP, all trade union leaders spoke supporting the cause of the Anganwadi women.

CPI(M) MP Chandrakala Pandhe, Brahamanand Mandal MP (HMKP) and Naval Kishore MP (NFTU) came during the lunch hour to express support to the Anganwadi women.

A delegation on behalf of SSS consisting of Rajkumari, Geeta Mahajan, Neelima Maitra, Bhabatosh Roy, Sudha and Bsav Raj KC went to meet the Prime Minister to present a memorandum, Prime Minister Deve Gowda just promised to look into the demands saying "that tit is under consideration.

Reporting back, the delegation members expressed their disappointment, for the lukewarm response.

On behalf of the presidium, Vimal Ranadive then moved the resolution. For many years now, every government, has promised to do something for the Anganwadi women. After two big all-India demonstrations by the SSS, in 1992 an increment of Rs.125 and Rs.90 wa swon, though, many states are not yet paying this amount. But it is also a fact that wherever the movement is strong as in West Bengal, Punjab and in Andhra the women have been successful in achieves some demands, such as festival bonus, in West Bengal, higher post as supervisor in Punjab, preventing privatisation in Punjab, preventing privatisation in Andhra, time scale swage in Tamilnadu. But complaints have come from many states that both the state and central government are increasing the work load without extra payment. Seniority is not accepted, nor regularisation, nor minimum wages. Conditions are the worst in Bihar.

The resolution also reiterates that if these demands are not accepted and implemented within a reasonable period of time, the Anganwadi workers and helpers will have no option but to observe a one day token strike as the first phase of their continuing struggle for their just demands.

# Government Flouting the Agreement on Modernisation of NTC Mills: Workers to Launch Rail Roko, Rasta Roko on 30th December

P K Ganguly

The Joint Action Committee of Textile Workers, comprising of the CITU, INTUC, AITUC, HMS, BMS, UTUC and TUCC has decided for a programme of Rail Roko and Rasta Roko throughout the country on December, 30, 1996. As a preparation for the success of the programme, state level conventions, rallies, gate meetings, postering, leaflet distribution, etc will be held by all the constituents in the country.

The programme was announced through a Declaration unanimously adopted in a national convention, followed by a rally at Delhi on 5th December. The rally was participated by about 3000 textile workers who came mostly from the northern states of UP, MP, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana and from Bengal and Gujarat.

The action programme taken was in pursuance of four major and long standing demands of the Textile workers, namely,

1. Implementation of the unanimous agreement on modernisation of the NTC mills arrived at in the Special Tripartite Committee meeting on 9.4.94, which was also approved by the Cabinet.

2. Writing off the loans of the four subsidiaries of WBABO (W.Bengal, Assam, Bihar and Orissa), Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat.

3. Immediate payment of statutory dues like PF, Gratuity, ESI, etc

4. Convening of the Tripartite Committee meeting in Textile Industry to discuss the sickness and other problems of the private sector, cooperative sector and state sector mills.

The Rail Roko and Rasta Roko programme is the culmination of a series of action programme launched during the Congress regime by the JAC during the last several years, which included massive all India rallies and Jail Bharo at Delhi and State level rallies, jail bharos, strikes, etc in the different sectors of the industry. This is the first major action programme after the installation of the United Front government.

The question of saving the public sector NTC mills from closure and their revival emerged as the most vital question over the years. This is coupled with the growing closures of the private sector mills,

sickness of the cooperative mills and pauperisation of the handloom weavers and fleecing of the powerloom workers who now produce about 80 per cent of cloth in the country.

It is to be noted that industrywise 122 mills of the National Textile Corporation constitute the largest number of public sector units in an industry in the country, which are threatened with virtual liquidation under the present policy of dismantling the public sector.

As a matter of retrospect, these 122 mills, originally in the private sector, were discarded by their owners as the weakest mills in the Textile industry. With the then policy of establishing the public sector, the Government had taken over the mills and nationalised them in 1974. The mills were modernised to some extent with expansion. Over two lakh workers were employed. The productivity and capacity utilisation of the mills increased both in spinning and weaving. They made profits and made exports. They catered to the needs of the poorer sections of the people and supplied Hank Yarn to the handloom sector at cheaper rates.

But over the period, particularly with the 1985 economic policies and the Textile Policy in tune with that, the Government started denigrating the public sector. The 1991 NEP was a declaration of open war against the public sector in pursuance of the philosophy of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. The progress of the NTC mills was nipped in the bud. They were made sick. The workforce was reduced to about 1,37,000 through VRS. The constant demand of the trade unions to modernise the mills was negated.

The Sick Industrial Companies Act (SICA) was amended and alongwith various sick PSUs, 8 subsidiaries out of 9 of the NTC were referred to the BIFR, despite total opposition by the trade unions. The BIFR was also given the power of liquidation.

Although, following the NEP, a Special Tripartite Committee and a Tripartite Committee in Textile Industry were constituted in 1991, the Government totally ignored these Committees and announced a

Turn Around Strategy to "revive" the NTC mills. In the name of revival, the Government decided to outright close down 42 mills and throw out 80,000 workers out of job.

The JAC of Textile Workers launched protest actions. The Government was compelled to form an NTC Committee with the trade unions and appoint the four Textile Research Associations of the country, namely SITRA, BTRA, NITRA and ATIRA to prepare reports for modernisation and revival of the NTC mills. After two years the Textile Research Associations (TRA) submitted the report in December 1993. During the period the NTC Committee also visited several sick mills in Bombay and Ahmedabad.

The TRAs stated that all the sick NTC mills, total 79, can be modernised and revived without any outright closure. They however recommended for merger of 36 mills into 18 mills, instead of the Govt's plan of outright closure of 42 mills. They also recommended for reduction of workforce of 70,000 through VRS, instead of the Govt's plan of reduction of 80,000. The trade unions totally opposed any reduction in workforce by forced VRS. The TRAs estimated the cost of modernisation to be Rs 2005.72 crore at 1992-93 prices. But the Govt has made it a precondition that it would not spend a single paise for the modernisation. The report of the TRAs stated that the sale of surplus land, machineries and buildings would fetch an amount of about Rs 2350 crores at 1992-93 prices. This would cover not only the entire modernisation cost, but also purchase of new machineries and product mix required for modernisation of the 79 mills. The UTI offered to purchase the entire surplus land at Rs 2400 crores.

The trade unions insisted for no reduction in workforce, no privatisation, and nationalisation of the 15 taken over mills (13 in Bombay and two in Kanpur), which were still not nationalised. After prolonged discussion and struggle, an unanimous 8-point agreement was ultimately arrived at in the Special Tripartite Committee meeting on 9.4.1994 as follows:

1. The reports given by the Textile Research Associations show that the NTC mills as well as Taken Over Mills can be made viable by modernisation.

2. Modernisation/Rationalisation therefore should be carried out in consultation with the unions.

3. There should be no retrenchment.

4. There should be no privatisation.

5. Taken over mills would be nationalised.

6. Surplus land may be disposed of and the

proceeds should be utilised by the management for modernisation, working capital, etc.

7. Professional management should be strengthened both in the Holding Company and at the subsidiary levels and representation of trade unions should be ensured upto Board level for effective participation of workers in management at all levels from unit to Holding company level.

8. Steps shall be taken to move the BIFR to accept the above proposals and close the cases.

But for more than one year the government refused to approve the agreement on the ground that its present policy was de-nationalisation and privatisation. So the two points in the agreement cannot be accepted. However, after intensified agitations, which included two successive massive rallies at Delhi and big delegations to the then Prime Minister with a number of MPs, the Government ultimately approved the agreement on 8.5.95. The Government also had to pass the Bill for nationalisation of the 15 Taken over mills. But thereafter the implementation of the modernisation process did not start at all.

The BIFR during the period approved the revival schemes of four subsidiaries, namely, Maharashtra (North), Maharashtra (South), DPR, (Delhi, Punjab, Rajasthan) and APKKM (AP, Karnataka, Kerala, Mahe). But it held up the schemes of WBABO, UP, MP and Gujarat on the ground that these subsidiaries had outstanding loans worth about Rs 1100 crores. The BIFR categorically asked the Government to waive the loans, so that it can approve their revival schemes. But the former Congress Government did not waive the loans. The BIFR served closure notices to these subsidiaries.

Even the UF Government has not waived the loans, nor started the process of modernisation of the mills. It is now more than two and half years after the unanimous agreement was arrived at.

On 5th December the JAC held the first protest action against the lackadaisical attitude of the UF Government also. When another big delegation met the Prime Minister, he assured to have a high level meeting with the Finance Minister, Textile Minister and Labour Minister on the issue. After the high level meeting he reported to a CITU delegation led by the leader of CPI(M) Lok Sabha group, Somnath Chatterjee and the leader of the Rajya Sabha group, E Balanandan that the entire issue has been held up because the present Shiva Sena-BJP Government of Maharashtra was not giving clearance to the sale of surplus land, which would fetch the major amount

for modernisation. The issue of waiving the loans of the four subsidiaries being a part of the package was also help up for this. He only assured to discuss with the Chief Minister of Maharashtra to clinch the issue.

But the plea of the Prime Minister is totally untenable. Because according to the estimates of the TRAs, the Bombay sale of surplus land and machineries together would fetch only about Rs 810 crores, ie. less than one third of the total proceeds from the surplus land and machineries of all the subsidiaries. Besides, the NTC lands are central government properties. If the Government wants it can sell it.

Also the issue of writing off the loans from the four subsidiaries is not a part of the entire package at all. If it is so, then as the Government has approved the package it has to write off the loans also.

The main reason is elsewhere. It is the policy of non-revival of sick units, closure and privatisation of the PSUs formulated under its mentors, the IMF and World Bank. It is being reported that the Textile Ministry has been asked to draw an altogether new scheme, whereby 30 to 40 mills may be closed down which will throw about one lakh workers jobless. Coupled with this is the new move of the Government to open up the non-core and non-strategic sector to the multinationals to the tune of 75 percent equity participation. The NTC mills are listed in it. The unanimous agreement with the recommendations of the TRAs is thus going to be totally flouted.

The Damocle's Sword is hanging over NTC. The workers destined to struggle, are left with no alternative than to intensify the united struggle irrespective of affiliations, with more militancy. The Rail Roko and Rasta Roko action on 30th December must give the message to the people about the diabolical plans of the imperialist thrust policies and the adverse effects that will be experienced by them due to the closure of the mills. The appeal made by the Joint Action Committee of Textile workers for the people's support to the Rail Roko and Rasta Roko must be conveyed to them.

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## CITU Demands for Revival of NTC Mills and IDPL

A delegation of CITU led by E Balanandan, leader CPI(M), Rajya Sabha and Somnath Chatterjee, leader of CPI(M), Lok Sabha with Tarit Topdar, MP and P K Ganguly, Secretary, CITU met the Prime Minister, Sri H D Deve Gowda on 11th December on the issues of revival of the NTC mills and IDPL.

This meeting was in continuation of the earlier meeting with the Prime Minister on 5th December when several thousands of NTC workers and IDPL workers held a demonstration at Delhi.

As per the assurance given by the Prime Minister on 5th December, a meeting was held by him with the Finance Minister, Textile Minister and Chemical Minister to take decisions on both the above issues.

The long standing immediate demands of the trade unions are modernisation of the NTC mills as per an unanimous agreement arrived at with the Special Tripartite Committee on 9.4.94, which was approved by the Cabinet and writing off the loans of the four subsidiaries of WBABO, UP, MP and Gujarat.

The Prime Minister who was with the Cabinet Secretary, reported that so far as NTC is concerned the entire process of modernisation has been held up as the Siva Sena-BJP Government of Maharashtra has not yet given clearance for the sale of surplus land in Bombay as per the agreement, which is the major source of the fund for modernisation. The government however has requested the Chief Minister of Maharashtra to come to Delhi on 20th December, so that the matter can be clinched. Since the writing off the loans of the four subsidiaries is part of the package, it will be dealt with thereafter.

On IDPL the immediate demand is release of Rs 26 crores for the running of the plants and Rs 6 crores for disbursement of wages. Production in the IDPL plants have been stopped as the Finance Ministry has not released the amounts to the Chemical Ministry.

The Cabinet meeting called on 24th December will discuss on this issue so as to revive the IDPL.

On NTC and related issues in Textile industry, the Joint Action Committee of Textile Workers comprising of the INTUC, CITU, AITUC, HMS, BMS, UTUC and TUCC has already given a call for countrywide Rail Roko and Rasta Roko on 30th December, 1996.

# Massive Protest Rally Against Patent Amendment Bill

More than 2500 field workers, organised under FMRAI, mainly from Northern Indian States along with representation from all over the country, participated in a procession which started from Ram Lila Grounds New Delhi and winding its way over Hotel Ranjeet Floyover and cutting across Barakhamba Road and via Jantar Mantar marched towards the Parliament on 27th Nov 1996. At the call of the National Platform of Mass Organisations, the field workers were protesting against the government's proposal to amend the Indian Patent Act 1970. Near Patel Chowk and in front of Parliament Police Station the protesters were blocked by a police barricade guarded by a strong police battalion. Here the procession was converted to a rally which was presided over by Com. DP Dubey, General Secretary of FMRAI. The rally was addressed by Comrade Jeevan Roy MP and Secretary of CITU, Com. Brinda Karat, General Secretary, All India Democratic Women's Association, Com. N K Shukla, Secretary, All India Kisan Sabha, Com. Sunit Chopra, Secretary, All India Agricultural Workers Union, Com. Asim Bala, MP, Com. Dinesh Abrol of Delhi Science Forum and Com. A Guha, Secretary, FMRAI.

The procession which was led by comrades carrying huge FMRAI flags and giant protest banners was made colourful with numerous banners of state units and sub units of FMRAI, large number of red flags and hundreds of placards. Continuous slogan shouting by the protesters throughout the route of the procession attracted the evening office crowd.

A TSR fitted with mikes preceded the rally which led the slogan shouting and a tempo was converted to a make-shift stage when the procession ended.

The Platform had given a call to observe 27th Nov as all India protest day by sending telegrams to the Prime Minister by all unions and conducting street corner meetings and gate meetings. The speakers in the rally emphasised the need for continuous and increased pressure to prevent the government from its stated intentions to amend the Patent Act.

Earlier in the morning the FMRAI held a massive North Zonal convention at the Bharat Scouts and Guides campus on the common demands of the field workers in the pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical industries. The Convention was the last in the series of such conventions and rallies held by FMRAI in the Eastern, Western and Southern Zones. The convention was attended by about 2,500 delegates and inaugurated by Com. E Balanandan, President, CITU. It was addressed by Com. D P Dubey, General

Secretary, FMRAI, Com. Sudhir Kumar and Com. C S Sharma, Joint General Secretaries and leaders of the various state units of FMRAI.

## Dharna at Patna

A massive dharna was staged on Nov 27 under the banner of National Platform of Mass Organisations in front of Railway Station in Patna against the proposed Patent Amendment Bill, Privatisation and invitation to the multinational companies in insurance and financial sectors, disinvestment of Public Sector, for the enactment of central legislation for the agricultural labourers and for the 33 per cent reservation of women in Parliament and legislative assemblies, against corruption, etc. The dharna was staged from 11 am to 5 pm.

While addressing the gathering the leaders of different mass organisations criticised the Govt in the Centre for pursuing the same discredited economic policies of the previous Congress regime. The leaders warned that the workers, peasants, agricultural labourers, women and other deprived sections of the society will not tolerate the so called liberalisation and globalisation that deprived the common people from getting even the bare minimum to keep their body and soul together. The policy has also resulted in undermining the sovereignty and self reliance in economy. The sky rocketing prices of essential commodities have created a situation where even middle class people are finding it difficult to endure. The leaders warned against the impending explosion of mass discontent if the govt fails to address the issues concerning the common masses.

The gathering was addressed amongst others by Com. Ganesh Shakar Vidyarthi CPI (M), Com. P K Ganguli, AITUC, Com. Nripen Krishna Mahto TUC, Com. S Mukherjee UTUC (LS), Com. Tarakant Prakash, UTUC, Com. Chandi Prasad, CITU, Com. Sarangdhar Paswan, Khetihar Mazdoor Union, Com. Durga Pd., Khet Mazdoor, Com. Shudha Bindu Mitra, JMS, Com. Krishna Kant Singh, Kisan Sabha, Com. Sachidanand Singh, Coordinaton Committee, Com., Harihar Prasad, Kisan Sabha, Com. Gaj Nafar Nawab, AITUC, Com. Yogendera Pd., NGEF, Com. AWadhesh Kumar, DYFI, Com. Ahteshram Ahmad, SFI, Com. Mithilesh Kumar Singh, Insurance Employees Association, Com. Yogendra Pd, Singh, Parivahana Karmachari Sangh, Com. Arun Kumar Mishra, CITU, Com. Jitendra Kumar CITU.

The meeting was chaired by a 5-member presidium consisting of Com. Krishna Kant Singh, Com. Girija Shakar Mani, Com. Chandi Prasad, Com. Tara Kant Prakash and Com. Ramdas Prasad.

# BIHAR BANDH TOTAL

J.S. MAJUMDAR

On December 18, the Left Front sponsored Bihar bandh to protest against growing corruption and to raise various demands of the people turned to be highly successful as well as peaceful despite all attempts of the state government to foil it. The bandh call given by the CPI(M), CPI, Forward Block and RSP evoked spontaneous response from all sections of the toiling masses.

The state unit of the Samajwadi Party, Marxist Coordination Committee and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (Soren) also extended support to the bandh while the CPI(ML) gave it "critical" support. For its own reasons, the Congress (I) too decided to support the bandh call.

Banks and insurance offices, markets, commercial establishments Act remained closed throughout the state while national and state highways wore a deserted look. Public transport vehicles remained off the road.

At Pakur, some 40,000 stone quarry workers spontaneously went on a total strike while the loading of coal at Lalmatia, from where it is sent to Farakka and other places, came to a standstill.

State government employees observed a 100 per cent successful strike on December 19. This was the last day of their two-day strike call.

At Patna, CPI(M) state secretary Ganesh Shankar Vidyarathi, CPI state secretary Suraj Prasad, SP leader Pappu yadav, CPI(M) state secretariat member Krishna Kant Singh, its state committee members Avadhesh Kumar, Arun Kumar Mishra and Bindeshwari Singh, as well as over 250 Left parties' activists were taken into custody.

The bandh call had its echo within the state assembly too when members of the Left parties trooped into the well of the house, shouted slogans and demanded a discussion on the bandh and the issues raised by it. This continued for about 40 minutes. The situation turned so embarrassing for the ruling party in the state that more than 50 members belonging to the four Left parties as well as the MCC, CPI(ML), and JMM (Soren) had to be marshalled out.

Rufusing to learn anything from its growing isolation from the masses, the ruling Janata Dal resorted to another heinous trick after the Left and other MLAs were marshaled out; it got a thoroughly anti-people

bill on cooperatives passed within a short span of only three minutes. Then, to add insult to injury, it got the assembly adjourned till December 22 though, as per the schedule, it was to continue for seven days more. The CPI(M), CPI, RSP and FB leaders and MLAs later took a delegation to the governor to protest against such anti-democratic manoeuvres of the Lalio Yadav government.

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## AITUC JOURNAL CARRIED WRONG REPORT

The 5th December issue of "Trade Union Record" the fortnightly journal of AITUC published a false report under the heading "CITU UNIONS JOIN AITUC" stating that "17 unions affiliated to CITU with 7500 membership have withdrawn from CITU" and joined AITUC.

CH. NARASING RAO, General Secretary, Visakhapatnam dist. committee of CITU communicated to "Working Class" that "The news published in 'TRADE UNION RECORD' is altogether false and concocted. It is also a lie that 7500 members of CITU of 17 unions have joined AITUC. Not a single union affiliated to us left CITU."

Fact remains that eight local officials of some CITU unions including one Anandam and others have been expelled from CITU for indulging in corrupt practices and those expelled elements have joined AITUC along with around 150 workers, particularly from Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation Union. But consequent upon that, 600 workers resigned from the AITUC union enmasse.

The official of the CITU unions who were expelled and took shelter in AITUC have already been replaced by fresh election of new leaders, and the same has been announced in massive rally of workers, the report of which has already been published in the local dailies.

The Visakhapatnam district committee of CITU condemned such false reporting by a trade union journal.

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## RESENTED WORKERS' OUTBURST IN BHILAI STEEL PLANT

Mounting resentment and anger of the workers burst out in spontaneous demonstration of several thousands in Bhilai Steel Plant in Madhya Pradesh, collapsing the work of the most sensitive coke-oven dept of the steel plant against the scheme of massive loot imposed on the workers in the name of govt pension scheme and also against the leadership of those Central TUs who rendered wholehearted support to the Govt scheme.

On 9th December 1996 the Bhilai township witnessed spontaneous unrest of the steel workers consequent upon commencement of deduction from workers' PF account for diversion to Govt Pension fund. The SAIL management, in spite of there being no compulsion on them to start deduction and diversion of PF money to pension fund due to clear cut order of High Court to that effect, sent instruction to deduct and divert PF money to pension fund which provoked the already mounting resentment further. The workers while shouting protest against the BSP management and Govt of India, also condemned those TU leaders supporting the Govt scheme of loot in the name of pension.

Surprisingly and to the dismay of all concerned, police force was let loose on the protesting workers and around 200 workers were arrested. On 10th December, several thousands workers spontaneously gathered before the Shram Sakti Sadan, Sector 6 of Bhilai demonstrated whole day long demanding scrapping of the Govt pension scheme and release of the arrested workers. It was an upsurge of common workers irrespective of affiliation against the Govt design of dacoity on workers' PF and shameless surrender of some TUs to such design, and thousands from even the recognised INTUC union took active part in the demonstration. The most sensitive dept of the steel plant 'the coke oven' remained inoperative for long eight hours having its severe repercussion on the production of that day. Under the mounting pressure of protest, the arrested workers had to be released. From the gathering before the Shram Shakti Sadan it was announced to assemble at Jubilee park of Bhilai Town Ship on the following day to discuss about next course of action.

In the meeting of Common Workers coming from all streams of unions operating in Bhilai Steel Plant, "Save CPF Committee" or "CPF BACHAO COMMITTEE" formed earlier during the pension struggle was revived.

In a meeting of SAVE CPF Committee held on 22nd December 1996 at Jubilee Park, decision was taken to hold dharna and demonstration inside the plant before the office of Executive Director (Works), KARKHANA BHAWAN on 24th December '96.

The Day 24th December 1996, witnessed a massive rally of more than 7000 workers inside the Bhilai Steel Plant before the office of ED (Works), KARKHANA BHAWAN. The common workers from all affiliations gathered in the two hour long dharna and demonstration. Production Work got paralysed during the period of demonstration. Bhilai Steel Plant never witnessed such massive rally of workers in the recent past. The SAVE CPF Committee declared their resolve to carry on the struggle against the loot of PF in the rally.

The incident of Bhilai steel plant, which remained calm and indifferent to many occasions of agitation and countrywide strikes should be the eye opener to those still supporting Govt pension scheme and lending hands of assistance to the **legalised pilferage of workers' provident fund** in the name of pension. It is also ridiculous that Govt of India is refusing exemption to the separate pension scheme for SAIL workers already formulated which does not encroach the PF money. And even some of the unions who are party to SAIL-based pension scheme remained unresponsive to such derogatory approach of Govt of India.

CITU has been opposing the Govt scheme from the beginning. Even those supporting the scheme, did not dare to declare their support amidst the workers, since workers in general rejected the scheme in totality. At least 130 stay orders against the scheme are pending in various high courts of the country.

All the trade unions must read the mind of the workers and unite irrespective of affiliation to defeat the retrograde scheme of loot on workers' PF.

# LIC - GIC STRIKE TOTAL

Over 2,00,000 insurance employees of LIC and GIC, successfully observed a one-day strike on December 9, throughout the country. The strike was total.

The strike was observed against the central government's move to open up the insurance sector for entry of private companies, Indian and foreign, and the decision of the government to introduce a bill in Insurance Regulatory Authority (IRA) as a prelude to this, in the current session of parliament, carrying an enabling power of licensing companies.

The call for the strike was given by the All India Insurance Employees' Association (AIIEA) which has been spearheading the campaign against privatisation of the insurance industry for well over six years, and other unions in LIC and GIC.

Big strike rallies were conducted in thousands of centres, big and small. In New Delhi, a massive strike rally before Jeevan Bharati Building (Zonal office of LIC) was addressed by Basudeb Acharya and Jibon Roy, MPs belonging to the CPI(M), Gurudas Das Gupta, MP(CPI), P.K. Ganguly, Secretary, CITU and other trade union leaders. In other centres also prominent political and trade union leaders addressed such rallies.

Even before the strike, there had been grounds well of support generated through intensive campaigns. Apart from the Left Parties, individual MPs, MLAs and others belonging to several other parties expressed their support.

The government, particularly the finance minister, has been declaring that the LIC and GIC would not be privatised but would be strengthened. At the same time he has been declaring that the insurance industry would be thrown open for participation by private Indian and foreign companies. There is no qualitative difference between privatisation and opening up. The entry of private and foreign companies would expose the public sector insurance industry to serious disruption. Most of the Indian companies have reached collaboration deals with foreign insurance giants. Opening up will lead to unethical practices like undercutting of premium and speculative investments. Social and priority segments of insurance cover and investments would be abandoned. The private companies will concentrate on lucrative areas of insurance to maximise their profits, and neglect other areas. Future generation of additional resources by LIC and GIC would be impaired. This would also result in scarce resources being transferred out of this country. Moreover, the private and foreign companies servicing and claims settlement record has not been good. The international scenario is marked by insurance mal-

practices, frauds, defaults and insolvencies.

LIC and GIC have been recording nearly 20 per cent growth for the past several years. Productivity and profitability have increased steadily. Without additional investment over what was carried out at the time of nationalisation (Rs 5 crore for LIC in 1956, and Rs.21.5 crore for GIC in 1972), This phenomenal growth and huge resource mobilization for social and economic development has resulted. At the present level of generation of resources (LIC alone threw up a surplus addition to the life fund of Rs.14,800 crore, apart from dividend and tax paid to the government, for investment in 1995-96) LIC and GIC together would generate as much as Rs. 1,00,000 crore in the next five years, i.e., one seventh of what is said to be required for infrastructure development in the next five years. Opening up will irreparably disrupt this established capability.

The AIIEA has been organising conventions on a large scale throughout India against opening up. In the last three months alone over 150 conventions at state, district and local levels have been conducted. A national convention will be organised shortly. The earlier mass contact effort of collecting over 65 lakhs of signatures from members of the public, is now being followed-up by arranging campaign 'jathas'. To start with this is being organised in Tamilnadu and Kerala where van jathas have been organised from five centres in different corners. These would converge at Madurai on December 13, 1996, where the 16th general conference is being held. These jathas would cover over 200 centres on the way. The reports so far received indicate encouraging participation by other trade unions and public figures. People have displayed lively curiosity and interest and on being explained, have expressed support too, to our struggle. From every centre of major congregation of people, telegrams are being sent opposing opening up of insurance to the finance minister. Four lakh leaflets have been distributed. Besides campaign through leaflets, scheduled meetings and impromptu meetings where a sizeable number of people are present, at street corners, bus stands, market places, etc., the matic songs, street plays and such other forms of campaign are being adopted. It is our expectation that at least one lakh of people will be directly contacted in this campaign and their support enlisted, part form many items more than number who will get exposed to our campaign.

This and other forms of mass contact programmes will be organised in other states also. The 16th general conference of AIIEA, meeting at Madurai from December 14 to 18, 1996, will decide on further intensification of the struggle.

# CONSUMER PRICE INDEX NUMBERS FOR INDUSTRIAL WORKERS

(BASE 1982 = 100)

Centre	Sept.96	Oct.96	Linking factor for old Base	Centre	Sept.96	Oct.96	Linking factor for old Base
All India	344	346	4.93	Barbil	333	332	5.00
Gudur	359	358	4.33	Rourkela	310	310	3.59
Guntur	344	348	5.60	Amritsar	313	317	5.19
Hyderabad	314	318	5.23	Ludhiana	310	318	—
Visakhapatnam	323	325	—	Ajmer	343	344	5.01
Warrangal	336	335	—	Jaipur	332	332	5.17
Doom-Dooma Tinsukia	318	325	4.05	Chennai	364	367	—
Guwahati	348	352	—	Coimbatore	333	338	5.35
Labac-Silchar	309	311	3.96	Coonor	361	356	4.80
Mariani-Jorhat	336	336	3.95	Madurai	356	359	5.27
Rangapara-Tezpur	336	346	4.29	Salem	361	360	—
Jamshedpur	331	337	4.68	Tiruchirapally	373	381	—
Jharia	298	301	4.63	Agra	326	334	—
Kodarma	303	306	5.43	Ghaziabad	333	336	—
Monghyr	327	336	5.29	Kanpur	339	345	4.69
Noamundi	321	328	4.58	Saharanpur	316	317	5.06
Ranchi-Hatia	334	332	—	Varanasi	365	368	5.12
Ahmedabad	345	345	4.78	Asansol	315	317	4.77
Vadodara	343	342	—	Calcutta	351	356	4.74
Bhavanagar	366	364	4.99	Darjeeling	301	303	4.55
Rajkot	341	340	—	Durgapur	359	360	—
Surat	366	364	—	Haldia	375	375	—
Faridabad	345	345	—	Howrah	358	362	4.12
Yamunanagar	331	332	5.53	Jalpaiguri	313	315	4.16
Srinagar	330	325	5.47	Raniganj	307	308	4.40
Bangalore	341	344	5.66	Chandigarh	331	328	—
Belgaum	355	359	—	Delhi	353	365	4.97
Hubli-Dharwar	344	348	—	Pondicherry	403	407	—
Mercara	351	354	—	<u>Additional series of Labour Bureau</u>			
Alwaye	355	353	5.19	Kothagudem	351	355	3.25
Mundakayam	360	358	—	Himachal Pradesh	327	328	3.75
Quilon	370	367	—	Bhilwara	346	344	3.20
Thiruvananthapuram	376	360	—	Chindwara	353	354	2.59
Bhalaghat	337	335	5.24	Tripura	330	332	4.37
Bhilai	311	313	3.49	Goa	382	390	3.40
Bhopal	365	367	5.46				
Indore	356	352	5.18				
Jabalpur	351	351	6.41				
Mumbai	369	371	5.12				
Nagpur	350	360	4.99				
Pune	364	365	—				
Solapur	370	368	5.03				

**Note:** Figures on old base can be obtained by multiplying the Index Number on New Base by the linking factor given and rounding off the result to nearest whole number.

—Dash denotes new centres under 1982 series,

# 92nd Birth Anniversary of Com.BTR

The 92nd birth anniversary of Com.BT Ranadive, the founder president of CITU was observed at Delhi on 19th December, 1996.

Originally it was planned to observe the anniversary with a mass meeting at the BTR Trust Memorial ground, which the CITU has purchased. But due to the lackadaisical attitude of the Government the ground could not be acquired, as there is a structure of J&K Government inside the ground, the demolition of which is yet to be completed.

The meeting however was held at the Constitution Club, and the room was full to the capacity. A big photograph of Com.BTR with garlands was placed in the room.

Com.Santi Ghatak, the Labour Minister of West Bengal and CITU Vice President presided over the meeting. He briefed about the Herculean efforts made by Com.BTR in founding the CITU. He explained how through his constant guidance the CITU has emerged as a leading central trade union in the country committed to advance class struggle.

Com.M K Pandhe, General Secretary of CITU detailed the political and ideological guidance given by Com.BTR to the trade union movement in the country leading to the formation of the CITU in 1970. He explained how Com.BTR guided the workers to tackle the complicated problems faced by them in their day to day struggles, and also intervene in both national and international issues confronted by the working class. He further narrated how Com.BTR explained each and every issue in the national and international arena and guided the leaders and workers of the CITU to approach them and tackle them from class angle. These issues were related to the struggle against imperialism, the struggle against monopoly capital, the struggle against the feudal ideology, the communal ideology and the anti-Marxist and non-Marxist ideologies, etc. And this differentiated the CITU qualitatively from other trade unions. Based on these ideological struggles with class outlook, Com.BTR gave the stirring call for trade union unity which must lead to the formation of a confederation with all the central trade unions and national federations to unite the entire working class and bring them on to the point of class struggle.

Com.Md Amin, Secretary, CITU and Minister of W Bengal paid tributes to Com.BTR and made reminiscence of his association with him and guidance received from him in both political struggle and trade

union struggles.

Com.K Adinaryana leader of the Central Government employees explained how Com.BTR guided them in their struggles against the anti-labour and anti-people policies of the central government.

The meeting concluded by observing two minutes silence in standing paying homage to com.BTR and then raising slogans for working class unity.

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*(From Page 9)*

from Kerala, 5 from Tamilnadu, 6 from Karnataka, 5 from Andhra Pradesh, 4 from Tripura, 3 from Bihar, 2 from Rajasthan, 4 from Maharashtra and 2 from Madhya Pradesh.

The concluding public rally was held at Bapuji Nagar Maidan in the heart of the textile city. It was an impressive rally of several thousands and comprised overwhelmingly of women. It was presided over by Com.Narsaya Adam Master. In this meeting, Com.Narsaya Adam Master introduced to the gathering the newly elected office bearers. The rally was then addressed by Com.C Kannan, President, Com. P K Ganguly, General Secretary and Com Vimal Ranadive, Vice President of the Federation; K L Bajaj, General Secretary of Maharashtra State CITU and Subhashini Ali, Joint Secretary, All India Committee of AIDWA.

The Solapur Committee of CITU and the Reception Committee headed by an enthusiastic team of leaders and functionaries like Narasaya Adam Master, MLA, Ravindra Mukashi, Allah Baksh Patel, and Smt Mangala Hotgi and volunteers from SFI, DYFI, AIDWA, etc had worked very hard to make the conference and the rally successful.

## G K Panickker

G K Panickker, Chairman of the Kerala Dinesh Beedi Cooperative Society, died on December 17, 1996 following a massive heart attack in Thiruvananthapuram. He was 75.

A prominent figure of the beedi movement in Kerala he held the chairman post of the society till his death from its inception in 1969. His dedicated work had greatly contributed in the growth of the society. An IAS officer by profession, he was always an ally of the beedi workers in Kerala.

His untimely death is a great loss to the beedi movement in Kerala. C Kannan, President of the Beedi federation has condoled his death.

## 7th Conference of Plantation Workers Gives Call Against Repression in Assam

The 7th Conference of AIPWF was held at Dibrugarh in Assam from 19-22nd of Dec 1996. More than 250 delegates from Kerala, Bengal Tripura, Assam, Karnataka and Tamilnadu attended, among whom 24 were women workers. Com.Vimal Ranadive president, AIWPF and secretary, CITU inaugurated the conference. Com.M K Pandhe, General Secretary CITU and Com.Samar Mukherjee, leader of CITU attended and gave their valuable suggestions to the delegates, in their speeches. Com.S K Handique, the chairman of the Reception Committee welcomed the delegates and guests attending the conference.

The important resolution on repression in Assam where the leader of Plantation workers in Kokrajhar district Sagarika Soren who was kidnaped and murdered and also those killed in Tripura by extremists, was passed. The condolence resolutions on Com.Achintya Bhattacharya, Manoranjan Roy, Sunil Moitra, Godavari Parulekar the respected leaders of the various movements were passed. Condolence resolutions also were passed on Com.Jinedevan, V G Bhaskaran Nair and M K Krishnan were remembered with two minutes silence.

After submitting the report by the General Secretary Com.Anand Pathak, 26 comrades participated in the discussions including 4 women making important contribution in the report. Main points were raised on the non-implementation of the Plantation Labour Act which required immediate amendments since, there is no housing, no electricity, no drinking water or creche in the plantation, especially in the north. Wages too are very low compare to south. A charter of demands was adopted at the end of the conference with 30 points. The demand of 20% wage in regional and Rs 1500 as minimum wage was accepted by the delegates considering the sky rocketing prices.

The newly elected working committee, where Com.Lalaji Babu was elected as General Secretary of AIPWF spoke on the Action plan during coming period. There will be agitation and wearing of black badges and demonstration in the states on 28th of January and observing the day as repression day, in memory of Sagarika Soren and comrades in Tripura. There were resolutions on pension on welfare fund scheme for plantation workers, on bonus etc.

A public meeting held on 22nd with a procession taken around by thousands of workers was addressed by Coms Samar Mukherjee, Bimal Sinha, Anand

Pathak, Com.Udhav Burman, MP, Hemant Das MLA, Lalaji Babu and S S Handique and Com.Dhaniram Khosla. Vimal Ranadive presided over the meeting.

The fraternal delegates from Bengladesh Com.Md. Anwar Hussain and M.D. Abu Noor were introduced and enthusiastically welcomed by delegates They were presented with special shawls from Assam.

The Working Committee elected Com.Vimal Ranadive as President and Com.Anand Pathak as Working President, Com.Lalaji Babu as General Secretary and Com.C Nanjundappa as Treasurer. Com. K. Padmanabhan, K. Kannan, Com.J Hemachandran, Manik Sanyal, Bimal Singha, Amal Ghosh Dastidar, Ajit Sarkar, Unni Krishnan and other were elected as vice presidents and secretaries of the new committee.

### CITU Welcomes Supreme Court Verdict on Child Labour

The Secretariat of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions have issued the following statement:

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions welcomes the verdict of the Supreme Court to ban child labour and ordering for compensation by their employers.

The CITU, which has taken up a countrywide awareness programme under an ILO-IPEC project on the elimination of child labour, has been campaigning on identical lines targetting nine child labour infested industries in different states.

The CITU urges upon the government to strictly implement the Supreme Court verdict in all employments, hazardous and non-hazardous, including in home based units, wherever child labour exists.

While welcoming the verdict for free compulsory schooling and enforcing compensation by the unscrupulous employers and giving employment to the parents or guardians of child labour, the CITU is of the view that poverty is the main cause of child labour. The government therefore must chalk out concrete programmes for alleviation of poverty, like genuine land reforms, employment generation, need-based wages to the working adult family members of child labour in the entire unorganised sector where child labour is rampant.

This would go a long way in natural elimination of child labour in the country.

# CONSOLIDATION OF THE RUSSIAN WORKING CLASS

□ Chittabrata Majumdar

The third Congress of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR) was held in hall of Columns, House of Trade Unions, Moscow on December 5-7, 1996. The Congress was attended by 641 delegates from all over Russian Federation representing 4,48,44,034 trade union members includes 24,87,974 Pensioners. The total work force in Russia is 4,78,58,220 out of which 4,23,56,046 i.e. 88.5% are the members of Trade Union. FNPR is the only National Trade Union in Russian Federation.

Apart from the delegates, 91 fraternal delegates from 49 countries, 26 delegates from 13 International organisations like ILO, WFTU, ICFTU, WCL, GCTU, ICATU etc. and 5 individual foreign guests also attended the Congress. From India, I attended on behalf of CITU and Comrade K.L. Mahendra on behalf of AITUC attended.\*

The Congress discussed Report of the General Council on the realisation of the decisions of the 2nd. Congress, report on activities of the Auditing Commission, amendments in the Constitution of FNPR, amendments in the Status of the Auditing Commission, the Programme, the powers of the General Council etc. and elected the President of FNPR and the Auditing commission, Comrade Mikhail Shmakov was re-elected as the president of FNPR.

The Congress was conducted democratically and in an organised manner. All the items in the agenda were taken up and concluded within the stipulated time and the delegates were given full opportunity to discuss and were free to express their views. They also confined themselves within the subject. All the decisions including amendments were adopted by majority votes of the delegates by raising their hands with cards.

## GENERAL FEATURE

The report and deliberations in the Congress and discussions with various people exposed the worsening conditions of the working people and of the economy. The globalisation has brought with itself the sizeable drop in the living standards of the majority of the population; the destruction and downfall of number of enterprises in advanced industries that used to make for technological development and independence of the country; the sharply reduced pro-

ductivity in agriculture; the steep decline in the country's science, culture, education and public health services resulting in a grave spiritual degradation of society; the growing stratification of society, with the bulk of the public

wealth being concentrated in the hands of a tiny minority; the overlap drop in wages and salaries in relation to the actual cost of living; the increased number of people living below the poverty line; the unmanageable growth of unemployment and the steadfast reduction of jobs with acceptable working and pay conditions; the less reliable guarantees of personal safety resulting from the criminalisation of society, the deteriorated environment, and the growing number of industrial and transport injuries and accidents and disasters; the limited access for workers to cultural values; and the fall in the prestige of honest work, good education and high skills.

All the burdens of reforms under prescription of IMF and World Bank have been shifted on the shoulder of the working people. Official minimum wage is less than 20 per cent of the minimum subsistence level, average salary can buy only 80 per cent of a minimum consumer basket, 43 million people i.e. more than 25 per cent of the entire population are living below the poverty line, unemployment in the society rose to 20 per cent, the workers are not being paid their wages for months together and the bill for non payment of wages is now at a staggering 40 trillion roubles.

The working in all industries starting from consumer goods manufacturing to machine tools industry, mines, military industrial complex, space research organisation has almost come to a halt. The Govt. is not providing any money not only towards the payment of wages, but also to continue the manufacturing activities too.

As for example, there is no work in the Submarine manufacturing unit at Arkenjel employing about 40,000 workers. The only job they are doing is to break the condemned Submarines. There is no power, no central heating, no salary to the workmen. Education of their children has also stopped. Being incapable to feed their family, on an average 15 workers per month are committing suicide.

Extraction of Crude Oil is also being reduced.

workers in Coal Mines are not getting their wages since June, 1996. Production in the agricultural sector has also seriously been affected. About 40 per cent of the requirement of food grains are being imported.

The plan for economic development and industrialisation in the COMECON countries were such that, industries in various parts of the region were complementary to each other. Destabilisation of the socialist system in the region and dismantling of Soviet Union, has completely destroyed the industrial harmony of this region. To make the industries independent, much investment is needed, but this is not coming.

Disinvestment in most of the public sector industries are going on. Though till now in all the cases, the Govt. is holding the majority shares. The Govt. has no plan for running of the industries and no money is being provided for that. On the other had, investment of foreign and private capital in the manufacturing sector is not visible.

#### HOW THE WORKING CLASS IS REACTING

The working class of Russian Federation have not accepted all these as their fate. Series of strike struggles including other forms organised by them during the period to safeguard their rights have shown their fighting spirit against oppressive regime. On November 5, 1996, 15 million workers took part in strike demanding their due wages, but with no result. The Govt. did not how any urge to run those industries properly and kept their eyes closed to the problems of the industry and the workers. They are rather eager to destroy the industrial base of the country. Under the peculiar circumstances, these strike struggles of the working class are becoming fruitless.

#### PROGRAMME DOCUMENT

Considering the circumstance,s the Congress felt the need of nation-wide strong collective actions. On collective action the programme Document pointed out 'When the employers or authorities avoid talks, display non-constructive attitudes or even refuse deliberately to honour the agreements already signed, the unions must be prepared to meet the encroachment on workers' interests with a resolute rebuff. In order to be able to do so, they must be ready to resort to collective action, including picketing, rallies, work stoppage, and other legitimate forms of struggle, right upto a nation-wide strike.' Thoroughly considered positions, solidarity, legality and publicity have been considered as the most important prerequisites

of successful collective actions.

The question of 'no confidence' to the Govt. was also raised by the delegates. But, having found themselves in conditions of 'a wild capitalism' and those of destruction of safety nets, the congress of FNPR put stress to establish social and economic democracy in the country, to promote production growth, mitigate clashes of interests, and restore incentives to honest work through a system of collective accords and agreements. To achieve the same, emphasis has been given to put pressure on the REgional and Local Authorities,s so that, through them sufficient pressure can be put on the State Duma to provide fund in the budget for solution of the problems.

About the policy of the Federation, the Programme Document states, 'FNPR is a free self-governing democratic trade union organisation, independent of employers, executive powers, and political parties and movements: it builds on the principles of federalism providing for unity of actions, independence of the affiliates, decision making in the interests of the majority, and respect for the rights of the minority.'

On the question of international relations, the Programme Document states, 'As a part of the world trade union movement, FNPR builds its international policy and co-operates with foreign national and international trade union centres and other organisations and movements, based on the principles of trade union solidarity, mutual respect and non-interference in one another's internal affairs.'

In the context of growing international consolidation of capital, FNPR took the position what, internationalism will go together with their patriotism. While supporting international integration and a fair division of labour, they are willing to defend home manufacturers against unscrupulous international competition, and workers in their countries - against economic and social discrimination by foreign capital, transnational corporations and international monetary circles.

Considering the fact that the present day trade union movement is passing through a crisis due to various factors of the changed situation, and to overcome the phenomena,the Congress decided to extend their functioning beyond the task of protecting wage and salary earners. They have decided to co-ordinate public initiatives aiming at workers' self-organisation and self management; more vigorous efforts to organize workers in new sector of the economy, partially employed persons, home workers, free-lancers, pensioners, professional people,

and the unemployed; to adopt specific programmes for women and young people; to expand the range of benefits and services that trade unions can deliver to their members; and to remove consequences of the political split in the trade union movement.

A long list of detailed programme in the sphere of protection of workers' economic interests including wages and employment of the population and unemployment; in the sphere of social guarantees; in the sphere of labour protection and ecology; and in the sphere of strengthening and development of the trade union movement has also been included in the programme Document.

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

During my stay in Moscow, I met and discussed with several foreign delegates like delegates from All China Federation of Trade Unions, Egyptian Trade Union Federation, general Confederation of Labour, General Federation of Trade Unions of Korea, Federation of Trade Unions of the Republic of Kazakhstan, federation of Trade Unions of Kyrgyzstan, New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia, Federation of Trade unions of Yzbekistan, Vietnam General Confederation of Labour, General Confederation of trade Unions, and WFTU.

I paid a visit to the office of the Russian Council, Oil, Gas and Construction Workers Union and discuss with the President Comrade Lev A Mrionov and Head of the International Department, Comrade Konstantian Tuzikov about the position of industry, activities of the union and also general situation in Russia. Following economic restructuring, the oil sector has already been divided into 16 separate Oil companies engaged in various activities and the extraction of oil has been reduced. Though due to strong pressure from the union, the authority could not divide Gas sector. As a result of financial difficulties, the construction sector has been affected seriously and the workers are being declared redundant. They are very much interested to know about the situation in Oil sector in India. I also explained the Indian situation. Both of us were in agreement that the main problems are identical in many respects.

### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Towards the end of the socialist system in USSR, people had money to purchase their required commodities, but shops were empty of commodities. Now, the shops are full of foreign products, but there

is no rush, as the majority of the people have no money to buy them. Under the new system, the great majority of the people are becoming poorer and a small section is becoming rich. New system has given birth to Mafia in the society. Everything is being controlled by them. No businessman, however small he may be, can continue his business activity, unless he pays regular monthly contribution to them. On failure to pay, he is being murdered. The citizens are not safe outside their house after evening in Moscow. Even the mafias do not hesitate to kill policemen in the streets of Moscow. Criminal activities are increasing. This is the life in Russia today.

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## Conference of NPCC Workers Union

The 17th Bi-ennial Central Conference of National Projects Construction Corporation Ltd. workers' union of India (CITU) was held on 21st & 22nd. Sept. 1996 at Bakreswar Dam unit, Birbhum (WB). The place was named as "Nirmal Roy Manch" memory of the esteemed veteran leader, later Nirmal Roy who acted as pioneer in organising the Construction workers and also the founder President of this union, the conference began with the hoisting of red flag. Com. Binoy Mukherjee, President the union followed by presenting flowers in the martyrs column. The conference was inaugurated by Birbhum District CITU leader Com. Broja Das.

The past performance of union, the organisation (RRNN Ltd.), the construction industry as well as the drawbacks of the central Govt.'s policy along with income and expenditure of the union for the year 1994 & 1995 was analysed and presented in a written report by Com Anup Kumar Roy, the General Secretary and Com Guru Pada Das, the Treasurer respectively. Hundred numbers of delegates were present in the conference from several units of India and out of thirty delegates took part in the discussions.

The conference unanimously elected twenty five numbers of Central Executive Committee members including office bearers for the years 1996 & 1997 consisting of Com Basudeb Acharia, MP as president, Com Binoy Mukherjee as Working President, Com Bisheswar Paswan, Amal Kundu, Md. Naim and Dilip Kumar Bhattacharjee as Vice-President, Anup Kumar Roy as General Secretary, Anand Prakash Prasad, Prabir Majumder, Faiaz Ali, Dina Nath Chatterjee and P. Ganesh Rao as Assistant Secretary, Guru Pada Das as Treasurer.

# INTERNATIONAL MEETING OF WORKERS AGAINST NEOLIBERALISM AND GLOBALIZATION AT CUBA

□ Sukomal Sen

Trade Union representatives from 49 countries of all continents which participated in the International Trade Union Meeting ON Unity and Solidarity of Workers on the eve of the XXI Century, on 2nd May, 1996 in Havana, Cuba agreed in promoting the International Conference of Workers against Neoliberalism and Globalisation in summer 1997 in Havana, Cuba.

The participants had recommended inviting Trade Unions and social organizations from all over the world in the international Conference.

Preparatory to that international Conference, a meeting of the co-sponsoring trade union was held at Havana on 3 December '96. The CITU as a cosponsoring trade union deputed Com. Sukomal Sen to attend that meeting. Trade Unions from many Latin American Countries, Australia, Turkey, USA and France joined the meeting, Chinese Trade Unions also sent their consent to cosponsor the international meet. The meeting decided that the international conference will take place at Havana from August 6 to August 8, 1997. The following agenda was decided.

- \* Privatization.
- \* Unemployment and subemployment.
- \* Wages cutting.
- \* Social Security cuttings and deterioration of health and education services.
- \* The world unipolarity.
- \* Unfair wealth distributions.
- \* Actions set out to weaken and eliminate trade union organizations.
- \* Losing of the countries' sovereignty and independence.
- \* Discriminatory treatment towards women and the use of infant work.
- \* Other specific topics of each country or region.

Further decisions were taken as follows:-

## 1. Registration and participation fee:

It will be an indispensable requisite to participate in all the activities, the registration and the participation fee at cash in the places designated to this effect.

Participation fee: 30.00 USD

## II. Co-sponsoring of Trade Unions, social organizations, foundations and individuals.

The co-sponsoring of the event implies the disposition of the interested persons to participate in the organization of this event, and according to their possibilities to extend material and financial support for the event.

## III. Managing Committee.

A Managing Committee will be created among the co-sponsoring organizations trying to have some representatives per continents which will be responsible to work in the program organization and impel all the event organizing work.

## IV. Confirmation of participation

Final date: June 30, 1997.

The preparatory meeting desired Com. Fidel Castro to address the International Conference. Accordingly Cuban Trade Union Federation was requested to write to Com. Castro to inaugurate the conference. It was also decided that the conference will be organised in five fora: Plenary Session to Commission. Five such Commissions will be set up on different subjects and then a final statement will be prepared and accepted.

This International Trade Union Conference at Havana in August '97 is going to be an important event in the fight against Globalisation and Neoliberalism.

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## Book Post