

THE VOICE

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Re. 1

DOWN WITH RACISM AND APARTHEID!



Down with Apartheid

ON the morning of June 16, 1976, African schoolchildren began gathering near the secondary school in Soweto. By 8 O'clock there were already 10 to 15 thousand people there. Bearing slogans such as "Down with Africaans!" "African is the language of our oppressors!", they started off to the local stadium to hold a protest meeting. But suddenly a police detachment appeared.

"Shots rang out. Dust, smoke, running children...Stones flew at the police. The shooting continued. But the crowd moved ahead, throwing whatever came to hand at the police."

This was the way the unrest of black schoolchildren began in South Africa ten years ago. It soon grew into a full-scale uprising, and all over Soweto there were clashes with the police and troops.

The strike movement goes on. One of most widespread forms of the people's struggle against the apartheid regime is the boycott of lessons by schoolchildren.

Emergency: A Declaration of War —Winnie Mandela

In a clandestine interview to Independent Television (London) which could bring her up to ten years in jail, Winnie Mandela has clearly and categorically stated the position of the black majority in South Africa. "Blacks regard the current state of emergency as a declaration of war which they will ultimately win. As much as the South African regime is prepared to fight to the last man, so are we determined to fight to the bitter end". Flaying the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher and US President Ronald Reagan for their shameful opposition to mandatory economic sanctions, a measure she characterised as "the only peaceful measure left to prevent unrest", through the heavy memory of the bloodshed under apartheid by thousands upon thousands of blacks, she has fiercely declared. "It is not for the British and the Reagan Administration to prescribe to us what degree of suffering we must still undergo. We have suffered enough."

The police can no longer cope alone with the demonstrators. In June 1985 a state of emergency was declared in the country. Despite the harsh repression, thousands strong meetings and demonstrations are taking place all over the country.

The ANC declared 1986 the year of the 10th anniversary of the Soweto uprising. And the 16th of June — "South African Youth Day". And this is not only a tribute to those who have fallen at the hands of the police, but a call to struggle.

Down with apartheid!", "Let's put an end to the Botha government" and "Let's wipe out racism!" are today the slogans of those who are fighting against apartheid.

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Government Accepts Posting of Husband and Wife at the Same Station

THE All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women (AICCCWW) had been raising the question of allowing the working women to lead a normal family life by transfer of either herself or her husband to the same station of the working. Several CPI(M) M.P.s also had taken up the issue with the concerned minister and also in their speeches in Parliament. As a cumulative result of these efforts, the Govt. of India, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions has now issued a circular No. 23034/7/86-Estt (A) dated 3rd April, 1986, in which it has been stated that "It is the policy of the Government that as far as possible and within the commitments of administrative possibility, the husband and wife should be posted at the same station to enable them to lead a normal family life and to ensure the education and welfare of their children."

The Circular gives certain concrete guidelines giving examples:—

- (i) All those who belong to All India Services, namely: IAS, IPS or Indian Forest Service (Group A) would be posted to the same Cadre by providing for a transfer of one spouse to the cadre of the other.
- (ii) Where one spouse belongs to one of the All India Services and other spouse belongs to one of the Central Services, the Central Service authority may post the officer to the same station, where the other spouse belonging to the All India Service is posted.
- (iii) Where both belong to the same Central Services both are to be posted in the same station.
- (iv) Where both belong to two different Central Services, the spouse with the longer service at a station may apply for transfer to the other station.
- (v) Where one spouse belongs to an All India Service and the other to a public sector undertaking (PSU) the spouse employed under the Public Sector

Undertaking (PSU) should apply for transfer to the station/state where the other spouse is posted.

- (vi) In case of one spouse belonging to a Central Service and the other in Public Sector Undertaking (PSU). The spouse employed in PSU should get transfer. In case there are no such posts, the spouse belonging to the Central Service may also apply for being posted.
- (vii) Those employed by the Central Govt. may apply to be posted in the same state and station if the other spouse is employed by the State Government.

In all the cases the principle accepted is that for enabling the married persons of both sex to lead a normal family life, all efforts should be made to ensure their posting at each other's station according to availability of the post etc., with flexibility.

This in itself is an advancement as despite a circular having been issued in February, 1976, various public sector undertakings have not been adhering to this principle. The case of Com. Manju Roy of DVC published in The Voice of Working Women earlier is a proof of the callous attitude of the authorities. The fact that the principle was evolved during the International Women's decade had no effect on male chauvinists in the Government Departments and the Public Sector Undertakings.

It is unfortunate that the DVC authorities are still not recognising this right of the working women to be posted at the Head Quarters of the spouse and some more such cases are pending. In another case of Mrs. Shanti Bajaj taken up by the AICCCWW, the husband is being denied promotion while juniors to him are being brought from line on promotion to Delhi/Faridabad area.

The most important question now is would the Govt of India ensure that this circular is implemented fully by the Central Govt Departments and the Public Sector Units controlled by them.

CITU's Report on Equal Remuneration Discussed in International Labour Conference

ON 31.7.1985, the CITU in consultation with the AICCCWW had submitted a report on Violation of Equal Remuneration Act in India. From Report No. III part-4 (B) it is seen that the subject has been discussed in the International Labour Conference held in 6th June this year as 3rd item on the agenda by the ILO. We are publishing below excerpts from this report for information of our readers.

"In comments on the application of Convention for the period 1983-85 in India, the Centre of Indian Trade Unions indicates, that after the passing of the Equal Remuneration Act 1976, wage inequality continued, inter alia, these women workers employed for about 10 to 12 years by the South Central Railway Administration were made casual as soon as the notification of Equal Wage was applied to railways, while their junior male colleagues were being absorbed permanently, and that this has affected their emoluments, social security and retirement benefits including pensions.

"In its report, the Government indicates that the South Central Railway Administration has decided that the women concerned should be considered for absorption in different yard gangs and also loading and unloading gangs."

"In India, according to the comments of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions with regard to the application of the Convention for 1983-85, many collective agreements continue to provide for differentiated wages between men and women, even after the adoption in 1976 of the Act respecting equal remunerations.² An agreement concluded in January 1985 in the beedi industry (Indian cigarettes) in Bihar (where this industry employs more than 80,000 workers, the majority of whom are women) provides that women shall receive Rs. 6.10 for the rolling of 1,000 beedies, while men shall receive Rs. 9.50. Similarly in Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, where women constitute 80 per cent of the workforce in the beedi industry, they earn between Rs. 3 & 4 less than men for work of the same nature which, according to

the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, is the reason for the employment of a female labour force and for the transfer of work from the factory to homes. The persistence of wage differentials has also been noted in plantations, by the Simla employment bureau in 1980, and in Assam, where the wage differentials between men and women are due, according to the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, to an understanding between a number of trade-union leaders and the managements of the plantations. In Karnataka, inequalities in remuneration existing in plantations in 1983 (jobs were classified into two categories with women always being classified in the second, less well paid category) were, however, abolished by the last collective agreement, which was concluded in 1985. According to the same comments one very important section of women, i.e. those employed in agriculture, earn lower wages than men even for work of the same nature, including harvesting, except in West Bengal and Tripura, where the State Governments try to enforce equal wages.

Reinstate Bibi Bimla

In Ludhiana an impressive DHARNA of about 200 employees including about 100 working women was organised on 3.7.86 at the call of co-ordinating Committee of Working Women Punjab in front of Guru Nanak college for women, Ludhiana.

Dharna was in protest against the backing out of the assurance of the college principal for reinstating widow worker Bibi Bimla, peon of the college who was removed from service without any reason.

Leaders of different organisations of Centre, State, semi-Govt and Private sector such as P & T, Rly. LIC Punjab State Subordinate Service Federation, Electricity and Punjab CITU spoke in the Dharna and assured full support to the organisation. At the end, Bibi Surender Kaur, convenor, warned the principal and the management of that organisation that women will intensify the movement in case Bibi Bimla is not reinstated immediately.

A.I.I.M.S Unconcerned About the Nurses Accommodation

BELIEVE it or not, in the capital city of the country, in its "most prestigious" medical institute, the benefits given to women all over the country by its Parliament full two and a half decades ago are denied to women. The hard won rights under the Maternity Benefits Act 1961, won through innumerable struggle and sacrifices spread over several centuries, rights which even managements in the remote plantation jungles seldom dare to touch, has been denied to them in a most clandestine manner. Several cases of violation of the Act, especially pertaining to benefits under Section 9 (miscarriage, abortion, etc) have come to light.

Regarding the question of the rights of its women employees, this is only one among the several feathers on the cap of the (ladies and) gentlemen who conduct the affairs at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. Delhi is the crime city of the country. With regard to atrocities and crimes against women also it has the dubious distinction of being number one in the country, incidents appear often attracting front page coverage in the national dailies. Under such circumstances, where women employees, nurses, etc. are to work during night shifts normally starting at 9PM and ending at 8AM next day and evening shifts starting at 3PM, and ending at 8-9 PM, the authorities have refused to provide hostel accommodation to young girls. The attitude of the "Prestigious institute" has special significance in view of the fact that it is the only medical institute in Delhi which is being run by the government which has the prestige of refusing accommodation to young girls. Though the All India Institute of Medical Sciences started the B.Sc Nursing Course several years back no separate hostels were built for the Student Nurses. They are also being accommodated in the hostel meant for staff nurses. To cap it all, senior staff members who do not want to stay at the housing colony of the Institute only 2 KM away and from where official conveyance is available for to and fro journey to office and back are provided accommodation in the Nurses hostel itself, one family occupying several rooms. Result, the "prestigious" institute

could not provide hostel accommodation to even those women employees who are coming from places as far as Faridabad, Ghaziabad etc.

The question of providing accommodation to its women employees even after several years of service is no concern for the management. In Delhi where hundreds of establishments provide conveyance facilities, special buses, vans, etc to its employees, the A.I.I.M.S which has such a large percentage of women in its work force, has never thought of providing any such facility to its employees.

The Operation Theatre allowance is a further example. Those who are working in the Operation Theatre have to stand for full 6-8 hours. The O.T. allowance which is normally admissible in such cases and which is given in a number of less "prestigious" hospitals in the same city are non-existent in the A.I.I.M.S.

Recently a concerted effort was made to change the service conditions arbitrarily, thereby even closing the existing limited promotional avenues for the nurses and other lower grade employees. Since it met with some resistance from other sections of the employees, the management could not move as smoothly as it expected. Any organisation representing the interests of the nurses are non-existent with the result that they are treated in a manner often reminiscent of working conditions in the 16th century. Instances reported go to the extent that a girl running 103° temperature and was under-going treatment for Malaria was strictly instructed at point blank to report for duty on next day morning.

Nothing more is required to prove that this will only be the tip of the ice burg,

All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women

The following letter was written by Vimal Ranadive, Secretary-AICCW to Shri Narasimha Rao, Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India on July 3, 1986

on the question of Maternity leave of the Nursing staff in AIIMS.

Dear Shri Narasimha Rao,

I am forwarding herewith an application from Mrs Mariam Sebastian dt. 24.6.86 addressed to the Medical Superintendent, All India Institute of Medical Science, for your special attention.

In the ordinary circumstances I would have referred the matter to the Medical Superintendent to whom the applicant has asked for leave. But two points have forced me to bring the case to your notice. The first is that after the Doctor advised the applicant rest for six weeks this was changed to 15 days at the intervention of the Administration Department. This indicates some administrative decision of not allowing the women to avail of 6 weeks rest after miscarriages. This is entirely against the provisions of the law. The second point is still more serious. It appears that in about a dozen cases such things have happened in the past. I have made enquires and came to understand that the staff Nurses of Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital do get the 6 weeks leave as provided for in the Act in case of miscarriages. It is only the All India Institute of Medical Science which is denying the legal benefits.

The AIIMS is a prestigious medical institute. It is therefore doubly wrong to allow the violations of law particularly in respect of women. Besides, what our country has come to? Everyone appears to have forgotten that at the instance of the U.N. we have just completed observing the International Women's Decade. Is it appropriate that the AIIMS authorities would treat the women workers in this fashion.

I would, therefore, request you to please intervene in the matter and take necessary steps not only for allowing the applicant her due six weeks rest but also conduct an enquiry as to in how many cases the women workers have been denied their due maternity leave. I shall be thankful if you please let me know the action taken in this respect.

Tribal Women Denied Maternity Benefit

13 Tribal women workers in Purnapani mines in Orissa were denied the Maternity

Benefit since many years. They are working under the contractor, and middlemen who employ them depriving the various benefits entitled under the Act. The United Mines Mazdoor Union in Orissa has brought this to the notice of the Director General of Mines Safety. The tribal women, being simple and uneducated are even not aware of their rights and this is taken advantage of by the contractors. The CITU has written a letter to Shri P.A. Sangma, the Union Labour Minister demanding not only maternity benefit for these 13 tribal women workers but also that an enquiry should be instituted about this.

Will the Government who claims the "motherhood as sacred right of women" will do the needful?

Plight of Women in Education in Iran

The Khomenini's regime attaches great importance to schools and colleges, in order to propagate its medieval beliefs. The aim is to indoctrinate the young minds from early stages, using all kinds of pressure and influence. This is directed more fiercely at female student. Following are just some examples of the plight of Iranian women in Education:

* In a girl's high school in Tabriz, a student was expelled for laughing aloud while a male teacher was teaching.

* In the same school, when a male teacher is teaching, the principle eavesdrops behind the door to catch anyone who might laugh aloud, in which case the student is told off after the class and in front of other students.

* The principal of another girl's high school in Tabriz, while reading out to students a directive from the Department of Education, said: "Girls who fail to wear the Islamic cover will, according to the order of the Islamic Judge, receive 74 lashes as punishment.

* Last summer in Minab, South of Iran, the informers from the Islamic student societies had the task of reporting to the school authorities, the names of those female students who were ordinary head cover, as opposed to the strict Islamic one, in the streets of Minab. Those whose names were reported were refused admission in September, when the school reopened.

Midwives should be Paid at the Rate of Rs. 30

THE Bihar Medical & Public Health Employees Association has directed its unit to see that the midwives are paid at the rate of Rs. 30 per delivery. The State office of the Association has come to know that in many blocks in Bihar this amount is not paid to the midwives, as a result of which the money allocated for this purpose is returned to the Government. The Association has asked its units to train the midwives about keeping their work report complete and duly signed by the competent authority.

To discuss the problems of midwives, a delegation led by Sukomal Sen, M.P., the General Secretary of the All India State Government Employees' Federation, had met the Health Secretary, Government of India, on March 19. The other members of the delegation were Vimal Ranadive, Secretary, All India Coordination Committee of Working Women, Yogendra Prasad Singh General Secretary, Bihar State Non-Gazetted Employees Federation and Radha Raman Singh General Secretary, Bihar Medical & Public Health Employees Association.

In its discussion with the Health Secretary, Government of India, the delegation was told that there are about five lakh trained midwives all over the country and it was not possible for the Government to absorb all of them as regular employees. Yet, the Government of India has directed all the State Governments that trained women be employed on the posts of Helpers and Community Health Guides at an honorarium of Rs. 50 p.m. in each Centre in all the blocks. The proposal of enhancing the honorarium for Community Health Guides from Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 p.m. is also under consideration of the Government of India.

The Association, in a memorandum submitted to the Health Minister and the Health Secretary, Government of Bihar, had demanded that these Government of India's directives be implemented in the state without delay. However, the Health Ministry of the Govt. of Bihar has not yet evinced any interest in the matter.

The Association has therefore also directed its units to plan and prepare for a statewide agitation of the midwives for getting these directives implemented.

State Benefits to Women under Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea

Women in North Korea are fully guaranteed the right to work and the excellent working conditions by laws. This was provided by the laws proclaimed by the Government right after liberation in Aug. 1945 and has been further developed in line with the requirements of the Socialist system. Women have equal rights with men to work, to receive equal wages and social insurance and education.

The Labour Law for the workers and office employees are as follows

Article 7. To pay an equal wage to the workers who do equal work with equal techniques, irrespective of their age and sex.

Article 15. To allow a pregnant woman who needs to do lighter work for reasons of health to be transferred to easier work from the sixth month of pregnancy until she takes the maternity leave, and to pay her on the basis of the average wage for the last six months.

Article 16. A working woman with a baby under one year of age is allowed to have a 30 minute feeding break twice a day, during which she will be paid her average wage.

Article 17. It is prohibited to put pregnant or nursing women on overtime or night work.

Women Workers Meeting at Bangalore

Tejaswini

COM. Vimala Ranadive, Secretary of All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women, addressed a meeting of the women workers at Bangalore on 17th May, 1986. Com. Kurshid Begam, CITU state council member presided over the meeting, which was attended by more than two hundred from the CITU led unions in the Krishnaraja Puram area.

Vimala Ranadive warned that the new economic policy of Shri Rajiv Gandhi Government will take away the job opportunities of the women also where already crores of people are facing severe unemployment problem in the country. The women workers easily become the victims of the capitalist class who extract more than 8 hours work a day. The working women are organising themselves and fighting for their rights under the flag of CITU all over the country. The women workers of Madras city have been successful in getting the demand of child care centre at the work spots. Though the women work equal to the men they get less wages only because of being a woman.

In most of the areas in Andhra Pradesh women are being employed in large numbers in Beedi, Tobacco and such small industrial concerns. But the 95 per cent of them are going to loose their jobs due to the mechanisation in these industries. Every day the prices are going up and the purchasing power of the working people is falling, bringing down their standard of living. In this condition it is difficult to manage a family with the earning of a single person. The women should not only fight for their day to day demands but also join the struggle to safeguard the national integration and the world peace. They should also fight for the equal social status for women and carry forward the struggle to preserve their rights.

The Congress(I) Government headed by Rajiv Gandhi who is in a hurry to take the

country to the 21st century is pushing back the muslim women to the 13th century by enacting the muslim women bill against the will of the people. The women who are already being crumbled under obscurantist social traditions should unite and fight against capitalist policies of the ruling class.

In this context the 100th anniversary of 'May Day', the symbol of the International solidarity of the working class, is a very significant event of the time. The women stood shoulder to shoulder with men in the Chicago struggle one hundred years back. Today we have to remember those militant women and draw inspiration from their sacrifice to carry forward the struggle. The unorganised sections of women are also to be organised under the red flag of CITU and intensify the struggle against all the repressive and anti-working class policy of the ruling class. The women should also fight for their liberation by achieving the social-economic equality and freedom.

Hissar Janwadi Mahila Samithi in Solidarity with Workers

About 100 women belonging to the local unit of JANVADI MAHILA SAMITI staged an impressive demonstration in front of the district headquarters here on June 4. The action was organised in support of the Haryana Concast Ltd. which has been arbitrarily closed down rendering 400 workers jobless and dismissing 19 trade union activists without holding an inquiry.

The demonstration led by Mrs. Bimla handed over a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner who was forced to come down to receive the memorandum after a prolonged tussle. The memorandum has demanded immediate reopening of the plant, vacation of victimization and check over the bureaucracy of officials in the public sector.

Janawadi Mahila Samiti, Madhya Pradesh

Anagha Shinde

COMRADE LAXMI SEHGAL paid a four day visit to Madhya Pradesh where she addressed different public meetings and other organisational meetings. On 15th of May Laxmi Sehgal addressed a public meeting at Bhilai in which she mainly emphasised on the question of National integration. She said that Cong(I) regime is encouraging communalism for its own selfish political interests as on the issue of Shah Bano case and Babari Masjid conflict. It is Cong(I) who raised Bhinderen-wala and gave him such an importance to enable him to challenge our national unity. It is they who have created a drift between minorities and majority in Assam. They have given every opportunity to Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, to TUJS in Tripura and RSS in Kashmir to play their dirty game of communalism and disrupt our national integrity. There are imperialist forces who help them to disintegrate India to meet their global hierarchy.

She told that Rajiv Gandhi says that he would take the country into twenty first century. But instead of solving the problem of unemployment it is increasing by computerisation. This policy of Mr. Rajiv exposes the hoax of taking Indian people to the twenty first century. All his policies are in fact conspiracies against the working class peasantry and crores of students and unemployed youth.

Laxmi Sehgal concluded her speech with the appeal to the working class, peasants, students, youth and women to rally together and change the existing system based on exploitation.

On 16th of May Comrade Laxmi Sehgal addressed a meeting at Raigarh Jute mill gate. Dealing with problems of Jute workers she gave a call for militant struggle against present government's anti-jute mill worker policies. She said that government does not want to give them their rights. On the contrary the workers are being threatened and blackmailed by saying that the demand of jute is decreasing and the jute industry is running in a loss. But such cunning devices would not stop jute workers struggle. They should unite and fight for their rights. Comrade Jadulla presided

over the meeting. Second district conference of Raigarh AIDWA was held on 17th of May. Comrade Laxmi as the chief guest addressed the conference and emphasised on the need of a strong women's organisation to fight against the odds women have to face. She narrated the condition of tribal areas and also about the Muslim women bill. Resolution on price hike Muslim women bill, unemployment computerisation, and local problems of Raigarh were adopted unanimously. A resolution against American imperialists for attacking weak countries and preparing for star wars was also passed. Anagha Shinde, Mrs. Shantibai Karmaker and Mrs. Janki Devi Dube constituted the presidium. In the evening a public meeting was held at Raigarh Town hall ground, organised by AIDWA. The meeting was presided over by Mrs. Fatima Jadulla, the Secretary of Raigarh AIDWA. The rally was addressed by Dr. Laxmi Sehgal and Anagha Shinde. Anagha Shinde criticised new education policy which would breed unemployment. She spoke on Muslim Women's bill and Multinational companies. The public meeting was attended by hundreds of people.

On 18th of May Laxmi Sehgal addressed a meeting of active members of different mass organisations at Bilaspur. Members of CITU, DYFI, SFI, AIDWA and also of Janawadi Lekhak Sangh were present in the gathering.

Working Women's Day Observed in Delhi

The Delhi State CITU decided to observe 28th April as Working Women's Day as part of the May Day campaign. For a week before May 1st, the Delhi co-ordination Committee of Working Women fixed lunch time meetings of working women at factories and work sites in Delhi and Faridabad. Meetings were held at the Le Mount factory (Faridabad), LIC and the Social Welfare centres at Delhi. The significance of the May Day Centenary for working women was explained to the women and their enthusiasm was reflected on May Day itself, when for the first time in Delhi, 98 working women participated in the May Day rally.

Questions and Answers in Parliament

Offences Under Equal Remuneration Act to Become Cognisable

QUESTION

10th March 1986

*220. Dr. B.L. Shalesh:

Shri Ananda Pathak:

Will the Minister of Labour be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry has made any assessment about the implementation of the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 and if so, the infirmities noticed therein and instances of violations of provisions of the Act during the last three years brought to his Ministry's notice; and

(b) what steps are being taken to give more teeth to this law and to make the violations of its provisions cognisable by courts?

ANSWER

(Shri P.A. Sangma)

(a) The implementation of the Equal Remuneration Act in most employments is the responsibility of the State Governments. As regards implementation of the Equal Remuneration Act in employments for which Central Government is the appropriate Government, figures relating to enforcement have been collected from time to time. The particulars violations of the Act in these employments during the last three years are given in the Annexure.

(b) Proposals to amend the Act to make it more effective are under consideration.

ANNEXURE

Statement referred to in reply to Started Question No. 220 in the Lok Sabha for March 10, 1986

Enactment	Year	No. of inspections	No. of irregularities		No. of prosecutions launched	No. of cases disposed off	No. of convictions	No. of Acquittal
			Detected	Rectified				
Equal Remuneration Act, 1976	1983	879	1230	1209	58	25	25	—
	1984	1189	1501	1009	167	40	38	2
	* 1985	1563	2286	1282	289	77	76	1
	* Provisional							

Meeting of the WFTU Commission of Working Women

REPRESENTATIVES of trade unions from India, France, Cuba, Chile, Iraq, USSR, Czechoslovakia as well as of TUI of Commerce, TUI of Transport Workers and TUI were present at the meeting of the WFTU commission of Working Women held in Czechoslovakia, on February 19-20, 1986.

Participants reviewed the activities of the Commission during last year, particularly actions connected with the World Conference at the end of UN Decade and Non-Governmental Organisations Forum held in Nairobi in July 1985.

Debates at the Commission meeting showed that despite the fact that some progress has been achieved in the efforts to improve the status of women in all aspects of life during the Decade, its basic aims have not been reached in many countries and regions. While women's rights have been formally recognised as a result of struggles by trade unions and progressive forces, a major problem is

still non-application of these rights by many governments and employers in capitalist and developing countries. This concerns especially the right to work, equality in employment, remuneration, promotion, access to education, vocational training, social security and maternity protection. In the capitalist countries hit by the crisis, women are first victims of dismissals. Transnational Corporations create new forms of discrimination against women and seek to undermine the gains of struggles of trade unions in defence of the rights of working women. Actions and active struggle of trade union are needed against such practices as well as an effort to protect rights and demands of working women.

It was stressed that working women are getting aware of the fact that the struggle for their rights is closely linked to the struggle for safeguarding peace and for disarmament. More and more women join trade union actions for peace, against the threat of nuclear war.

WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

Working Condition in Coffee Curing Works in Hassan District

THERE are 8 Coffee Curing Works located around Hassan Town in Hassan District Karnataka. They together employ around 2000 workers, over 85 per cent of whom are women workers. These Women workers are from poor peasants families and in some cases from families of Agricultural labourers from neighbouring villages of Hassan. They have to walk every day distance ranging from 5 to 8 Kms. Coffee Curing works are agents of Coffee Board. They are owned either by partners or by Companies. They procure coffee from Coffee Planters and pool the coffee, and despatched coffee according to the directions of the Coffee Board. Coffee Board pays them Curing charge on the basis of cost of production calculated by the Board.

Wages Not Paid as per Minimum Wage Act

The Managements of Curing Works resort to manipulations in order to deprive the workers normal wages. According to Karnataka Govt. notification the managements have to pay a minimum wage of Rs. 4.10 or Rs. 4.15 per garbling a bag of 40 Kgs of Coffee. Though the workers can garble 4 to 5 bags in a day the managements would give only 1 or 2 bags for garbling. Some managements harass unionised workers by not passing garbled Coffee and by making them to clean the same Coffee again for 1 or 2 days for which no wages would be paid.

Welfare Benefits Not Provided

Factories Act applicable to Coffee Curing works, and the Welfare provisions are not provided to the workers. Supply of drinking water, Creche facility for children of workers, Latrines, Canteens, Dining Halls, are either not available or nominally available. Some managements do not give wage slips and leave books. Medical facilities are not available.

The workers leave their houses in the morning between 6 & 7 A. M. and reach between

7 & 8 P. M. The whole days earning will be between 4 & 5 Rupees.

Work Load Increased

Though as stated above, the minimum wages notified by the government is between Rs. 4.10 and 4.15 for a bag of 40 Kgs. The management give bags containing 60 to 70 kgs for garbling thus arbitrarily increasing the work load.

Union Workers Harassed

If the workers are late by 5 minutes they will be sent back, even though most of them are illiterates and innocents. Now they are developing class consciousness. In spite of managements various types of harassments against unionised workers, they are uniting and fighting for their trade union rights and for their legitimate demands. Number of times they conducted heroic strikes and struggles for regulation of employment, against non-implementation of Factories Act and other demands. They have also participated in various programmes organised by our union and at the call of CITU, by taking processions, demonstration, attending Public meetings, Hall meetings, also attended convention and conference held far away from Hassan District (Bangalore-Mangalore etc.) At the call of CITU they picketted Labour Department offices and Deputy Commissioner's office and courted arrest. Now they are having full confidence in the CITU leadership and have faith in red flag.

Women Workers Organise Under CITU

After Com. Vimala Ranadive's visit to Hassan where a meeting of more than 300 women was held about 70 Women workers in Bharathi Coffee Curing Works who broke with us about a year back and others have joined our Union. The management was taken aback by this sudden development and started harassing the workers. According to the

Karnataka Government's present minimum wages notification to the Coffee Curing, Garbling Maistries (Supervisors) should get Rs. 375.00 per month plus D. A. But these two garbling Maistries (Supervisors) were paid by the management only Rs. 10.00 per day plus D.A. When our Union demanded Maistries wages to those two ladies through our letter dated 4.6.86, instead of rectifying the mistakes the management terminated the Maistries jobs which they had done for the last 11 to 14 years, and directed them to work as Garblers, arguing that they are not maistries they were entrusted only to clean, Sweep etc., the management also issued notices to 10 members and kept them under suspension, pending enquiry and not passing Coffee which the workers cleaned and not noting their attendance.

Anti-Labour policies of the Management

Against the anti-labour policies of the management of this coffee curing works the workers were on strike from 13.6.86 demanding stop to harassment, victimisation of unionised workers, and to pay wages according to the notification to the two lady Maistries and give work as they have been doing previously. Due to an adamant attitude of the management, the women workers are continuing strike, sitting on Dharna in front of coffee curing work. The strike is withdrawn after an agreement arrived at before the Labour officer on 19.6.86 and work was resumed from 20.6.86. But the management again started harassing the two women by not giving the previous work which they promised. The situation is still tense.

Due to the encouragement given by the Govt. Of India for Automation and computerisation the managements are equipping the Curing works with electronic sorters, which render hundreds of women workers surplus, as it happened in other works.

Automation Threat in Coffee Curing

Our Union is campaigning against the dangers of Automation and Computerisation in our country and has placed charter of demands before the managements 1. A wage of Rs 20/- per day 2. Variable dearness Allowance at 5 Paise per point over and above 470 points of Consumer price Index (Base-1960-100) 3. Transport facility to workers whose houses are

beyond 1 KM from the curing works. 4. Medical facilities to the workers and their dependants. 5. To implement all welfare provisions of the factories Act and Rules.

US Atrocities Condemned

Com. Susheela Gopalan The General Secretary of All India Democratic Women Association has issued the following statement to the press on 3.6.86.:

The All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) expresses its shock and horror to learn from the available reports from South Korea the cruel and heinous atrocities committed on the women in South Korea by American Soldiers and condemns them outright.

According to the South Korean Journal "Workers Paper" the U.S. troops gangraped and killed a pregnant woman teacher at Pongyang-myon, Chewon County, North Chungchong province. The South Korean authorities, an ally of U.S. imperialism tried to hush up this incident for many days. Mrs Li, a teacher of Pongyong Primary School was kidnapped by 6 U.S. soldiers belonging to Artillery Battalion 25th Division who were participating in "Team Spirit-86" and was taken to a hill where she was gangraped and later killed. The behaviour of South Korean authorities who blocked the area, forced the village people and school staff to keep mum about the incident should be condemned. They even took away the husband of Mrs. Li so that he should not give out the incident to the press.

The U.S. troops play with the lives of Korean women, fire and kill them mercilessly. It was reported in the press that New Year's Day was celebrated by U.S. soldiers by capturing South Korean young women, cutting their hair and undressing them and painting their bodies. The cruelty of the Hitlerity soldiers could be noticed when they gouged out their eyeballs to keep them as a "Souvenir".

It is reported that such crimes continue to increase in South Korea, the latest number according to official figure being 1100, in 1982. There will be thousands more which are not reported by the South Korean authorities.

The AIDWA condemns these acts of
(Contd. on page 23)

Give US Politics, We Will Do Much— 18th Conference of PBGMS

Vimal Ranadive

THE 18th Conference of Paschim Banga Ganatantrik Mahila Samithi (AIDWA) held at Midnapur at Jamshed Ali Nagar from 26th-29th June was a historic conference no doubt. Midnapur Dist. had the honour to hold it since, the district enrolled the highest number of membership, 2,35,000. The Reception Committee was formed with Com. Nanda Rani Dal as Secretary and Com. Sukumar Sen as the President. The different Committees were looking after the arrangements of food, reservation, tea etc. Chhaya Bera, and Nanda Dal were seen everywhere from the kitchen to the mike in the hall announcing which district to go first for the food, in the dinning hall, and other announcements.

Midnapur town was decorated with beautiful and colourful gates, festoons, with symbols of a woman with a flag in her hand. The conference was the talk of the town. Buses with delegates with badges and the blue bags presented by the Reception Committee were moving from the hall to the camps.

On 26th at 4 P.M. AIDWA flag was hoisted at the conference place by the respected leader Com. Kanak Mukherjee. Flowers and garlands were offered at the Martyrs column. Com. Jyoti Basu, the Chief Minister was the first to offer them, followed by other leaders and delegates.

It was a day of open session. Already the Maidan was full, processions of women coming to join the meeting one after another. Within no time, women workers, peasants, middle-class, agricultural women — all thronged into the maidan, majority being women, Kanakdi took the chair. She spoke about the political significance of the 18th conference of the G.M.S. and how it advanced within such a short time. Vimal Ranadive spoke about the Left Front Govt and what it has done for common people including women. Then Shyamali Gupta, the General Secretary reported about the happenings during the last few years and what the Samithi has done for women.

Com. Jyoti Basu was the Chief guest and the main speaker. He said women's struggle is very much a part of the general struggle of the common people to change the present set up of the society, and to make that struggle successful, women are to be brought in the broad movement of the people. Speaking about the present economic policies of Rajiv Gandhi Govt. and his slogan to take India into 21st Century, he said people are fighting against these policies, they have not surrendered. Women are half of the population and how can any country be liberated without their emancipation? By passing laws only women will not be liberated, for implementation, movement is necessary. Rajiv Gandhi surrendered to get a few votes, when the Muslim women's protection Bill got passed.

The eighteen lamps (pradeeps) were lighted on the occasion of the inauguration of the conference. The President of AIDWA, Manjari Gupta inaugurated the Conference, explaining the work being done all over India by AIDWA when its strength went up to more than 15 lakhs. Shyamali Gupta placed the report on the 26th evening, giving the main points on the International and National situation.

The 2nd session began with the greetings by Sudha Bindu Mitra, Secretary Janawadi Mahila Samithi Bihar and Hemalata Deb from Orissa, M.S.

The great advance made by the G.M.S. was noticed by the speeches made by the young delegates from different districts. Number of them made correct points without any hesitation, any shyness, on their part. During last 6-8 years the team of young activists who have worked in their districts on the problems of women, among Panchayat members, and ICDS, among agricultural and peasant women, women in Basti and in unorganised sector, and especially on Muslim women, gathered a lot of experience. They had to defend the Left Front Government while fighting against the anti-

socials, as well as the policies of the Congress. That points out the political advance the Paschim Banga Ganatantrik Mahila Samithi has made.

Some delegates rightly said that after passing of the Muslim women's Protection Bill, the call of protest meetings or action was necessary, some suggested there should have been a mention in the report of our work in slums while others raised the questions as to how we should work with women working in ICDS. The question of women members of Panchayat was raised as to how to educate them and bring them to Mahila Samithi. Many raised the question, and rightly so, the agricultural and peasant women being members of the Samithi on a large scale, their participation in the organisational activities is much less and therefore, the G.M.S. should try to discuss as to how we can bring them in our organisation. Along with this many delegates raised the question, especially the delegates from Howrah and 24 parganas that a large number of Hindi speaking women are still away from us and how this question should be tackled seriously. The women in the unorganised sector such as women in Tiles, and Beedi, should be brought in our organisation. One Adivasi woman, Sarunashi told the delegates that the land which was not given to us for many years by the landlords, the Left Front Government helped us to get it. "If you give us politics, we will be able to do much. We are illiterate, but we want our children at least to be educated". Her inspiring speech was appreciated very much by delegates. Sandhya Chatterjee, the Mayor, from Chandan Nagar called upon women to launch struggles since Rajiv Gandhi Govt. will not be able to fulfil the aspiration of the people. Many delegates suggested that there should be mention about the education policy of the Rajiv Gandhi Govt. in the report. The speeches of Kohinoor Begum from Burdwan, Veeruar Begum, the convener of the Muslim women's committee, T. Begum and others were marvelous. Not only they got disappointed by the passing of the Muslim Protection Bill but they raised the slogan to go to each Muslim Mohalla to convince Muslim women about the futility of the Bill passed, and bring them for struggle. Kohinoor Begum said there are different religions but we come on the common platform of G.M.S. We went in a deputation to Delhi, but were abused

by the Congress. They said we were against the Shariat. But we know what we stand for and therefore many helped us by money to go to Delhi. Many delegates said, yes, we became more conscious politically after the Left Front Govt. came into power. We know we are not able to do much for women, for instance, we could not provide jobs for women. Some delegates said the total picture of number of cadres we could bring during last 4 years should have been reported so that we could judge our organisational progress. Basanti Acharya from Midnapur said women were able to get equal wage wherever we fought and many places, though equal wage was not possible, some increase was there. She said there was co-operation between GMS and Krishak Sabha. Delegates from Darjeeling Gargi, Shobha and others explained the grim situation in Darjeeling dist. when "Gurkha land" slogan was given to disrupt the unity of the workers. It was also told that congress leaders supported that slogan. While speaking on the disruptive role the Zarkhand Mukti Morcha played, Lila Bishwas from Midnapur explained as to how they had to fight against this disruptive organisation. Some of them attacked us when we held meetings, and collected money for the conference. In one of the incidents one woman was even killed. In spite of that we were able to hold this conference. One delegates from W. Dinajpur exposed the character of the Zarkhand Mukti Morcha by telling that these people distributed Milk powder to poor people to cheat them. The political awareness of the delegates was noted when one delegate said that the incident at Arwal in Bihar where many Harijan women and children were killed should have been mentioned. Many delegates mentioned about the successful Municipal elections which were recently held and the G.M.'S prominent role in convincing men and women about the importance of the win of left-front.

40 delegates spoke on different aspects of the report. The points they raised were the problems, they faced in their districts, and wanted to know how they could tackle them. It was a fact that a large number of peasant, agricultural women are the members of the G.M.S. along with teachers and women workers from unorganised sector. Their problems were raised on the platform. The membership of 1985 has been declared as 10,28,000.

The sale of EKSATHE, monthly journal is about 1800 and the sale of "organisation" which is a by-monthly is much more.

After the reply by the General Secretary the report was passed, unanimously with a few amendments. Kanak Mukherjee summed up the 18th Conference with the slogan to strengthen the organisation manifold to face the present political situation.

Credential Committees report showed that out of 514 delegates, Muslim delegates were 26. It also showed the class composition of the delegates, i.e. middle class women numbering 424, and peasants about 91. The delegates who attended the conference for the first time numbered 191, and who attended all the 18 conference were, 18. Number of resolutions were passed.

The conference was greeted by Com. Sukumar Sen the Party Secretary CPM, SFI, DYFI State and Central Govt. employees representative, Lawyers Associations, Gana Natya Manch and many others.

There were seminars on different questions like peace and war, decadent culture etc. held daily for the people of Midnapur along with the cultural programmes. The conference used to begin with cultural squad from various districts and end with the songs.

On the 2nd day, before the session began a women's procession of about 250 entered on the lawn of the hall with festoons and flags. They were employees belonging to the State Govt. Co-ordination committee who came to greet the delegates. Kanak Mukherjee and Vimal Ranadive addressed them on behalf of GMS and AICCWW.

In the open session, the GMS presented Rs. 10,000 to Nicaragua liberation struggle 10,000 for S.A. famine Relief and Rs. 10,000 to closed and sick factories in West Bengal. All the amount was given through the Chief Minister. Two small girls who saved Rs. 65.00 from their tiffin also was handed over for the Relief of Children in S.A.

Geeta Chaudhari who sang a song on Malati who died in Birbhum while fighting, besides herself becoming emotional while

singing the song, brought tears to every body who heard her, a unique song and a unique Voice! The glory of West Bengal struggles its culture and tradition all became one in the song!

Nirupama Chatterjee—The Minister of Social welfare and Relief addressed the delegates in the following words: The success achieved by the Left Front Government should be widely spread among the followers and through them to the toiling masses. This government has released the prisoners who were arrested without showing any cause. This is an example to prove that this government wants to protect democracy. Not only that. They have decentralised the power of administration in order to strengthen the base of democracy. The Panchayet Election and the power delivered to that Committee have proved that the decision of decentralisation of power was fully correct. The relief work done at the time of flood is a concrete proof of it.

But there are some weak points too, there was some hesitation regarding the matter whether females would participate as a candidate in the Panchayet Election. There were a number of hurdles and as a result in some cases females entered in the Committee not as elected members but as nominees. Our Democratic Mahila Samity has failed to organise these women, to make them effective in its organisation. Even the success is negligible where this organisation has utilised the power and capacity of these females.

Again, there is a great danger of splitting up the toiling masses by the slogan of provincialism, communalism etc. We find these diseases are spreading rapidly all over India. In order to stop these poisonous penetrations, we must try to raise the level of consciousness of our workers who have close contact with the masses.

The help to the fishermen to improve their economic condition is also almost unknown to the society.

But we know that the people will not be

with us, unless we organise them. In many cases, women are not aware of the successes of the L.F. Government such as the Barga-recording the land allotted to the landless people, the increase in wages of landless peasants etc. In case of legal rights our workers do not know what legal rights can be enjoyed by women. The dowry system has not vanished from our society. On the contrary, it has penetrated deeply within the society. In most cases married women who have to undergo severe tortures, can not protect themselves though there are some legal rights for their protection. In some cases where our organisation is strong, we win but in most of the cases, we fail.

Considering all this, we shall have to find the weak points of our movement and only by removing them we can make our organisation stronger.

Nisha Roy congratulated the delegates. On Behalf of CITU, West Bengal

"In this socio-economic structure women can never enjoy the rights and liberties which they should get for the proper development of the society for the duties and responsibilities they bear in every sphere of life.

In order to change the society in a better form, CITU should organise these oppressed women with the help of other democratic organisations. More and more joint programmes should be taken to organise this vast section of the non-political and backward women.

To develop the level of consciousness, women should have some knowledge of Marxism. A serious thought is to be given to raise the level of consciousness.

In the last Shiliguri Conference of state C.I.T.U., it has been declared that special stress should be given to organise the unorganised working women in different sectors.

It is clear to the working mass that in order to satisfy the interests of the capitalists, the Central Government has declared its industrial policy which will pave the way to retrenchment of the toiling masses in both the sectors-public as well as private. Care should be taken

that female workers will not be deprived of what they are getting under special circumstances. So, a great movement against the retrenchment will have to be organised led by C.I.T.U. Working mothers come to work leaving their children uncared. So, factories and offices where the number of working women is great, there should be creches so that working mothers can serve better. And we hope that Ganatantric Mahila Samity also will play an active role to raise this movement. Lastly, we express that we are always eager to co-operate with the programmes taken up by you, to develop the work among the women."

Maternity Leave After Two Children Unlikely

The Central Pay Commission has recommended that the maternity leave may not be allowed to women employees having two children, reports UNI.

This recommendation has been made in consonance with the national objective of a small family, says the commission's report submitted to the Government on 30 June.

Considering the difficulties of looking after a new-born child the commission has recommended that after a child birth, a woman employee should be given whatever leave is due to her in any form up to one year. This facility should however, be allowed for two children.

The AICCW on "No Maternity Leave Beyond Two Children"

"To curtail the maternity benefit upto a limit of two children under the good intension of giving more leave to look after the child with half pay or no pay etc. is a cruel joke for the working women. The CITU and AICCW totally oppose the new move of the Pay Commission to discontinue the maternity benefit after two children, in the name of the objective of a small child...."

NFPTE Kerala

Condemning the recommendations has said "This recommendation is most inhuman and deserves condemnation by all organisations".

Tripura Left Front Government Protects Women and Children

THE Left Front Government of West Bengal and Tripura have done a few things for women and children in their states within their 8 years rule. Women have been given employment under ICDS scheme in West Bengal while child welfare registered a rapid growth during last 8 years in Tripura. Prior to 1978 there were only 10 residential institutions for children in Tripura. Now 10 more institutions for children with total additional intake capacity of 500 was set up. In case of women, the capacity of three state homes for destitute women has been raised from 100 to 150. Additional provision at the State Infirmary at Narasingha during 1984-85 led to a total intake capacity of 240.

In the field of social welfare, though the Tripura state social welfare Advisory Board is trying to do many things, there are some difficulties in implementing the programme. The following suggestions are being made by the working women in Tripura for consideration of the Central Social Welfare Ministry. The five Border Area project is undertaken by the Board for development of women and children. To extend and expand the work for women, the women working in the field have a few suggestions to the Central Social Welfare Board.

There are some drawbacks about the programmes sponsored by Central Social Welfare Board for the State Social Welfare Advisory Board. Some of them are mentioned here.

(1) Grant-in-aid under One-Year. Grant-in-aid Programme for conducting Balwadis etc. @ Rs. 2,000 for annum per centre is considered most insufficient as the Gram-Sevika and School Mother attached to the Centre are getting Rs. 100/- and Rs- 45 per month respectively. It is suggested that yearly grants should be increased to the extent of Rs. 7,000/- from the current financial year.

(2) While 53 Balwadis are favoured with Nutrition benefit, 90 aided Balwadis are not getting the same benefits since 1978-79 for

want of higher allocation from the Central Board. With a view to removing inconsistency, a higher allocation of fund of 7.5 lakh of Rupees per annum is considered imperative and urgent.

(3) Creche Programme may be strengthened by increasing remuneration to the Ayas and working higher provision for supply of milk etc to the children. One trained Balwadis teacher on a regular scale of pay may be added with this Programme. Moreover the amount sanctioned should be processed through State Social Welfare Advisory Board for proper and regular supervision of the Scheme keeping all other conditions of the Scheme unaltered.

(4) The residential course for the Condensed course should be revised by adding provision of a Matron and a Night-Guard in the Budget.

Pocket Money i.e. stipend for the students for all the courses should be increased to the extent of Rs. 50/- from Rs. 15/- per month. The feeding charges of a student pertaining to the residential course for a month should also be increased upto Rs. 200/- from Rs. 60/- per month inconsideration of present market prices in the State of Tripura.

(5) Provision of Rs. 4,500/- for each Rural Women Training Camp is considered meagre. The same should be enhanced to Rs. 8,000/-

(6) Placement of fund for conducting Family Welfare Motivational Camp should be made by the Central Board in the early part of the year for planning and proper implementation of the Programme.

(7) Provision for 2 (two) Cows should be considered for Diary Scheme.

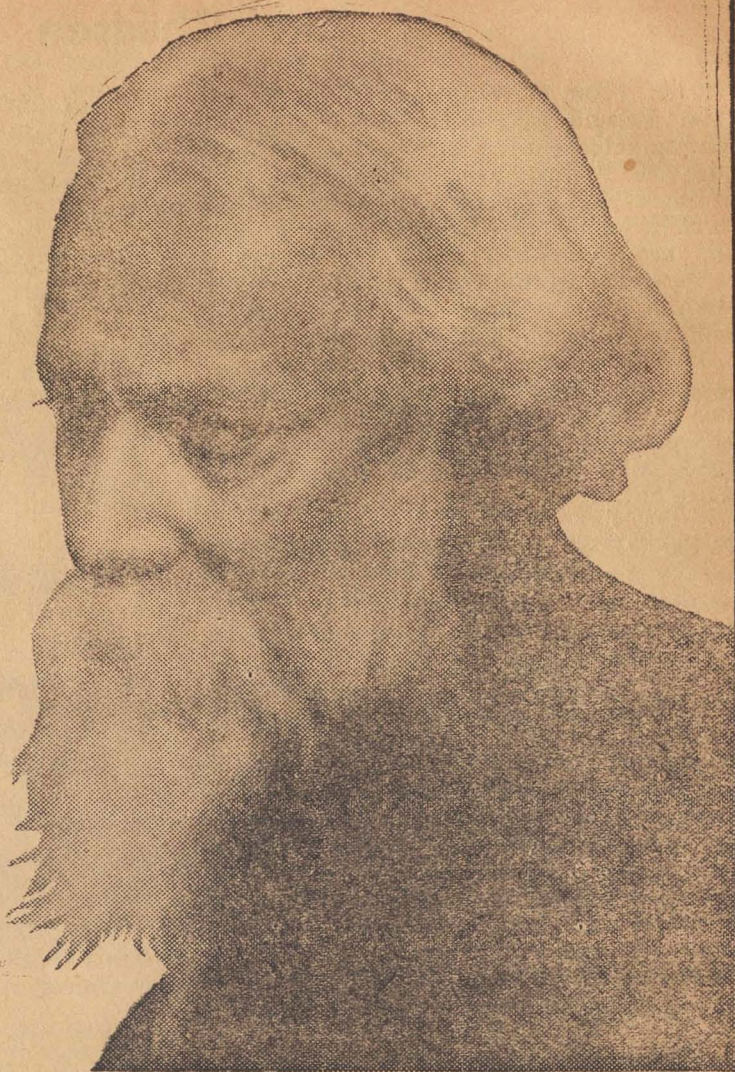
(8) The allocation of Self-Employment Programme should be made higher in-consideration of abnormal rise in the prices of commodities in the State.

(Contd. on page 20)

Crisis In Civilization

"....the demon of barbarity has given up all pretence and has emerged with unconcealed fangs, ready to tear up humanity in an orgy of devastation. From one end of the world to the other the poisonous fumes of hatred darken the atmosphere A day will come when unvanquished Man will retrace his path of conquest, despite all barriers, to win back his lost human heritage."

—Rabindranath Tagore



**Our homage to
Rabindranath
on the
125 th birth
anniversary.**

Government of West Bengal

"Women Are The Country's Secret Weapon"

CAN our readers imagine, that in an advanced capitalist country like America, women do not enjoy Maternity leave, and they have to take "disability leave" when the child is born? Naom Menezes writes in the following article that if women are withdrawn from the labour force, there will be an immediate shortage of labour and the cost would go up! The following article gives very interesting account of the present unequal position of women in one of the very much so called advanced capitalist country like USA.

— Editor

Just look at the facts. In 1950 only 11 per cent of women with children under six in the US held jobs outside their homes. In 1986 it is 52 per cent. Of these 49 per cent are married women with children under one year of age. These numbers do not include single women who are heads of households supporting themselves and their children. Single mothers, a growing phenomenon in the US are not unwed mothers. As one might easily and erroneously imagine, but women who are divorced or have been abandoned. Since one out of every two or three marriages currently goes on the rocks the number of single mothers is growing at an alarming rate.

Now let us move onto some more interesting facts and figures collected by the National Organisation of Women (NOA) currently engaged in drumming up public support for Equal Rights for Women (ERW). Though women account for nearly half the work force they still continue to be paid, on an average, 64 cents for every day paid to a man doing the same work. Young women with college degrees get the same pay as men with eighth grade education.

With so many women in the workforce it would appear natural that they are well looked after by their employers and receive special consideration during pregnancy, right? Wrong! The US lags behind every industrialised nation in the world in terms of maternity leave and benefits. In Western Europe the average maternity leave is five months with pay, in India it is three months. But in the US

there is no such leave. Only 40 per cent of working women are lucky enough to get maternity leave without pay the rest have to settle for disability leave.

So timing a baby over a long weekend, getting back on the job in three days and putting new born infants into daycare centres are routine-not so much with blue collar working women but with doctors, lawyers, business executives. They simply cannot afford to miss a step in their relentless race with men for positions at the top. And these are the good times.

Before 1978 when the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, an amendment to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, was passed, a woman had no protection from summary dismissal the moment her pregnancy was perceived as a problem by her employer. Now the act forces employers to treat pregnancy the same as any other disability and though this has protected many women from losing their jobs, they soon find that a "disability" of any sort that goes on for weeks instead of days is viewed askance by an employer,

Women Traps

Women's groups, so vociferous about equal rights have been curiously reticent about lobbying for special protection for pregnant women and the mothers of young children. The reason? "Maternity leave is a term that we try not to use," explains Isabella Katz Pinsler of the American Civil Liberties Union Womens' Rights Project. "It traps women into always being child-raisers and further perpetuates their marginal status in the labour market."

Another argument that many feminists use to defend their lack of enthusiasm for special benefits for women, is that historically protect women serve only to keep them down. Their claim that their efforts are directed towards fighting for an ideal situation in which both parents shoulder the responsibility of childrearing has been cold comfort all these years to women forced to combine the responsibilities of raising children with the demands of a full

time job. It is only this year that their efforts seem to be getting somewhere, for at last a bill has been put before Congress that seeks to provide that men and women can take upto 18 weeks of unpaid leave with job guarantees when they become parents, regardless of whether the child is adopted or not. While everyone is congratulating themselves that women are no longer singled out as a class of employees creating special problems and requiring special privileges it is clear that the provisions of the act have little bearing on the facts. Women continue to bear the children and also to shoulder the responsibility of raising them.

So, why do American women work? Not for fun, pin money or to prove that they just are as good as men as all the glossy magazines would have us believe. They work for the same reasons that women anywhere else work — for money to pay bills. The American Dream based on upward mobility takes two incomes to realise these days. People are no longer able to afford independent homes in safe neighbourhoods with good schools and public amenities and nurture the hope of sending their children to college on the earnings of a single breadwinner as they could in the 1950s and 60s.

Apart from financial necessity another reason American women give for working is security. Bluntly put this means that they regard their jobs as investments against death or illness of a spouse or divorce. It is not an exaggeration that in the first year after a divorce a woman's standard of living drops by 73 per cent while a man's goes up by 42 per cent.

Even if these fears were somehow dealt with and women did stop work as many child experts say they should, the effects on the economy of a mass exodus would be disastrous. "American industry would come to a stand still," says Sar Levitan, manpower economist and director of the Study for Social Policy Studies at Georgetown University. "Women are the country's secret weapon," says Muriel Siebert, former superintendent of banks for New York State. "If we withdrew women from the labour force, we'd have an immediate shortage of skilled labour, and the cost of labour itself would go up." Perhaps the situation is best summed up by Lee Iacocca Chairman of Chrysler Corporation. "The rest

of us would have to work twice as hard with half as many brains".

With that kind of clout, it never ceases to amaze me why American working women continue to do what they do. So the next time open a magazine and read about progressive American women or feel inclined to drool at the sight of their plush homes and labour saving devices, don't. Instead pity the poor things for they are helpless victims of massive fraud. It will take a great deal more than the passage of a bill before the ideal situation occurs in which both parents share the responsibility of providing and parenting. The workplace and the home will both have to be drastically restructured the former to accommodate mothers, the latter to incorporate fathers. Until that happens it will continue to be "supermom" to the rescue.

Naom Menezes

(Contd. from page 17)

(9) Ceiling on Pay and Allowances of the Staff of the Border Area Project further imposed with effect from 1.4.84 should be withdrawn with a view to minimising the frustration of the employees of the Border Area Projects.

(10) The Scheme of Border Area Project is required to be strengthened for serving the purpose for which it was originally designed. 4 new Border Area Projects may be considered to be started in Tripura for extending the Welfare Services to the people living in the uncovered International Border Areas.

(11) Setting up of Children Library may kindly be considered in view of great necessity of the rural children.

(12) Building grants may be actively considered for the aided Balwadis Centres once in 3 years in consideration of the fact that people residing in the rural and hilly areas are below the poverty line.

(13) Status of the State Board may be declared through the State Legislative.

(14) Strengthening of Staff of the State Board should be considered immediately in the interest of the State Board's Programmes.

Into The 21st Century Without Nuclear Weapons

Chernobyl and the Peace Movement

THE hi-technology disasters of the year, the challenger space shuttle explosion and the Chernobyl radioactive leak, have brought home some stark realities to the peace movement.

If the Challenger blow-up revealed the dangers inherent in the mad drive to star wars, Chernobyl gave us a small taste of the radioactive catastrophe which could be unleashed by the growing nuclear arsenals of the arms race.

Had all governments and news media been equally concerned about the war danger, Chernobyl could have provided enough food for thought to arrest the nuclear weapon threat quickly. The US and some of its allies reacted, predictably, with a barrage of hostile statements and reportage based almost without exception on exaggeration and speculation. At times some objective reporting of Chernobyl did get through, when nuclear power experts were given the floor, but such occasions were rare.

Western reports of thousands of Soviet dead and widespread contamination in Eastern Europe channelled public concern about the accident away from any calm consideration of its implications. Chernobyl became the major means of diverting attention from the very questions it raised. Even the issue of nuclear power safety was distorted by the endless scaremongering.

For the peace movement the relevance of the Chernobyl accident does not lie in the speculation and falsehoods which pervade many assessments of the disaster. Nor does it concern campaigns against nuclear power. Chernobyl represents in miniscule the horrific potential of the nuclear arms race. The lies spread by the US and its closest allies were designed to divert attention from recent efforts by the Soviet Union to halt and reverse the arms race, beginning with its ban on nuclear tests. They were also designed to assuage growing public criticism of American bellicose behaviour in international affairs.

Now the truth about Chernobyl is known, the distortions stand exposed (The United Press International first reported 2,000 deaths from the nuclear leak but at the end of May

retracted the allegation. The report was made, a UPI commentator noted, "for reasons which could not be determined").

Again the onus is on the US to respond positively to Soviet leader Gorbachev's offer, reiterated on 14 May, to meet President Reagan and agree on ending nuclear tests. The Soviet Union has once more extended its unilateral test ban for another three months, until 6 August. The door to nuclear disarmament remains open. [—from *Peace Courier*]

US Aggression Condemned

Many women's organisations including India protested against the US aggression on Libiya which killed many women and children. From the information received from WIDF the protest actions took place from the following countries: South Africa (ANC), Afghanistan, Baharin, Britain, Canada, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, El Salvador, Kampuchia, North Korea, Nicaragua, Palestine, Soviet Union, India and many others.

The delegation from Czechoslovakia was the first women's organisation to visit Libiya and see the destruction caused by the criminal acts of terrorism of U.S.A. Houses were demolished, playgrounds of children destroyed, men, women and children who were injured in raids were hospitalised and those killed were buried with honour. A poster depicting the raid captioned as "Reagan's Peace". Women in Libiya were happy to receive the solidarity actions from so many women's organisations.

Special Prison Camps for Women

In recent weeks there has been a new intensified drive to further suppress women. On 17th of April, the spokesman of the high court said: "Women who violate the Islamic laws will be stoned to death." There have been many reports of such punishments taking place in various cities. On the 2nd of May, the head of the parliament said that there were plans being prepared to send women who do not observe the Islamic dress code to special penal and re-training camps. *News from Iran*

Release Women Political Prisoners in South Africa

ON paper, the South African prison regulations allow for somewhat softer treatment for women prisoners than for men. But what are the facts?

It should be remembered that the policy of the regime is to keep political prisoners in separate sections in the goals. These small groups of women are therefore isolated from other prisoners as well as from the world.

Prisoners held in small groups, sometimes for years on end suffer more severely. In any group of political prisoners, a letter or a visit to one is a source of interest and excitement to all. The fewer the visits and letters, the less news gets in and the less news gets out.

Relatives and friends of prisoners in South Africa often don't have the money for the fare to visit them. To visit a remote country goal, however, means a long and expensive journey for all visitors. Some women prisoners — including Dorothy Nyembe — have also been held in Barberton and Nelspruit, about 200 miles east of Johannesburg, the nearest city. In the late sixties it was discovered that some of the groups of Black women in Nelspruit had no visitors at all for two years.

No Observers No Checks

There is another serious disadvantage suffered by prisoners in such conditions. Jelen Suzman, the Progressive Federal Party MP, for example, has in the past visited the large concentrations of men political prisoners on Robben Island and in Pretoria; but at the time when Black women were imprisoned in Nelspruit and White women in Barberton, she never visited them, presumably because a visit to the Eastern Transval would have taken her from her parliamentary duties for at least two full days.

The visits of the International Red Cross have been an exception to this, as their representatives have, according to their brief, visited every prison in the country where political prisoners are held. Unfortunately, these inspectors have no power to bring about any change in prison conditions, and the information they have gathered is not available to us.

Deliberate Policy of Isolation

This isolation of women prisoners, and the consequent shortage of information about them, is no accident.

Even regulations covering the medical care of prisoners are often ignored. Barberton Prison has by now become well known for this. Some years earlier in the same prison, Dorothy Nyembe was refused medical attention: "...I was sick and I went to see the doctor, and when I came there he said, 'What do you want? You want us now to help you.... Well, we will never.' I remember I never received medicine until October for eight months from when I came to Barberton. I was asthmatic."

Barbara Hogan complained that she had not been given urgent dental treatment.

In the case of Dorothy Nyembe, the regulations regarding letters and visits were also deliberately broken:

"I wrote every month home but they never got anything — Only at tenth year, when I had four years left, then they let me have letters and visitors. My daughter made applications to visit but they always failed."

Sometimes, when a visit does take place, it is worthless because the visitors cannot talk to the person they have come to visit. Dorothy Nyembe describes how:

"In Kroonstad we had to talk in Africans. Sometimes people came but they couldn't use their language."

Behind the walls of secrecy, prison officers make decisions that may be determined by expediency, by whim or by their individual opinions regarding what is or is not suitable for political prisoners for Black prisoners or for women. In spite of the regulations that allow political prisoners facilities for study — and which have been in force nearly all the time on the Island and in Pretoria — Dorothy Nyembe was not allowed to study. In Barberton though, she was allowed to do needlework. The White women political prisoners in Barberton in the mid-sixties were allowed to study, and they were allowed needlework; but — in spite of what is clearly laid down in the regulations — the command-

ing officer refused permission to those who played small musical instruments to have their instruments with them. The reason he gave for this was that he had never heard of women prisoners having musical instruments!

"Totally in the Hands of the Prison"

In Barbara Hogan's affidavit of March/April 1984, in which she complained that she was kept completely separate from all other prisoners, she expressed fears that she might not survive the remaining nine years of her sentence, and said: "I am totally in the hands of the prison authorities in respect of every facet of my life". Every prisoner is in this position.

Prison officers can always make prisoners' lives far more uncomfortable than prisoners can make theirs. 'Privileges' can easily be removed; on the Island they were gained, lost and regained more than once over the years, and by being moved to Pollsmoor in 1983, Nelson Mandela was, at a stroke, deprived of all exercise outside his cell. Letters can be censored or never posted at all, visits may be non-existent; though Barbara Hogan succeeded in seeing a lawyer, prisoners requests to see legal advisers can be — often are — ignored.

Outside Pressure and Campaigning

The struggle of political prisoners for better conditions can be effective only if it is supported by pressure from outside the prison, from organisations and agencies inside and outside South Africa. Until now, the women political prisoners have been neglected by campaigners, because it was not known how harsh their conditions were. No one knew for a long time that Comrade Dorothy-Nyembe had been refused treatment for her asthma; if those outside the prison had known, they could have campaigned for it as they have campaigned in the past for medical treatment for prisoners on the Island.

The situation is becoming more serious; first, because the number of women prisoners is increasing, and second because there are signs that the regime is taking steps to extend its information blackout to male prisoners as well — prisoners are being moved from the Island to more remote prisons, and there has been a complaint from one mother whose visit to her son in Helderstroom was stopped because she spoke to him in their own language.

The need is urgent for those outside to campaign for more information about the conditions under which all our comrades are being imprisoned, and to campaign for an improvement in these conditions.

Excerpt from an article by: Claris

Massive Boycott of White-owned Shops

A massive consumer boycott of white-owned shops forced the apartheid regime to release people's leaders in some areas, report the Voice of Women Journal and the Newsletter of the *ANC Women's Section*. The initiative for the boycott was taken by local women, youth and consumer organisations. Many forms of boycott were used in different areas. The demands included the withdrawal of troops and police from the black townships; an end to the disappearances of people; the scrapping of the Black Local Authorities Act; the release of detainees; an end to forced removals; the dismantling of bantustans; etc. Many anti-apartheid activists, organizers of the boycott, have been detained, arrested, harassed, even murdered, but the struggle continues. "We cannot enrich the pockets of our oppressors and exploiters at this time when they are killing us and using our money to buy the very guns and bullets used against us", said the ANC women. They assume that the consumer boycott has added another nail to the coffin of the racist regime, presently going through serious economic and political crises as a result of the people's resistance and the protests of the international community against apartheid. In countries which still maintain economic and other relations with the apartheid regime, women continue to boycott South Africa goods.

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sadistic depredation by U.S. soldiers which are continuing with impunity for 40 years of the U.S. occupation of South Korea. The AIDWA demands that the U.S. occupation be immediately withdrawn and atrocities on women and others be put to an end to as the U.S. imperialists has no business to continue to occupy South Korea. The AIDWA is of the firm opinion that it is of utmost importance for the North and South Korean people to unify their country which will lead to peaceful and happy life for both the people in North and South Korea.

Resist Attack on Employment

WE have been writing repeatedly on the question of women being thrown out due to various methods of technology introduced in our country. The mechanisation in Tobacco has already created a crisis in Andhra Pradesh, a number of factories closed and thousands of women workers out. The introduction of automachines in the public and private offices is bound to affect the women clerks, typists, stenoes since they are the major work force there. From the figures of women being retrenched in Britain, in Electric Data Processing Machine given in the Voice of the Working Women, Sept, 1985 issue, there should not be any doubt about this. The repeated statements made by the Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi to import the hi-tech machinery from multinationals in USA and other Western countries, to enter into 21st century, is a clear warning for those who are still in the job.

We have been told that technology, automation, mechanisation will relieve the strain on the persons employed, the living standard of the family would go up. It is true for those men and women who are employed in Socialist countries. The working hours are made shorter, the work easier. But for us it is just the opposite. Women will be the first to be fired when the automation is introduced in the office. The example of women working in electronics who constitute 80 per cent in almost all Asiatic countries should also make us aware about the objects of the Multinational companies.

"The fact that the electronic components are becoming increasingly tiny, light, cheap and easily transportable has rendered the Multinationals relative advantage to switch production anywhere where labour is cheap". (Asian women workers, June '86) Women thrown out to the unorganised sector from organised are employed in Electronics, Garment, small scale industries and so on, with meagre wages, long working hours, with health hazards and no legislation to protect them. It is a pity that

these young educated girls in Delhi, Bombay, Madras and in other cities continue to work under such terrible strain. They can not even think about leaving the job. Because, there are thousands of others who are just waiting out side to take up their places!

Women accept the jobs simply because there is no alternative. Alternative is to starve under the present economic conditions. Those women who retire from the job for certain reasons, the vacancies are filled up by men. All the winding departments in the textile mills are closed for women and boys are employed, thus escaping the statutory, regulations like provision of creche, maternity benefit and so on.

The CITU in the last General Council meeting held at Calcutta warned about the attacks on the employment, of workers. The Central Government is advertising "Self employment" as a panacea to solve the unemployment problem, which is just a joke when lakhs of people are seeking for jobs. Working women must raise their voice to demand, whoever wishes to get a job must be given the opportunity. It is the duty of the congress rulers. To have an employment is a fundamental right of every person and it should be included in the Constitution.

30th Anniversary of Women's March

"This year we are observing the 30th anniversary of the historic women's march on Pretoria, an event which lives on as a source of great inspiration to all our struggling people. It will be the task of our womenfolk to emulate the example we set ourselves, three decades ago and last year, to unite and fearlessly join the mass offensive against the Botha regime in even greater numbers. We should also continue to work for the formation of a national women's organisation."

President Oliver Tambo.
