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*LIC Working Women Convention, Haryana
2nd State Anganwadi Women's Conference, held in Kalyani, West Bengal*



Participate in the September Struggle for Land Reform

THE AICCWW whole heartedly welcomes the call sponsored by the Central Coordination Committee of the left led mass organisations of peasants and agricultural workers to launch the united struggles for their demands in the month of September 1988. The major demands constitute the land reforms, remunerative prices, reduction in prices of inputs and taxes, proper distribution system, debt relief, minimum wages for agricultural workers etc. One of the important demand is employment and the central legislations for the workers in rural areas. The demand also is made to fight against the atrocities committed by the landlords on SC and ST with the help of the police, among whom women and children become the major victims.

In the struggles launched last year, the large percentage of women in agricultural workers and peasants courted arrest in Andhra, Tamil Nadu, Bihar etc with their babies in arms. The whole country rose up to demand land to the tillers denied by the Congress rulers since independence. The minimum wage is denied to agricultural workers. The employment is just seasonal.

The question of land reform stands in the Congress programme in every five year plan, and lately in the 20 point programme. It is again coming in the forefront since elections are approaching. The congress rulers are declaring poverty alleviation programmes for the rural poor for women's development and so on. No development, economic, social or otherwise is possible unless the land is distributed among rural people. Latest official figures show that since the inception of the land ceiling programmes, a total of 76.40 lakhs acres have been declared surplus. Of this 59.45 lakh acres have been taken possession of and 44.14 lakhs acres have been distributed to 41-02 lakhs persons. Further it is noted that out of total land distributed, more than 30 per cent is accounted for by West Bengal and Kerala Left Front Government. In contrast

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the record of the Congress(I) Government is a failure. The rural debt reached to Rs. 15,000 crores. Over and above that there was drought in different states in the year.

Among the 80 per cent rural poor, women are the most affected. They work in the field, in the house and many times are the victims of sexual harassment. A large section of rural women consist of scheduled caste and schedule

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Haryana State Working Women Convention, Karnal

Sunita Rani, Karnal

IN the fast changing society of ours the significance of the role being played by women is second to none. They are in fact emerging in every sphere of life. During the last few years the number of employed women has increased manifold. No doubt most of them still continue to be in the unorganised sector, they are fast joining their counterparts in the organised sector and have started not only solidly rallying round their male counterparts but also, in many cases, taking leading roles in the trade union movement in the country.

Haryana State Working Women convention took place on 17.7.88 at Panchayat Bhawan, Karnal, and of course Northern Zone Insurance Employees Association, Divisional Committee, Karnal played the pivotal role. It would be pertinent here to recall that the All India Insurance Employees Association in its 13th general conference held at Jaipur from 23rd-27th February 1988 gave a call to hold such conventions in every state to know real problems of the working women in different sectors.

The convention was preceded by hectic preparations and women employees from LIC Divisional HQs, Karnal aided by their counterparts in LIC Branches in Haryana, took it upon themselves to rally round the cause and mobilise lady employees from their sister concerns all over Haryana. Even the resources needed for the convention were mobilised by women employees themselves by way of sale of coupons so as to make the convention a self-reliant one.

The convention was really a big draw as per the expectations and more than 500 delegates/observers jam-packed the Panchayat Bhawan Hall and in fact the hall proved to be too small to accommodate them all. They represented almost every department in Haryana, may it be LIC, GIC, banks, lecturers, teachers, nurses, anganbadi or other state, semi-govt or central govt. institutions.

The Chief guests arrived and were given a

rousing welcome on their reaching the venue. After the brief garlanding ceremony, the welcome address was read by Com. Dharam Singh (of Haryana Roadways Karnal) President of the Karnal Distt. Committee of the Sarv Karmachari Singh, Haryana. The convention was greeted by a number of prominent local trade union leaders in the morning session before Mrs Vimla Ranadive delivered her inaugural speech.

Among others, Convenor of Working Women Co-ordination Committee, New Delhi Mrs Ranjana Nirula, Mrs Surinker Kaur, General Secretary, Co-ordination Committee of Punjab, Mrs Jagmati Sangwan, Secretary Janwadi Mahila Samiti, Haryana and Mrs Rama Dixit, an LIC employee addressed the convention.

Mrs Vimla Ranadive, while inaugurating the convention said that only three days ago, the Shankaracharya of Puri, in a much publicised statement, glorified the act of sati by advising that all real women must commit sati after the death of their husbands. As per an act promulgated after Roop Kanwar committed sati in Rajasthan, the Shankaracharya should have been arrested and proceeded against under the law which says that glorification of sati tantamounts to abetment of sati. The Shankaracharya had reportedly gone to the extent of saying that Harijan should not be permitted to enter Hindu temples. In spite of all this he was not arrested by the Centre. The Shah Bano case had also lowered the prestige of women and strengthened the hands of fundamentalists.

While addressing she also spoke about the tribal women who had been gang-raped in Tripura and Harijan women who were allegedly raped by the cops in Bihar. When contacted the authorities in the area declined to comment.

Mrs Ranjana Nirula stressed that in order to make women liberation movement successful, economic independence of women was a

pre-requisite and that a legislation to end exploitation of women in the un-organised sector should be made. Not to speak of the un-organised sector, which has almost 90 per cent of the total working women, the state of affairs even in the public sector too is distressing. In the Anganwadis, the women were employed at a paltry pay of Rs. 250/- per month, she disclosed.

Demanding setting up of creches for the children of working women in the organised and unorganised sectors, she said that about 3.3 crore children need creches. She elaborated how women are being discriminated vis-a-vis men. Medical expenses reimbursement was admissible in the case of the parents of a male married employee but not to the parents of such women employee.

She informed that the Prime Minister had no doubt formed a national committee for women development but he, as chairman of the committee, refused to take even a single representative from any women's organisation.

Mrs Surinder Kaur, General Secretary, Punjab Co-ordination Committee demanded right to employment to be made a fundamental right, and provision of working women's hostels both in rural and urban areas. She also made fervent plea for provision of free transport and security measures for the women employed in rural areas.

Mrs Jagmati, secretary, Janwadi Mahila Samiti, Haryana stressed the need of a national debate to improve the lot of working women, because nothing worthwhile would be done by successive governments at the Centre or State, unless due pressure is built up. Retrenchment of women in the name of mechanisation, advancement of science and technology, she deplored, is continuing on the plea that lesser-women are needed for a specific job now.

Anju Dhavan from LIC said, that the special status of ladies in the ancient India is in sharp contrast to their pitable condition now. In the male dominated society women is being exploited at every step and the working women is no exception. She appealed women to shake off their despondency and move forward in a determined way. Beena Kumari

from LIC said the time is changing now and women can no longer keep in the four walls of the house. Women are working now everywhere. She pointed out that in the absence of hostels for women, creches for children, she is not able to take up the employment or accept promotion however she wished. And this is tantamount to virtual negation of equal rights. Vidyotana Varma called upon working women to realise their united strength and resolve to stand up against injustice to women. She also sang a melodious song. Miss Alka (CBSE) spoke about corruption in the school, and discrimination meted out to women teachers. She stressed the need to mobilise women to take active part in trade unions. Bindu (Kaithal) pointed out the meagre salary of teachers, and the private schools being run on commercial lines. Sunita Rani (Karnal) Jaswanti (Narawana) also spoke about Sati, and posting of couples at the same place. Chandrakanta, a lecturer D.S. College, stressed the role of Women in emancipation.

Mrs Sunita Rani, convenor of the Haryana Working Women Convention, moved resolutions which were passed unanimously. The resolution was passed against the dowry seekers demanding a new legislation. It demanded from a promise not to marry such men who are dowry crazy. The resolution against sati demanded from all women organisations to mould the public opinion against it. Another resolution on equal pay for equal work called upon women organisations to be prepared to successfully demand equal economic rights. Other two resolutions demanded provisions for hostels and full democratic rights. One of the resolutions dealt with the demand of posting of working couples at one station.

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Com. K. V. Janaki of NFPTE greeted the delegates. Earlier, Com. Sujatha of KSGIEU welcomed the participants. Com. Grace Mary Varghese, Joint Secretary, Divisional Office Base Committee of LIC Employees' Union proposed a vote of thanks. The convention passed resolutions demanding special bus service for women at least during peak hours; LIC and GIC managements should provide subsidised hotel accommodation for their women employees at major centres and creche facilities where there are a number of women employees who can benefit by them.

2nd Conference of Anganwadi Women in West Bengal

THE 2nd Conference of ICDS employees in West Bengal was held on 19th-21st August at Kalyani 24 Pargana Dist., Altogether 600 delegates and observers attended the Conference from different Districts. The women employees were coming in processions with the CITU flag shouting slogans from the Kalyani station to the conference hall.

The open session, which was held in the Hall due to incessant rains, was inaugurated by Vimal Ranadive Secretary CITU. She said the projects of ICDS are run by State and Central Government & thousands of women are working as workers and helpers. Their conditions are very poor with Rs. 250 for the worker and Rs. 110/- to the helper. Only where the leftfront Govts. are ruling like West Bengal and Kerala, the wages have been increased to Rs. 300/- P.M. and maternity benefit is paid, bonus for Onum, casual leave etc. have been granted. The Congress rulers want these Women to be "Social Workers" and so they are paying the 'honorarium' of just Rs. 250 and Rs. 110/-. The Govt. should pay minimum Rs. 600/- considering the heavy work they do for 6 hours a day. She said in fact they should be recognised as the employees under state or Central Government. There are 50 lakhs women unemployed in the register, and due to the policies of the Congress rulers of modernisation in the industries, women are thrown out of industries where they constituted a large member. Com. Vimal Ranadive ended her speech appealing to organise them under CITU and get better facilities.

Com. Shanti Ghatak the State Labour Minister Chief guest in the Conference said that ICDS workers are the part and parcel of the working class. Due to the policies of the Central Government the industries in West Bengal are in a bad situation. Unless these policies are reverted, there is no hope for our country. He promised the ICDS delegates all the help required to improve their conditions and to build up the organisation.

Com. Bhavtosh Roy, on behalf of the

12 July Committee said the ICDS Union has now expanded on a wide scale in most of the districts in West Bengal with the large membership and its activities. He assured the delegates the support of the democratic movement in achieving their demands.

Com. Nirupama Chatterjee, the President of the Union said, that we have to take decision of organising women in ICDS all over India and build up strong organisation without which their poor conditions would not improve. With the limited powers of West Bengal Govt. it has started 16 projects of ICDS in West Bengal. In other states too such projects should start in the right earnest. She appealed to the delegates to participate in the democratic movements. Com. Subhash Bose MLA greeted the Conference. The Presidium consisting of Maharani Konar MLA, Com. Arti Dasgupta, Secretary CITU, Com. Brajgopal Niyogi, and Com. Bhavtosh Roy conducted the proceedings.

Many delegates from different districts spoke on the working conditions in ICDS and demanded that they should be recognised as employees of the State of Central Government with Rs. 600/- as minimum wages and other facilities. The session continued till 21st of August. A new executive Committee with Nilima Maitra as General Secretary and Com. Nirupama Chatterjee as President was elected.

Convention of Working Women in Burnpur

THE Convention of 'Working Women' of ABK Metal & Engr. Workers' Union (CITU) and united Contractors Workers' Union (CITU), Burnpur was held on 29th July 1988 at Burnpur. It was attended by around 520 working women, even such women who never attended any programme of union earlier, joined it with great enthusiasm.

The convention was presided over by Com.
(Contd. on page 24)

Tribal Women in Orissa Mines Speak on their Problems

THE Co-ordination Committee of Working Women in Orissa organised two separate conventions in mining belt, one on 26th June at Kundurunala, (Joda) Keonjhar district and other on 27th June at Roxi in Sundergarh District. The Convenor of Co-Ordination Committee Com. Madhumita Behera conducted the convention at both places. Com. Malati Nayak, the Convenor, Working Women Committee of Keonjhar Mining Workers Union (CITU) presided over the meeting which was attended by one hundred seventy four tribal working women of various mines. Sixteen women participated on the discussion and spoke about their problems. Com. Madhumita Behera in her speech highlighted the serious socio-economic implications of present political crisis and called on women workers to continue this heroic struggle in mining belt under CITU banner. A committee of twenty one members was constituted to meet every month and decide steps about organisation.

The convention at Roxi was attended by more than two hundred tribal working women of mines which was presided over by Com. Marsa Samad. About fifteen women comrades spoke about their problems. Two separate committees, one for Roxi loading side and another for Toda Camp were constituted.

Both the conventions were attended by Com. Lambodar Nayak, president of CITU Orissa State Committee. Among other decisions, both conventions decided to organise a mass signature campaign in petition to Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on their plights by 15th July demanding a Parliamentary Team to visit the area. The conventions observed one minute silence in memory of Com. Lakshmi Dhar Biswal and passed condolence resolution.

LIC—Ernakulam Division Take Lead to Organise Working Women

For sometime past, All India Insurance Employees Association had been encouraging the units to hold conventions of women emp-

loyees which would help the women employees to take more active interest in the trade union activities. This had become all the more necessary in the background of large number of women getting jobs in LIC and GIC in successive recruitments. And in the All India Conference held in February 1988 at Jaipur, the All India Insurance Employees' Association took a policy decision in the matter and directed all the Divisional Units in LIC and State Units in GIC to hold such conventions. The LIC Employees Union, Ernakulam Division seized the opportunity of its 3rd Annual Conference and jointly with the Kerala State General Insurance Employees' Union held a Convention of women employees at Ernakulam on 10th July 1988. The Convention was attended by 75 women comrades.

Com. T S Sudhayini, Vice-President, Ernakulam Divisional Office Base Committee of LIC Employees Union presided over the meeting. The convention was inaugurated by Com. V V Prasanakumari, Convenor Womens' State Committee of NFPT. In her speech she explained the difficulties the working women have to face in capitalist society such as ours. She condemned the religious fundamentalists who are trying to take the country back to the medieval ages. N M Sundaram, General Secretary, All India Insurance Employees' Association explained the efforts made by the Association to safeguard the interests of women employees working in LIC and GIC. He urged upon the women employees to take more active interest in the day today functioning of trade union and also appealed for developing better social awareness so that superstitions are not allowed to influence them. Com. N K Kannan Menon, President, KSGIEU and Com. C. Ravindranathan, General Secretary, LIC Employees' Union, Ernakulam Division also addressed the gathering. The following comrades participated in the discussions that took place in the afternoon. B. Krishnakumari Amma, C Ambika Devi, Mancy Samuel, Kala Balasubramaniam, C P Saradamma, K Indira, C. Geetha, and Mary Varghese.

(Contd. on page 4)

Medical and Health Women Employees in Bihar Organise to Fight

A state level meeting of the working women employed in the Health department of the Government of Bihar was held on 13th July, 88 in the Co-operative Bank hall, Patna in the morning in presence of Com. Vimala Ranadive, Secretary, All India Co-ordination Committee of working women, under the presidentship of Srimati Sarita Sinha. Fifty four representatives from Bhagalpur, Godda, Sahebganj, Patna, Dumka, Singhbhum, Katihar, Samastipur, Deoghar, Aurangabad, Khagaria, Siwan, Gopalganj, Sitamarhi, Darbhanga and Gaya districts took part in the discussion. After the inaugural speech by Com. Vimala Ranadive and introduction of the subject matter by Com. Radha Raman Sinha, General Secretary of the Bihar Medical and Public Health Employees Association, twelve women delegates took part in the lively deliberation. The speakers expressed the view that out of seventy thousand medical employees of the state, nearly twenty five thousand are ladies working in hospitals, Dispensaries, Blocks and other medical institution as nurses, female ward attendants, Lady health visitor, auxiliary nurses, Mid-wives, Trained dais and sweepers etc. They are the most advanced and militant women with high level of organisational consciousness. They took part in so many struggles and strike actions at the call of the Bihar Medical and Public Health Employees Association and state and All India Employees Federation, actively. Thousands of them have courted arrest so many times and faced severe repression at the hands of the Government but they have never been demoralised, instead their fighting morale for the cause of the employees has ever been increasing.

It was strongly felt that inspite of the above factors, leadership is not emerging from amongst the ladies. At the same time there are so many specific and important problems of these ladies which are not being discussed because of the domination of their male brothers and leaders. Hence the need for a separate Morcha of ladies under the banner of its parent organisation the Bihar Medical and Public Health Employees Association. It was

unanimously resolved to form a state level adhoc committee.

An adhoc committee of the Bihar Medical and Public Health Employees Association women-sub-committee was formed unanimously with Srimati Sarita Sinha L.H.V. Rajaun Block, Bhagalpur, Bihar as convenor with Nineteen members.

Ad Hoc Committee formed of Bihar Anganwadi Women

Another state level meeting of Angan Wadi Sevikayan and Sahaikayan was also held in which eleven delegates from six districts took part. The meeting formed the Bihar Rajya Anganwadies Karmachari Sangh and an adhoc committee was also formed with Srimati Sushila Kumari, Angan Wadi Sevic Post — Sakhamcha, Bibhutipur, Dis. Samastipur as Convenor and Srimati Dharma Shila Devi, Angan Wadi Sevic, Post — Gangachal Malkana, Masadhi, Dis. Patna as Joint Convenor and Nine other members.

Udupi LIC Women Employees' Convention

THE First Convention of the Women employees working in the Udupi Division of the Life Insurance Corporation of India was held at Udupi on July 25, 1988. The Convention was a part of the 31st Annual General Council Meeting of the Insurance Employees' Union, Udupi Division. The Vice-President of Insurance Employees' Union Udupi Division (AIIEA), Comrade (Smt) M. Sumathi Prabhu presided and conducted the proceedings of the Convention.

A draft resolution was moved in the Convention by Comrade S.R. Keerthilatha of Koppa Base Unit. The resolution encompassed such issues as Sati system, Dowry system, non-implementation of Equal Remuneration for Equal Work Act, the discrimination towards the women cabin crew in the Air India and Indian Airlines and problems connected with the working women in LIC. In the debate that followed, out of a total of 43 delegates, 12 participated.

Blatant Sex Discrimination Against Air Hostesses

NATIONAL Campaign Committee of Trade Unions consisting of AITUC, CITU, BMS, HMS, UTUC, UTUC (L.S), TUCC and ITUC (Dara) and 55 Industrywise federations, submitted a joint memorandum to the Civil Aviation Minister, Shri Shivraj Patil on 31st July '88 on the sex discrimination to the Air Hostesses of Indian Airlines and Air India are subjected to by their respective managements. The memorandum states:

"We express our great concern at the gross injustice and discrimination with which the Air Hostesses of Air India and Indian Airlines are treated by the managements of these two premier public sector flag carriers of our country.

The rules of these two Corporations require the Air Hostesses who are all female employees to retire at the age of 35 years. Beyond this age extensions are granted on yearly basis only after undergoing an arbitrary and subjective medical examination that too upto 45 years only, after which their services are terminated. The Air Hostesses are also not allowed to marry upto four years after joining the service and not permitted to have more than two living children. These restrictions do not however, apply to male members of the cabin crew working with them and carrying out similar jobs.

With regards to Air India management it is pertinent to point out that they even do not allow the hostesses to carry on Inflight supervision which post is exclusively allotted to male members even though the female members have decades of experience and competence. In fact, even after achieving the equivalent grade of Dy. Manager, the Air Hostesses have to repeat to the Junior most Assistant Flight Purser who is invariably a male and in the aircraft she is subjected to his superintendence. This is because they are females and thus are not allowed the said supervisory positions.

Air India employ foreign nationals as Air Hostesses and has to retire them as per the laws of those countries which is presently between 55 to 60 years. These Air Hostesses cannot be sent for the medical examinations

and they have categorically refused to undergo the said medical examination. However, since Air India assured the supreme court in 1987 that it would give equal treatment to all its hostesses, now Air India has embarked upon an unfair practice of grounding the European Hostesses w.e.f. May 1988 and is likely to do the same for Japanese nationals. This is with the view of denying the Indian Hostesses employment upto 58 years.

You will appreciate that the effect of these early retirement is that the hostesses at 45 after serving for more than two decades find themselves unemployed in mid-age and lose their independent and self supporting status in society. Further even during their service they are denied many benefits like House Building loan etc. because of early retirement.

We draw your kind attention to I.L.O. Convention No. 111: Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) 1958, which guarantees equal treatment to female employees. Certain countries like V.K. have framed suitable legislations like the Sex-Discrimination Act prohibiting such practices by employers. However, in absence of such a legislation in India, employers like Air India and Indian Airlines are indulging into discriminatory practices as mentioned above and being public sector organisations they circumvent the spirit of our constitution which guarantees equal opportunities to women. It pains us to state that Air India has been projecting facts incorrectly at various forums including courts as to the nature of this category as being special and sex-based etc. as a result of which they have been denied justice so far.

We seek your immediate intervention in this matter as the said Corporations are committing this gross injustice under your Ministry. These practices are reminders of a backward past and should not be allowed to continue in our society. We hope you will do the needful urgently.

New Devices to Drive out the Women Workers in Coal Industry

WHEN the Govt of India is celebrating its so-called 'Women Welfare Policy' in the proposed 8th plan the process of driving away of the women workers from the jobs is continued unabated. Interestingly, Public sector enterprises take a leading role in this!

In advancing the process, the enterprises are not keeping any opportunities unturned. The co-ordination committee of Working Women, has of late come to know about a plot to compel the working women in the coal industry to leave the service by themselves.

The Coal India has drawn a plan to reduce its existing work force of 7 lakhs to 5 lakhs within the next 10 years and accordingly the process of getting the workers redundant is already on. It is also the common experience that the women workers are to face the main brunt of the policy. Not only through the rationalisation or the computerisation they are made surplus, but the discrimination is also becoming more a decisive factor.

In the recent period under the plea of rationalisation, thousands of Coal Workers are redeployed. In this process of redeployment it is found many working families are being separated either by transferring the husbands or the wives. Working families of the CCI & the NCL are mostly becoming the victim. The number of appeals from the workers for the union of the family either by transferring the husbands or the wives is ignored.

13 couples of CCL were separated in the year 1980 getting the male workers transferred to Jhingurdah & Bina projects of NCL while compelling their wives to continue in two other different projects in Hazaribagh. Workers' individual appeal and the subsequent persuasion from Coal Federation have failed to set things right. Most distressing situation is that both the CCL & the NCL are keen to dispense with the women workers.

Social Welfare Women Fight Back the Attack of Delhi Administration

THE Delhi administration is planning to throw away hundreds of women piece rate workers working under the Directorate of Social Welfare Delhi Administration by starting I.T.I. classes at these 18 centres where the women are working at present.

The authorities of Rehabilitation Services and that of the Directorate were very much displeased at the formation of the union. The immediate attack was of shifting the administration shop at the centre throwing the women out of employment, which was repulsed successfully by the women.

Between 1982 to 1985 women went on indefinite strike and relay hunger strike for the fulfilment of the following demands.

1. Stoppage of deduction of 25 per cent from the wages.
2. Regularisation under labour laws.
3. Old age pension and increase in piece rates.

The first two demands were accepted and women got 90 per cent wage rise. However, the un-scrupulous authorities started harassing the women by not providing them work and started diverting it to some of the private contractors.

The representatives of the union met the authorities a number of times and complained about the work. However, all the complaints went unheeded. Thus the authorities were hoping that the declining work will compel the women to leave the centres. Their designs did not materialise as the women continued to attend the centres despite little work from which they could earn only Rs. 200/- to Rs. 250/- per month.

During this period they got some of the demands such as electric irons, machine oil, machine repairs by the administration, mattresses to sit on, drinking water and toilets. Regard-

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Shram Shakti—Report of the National Commission

Vimal Randive

THE report of the National Commission on self-employed women and women in the informal sector was published in the month of June '88. It is the first attempt, to project the lakhs of women workers in their true colours, whose 'Shram Shakti', the labour power if utilised could be a tremendous force in building our economy. The Commission visited the sights of the work places, interviewed thousands of women, met the representatives of managements. Government mass organisational including trade unions to bring out the real situation of these women in the unorganised sector side by side with the self-employed women. After going through the document, one has to appreciate the serious efforts, the members of the Commission and especially Mrs Ela R. Bhat M.P have made to highlight the poor working conditions of these women and their low status.

Terrible Working Conditions

The Commission has brought out a number of aspects on women, self-employed and in unorganised sector, such as their bad working conditions, poor health no legislations, the impact of the policies of the Governments on these women, the role of organisations, and so on. In our comments here, we are unable to deal with all the points raised in the report. Even after 40 years of our independence a women has to struggle to get even 20 N.P as wage is something unbelievable, but it is a fact. The girls of 8 years and even younger have to work for the lively-hood of the whole family when they should be studying in the schools. The sad plight of a working woman in construction who stays with her family all her life at the construction sight was summed up very well in her own words "We only see these stones...and stones..." The question should be asked rightly, that what on earth she should live for. She lives in the 'stones' breaking it hours together, and works for the contractor for whole life! Should not a domestic servant — feel insulted if "servants, dogs, luggage not allowed" is put outside the

door of a lift of 10 storied building in one of the posh locality in Bombay? In the society based on classes, the upper class treats "dogs and women" alike! Moreover the present set up of the Government being, feudal landlord, treat woman as their private property!

Some of the important aspects the Commission has pointed out with regard to women in the organised sector are important. In the Chapter of industrialisation, the Commission has brought out very well the serious impact of mechanisation and modernisation on the employment of women, who are being drastically retrenched. The Commission in their report stated "The Ministry of Labour should prepare a list of those sectors — industries which are presently labour intensive and provide employment to sizeable number of women but are likely to be affected by technology transfer..." etc (Page 78). The women's organisations met the Planning Commission a few years back also suggested "not to introduce the modern divices in the labour intensive industries". Another suggestion very correctly made in the report is "directives should be issued to all industrial units, specially in the public sector, that no further reduction in the level of employment of women will be permitted". A suggestion is made to form a small planning group on technology policy, to see that the training be given to women and also employment opportunities. Another suggestion also is made, though we are not sure about its implementation or acceptance by the Govt. that the licenses should not be issued to those projects which result in the displacement of women. Under the present economic policies of the Government, which invites the multi-nationals and have privatisation of the public sector etc. the reduction of the labour force is inevitable and women are the first victims of modernisation.

Non-implementation of Legislations

The legislations and their implementation is one of the aspects dealt by the Commission.

Even the Draft Perspective plan on women had to admit the Equal Remuneration Act, Minimum Wages Act, as well as Maternity Benefit Act are not being implemented as they should. The Commission's report also corroborated it by giving a number of instances. While criticising the non-implementation of the Equal Remuneration Act, Maternity Benefit Act and so on the Commission points out that "while there may be scope or need for improving the content of the law, these laws are ineffective, inadequate or more often, there is no enforcement of these laws..." (page 99) Sample examples are given through the interviews taken with the women concerned. The recommendation, made therefore is a "separate wing in the Labour Department may be created which will have exclusive responsibility for dealing with problems of unorganised labour..." Moreover, the wing should have a number of women, not less than 30 per cent at various levels, so that the problems of women workers are not ignored. The suggestion (Page 100 (C)) is made to give powers of inspection and for filing complaints to women's organisation, trade union functionaries, workers representatives etc., is welcome. The CITU has been demanding this since long time.

Should We Opt for Night Shifts for Women?

A question has been raised whether women should work in the night shifts which is detrimental to health of both men and women in particular. We do not agree that women, even if allowed, can be employed in the night shifts. The report correctly pointed out that women after coming home also do not have rest. "Where however it becomes absolutely necessary to run a third shift, then there is no reason to restrict employment in those shifts only to men. But special safeguards and benefits may have to be provided at least for a long period of time to come to women workers, such as transport..." Even with such safeguards, the night shift will affect her health and therefore it is not advisable under the present set up to ask her to work in the night shifts. Women have to take the double burden, at home and at work place under the capitalist system.

Maternity Benefit

We agreed with the point made (page 107) regarding the amount of Maternity Benefit, the

percentage of which is an "absurdly low sum" the "burden must be borne by all employees." Here the difference in the outlook of the Perspective Planners and this report comes out clearly. The Perspective Plan on women recommends that the women workers also should contribute in the maternity benefit fund, while this report rightly pin points the responsibility of paying the benefit as of the employers. It also said there should not be a qualified period for giving the maternity benefit. The Commission has come out with their criticism of giving maternity benefit upto two children. It says; "We do not think it is necessary or proper to restrict their benefits to only three confinements for each women..." The report says emphatically that a small family norm will in our view, be better served by improved maternity and child care which will be reducing infant mortality and improving the health of the mother and her children, result in small families..." this view is very sensible and experience of other countries too substantiate this.

We have been demanding maternity benefit and equal remuneration for women in agriculture and in the unorganised sector. In this context, the commission has referred to the schemes of maternity benefits to women in states like A.P., Karnataka and Gujarat where the entire expenditure of the benefit is borne by the State Governments. If it is so, this can be considered by other states also.

Common Organisation for Men and Women

On the question of organisations, while organising women workers two alternatives have been placed before us. Should we form separate organisation of women workers or should they integrate with other-men? It is said that there is a need for both. The need for separate organisation arises because "in our culture, women are not accepted as equals." In a joint organisation, "the men do not allow women to articulate their needs or to take positions of leadership..." The questions raised here are correct but the possible solution suggested is not very clear. The report mentions about, (page 147) "women's wing within the organisation" the path chosen by many trade unions. But the commission feels, "such women's wings will receive no importance and women will remain subordinate within the organisation." The statement made here is
(Contd. on page 15)

Pledge for National Unity and Integrity

Even after 40 years of Independence our cherished goal of a society free from poverty and exploitation remains unfulfilled. Unity, equality and fraternity among different groups of people are yet to be achieved. The result is frenzy of disharmony — racial, lingual and religious at various places and violent secessionist forces endangering integrity of our country. The grave situation is further exploited by the anti-people imperialist powers.

Only unified struggle of the working class can fight out poverty and exploitation. Disunity, divisiveness and secessionism based on race, religion and language are thwarting our efforts towards the prime objective.

On this Independence Day let us reaffirm our pledge to preserve national unity, integrity and communal harmony.

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

National Debate on Perspective Plan on Women Begins

THE All India Convention sponsored by seven All India Women's organisations attended by 142 delegates and 30 organisations from different states was held on 22-23rd of August at the Constitution Club. The first session began at 10.30 AM with a few words of welcome to the delegates and informing the purpose of the convention by Mrs Ivy Khan, YWCA, Mrs Veena Mazumdar, of Centre for Women's Development Studies spoke on the background of the National Perspective Plan for women, and how it came to light suddenly. This was very necessary for the delegates since no organisation was aware of the present plan. Already the seven women's organisations issued a statement with their criticism, that the plan was prepared without adequate consultations and did not reflect the basic concerns of the Indian Women's movement. It was also pertinent to note that the seminar convened by the Central Social Welfare Board on 29-30 June 1988 also expressed concern the way it was finalised and hurriedly brought forward for the discussion and to be introduced in this parliament session. The demand of the women's organisations and also of the persons attended the meeting was for national debate on the plan before it is finalised. Ms. Veena Mazumdar explained in detail, the various development plans, the women's movement, the achievements and its weaknesses by giving the various examples since 1974-75 onwards, specifically mentioning the report of the status committee.

The Committee of 7 women's organisations consisting of AIDWA, NFIW, AICCWW, MDS, YWCA, JWP and CWDS worked jointly to make the convention a success by holding number of meetings, preparing the main document, making all the arrangements for bringing out the papers and so on.

Susheela Gopalan, General Secretary AIDWA spoke on the document 'overview' which brought out all the aspects in the perspective plan. She could attend the meeting of the Chairman of Social Welfare Board and she alongwith others demanded a national debate. She dealt in

detail the present unequal position of women on the agrarian front, employment in rural and urban areas. She also criticised the poverty alleviation programmes of the Government, the benefits of which do not reach the real needy people. She attacked the present policies of the govt. of modernisation and privatisation resulting in displacement of thousands of women. The important issue for the rural people including women is the land. Unless land is distributed among the people, the whole economy in the country is going to be ruined. She noted the frank admission of failure and inadequate implementation of existing laws concerning women and attacked the enforcement machinery of the Govt. which despite the passing of the laws does not work. She also said the appeasing policies of the Rajiv Gandhi in case of Muslim Women's protection Bill passed by majority votes, in practice, goes against the interest of women. Lastly she touched upon the point of meagre resource allocation for the women's development. She concluded by saying that unless the plan goes to the Women, discussed thoroughly, it cannot be passed in Parliament.

Many delegates from the states spoke and expressed anger against such a hasty decision of the Govt on publishing the plan and they could not have even a glance at the huge 3 parts document. The Chairwoman of the Delhi Social Welfare Board Ms Meena Swaminathan also was critical about the way the plan was rushed and spoke a few words adding that some positive points should have emerged out of the plan. Ramanika Gupta a trade unionist exposed the discrimination made against the women workers in coal industry. Delegates from Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Gujarat Participated in the discussion.

The open session then was divided among 7 groups in the afternoon, on the following subjects: (1) Industrialisation, employment (2) Rural Development (3) Education & Media (4) Social Oppression (5) Law (6) Political participation and (7) Health. It is notable that each sponsor organisation had taken responsi-

bility of convenorship of one group. These groups discussed the particular paper, gave amendments and their suggestions to improve the drafts which were cycloed and distributed to the delegates.

Group Discussions strengthens the document

It was in fact, interesting to note that many amendments which came from the delegates in the group discussion were very appropriate and helped to strengthen the subjects. For instance, almost all the groups suggested the radical land reform for the improvement of the rural people and rural economy resulting in overall development of women and men. Many groups said that the poverty alleviation programmes of the Govt do not reach the real beneficiaries. Many criticised about the non-implementation of the machinery of the Govt with regard to the enactment of the legislations. Many delegates noted that the social oppression of women is completely omitted from the draft. The compulsory and universalisation of education through a goal since 1947 has not been stressed in the document. The female literacy is just 25 per cent. The discussion on the political participation of women pointed out the clubbing together of all organisations—voluntary, action groups and mass based women's organisations, was wrong. It criticised the draft plan for stating that the Matura rape case led to the women's movement. Many organisations fought against price rise, dowry deaths, for agrarian demands, against atrocities on Harijans etc since long in 70s and even before that. It also criticised for mentioning in the draft that political parties did not take up women's issues. Almost all the papers have brought the issue of childcare facilities in the absence of which women cannot come out resulting in their poor participation in the decision making bodies which hampers the women's movement.

The paper on 'Health' noted the expenditure on the family planning programme of the Govt. continue to increase by leaps and bounds and financial allocation given to the child care facilities and for health of women is very poor. The expenditure on family planning went up from 0.14 crores to 409 crores in the 5th plan, 1426 crores in 6th plan and finally to a proposed 3256 crores in the 7th five year plan. The document emphatically said these pro-

grammes of family planning virtually become an assault on women, who have no control on their lives and health. The document reported that it resulted in adverse impact on women's health. It also criticised the plan for remaining silent on the hazardous drugs imported by multinational companies, which have dangerous effects on women. The document on employment quoted figures of women's employment in the organised sector which is only about 12 per cent. The unorganised sector and their working conditions, as well as the effect of modernisation on the employment of women who are the first victims were stressed. The group also pointed out the present training facilities given to women which are women-preferred. The Equal Remuneration, minimum wage, Maternity Benefit Act, etc are not implemented and therefore a demand was made, the women's organisations and trade unions should be associated with the implementation machinery. In this context, the work done by self-employment groups like 'Annapurna' and others came for discussion. Eventhough women get job opportunities in the self-employment and they become economically independent to certain extent, it cannot solve the problem of employment of the vast army of lakhs of unemployed women.

The document on 'Law' commented that the NPP failed to take into account the social, economic and political inequalities that exist in our society. It said the constitution does not make the right to work a fundamental right and does not recognise gender based oppression as a major source of oppression for women. The paper pointed out that India has still not ratified the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, 1979. The paper rightly pointed out that the laws are loaded in favour of the employers and the inspectors appointed by the Govt do not perform their duties. It has recommended that the workers in the organised and unorganised sectors be paid a minimum wage, with basic minimum needs. The paper took note of the home based workers and recommended legislative protection. The paper on social oppression took note of increasing atrocities on women, and the Govt failure to deal with the situation. It correctly said the roots of women's oppression and unequal position lie deep within the property relations and unequal position of

women and is intimately connected with its economic position in our country.

West Bengal Minister Submit Paper

The convention was happy to have Smt Chayya Bera Minister of State-in-charge (Relief Branch) Govt. of West Bengal who submitted her paper for discussion. The document gives details of the benefits the Left Front Govt. gave to ordinary women in rural areas, the jobs in Anganwadis, widow pensions, residential accommodation for working women, setting up of creches and welfare homes. Alongwith this she said the money allocation for the schemes given by the central Govt. during last 4 years was very poor. The agricultural men and women used to get work for 4 months in the year, now with various development works started by the Govt. through Panchayat they get work for 7-8 months. The equal pay is now available almost in all the industries. The education policies have given boost to girls education. The ICDS scheme has benefited 31670 Anganwadi women and helpless.

Convention Condemns the Hospital Bill

It was important to take note that the delegates in various groups condemned the Hospital and other Industrial Bill and the Industrial Bill for curtailing the trade union rights of employees. The employment group also passed a resolution demanding withdrawal of Ban on new recruitment". A resolution on Bihar earthquake was passed demanding all help to the victims.

Women Victims of superstitions

Another important point was made by Ms. Neelan Gorhe in the paper submitted by S tree Adhar Kendra about the superstitions and religious revivalism and women becoming the victims. She said, the DPP was silent on this point. In this context she gave instances of atrocities on Dalit women in Chandrapur in Maharashtra by Shivsena, a communal organisation which stripped Dalit women naked and paraded them in the street.

On 22nd and 23rd about 35 women participated in the open session citing their own experience on behalf of their organisations.

Among those who spoke were Jyotsna, Chatterjee, Ranjana Kumari, Surender Saithi, Vimala Faruqui, Laxmi Saigal, Leela Dube, Manjari Gupta, Vimal Ranadive, Lalita Sarkar, Arati Ganguli, Brinda Karat and many others.

A Call for Statewise Conventions

The open session gave a call to the women's organisations to hold such statewise conventions and seminar on the plan and send their recommendations. The committee of organisations also decided to bring out a document containing all the papers discussed and amended alongwith the report, statistics, tables etc. The wide discussion on the perspective plan, the united action of 7 women's organisations, the patient work the organisations did for the convention, and the response the committee received from the states within such a short time, once again showed that women should not be taken for granted. They should be consulted before any major decisions on women are taken. The intervention from the 7 womens organisations proved to be correct since the introduction of the plan seemed to be postponed further!

(Contd. from page 11)

correct to a certain point, if there is no outlook of the organisers towards the perspective of women's movement which has to be a part of the mainstream. This does not mean the method of women's wing in trade unions is not correct. The experience of ours proves that this was the only way to educate the women about their problems, to raise the consciousness among men and women by fighting these feudal deviations existing among both.

It is not possible here to deal with all the points raised like drinking water, housing and so on which are very important and women suffer the most. The women's movement, and its history is also touched by the Commission.

On the whole we welcome the report of the Commission and its recommendations. The labour Commission has taken to collect the information, beautiful pictures of different women workers which shows their present conditions is worth mentioning. The report on self-employed and women in the informal sector should in fact inspires those activists, trade unionists and others to work among them to raise their status as equal partners in the society.

South African Women in the National Liberation Struggle

THE struggle for national liberation in South Africa is a struggle for the democratic transformation of a system in which a minority has denied political rights for centuries to the majority of the people. The political repression of the black people of South Africa has been coupled with their economic exploitation, their loss of land, the denial of the basic human needs of adequate health, housing, family life and sustenance. Women's participation in the revolution is central to the strengthening of the national liberation movement and the nature of the transformation of society.

Laying the Foundations

In 1913, at the time of the notorious Land Act, the year after the formation of the ANC, African women staged a spirited campaign — including passive resistance and civil disobedience — against pass laws for women in the Orange Free State. This province was unusual in applying pass laws to women. In general, before 1950, the pass laws used to control African men in the labour force — were not applied to African women, primarily because there were so few women living in towns. But not so in Bloemfontein where African women, present in significant numbers, were subjected to pass laws — the badge of slavery. They condemned pass laws for women arguing that the family was sacred — jail would separate them from their families — and women had a special role in maintaining its integrity. This anti-pass campaign forced the ANC to pay greater attention to women and led to the formation of the Bantu Women's League in 1913-14 — the first national organisation of black women.

However, women were not allowed to become full members of the ANC, and for the next 25 years were accorded the status of 'auxiliary members' without voting rights.

It was in the climate of mass mobilisation of the early 1940s, marked by events such as the successful Alexandra bus boycott of 1943, that women were granted full membership

status in the ANC and the ANC Women's league was set up. All ANC women automatically belonged to the Women's League. Rapid changes were made once the 1949 Programme of Action had been adopted, ushering in the dynamic ANC leadership of Mandela, Tambo, Lembede and others. In that year Ida Mtwana was elected president of the ANC Women's League. As the ANC grew into a mass organisation in the 1950s — particularly during the Defiance Campaign — so the scope of the ANC Women's League expanded. But what really galvanised women was the threat to introduce passes for all women.

In 1953, filled with confidence from the success of the Defiance Campaign, women such as Florence Matomela (Cape President of the ANC Women's League), France Baard, and Ray Alexander worked for the establishment of a political body which would provide a stronger voice for women involved in the Congress Alliance, and the FEDERATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN WAS FORMED IN 1954. Amongst its aims was the drawing up of a Women's charter. In 1955 Lilian Ngoyi, outstanding national and women's leader, and recipient of the highest honour the people of South Africa can bestow — Lsitwalandwe-Seaparankoe — was the first woman to be elected to the ANC national executive. As the 1950s wore on, women came to the fore in the anti-pass campaign, and the status and prestige of women in the Congress Alliance and within the ANC increased. Symbolic of this was the ANC's decision to commemorate August 9th as 'Women's Day', in honour of the massive anti-pass demonstration staged by the women in 1956. Women had made anti-pass demonstrations their own platform.

The banning of the ANC in 1960 and the infamous Rivonia Trial of 1964 saw the mass upsurge of popular resistance of the Fifties transformed into underground, illegal work. The next twenty years witnessed the painstaking rebuilding of organised resistance despite intense repression. The Soweto Uprising of 1976 marked a turning point, and

the 1980s have seen the flourishing of the broad democratic movement, uniting millions of our people-women, youth and students, workers and peasants-in opposition to the tyrannical apartheid regime.

The Mass Democratic Movement

The participation of women in the struggle for liberation has grown from strength to strength. The mobilisation and emancipation of women has become a central issue in the national liberation struggle. This is true both in those many organisations which have sprung up in the 1980s, and within the ANC itself. When President Tambo addressed the Second National Conference of the ANC Women's Section in Luanda in 1981, he said:

'...Women...have the duty to liberate us men from antique concepts and attitudes about the place and role of women in society and in the development of our revolutionary struggle. We invite the ANC Women's Section and the black women of South Africa more oppressed and more exploited than any section of the population, to — assume their proper role-outside the kitchen among the fighting ranks of our movement and at its command posts'.

The ANC sees the struggle for national liberation resting on four pillars; the mass democratic movement, the revolutionary underground, the people's army and international solidarity. Today women feature prominently in each of these four pillars. Working for national liberation, we challenge and combat women's exploitation and women's subordination.

In 1983 the United Democratic Front was launched nationally in South Africa as an organisation drawing together over 600 political, community, trade union, professional, youth, women's, sports and religious organisations dedicated to 'uniting all our people...to fight for our freedom' and to campaign for the implementation of the Freedom Charter. In 1985 the Congress of South African Trade Unions was launched, as a union federation bringing together unions in industry, mining and the service sector representing over half a million workers.

The Women Organise

Women are prominent in the ranks and the leadership of many of the organisations, including the UDF itself. Albertina Sisulu epitomises the heroism of South Africa's women. Banned for 17 years and arrested many times, her husband Walter has spent almost a quarter of a century behind bars. Life imprisonment, her family has repeatedly been detained, tortured and harassed, some forced into exile. Albertina was an executive member of the ANC Women's League in the 1950s. The breadwinner while other family members are in jail, she was elected one of the three presidents of the UDF. With other notable veterans such as Helen Joseph and Frances Baard, Albertina Sisulu demonstrates the continuity of women's struggle. Another patron elected at the founding congress was Martha Mahlangu, detained for many months during the 1986-87 state of emergency. Her courage and movingly defiant speeches touch all who hear them. Her son Solomon, ANC cadre and member of Umkhonto we Sizwe, was executed by the Pretoria regime in 1979. The tasks women fulfil are not only overtly political. It is our responsibility, often in the absence of our menfolk, to hold the fabric of our society together. We are faced with apartheid's death squads, squalid living conditions, deprivation of family life, hunger, poverty and disease engage in the daily battle to create a home and environment from which our future can grow.

New Regional Organisations Start

By 1986 three large regional women's organisations existed in the Transvaal, the Cape and Natal. Their branches consisted of urban and rural women, young and old, black and white. The women's organisations campaigned on a range of issues: they held marches in protest at the presence of troops in the townships, they were an important force in the nationwide township rent boycotts, and in one town, Port Alfred, the women organised a week-long stayaway from work in protest at the lenient action taken by the police against a known rapist, which so contrasted with the way in which young people had been detained and dealt with.

(Contd. on page 19)

Violation of Transfer Policy by Regional Provident Fund Commissioner, Punjab

WITH the approval of Government of India, Ministry of Labour, Central Provident Fund Commissioner had issued a policy Statement some times back to all the Regional Provident Fund Commissioners for the transfer of Head Clerks from regional office to Sub-Regional Offices on the year rotation on seniority basis for the smooth functioning in the Sub-Regional offices. But in contravention of the approved policy, the Regional Provident Fund Commissioner has been transferring head clerks at his whims and fancy with the open connivance of one of the faction of the Local unions. As a result some of the head clerks are being rotated time and again while others are exempted from such transfers. As a result some of the head clerks have been forced to rotate for the third time while some have already been rotated two times and all due for third time very shortly. Very strangely in some of the cases the stay of the officials at Regional Office was less than six months and in many cases less than a year after their rotation turn in Sub-Regional Offices.

Contrary to this, there are head clerks who owe their allegiance to the management led union have not been rotated even for once. In many of such cases whenever their turn for transfer come, they are picked up and co-opted as office bearers of the so-called union (in utter disregard to Trade Union Act 1926 and I.D. Act 1947) and protected from such transfer. After a couple of months a particular set of office bearers is changed and new office bearers are intimidated. This has happened not in one but many cases. Virtually protection is operated like a current account by misusing "protected workman status."

It is also reported that some of the head clerks are being recalled after serving for few months in sub regional office without completion of requisite one year term thus advancing the turn for transfer of other officials.

The higher authorities have also failed to intervene and solve the grievances of genuine affected officials due to close relationship of the local faction of the Union and the Management.

In such a process ladies staff members

have become the main target of harassment. They have been transferred to sub regional office in gross violation of instructions issued by Government of India to post the employed couples at the same station. Some of the ladies head clerks have already been rotated two times while contrary to this male head clerks in many cases have not been transferred even for once.

Not only this the Regional Authorities have not even cared for a very hard case of a lady head clerk who being handicapped cannot walk properly even in the plains was transferred to a hilly area, Shimla, and had to knock the doors of Supreme Court to get justice.

It is also reported that total administration in Provident Office in Chandigarh is in the grip of mafia leader promoted by the Regional Authorities and Regional Provident Fund Commissioner is merely a rubber stamp who takes guidances and directions in all his actions, from the said leader of the Union. Whenever any official goes to Regional Provident Fund Commissioner with his individual grievance he compels the officials to toe to the line of the said union leader and ask them to come through his promoted leader who in turn harasses the staff members. It is also reported that the said leaders has never done any office work and remains busy in manhandling and misbehaving with the staff members including supervisory and senior staff. The Authorities instead of taking action against the culprit promote him and in turn harass the victims and take action against them. The Regional Provident Fund Commissioner even reportedly compels the other officers under him to reconcile and submit to the said illegal union leader if they dare to work fairly and independently. A high level inquiry of instituted will bring many irregularities to the light. So that this social security organisation meant to serve the lakhs of PF subscribers could fulfil its real objectives.

The Co-ordination Committee of Women in Punjab led a delegation which included some of the women employees of the office to the Chandigarh Commissioner and demanded justice to the women employees.

Election Of The Union is Illegal

(The following letter was submitted to the Regional provident Commissioner Chandigarh signed by 103 staff members from the office requesting him not to hold the election of the Union. The letter speaks the unconstitutional way — the election was being held-Edi)

Sir,

This is with reference to the Notice dated 18th July, 1988 from Sh. A.S. Dua and J.C. Shama as being election commissioners to conduct the election of the Union. In this respect, it is respectfully submitted that the said election is illegal and is contravention of constitution of the Union as follows:—

(i) Under Clause 5 (V) of the constitution of the Union, the voting is permissible only through Secret ballot. But Clause 4 of the Election Commissioners notice which allows by hand/by post votes contravene the Clause 5 (V) of the Constitution as it violates spirit of secrecy of votes as there is no provision of postal Ballot at all.

(ii) Vide Central Office letter No. P 11(10) 80/MP/PT/dated 19.1.1984/20.1.1988 the designation of Enforcement Officer's AAO's have been classified as Clause II Non-Gazetted. And Clause XX 4(1) of the Constitution of the Union stipulates that only class III and class IV employee of the Organisation can only be the members of the Union. As such Enforcement Officer's/A AO's can not participate in the said election in any way. But Election Commissioner are allowing such illegal members who participates as per their notice dated 29.7.88.

(iii) The appointment of Election Commissioners was made by a section of employees and they are playing partisan role. Thus, the basic sanctity of election in a democratic manner/Free and Fair is finished.

(iv) Accompanying of Election Commissioner with the illiterate voters violates spirit of secrecy and *whic is a abinitio*.

In view of the above circumstances, your

kind honour is requested to intervene personally and ask the Election Commissioner not to proceed with the illegal undemocratic election otherwise it may be treated as bogus election against the wishes of majority of staff members. It is also made clear that Administration itself will be responsible for the consequences arising out of it.

Yours faithfully
Staff Members

(from page 17)

Women worked hard to build our organisations, to mobilise young women and to spread organisation into the rural areas. As the regime's war against our people escalated, women's organisations spread to new areas, for instance running self-help classes in first aid so that people injured by the police and military on the streets would not have to go to hospital for medical assistance and run the risk of being detained.

In May 1987 all the regional women's organisations came together and, in conditions of secrecy because of the Pretoria regime's record of harassing activists, launched the UDF Women's League. Preparations are under way for the rebirth of the Federation of South African Women nationwide in 1980, strengthening the national unity of women.

Women Join Trade Unions

The organisation of women has not been confined to women's organisations. Women have joined trade unions in large numbers, and have been prominent members of parent-teacher-student associations and community civic organisations. It is here that women have developed many skills—talking, mobilising, educating and campaigning about all issues affecting their lives—cementing their integral role in the liberation struggle. As Transvaal women said of their organisation in 1984: 'We need women's organisations because of the special problems we face as women. This struggle will never be won until all the women are involved as well'.

Kerala Left-Front Concedes Nurses' Demands

THE notorious Karunakaran Govt had arbitrarily stopped payment of stipend to Student Nurses in Kerala. They were beaten up and the tent in which they were conducting a satyagraha in protest was pulled down by Karunakaran's police repeatedly.

But things have changed dramatically after the people voted the left-front Govt to power in Kerala. The left-front govt led by Com. Nayanar has not only restored the stipend to the student nurses but has also given an increase of Rs. 50/- per month.

Kerala is the first state in India to introduce a nurse bed ratio of 4:1 in the hospitals. The Kerala govt has already implemented this in the major hospitals in the state. An official order to this effect has already been sent to the concerned authorities. A bed-nurse ratio of 4:1 was recommended by several expert committees in the past but the central govt had simply shelved it for decades. Even in major Delhi hospitals the nurse-bed ratio 40 (or more): 1. Thus the nurses are reeling under unbearable pressure.

The Kerala govt has also agreed to strictly adhere to the principle of eight hours work for the nurses, a decision yet to be dreamed of by the nurses in other parts of the country. The govt of Kerala has also started implementing this in the major hospitals.

The above benefits coming in the midst of this severe financial crisis should act as an eye opener for the nurses organisations in other parts of the country to fight for these long pending basic demands.

Delhi Nurses Fight Against Retrenchment

The AIIMS management recently tried to terminate the services of more than ten nurses because of their trade union activities. The only fault of the nurses was that they refused to the line of the management and their puppet union. The management even without following the proper procedure for retrenchment tried to dispose-off the services of the nurses. This was when the AIIMS was terribly understaffed and when fresh recruitments were going

on to fill the vacancies. But when the Delhi Hospital Employees & Nurses Union took up the matter and threatened direct action, the management was forced to retrace its steps.

Strong resentment is growing among the nurses because of the abnormal delay in starting construction of houses for the nurses. There are already around 400 nurses in the waiting list for houses. When the union representatives met the management on 30.8.88, they were promised that the management is planning to rent out houses from the DDA and will allot them to as an emergency measure. The management also agreed to arrange for to-and-fro conveyance for the nurses from such colonies.

Mass Deputations of West Bengal Nurses Association to CMOH

WEST BENGAL Nurses Association on 27th July, 1988 observed mass deputation programme at the District level to press for 12 point Charter of Demands. The Nurses from different Health centres and Hospitals from every District demonstrated before District Hospitals, office of CMOH & Chief Medical Officers.

Over 303 nurses of Nadia District assembled at the District Hospital where Vice President Ram Mukherjee, Secretary Lily Biswas and Co-ordination Committee member Manick Banarjee addressed them. The nurses then paraded in a procession by raising slogans to the office of the Chief Health Officer and presented the memorandum to the Deputy Chief Health Officer.

In Budwan District a procession comprising of delegates from different Blocks, and Sub-Divisions was taken out from Nurses Hotel to the office of CMOH, where Secretary, Purabi Basu and Co-ordination Committee member, Saradindu Mitra and Assistant Secretary, Laxmi Modhak addressed them. The meeting was chaired by Vice President Jayantika Roy. A seven member delegation handed over the Charter of Demand to D.C. M.O.H.

Similarly over 100 Nursing staff of Malda

District went in a procession from Co-ordination Committee office to the office of CMOH, where Secretary Namita Dev Joint Secretary Shipra Bhattachary and Co-ordination Committee Vice President Nikhilesh Das addressed them. The meeting was chaired by President Maya Das Gupta. Later on a delegation met and presented the a copy of Resolution on 12 point Demand to CMOH. Copies were also sent to Health Minister, Labour Minister.

Delegates from different parts of Birbhum District assembled at Siuri Aravinda Bhawan and marched in a procession to the office of CMOH. The Charter of Demand was placed in the meeting by Joint Secretary Bhattachary and Co-ordination Committee Secretary also spoke. The meeting was chaired by President Uma Mitra. A six member delegation met the CMO and handed over the Charter of Demand.

Co-ordination Committee, Punjab Demands Better Conditions for Women

A meeting of Istri Mulazam Co-ordination Committee, Punjab held on 2nd August '88 under the Presidentship of Mrs. Surinder Kaur terming the recommendations of Punjab Pay Commission to increase causal leaves, to open creches, more hostels for working women, preference in allotment of Government houses as positive recommendations has demanded ten extra causal leaves for women employees having service more than twenty years, maternity leave for six months, Meeting also demanded clear instructions regarding maternity leaves to adhoc women employees, increase in diet allowance of nursing staff and clear instructions regarding recommendations by pay commission.

Releasing the proceedings of meeting to the press Mrs Surinderjit Kaur General Secretary told that, meeting has noted deep concern that there is no recommendation by Punjab Pay Commission regarding very deplorable service condition of R.D.A., Anganwadi, Health Guides and resolved to mobilise maximum support for the demand of these catagories of women employees.

The meeting further passed resolution strongly condemning the shameful misbehaviour

by D.G.P., Punjab Mr. K.P.S. Gill with I.A.S. Officer and demanded stern action against the culprit.

LIC Women Employees' Convention at Trivandrum

A Convention of the women employees of Life Insurance Corporation of India, Trivandrum Division was held under the auspices of the LIC Employees' union, Trivandrum on July 24, 1988 at the District Co-operative Bank Hall, Quilon. The Convention discussed several problems faced by women employees in LIC. The meeting was the first of its kind in LIC, Trivandrum. The Convention decided to fight in co-operation with other sections of employees and workers for the cause of women's right and against the exploitation of women. About 75 delegates from various Branches of LIC and GIC participated in the Convention along with members from other sister trade unions.

Inaugurating the Convention, Com. (Smt) K R Bhanumathy, leader of the NGO union called upon the entire working women to come to the forefront of the women's welfare movement. Comrace N.M. Sundaram, General Secretary, AIIEA, pointed out that greater threats were posed to the right of collective bargaining of the employees and the women employees should be second to none to defend the hard-won rights, benefits and privileges. He stressed on the need for co-ordination of women workers. Comrade (Smt) Girija Potti (A.G's.) Office) was also addressed the Convention said that the need of unity of action by working women has paramount and urgent. Comrade (Smt) Krishnammal of Democratic Womens Association also addressed the Convention. The delegates highlighted the problems of women employees in the branch offices of LIC and decided to seek remedial action. (Smt) Ravichandrika of BO Unit II, Trivandrum presided over the Convention and Comrade (Smt) B. Jayasree, Branch Secretary BO Unit I, Trivandrum welcomed the delegates to the Convention. A 7 member committee of women employees was elected to coordinate the movement of women workers and also to focus and find solutions to the problems of women employees in LIC with the help and guidance of the AIIEA.

Release Nelson Mandela

(The following message with an introductory letter was delivered to Mr Moosa Moola the Chief Representative, African National Congress by Mrs Vimal Ranadive Vice-President of AIDWA, on 21st July, 1988. Ed.)

“WE would request you to kindly forward the enclosed telegram to Ms Winnie Mandela. It is indeed difficult to express in few words possible in a telegram, our deep feeling of solidarity with the ANC and the fighting people of South Africa.

At a recent meeting of the Central Executive Committee of our organisation 2.3 million members, we had taken the decision to observe July 18 as solidarity with South Africa Day Focussing on the demands for immediate release of Com. Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, annulment of the death sentence of the Sharpsville six, condemnation of continued refusal of the Reagan and Thatcher Governments to impose economic sanctions. Our units throughout the country observed day with meetings, processions, and rallies.

We would to once more reiterate our hatred towards the racist Botha regime and our deepest solidarity with the brave and courageous people of South Africa”

To

Comrade Winnie Mandela

Warmest Greetings on the occasion of Comrade Nelson Mandela's Seventieth Birthday. We join worldwide demand for the release of this shining symbol of peoples freedom struggle! Your courage is an inspiring example. We demand annulment of death sentence of Sharpsville six and release of all political prisoners. We condemn imperialist support to the hated racist Botha regime and refusal to levy economic sanctions. Susheela Gopalan General Secretary, All India Democratic Women's Association.

Susheela Gopalan,
General Secretary, All India Democratic Women's Association.

Mandela's Home Burnt Down

All that remains of Nelson and Winnie Mandela's Orlando West home, gutted by fire on 28.7.88 is a shell. A member of the Mandela Football Club (MFC) who was in the house when the fire began, said more than 50 youths, some in school uniform, arrived at the house at lunch-time and demanded to speak to the club members. Three of them gained entrance by forcing their way through the main gate....

A fight ensued, and the three intruders were evicted from the house, but they returned a short while later and allegedly stoned the house, breaking windows. "They got hold of two petrol containers and forced their way through Winnie's bedroom and poured petrol on the furniture. They did the same to the lounge and other rooms before setting the whole house on fire. The petrol was kept for use in two electrical generators-used since the Soweto City Council cut the electricity during the three-year old rent boycott.

The fire brigade arrived and put out the fire while the South African Police took photographs. We condemn the incident.

The Voice of the Working Woman Greets
Women in South Africa

on 9th August

On this historic women's day, we express our solidarity with the heroic women in South Africa. We salute those who are facing the death sentences. We assure our firm support to the struggle against Apartheid.

Corporation Bank Union and the Question of Transfer in Bangalore

HAVING allowed the disease to enter the body, any amount of treatment to mitigate the symptom would result in failure. This is what exactly happening in the banking industry today. The so called majority unions in the banking industry boasted of having entered into an agreement for computerisation and claimed that it was historic in trade union movement. Today after the entry of computers in to the hitherto manually done areas redundancy of job has become the reality.

Forced transfers of some employees is an offshoot of this computerisation agreement. At the time of signing the agreement on computerisation bank employees were hold that no adverse effects would invade as a result of the agreement. But after the agreement recruitment in banking industry became standstill. Job potential has been reduced to a large extent. Promotions have become rare. Now comes mass transfers. It is here the role of the so called majority union's in fighting the transfer issue comes into fore.

In Corporation Bank forced transfers on mass scale have resulted in putting the employees irrespective of sex into all sorts of hardships. It has started in 1987. The only majority union in that bank has started a dummy fight just to suppress the discontentment of the employees against the union. Even strike calls were given. Since they do not have the face after agreeing to mass transfers to approach the management to retrace the step of mass transfers. The dummy fight was unable to get any solution to the mass transfers. On the other hand some more employees were asked to give the consent and places of choice in October '87. The union posing itself as a crusader against the transfer again gave a call for strike, after the All India Conference of the union where Bangalore delegates took the leadership to task. Subsequently when nothing moved, an industrial dispute was raised with the Regional Labour Commissioner, Bangalore. The Labour Commissioner gave a failure report in the middle of July, 1988, because the management was adamant. The management took the plea that they were acting in accordance with the Central Govt. directives. Immediately after the failure report transfer

orders of the concerned employees followed. Employees in Bangalore got agitated and forced the leadership for a struggle. It is again here the leadership bungled and just to satisfy the employees gave three days strike call in Bangalore and one day initial strike call also. No serious attempts were made either to approach the management or to get some legal remedy. 31 employees including 13 women employees (all of them are married) had to get themselves relieved and report at the new place. Women employees were transferred to distant places which are beyond 60 KMs. All the attempts of the union to oppose the transfer orders were treating the symptoms. Unless bank employees organise themselves to fight the computer offensive, there is no hope for bank employees.

Soviet Women's Committee Greetings

Message of Solidarity From the Soviet Women's Committee to AIDWA on Independence Day is given here under:

On the occasion of Independence day we send our warm Greetings and Congratulations to Women of India stop Gaining of Independence by the Great People of India opened up vast opportunities for the advance of the country on the Independent Development and Progress stop we are Rejoicing at the ever Strengthening Friendly Relations Between our Countries stop Soviet Women support and Approve of the Efforts by the Soviet Union and India in the Struggle for a Nuclearfree and Nonviolent world stop Soviet Dash Indian Festivals have Invaluably Enriched our Friendship stop Women Programmes of the Festivals have Presented Broad Opportunities to Learn more about the position of Women in our Respective Countries and to better understand their interest and Concerns stop we hope that a Frank Dialogue Between Soviet and Indian Women will continue stop we wish Indian Women and their Families happiness comma Peace and Prosperity stop Soviet Womens Committee.

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tribes. The recent happenings in Ujan Maidan in Tripura, where the Assam soldiers molested tribal women have become the talk of the whole country.

The recent perspective plan for women announced by the Government talked about the women's development and the poverty alleviation programmes and so on. The women's organisations have rightly noted that the programmes meant for women like IRDP, NREP, TRYSEM and so on were totally ineffective and did not help to improve the economic position of rural women. Even the recommendations of 30/- of all IRDP benefits to women or percentage of bank loans and such other things will not basically change the position of

women except some few benefits available, if at all these directives are carried out. Therefore the question of land to the tiller, and land reform has assumed a great significance under the present political situation.

The call given by the Co-ordination Committee of peasant and agricultural workers unions and supported by mass organisations and Left parties will be welcome by women's organisations, and women in countryside. The women will court arrest in mass demanding among other things land to the tiller, the implementation of which will change the position of rural women and men qualitatively. The strong unity achieved in the course of struggle will again raise the demand for resignation of the Rajiv Gandhi who is not capable to solve a single issue.

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Chandra Sekhar Mukherjee, President of the Union and by three Working women Comrades, namely Com. Gita Swar, Com. Kalpana and Com. Maya Bauri.

The main resolution was placed before the convention by Com. Bama Pada Mukherjee, General Secretary of the Union. In resonance of the guidelines adopted in the 5th Conference of CITU, held at Bombay.

Thirteen women workers participated in the deliberation. It generated a great enthusiasm among the working women and they are having intensive discussions among themselves. The representatives of 'Ganatantrik Mahila Samity' also actively participated in the Convention.

It was resolved in the Convention that a mass demonstration to be organised on 25th August 1988 to General Manager, IISCO, Burnpur, to submit the charter of demands on the hard pressed issues faced by the working women.

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ing old age pension the authorities are not willing to treat them as a worker despite their continuously working for 40 years. When the women did not stop working at the centres despite less work and were continuously demanding the old age pension and regularisation under the labour laws, the authorities planned to throw them out of job by starting I.T.I.

The representatives of the union met the authorities and requested them not to disturb these old women and throw them out at this very old age. However, authorities were determined to punish these women for forming a union.

The women went in a mass deputation at the office of the directorate of Social Welfare and demand the withdrawal of the I.T.I. classes from the centres on 28.7.88. The authorities who had threatened the representatives of dire consequences had to submit to the pressure from women and agreed not to

disturb the women till Nov. 88. Regarding the pension of Rs. 300/- per month and the 25 per cent cut from the wages since 1984, regularisation of young widows and destitutes, the authorities expressed helplessness as it was sanctioned by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt of India and they requested to contact the Home Ministry.

A seven member delegation led by Bibha Ghosh Goswami and Suresh Kurup MPs met the Home Minister Shri Buta Singh and discussed with him about the pension and regularisation of the young women and continuing the work. The delegation included Kishori Saxena, President, Pramila Pandhe General Secretary, Sarla Rani, Vice President and others. He told Com. Bibha Ghosh Swami that he would let them know about the decisions within a week. The union has decided to continue the preparations of further struggle for the demands. The old spirited women are determined to fight back the designs of the authorities at any cost.