

**CENTRE OF INDIAN TRADE
UNIONS**

4th. Annual Conference

GENERAL REPORT

BY

**P. Ramamurti
General Secretary**

**TYAGI VENKATACHALAM NAGAR
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Dear Comrades,

We are meeting after nearly 4 years—two years later than we should have met. The delay has been due to unprecedented events which followed almost immediately after our last conference in May, 1975.

The delegates to the All India Anti-wage Freeze Convention convened by the UCTU had gathered in Delhi on 25th June, which was to meet on the 26th June, 1975. On the morning of the 26th came the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's radio broadcast that she had clamped the draconian Emergency. All meetings had been banned. The convention could not take place, as the police had taken possession of the Hall. All democratic and trade union rights were scuttled.

Our organisation was one of the worst victims of the Emergency and naturally so. In the period preceding the Emergency it was the CITU that had played the foremost role in uniting the working class on concrete and specific issues facing them and unitedly resisting the attacks of the Government and employers on the working class. The resistance was growing day by day despite the savage repression and it inspired other sections of the working people. On my report to the last Conference I had noted, this struggle of the people had attained a tremendous sweep in many parts of country. The Emergency was aimed at this growth of the democratic mass resistance against the anti-people policies of ruling class. Naturally, therefore, the CITU became one of the main targets of the attack.

SUPPRESSION OF T.U. RIGHTS

Thousands of our cadres and activists, members of the Central Executive Committee, General Council, State and District Committees had been put behind bars without trial. In many states like Rajasthan, even elected members of the Works Committees were put behind the bars for no other reason than that they belonged to the CITU.

It must be said to their credit that they did not wilt under the attack. The trade union movement for a few months was totally paralysed. It must be stated, however, as has been noted by the President in his speech, that the working class could not be mobilised into serious political action against this most ferocious attack on the rights and liberties of the entire people. This was mainly due to the division in the trade union movement and the fact that the leaderships of the AITUC and the INTUC actually supported the Emergency, calling it a fight against fascism and reactionary forces.

Very soon, however, the real purpose of the Emergency became clear to even the workers belonging to INTUC and AITUC. The employers went on attacking their wages and jobs. Retrenchment from increase in work load took place in almost every industry. In the jute industry of West Bengal alone about 50,000 workers had been retrenched during the days of Emergency.

The notorious Bonus Act which virtually took away the right to get the minimum bonus, was passed. The agreement with the LIC employees on bonus was scrapped by legislation.

Despite these ferocious attacks the leaders of INTUC and AITUC were sitting on the newly formed Apex Bodies! In Tamil Nadu where a non-Congress Govt. functioned for eight months, they demanded the formation of an Apex Body, excluding trade union organisations which did not support the Emergency and the 20-Point-Programme of Indira Gandhi.

Our active comrades in many states, who escaped arrests were living underground and were keeping contact with the workers. Despite the denial of all rights, a few months after, struggles, even under these difficult conditions, were launched. The most notable of these struggles were :

The protracted struggle of Bata workers on the question of bonus, the struggle of IDPL workers at Hyderabad demanding bonus, the strike of Century Rayon Bombay for higher bonus payment, the strike of Indian Telephone Industries, the struggle of J.K. Synthetics workers in Kota against imposition of workload, the strike in Tamil Nadu

against bonus Ordinance, strike in Kerala and Bombay against promulgation of emergency, struggles of CEAT workers, Bombay, J. K. Jute Mill Kanpur, Engineering factories in Faridabad (Haryana) and Ghaziabad (U.P.).

According to official figures about 2000 strike actions have been reported during emergency.

The representatives of CITU, HMP, BMS and that section of the H.M.S. which had broken away from those who supported the Emergency and the Govt., met secretly and issued a joint statement appealing the workers to unitedly resist the attack on bonus in all the forms open to them. These appeals were clandestinely printed in lakhs and distributed among the workers throughout the country.

This had a great impact on the workers who saw a glow of hope. In some industrial units, workers resisted the attack on bonus spontaneously. In a textile mill near Bombay, the workers spurned the advice of the leaders of INTUC Union which was the only union in that factory and went on a strike demanding the same bonus as in the previous year. Many workers were arrested but the workers continued the strike undaunted, ultimately forcing the employer to concede the demands. Workers of I.T.I. Bangalore, a public sector undertaking, downed the tools on hearing that the management would not concede the former bonus. They were surrounded by a massive police force and a pitched battle was fought. Overwhelmed by the police force most of the workers escaped from the factory, jumping the wall. Their quarters were raided by the police and the workers and their families were beaten up. This heroic struggle was betrayed by the leadership of the Union.

The CITU approached the leadership of the AITUC and proposed to them that despite their political support to the Emergency they should unite with the CITU and the other trade unions in fighting back this attack on the working class. But the leadership of the AITUC refused to unite with us; instead, its leader S.A. Dange, publicly stated that the gains of the Emergency to the country and the people were many times more

than the loss that the working class had to undergo by way of bonus and other emoluments. The fact that the working class had lost all its democratic and trade union rights, meant nothing to him and the leadership of the AITUC.

When the Swaran Singh Committee's report on constitutional amendments was published, which, if enacted, would lead to institutionalising the Emergency, democratic opinion in the country began exerting its pressure. In many states the CITU brought out clandestine leaflets explaining the implications of the proposed constitutional amendments and distributed them amongst the workers. Whenever opportunities presented themselves, meetings of the workers alongwith others were held against these enactments.

When Indira Gandhi gambled and went into elections to Parliament, hoping to win the elections, and thereby get legitimacy to her authoritarian regime, the working class and the people throughout the country played a magnificent role in defeating her game. It is noteworthy that in all the Parliamentary Constituencies throughout the country where the working class predominated, the Congress Party headed by Indira Gandhi and her allies received a stunning defeat. All the praise showered upon her regime by the INTUC and the AITUC and by a section of HMS proved of no avail.

AFTER WITHDRAWAL OF EMERGENCY

The election results and the installation of the Janta Government at the Centre had raised great hopes among the working class. This was particularly so because in the Election Manifesto of the Janta Party it has solemnly undertaken to restore the democratic and trade union rights, dismantle the authoritarian framework of the 42nd Constitutional Amendment and pursue a pro-working-class policy. It had promised to annul all the victimisation measures undertaken during the Emergency period against the workers. It had accepted bonus as a deferred wage. On the question of minimum wages, the Manifesto had stated that need-based minimum wage will be the minimum wage. It had also promised that Dearness Allowance should fully compensate the raise in the cost of living.

The Government had restored trade union and democratic rights. The trade unions could now function openly. The Railway Minister, at the earliest opportunity, announced the annulment of all victimisation measures against railway workers taken during the 1974 strike. The Minister for Communications, George Fernandes, followed with similar assurances of removing victimisation.

Naturally, a spurt of strikes followed in the private sector demanding cancellation of all victimisation resorted to by the employers during the Emergency. The Government in the first few months showed a certain sympathetic attitude to these struggles and used its good offices to get many cases of victimisation cancelled.

But soon its economic policies began to reveal themselves as in no way different from those of the previous regime. These have been dealt with in detail by the President in his Presidential Address. Hence, I am confining myself in this Report to the struggle for unity and united action we have been endeavouring about in this period.

Many of the Ministers and officials began to mouth the same slogans as the leaders of the previous regime in regard to wage demands of workers, contrary to the commitments they had made in the Election Manifesto on the question of incomes, wages and price policy they sought to pit the agricultural labourers against the organised workers.

ALL INDIA TU CONVENTION

In these conditions we approached the leaders of the other trade unions for an All India Convention of Trade Unions. The Convention took place in September 1977. The AITUC and INTUC could not be invited to the Convention. It was inevitable under the circumstances prevailing at that time. The whole-hearted support that the leaderships of these organisations had given to the Emergency regime together with the fact that they had not repented for it, despite their own workers repudiating their policy in the General Elections, had made them suspects in the eyes of the other trade unions and the mass

of workers. Naturally, the other trade union centres were not willing to invite these organisations to the Conferences.

However, we were able to persuade the other participants to allow those trade unions and Federations, like the Federation of Defence Employees' Unions, which are not affiliated to any Central Organisation, but in which leaders with allegiance to the AITUC are working along with others, to participate in the Convention. We were also able to persuade them to allow individual trade unions, irrespective of their affiliations, to participate in the Convention.

The number of participants was so large that it had to be held in the main hall of Vigyan Bhawan—the biggest hall available in Delhi. Over 3,000 delegates participated in the Convention. It concentrated on the two major issues looming large before the working class and the people. The first was, dismantling of the authoritarian framework erected by the 42nd Constitutional Amendment and the other was the wages, incomes and price policy. It demanded immediate constitutional enactment, annulling completely the 42nd Constitutional Amendment and further amendments to the Constitution which would make fundamental rights inviolable and prevent the imposition of Emergency except for meeting external aggression.

On the question of wages, incomes and price policy, the Convention welcomed the policy statement in the Janta Party's Election Manifesto and demanded its implementation by the Government. It pointed out that disparities in incomes between the different classes—the monopolies and the big capitalists, the landlords, speculators and such people on the one hand, and the working class, employees and agricultural labourers, peasantry and other toiling sections of the people, on the other. It deprecated the attempts to deny wage increases to the industrial labourers who were receiving the pittance of a wage. It pointed out that the working class was in no way responsible for this state of affairs where the landlords were fleecing agricultural labourers. In fact, the organised working class movement and their struggle had inspired the agricultural labourers

and unorganised sections to organise themselves in many parts of the country as a result of which the agricultural labourers in several areas had won significant increase in wages. The Resolution further pointed out that disparities in income in this country cannot be reduced but, on the other hand, will only increase if the property rights of the monopolies, both foreign and Indian, and the landlords were not seriously attacked.

At the end of the convention a delegation of the Central Trade Union representatives met the Labour Minister of the Government of India, presented him the resolution of the Convention and offered to have a dialogue with the Government on the measures to be taken for translating the promises of the Janta Party in regard to incomes, wages and price policy into reality.

Following this Convention meetings were held in many places jointly with other organisations throughout the country, on the basis of the resolution of the Convention. The resolution of the Convention was also brought out in different languages by the State Committees and various unions and circulated on a mass scale among the workers.

Despite all this, however, the Government did not respond to the offer of the Trade Union Centres to have a dialogue with them, on this important question. Instead, it appointed a Committee under the Chairmanship of Mr. Bhoothalingam, a retired I.C.S. officer, who was the Chairman of the Lever Brothers, a multinational Company, and after the retirement had been working as Director in many Companies owned by monopoly houses. The other members of the Committee were mostly drawn from management institutes. The Central Trade Unions were nowhere in the picture. It was clear both from the constitution of this Committee and from its terms of reference that the Govt. had no intention to implement its election pledges. On the other hand, the intention was to freeze the wages in the name of improving the conditions of the agricultural labourers. Naturally, therefore, the entire trade union movement reacted sharply against this move of the Govt. and decided to boycott it. The Govt's. attempts to persuade the trade unions to co-operate with the Committee by

stating that it is not a Committee but only a 'Study Panel' did not succeed.

The report of the Bhoothalingam Committee and its recommendations clearly demonstrated that the apprehensions of the trade unions were well founded. Since the President has dealt with this report and its recommendations in his speech, I am not dilating on this.

The Bureau of Public Enterprises (B.P.E.) consisting of a few officials in the Finance Ministry which was originally constituted to look after the financial aspects of the public undertakings has grown into an organisation for acting as a watch-dog to keep wage negotiations in the public sector undertakings under control. It had issued a circular it had stated that pending the submission of the Report by the Bhoothalingam Committee and a decision by Government on the question of wages, incomes and prices after considering the report, no wage negotiations must be entered into with the trade unions. The agreements in public sector undertakings had expired even during the period of Emergency but, yet, the management refused to enter into negotiations because of this directive from the B.P.E. This virtually amounted to wage freeze in the public sector undertakings. It was clear that if this policy was allowed to succeed, employers in the private sector also would take the clue from the Government could be frustrated not by individual public sector undertakings going into strike action, but by the combined activities of all the public sector undertakings.

PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEE'S STRUGGLE

In order to get such a mobilisation successful, we got in touch with all the trade unions in the various public sector undertakings in Hyderabad and discussed with them the necessity of such a united action. The Hyderabad unions formed a Co-ordination Committee which invited all the trade unions in the various public sector undertakings throughout the country for a Convention in Hyderabad on 23/24 December, 1977. They also invited the Central Trade Unions to send their representatives to aid them.

In the meanwhile, the trade unions in the public sector undertakings at Bangalore had formed a Joint Action Committee and they were going into action. They had decided upon a programme of action to force the management to start negotiations. The General Secretary of the C.I.T.U. visited Bangalore, got into touch with the Action Committee and the leaders of the various unions and persuaded them to join the Hyderabad Convention. It required a good deal of persuasion on our part to make the B.M.S., and H.M.P. leaders to agree to the INTUC also participating in this Convention.

Although the Convention was a success, yet representation in it could not be effective and wide as possible, because by the time the other central organisations agreed to participate, the time was very short for them to circulate to their affiliates in the public sector undertakings to participate in the Convention.

The Convention decided to observe 20.1.78 as anti-wage-freeze day in all the public sector undertakings. United rallies and wherever possible demonstrations and strikes, depending upon the degree of preparation, were to be undertaken on that day. In many public sector undertakings joint meetings were held. In Bangalore there was a total strike in all the public sector undertakings on that day. The number of workers who struck work was 70,000. In the Kolar Gold Fields Unit of B.E.M.L. also there was a total strike of 6000 workers. About 15000 workers in the various undertakings in Hyderabad also struck work on that day. That was the day when most of the Cabinet Ministers of the Central Govt., including the Prime Minister, and the Leaders of the Janata Party arrived in Bangalore for their party meeting to decide upon the election alliances in the Assembly Elections Scheduled to take place in February 1978.

This "massive greetings" of these leaders by the public sector undertakings workers in Bangalore had its impact on the Govt. By the 1st week of February, the B.P.E. had instructed the public sector undertakings' managements to start negotiations where wage agreements had expired and negotiations started by about 10th of February 1978. This was a ruse intended to prevent the workers from going into action. However, illusions were created among the workers that their action

of 20th January had made the Govt. change its policy. The negotiations dragged on and soon the illusions were shattered.

The managements stipulated that the existing rate of Dearness Allowance of Rs. 1.30 per point of rise in the cost of living cannot be changed and offered a paltry sum of Rs. 5/- increase in the basic wage. Even where a higher rate of D. A. was prevalent, the management insisted that unless the workers accepted the reduction in the rate to Rs. 1.30 per point of rise, no negotiations could take place on other issues—even no issues involving no financial commitments. It was found that the management was acting under the directive of the B.P.E.

This made a mockery of the right of collective bargaining without which no trade union can exist.

The CITU got into touch with the central trade union organisations as per the resolution adopted at the Hyderabad Convention, which requested the Central Trade Unions to convene a wider Convention of the Unions in the public sector undertakings if the Govt. proved recalcitrant and jointly sponsored a Convention on May 15, 1978 at Delhi. This Convention was the most representative Convention of the public sector undertakings workers; all unions whether affiliated to public sector undertakings or not, and Federations of public sector undertakings participated in the Convention.

The Convention adopted a single Resolution denouncing the rule of the Bureau of Public Enterprises as one denying the right of collective bargaining to workers in the public sector undertakings and demanded the right to the workers in the public sector. With a view to enforce this demand the resolution of the Convention gave a call to observe June 10, as an All India Day and to go on one day's token strike on 28th of June, throughout the country in all the public sector undertakings.

Preparations for this programme went on vigorously in all public sector undertakings. The Government took the resolution lightly in the beginning, but later on the Industries Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, tried to mislead the workers by public statements to the effect that the strike was against the recom-

mendations of the Bhoothalingam Committee whose report had by then been published and that the Government had taken no decision on it. The trade unions counteracted this misleading propaganda effectively. When the reports from Govt. sources showed that the 28th June strike was going to be a massive success, in which at least 15 lakh workers would participate, the Govt. decided to have talks with the leaders of the Central Trade Unions on the 24th June. That night and the next morning, the Labour Minister hurriedly called the leaders of the trade unions for a meeting with the Government on the 26th.

The meeting was attended on the Govt. side by the Ministers of Labour, Industries, Petroleum and Chemicals and Finance. The Finance Minister stated that as the ultimate employer for workers in the public sector undertakings, the government must have a say in the negotiations and some guidelines were necessary for guidance of the managements. The trade union representatives countered it by saying that laying down such guidelines, which are taken as directives by the public sector undertakings' managements, arbitrarily by the Govt., makes a mockery of collective bargaining. It was finally agreed that the guidelines will be decided in consultation with the trade union representatives and a machinery could be created for this purpose. It was also agreed that the guidelines would be flexible and would not be taken as an alternative to directives. It was further agreed that negotiations would take place in the LIC on the question of bonus which had been unilaterally taken away by the management. A communique was issued by the Govt. on this basis. As a result, the Central Trade Unions advised the workers to give up the strike on 28th June, pending discussions with the Govt. regarding the new guidelines.

The Govt., however, dragged its feet on implementing this agreement. For nearly two months no machinery was set up.

The Central Trade Unions jointly wrote a letter to the Govt. that if immediate steps are not taken for constituting the promised consultative machinery they would have to advise the trade unions in the public sector to go into direct action. It is only after the receipt of this letter that the Government once again called a meeting to discuss what should be the composition

of the Committee. The trade union representatives stated that the Central Trade Unions must be represented on the Committee and it was for the Govt. to decide who will be its representatives. They insisted, however, that the Finance Ministry must be represented on the Govt. side. The Govt. agreed to the proposal. The trade union centres had given the names of their representatives on this Committee. However, no meeting had been called till February 1979. On 22nd February, a resolution was admitted in the Lok Sabha condemning the Government for going back on its promise. It was only then, the B.P.E. hurriedly issued a letter dated 24th February to the trade union centres for a meeting to discuss this question on 5th March, 1979.

In the meanwhile, in certain undertakings finding that workers were determined to go on strike, the management had to agree for an interim relief of about 10% of the total wage packet pending final negotiations after getting the new guidelines. The B.P.E. has been pressuring the managements to make these interim settlements the final settlements.

It is clear from all this that the Government has no intention of honouring its election pledges on this question. Its economic and fiscal policies despite its tall claims are leading to an inflationary spiral and by refusing to accept the responsibility of full neutralisation for the rise in the cost of living what the Government is aiming at is not only a wage freeze but a continuous erosion of real wage. This policy must be defeated by the united might of the entire working class and the CITU will have to take steps for bringing about such a united struggle.

STRUGGLE AGAINST I.R. BILL

At the first tripartite conference held after the Janata Govt. came into existence, the trade unions unanimously demanded that industrial relations must be re-structured and the law on industrial relations must be completely overhauled. The Government constituted a Committee on Industrial Relations with the representatives of the employers and trade union organisations and State and Central Governments under the chairmanship of

Union Labour Minister. The trade union representatives were almost unanimous on almost all the issues. On the question of recognition of unions and collective bargaining agent, all the Central Trade Unions demanded secret ballot. The INTUC representative, although he agreed to it in the beginning, refused to sign a joint letter addressed to the Chairman of the Committee embodying the joint proposal.

Great hopes were entertained by the workers that the Govt. would accept the proposals of the trade unions. The INTUC later had publicly stated that they had withdrawn their objections to 'Secret Ballot' proposal.

Despite all this, however, the Government introduced an Industrial Relations Bill in the Lok Sabha in the Autumn Session in August last which was a shock to the working class. In the Lok Sabha the Bill has been referred to a Joint Select Committee and it recommended the Rajya Sabha to elect its representatives on the Joint Select Committee. The Bill could not be introduced in Rajya Sabha for want of time.

The CITU utilised the intervening time to conduct a big campaign against this notorious Bill throughout the country. Other trade unions also had condemned this Bill. In a number of States joint Conventions have been held demanding withdrawal of the Bill. In consultation with all the other trade unions it was decided to hold a Convention in Delhi on 19.11.78 and also a rally of workers before the Parliament from all over the country on the 20th November, 1978. The INTUC which hesitated in the beginning also joined these efforts. A Reception Committee was formed and a Convention was held on the 19th November. It was the biggest Convention of Trade Unions ever held with over 10,000 representatives of trade unions attending it in the N.D.M.C. Indoor Stadium, New Delhi. The Convention unanimously demanded the complete withdrawal of the Bill and enactment of a new Act on the basis of discussions with the Central Trade Unions. The rally on the 20th November, 1978 was attended by over 2 lakh workers from all over the country. This had its impact on the Members of different parties in the Rajya Sabha. In view of the fact that the Trade Unions in which all the parties in the

Parliament were working, were unanimous in rejecting this Bill the Govt. was in a dilemma and they could not introduce the bill in the Rajya Sabha in November—December Session, fearing that it will be rejected.

NEW WAVE OF STRUGGLES

United activity has also centred around many other issues. The report of the Bhoothalingam Committee was one such. In almost every state joint conventions were held against the recommendations of the Bhoothalingam Committee's Report.

In every state united struggles of workers on the issues of wages, bonus, against retrenchment and other economic issues had taken place during the last two years on a scale never witnessed before. The biggest of these struggles was jute workers' strike of West Bengal involving $1\frac{1}{2}$ lakh workers. Ultimately the employers had to come down and agree to a minimum wage increase of Rs. 65.27 P. The threat of strike by the engineering workers in West Bengal forced the managements to come to an agreement giving a minimum increase of Rs. 65/-. Such struggles had taken place in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Rajasthan and other places. It is in this connection the prolonged strike jointly conducted by the CITU with other Trade Unions in the Atomic Power Plant is of great significance.

The united action which was growing before our last Conference has received a further impetus during the last two years. Not only industrial workers but middle class employees have also conducted united struggles. Some of the important struggles conducted in this period are :

- (1) The State Govt. employees strike of Maharashtra which lasted for 73 days. In support of their struggle a call was given by all the Trade Unions for a Maharashtra Bandh which was a complete success. There was a total strike in all the industrial establishments throughout Maharashtra.
- (2) State Govt. employees of Bihar also went on a long strike.

- (3) Electricity workers of Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and U.P. went on long strikes.

These strikes were declared illegal by invoking the provisions of the Essential Services Act. That could not prevent the strikes and the workers braved tremendous repression.

- (4) Workers of Khetri Copper Mines, Rajasthan were on strike conducted by a united Action Committee of the Trade Unions for more than two months.
- (5) Six lakh coal mine workers went on a token strike on 5.2.79 demanding wage revision and stoppage of interference by the B.P.E.
- (6) Bank employees throughout the country went on strike for two days in which both the Federations joined together and compelled the Govt. to intervene and settle the strike.
- (7) In the LIC all the unions together went on one-day strike, demanding revision of wage agreements.
- (8) 1,50,000 workers of the textile mills in Bombay went on a day's strike demanding revision of wages. The call was jointly given by all the unions, except the INTUC Union which was a recognised union.
- (9) Workers of the Unit of Balmer Lawri, a public sector undertaking, have been on strike for the last two months. Although agreement has been reached between the management and the union, the B.P.E. vetoed the agreement and insisted that the existing rate of Dearness allowance should be slashed to Rs. 1.30 per point rise of cost of living. The strike continues because of this insistence.
- (10) The entire working class of Delhi, Ghaziabad, Modinagar, Sonapat and Faridabad i. e. the industrial complex in and around Delhi went on a protest strike on 7.5.77 against the terrific repression mounted by the police in these areas.

- (11) Recently officers of many public sector undertakings have also been forced to join the T.U. Movement and entered into strike action or other agitations.

Comrades, the task of bringing about unity and united actions is an arduous one and faces many difficulties.

Firstly, in the early stages, the other trade union centres would have nothing to do with the A.I.T.U.C. and INTUC, because of their role in the Emergency and subsequent refusal to openly repudiate these policies.

Secondly, when we overcome these difficulties, the leadership of the AITUC creates further difficulties. Very often, when talks are going on for united movement, the top leadership of the AITUC runs to the Press with some proposed action. Naturally, there is a reaction among other trade union centres who would not like to be camp-followers of the AITUC.

Thirdly, in a number of cases the AITUC representatives outstep the bounds of the common platform on issues and seek to project their particular political views. This had to be countered repeatedly.

Fourthly, the INTUC as a whole was averse to joint action with the C.I.T.U. But the pressure of the mass of workers has made the leadership change the position. However, even now, there is a strong section in the INTUC leadership which is opposed to united action. As a matter of fact, it is the pressure of the workers and many unions even State Committees of the INTUC who had joined the CITU and other unions in joint meetings in the capagin meetings and conventions against the Industrial Relations Bill that preceded the Delhi convention on November 19, 1978 that clinched the issue and the INTUC almost towards the fag end of the preparations agreed to participate in the Convention.

It must be noted that while the AITUC is only too eager to join the struggle in other states, it actually opposes these struggles in Kerala. This happened in the case of the strikes of electricity workers, State Govt. employees and others. While

the AITUC condemns the invocation of the Essential Services Act to ban electricity workers' strike of the State Governments of U.P., Bihar etc. it refused to condemn the same action and the jailing of hundreds of electricity workers by the Kerala Govt. This is in sharp contrast to the attitude of the leaders of H.M.S., H.M.P. and B.M.S. in forthrightly opposing anti-working class measures resorted to by the Janata Govt. All these create suspicion in the minds of other trade union centres about the bonafides of the leadership of AITUC.

That the CITU could overcome these difficulties and obstacles and play an important role in bringing about united actions is because it took the issues affecting all workers and employees and carried on a peristent campaign among the workers.

BRIGHT PROSPECTS OF T.U. UNITY

Comrades, in the coming period the scope for unity and united actions will grow tremendously. This is because of the economic policies being persued by the Janata Government, which are in no way different from those of the previous Government.

The root of the anti-working class policies lies in the these basic economic policies. As already stated, in the beginning, for a few months, the Government took some measures to undo some of the excesses and victimisation measures of the previous Government during the Emergency. But, when the working class struggles began to break out, the Janata Govt. in the States as well as in the Centre began to supress them with a heavy hand.

In Uttar Pradesh firing was resorted to on striking workers in Pantnagar, BHEL Plant in Hardwar, on workers of the Swadeshi Cotton Mills in Kanpur for no other reason than that they demanded the payment of wages due to them by the management for months together and in other places. In Ghaziabad, employer's goondas fired upon workers whose demands were so elementary as provision of Cycle Stands, Canteens etc. Thousands of striking electricity workers were

arrested. It had the record of 11 firings on workers within a year.

In Faridabad, the Haryana Govt. let loose the police to terrorise the workers, who had marched under the banner of CITU and had launched a campaign for higher wages. It is noteworthy that the Award of the Engineering Wage Board remains a dead letter in Faridabad for the last 7 years and workers are being paid about 50% of the wages awarded by the Engineering Wage Board. Prohibitory orders under Section 144 were clamped at the instance of the employers. The Labour Minister, who expressed sympathy with the workers' demands, was summarily dismissed by the Chief Minister.

In Madhya Pradesh, when Electricity workers gave notice of strike, the State Government Promulgated an Ordinance—Mini MISA as it has come to be known since—providing for detention without trial.

The police resorted to firing on workers in Bailadila for demonstrating against mass retrenchment.

In Bihar, the police arrested the the Trade Union representatives while they were at the negotiating table, negotiating with the management. When the workers demonstrated against this, the police resorted to firing.

The strike of the Atomic Power Plant in Rawat Bhata (Rajasthan) where the workers had to resort to strike action under the leadership of a united Action Committee against victimisation of office-bearers of Trade Unions and other activists, against the withdrawal of the Project Allowance, and for the withdrawal of the false cases launched against the office-bearers at the instance of the Plant Management; a glaring instance of the anti working class policy of the Central Government. The Management refused to negotiate for months together. And when the labourers were forced to go on strike, the Prime Minister demanded unconditional withdrawal of the strike as a pre-condition for negotiations. The workers did not budge till after negotiations with the Central Labour Minister. The Rajasthan State Labour Minister wrote a letter to the Action Committee on behalf of himself, the Central Labour Minister

and the Chief Minister of Rajasthan assuring that the cases would be withdrawn, victimised workers would be reinstated and other demands would be negotiated.

After the withdrawal of the strike, when the Rajasthan Govt. wanted to withdraw the cases, the Central Govt. prevented it.

Months after, when the Union Labour Minister and the General Secretary of the CITU Visited Rawat Bhata and after talks, the Central Minister was convinced of the justness of the workers' demands, 4 months had elapsed and nothing was done to fulfil the commitments of the Govt. Meanwhile the workers were all acquitted by the Courts, there by proving the falsity of the charges of the Management. And yet, the workers were not reinstated. It was only after a good deal of pressure that a meeting of the union representatives and the Management was called by the Central Labour Minister on 12-3-1979.

The same story of procrastination in settling the disputes, prolongation of Strike in the Khetri Copper Mines and a number of other public Sector undertakings can be catalogued.

Most of the Public Sector Undertakings resort to parcelling out many of their permanent works to contractors. While giving such contracts, they do not even stipulate that fair wages be paid to such workers. As far as the Managements of the Public Sector Undertakings are concerned, the Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition). Act does not exist. Mr. Surieet Singh Barnala, the Union Minister for Food and Agriculture shamelessly stated in Parliament that the Food Corporation of India cannot give up the contract system in handling foodgrains not because the work is not of a permanent nature, but because it is cheaper to the Corporation. When the Govt. itself openly relies on sweated labour, how can it intervene when the Private Sector resorts the same contract system ?

Two years have elapsed and the Govt. is yet to evolve its policy on Bonus. Every year, when it was faced with a situation of a countrywide strike breaking out, it came out with an Ordinance restoring the payment of Minimum Bonus of 8.33 per cent.

It would have announced a Policy of Wage Freeze, but the prospect of having to face a countrywide strike has so far compelled it to hold its hand. But the efforts are continuing in that direction. The role of the B.P.E. in this connection has already been dealt with. The same policy is reflected with regard to the Railway Workers also. The Six Point charter of demands on which the Railway Workers went on the historic strike of 1974 under the leadership of George Fernandes, who now adorns the Ministerial chair as an important minister, remains unfulfilled.

Ministers go on tom-toming that a Cabinet Sub-Committee is going into the question of Bonus to the Railway Workers. But more than a year has elapsed and the Cabinet has not taken any decision so far.

The Railways are the worst offenders in regard to sweated labour. Nearly 20% of the total labour force in the Railways are casual labourers who are paid what is called the scheduled rates of daily wages, that is the minimum wages of Agricultural Labourers prevalent in the locality according to the District Collector. Even during the British rule, such a large percentage of workers was not kept as casual labourers.

The Agreement with the Loco Running Staff Association to enforce a Ten-hour maximum duty at a stretch for the Running Staff entered into after the strike of 1973 is still not implemented, the assurances of the Railway Minister notwithstanding. The Grievance Committee set up as a result of that Agreement had been scrapped during the Emergency. The Janata Govt. has not cared to revive the machinery, with the result the L.R.S.A. have no forum to express their grievances. Meanwhile victimisation in various forms continues mercilessly.

The Railway workers are in a ferment throughout the country. The AIRF has circulated the other unions for the setting-up of a Co-ordination Committee. The strike ballot of the NFIR acts as a catalytic agent.

In the Railway Budget, there is no indication that these problems would be solved soon. On the other hand, the increase in the fare in season tickets will be a heavy burden on the millions of commuters in the metropolitan cities. Further the

uniform 5% increase in freight on all commodities will push up prices of all articles.

In the LIC, the Janata Government, despite the solemn promise the Party Leaders had made during the election campaign, refused to scrap the Act of Parliament passed during the Emergency which nullified the Bonus Agreement with the Union. On the other hand, when that Act had been challenged in the Supreme Court, the Janata Govt. had no compunction in justifying the Act of breach of faith with the LIC Employees in the Supreme Court through the Attorney General. The Supreme Court, however, declared the Act ultra vires and restored the Agreement. The LIC Management on the instruction of the Finance Ministry, took no time, as soon as the term of the Agreement expired, in unilaterally amending the service rules, and declared that the LIC Employees will not be entitled to any Bonus!

The Industrial Relations Bill is the culmination of these anti-working class policies.

BUDGET AND HIGH TAXATION

The Budget for 1978-79 marks no departure from these basic policies which are the root cause of these anti-working class policies. On the other hand, it foreshadows heaping of fresh burdens on the people. The heaviest ever fresh taxation of over Rs. 600 crores, and the unprecedented deficit financing of over Rs. 1,300 crores will inevitably push up prices to unprecedented levels. The Budget levies heavy increase of excise duties on even such articles like soaps, toothpaste, tooth brush, terming these as 'luxury articles'. Even such necessary aids of the poor man's consumption like Kerosene and Matches have come under the axe of increased taxation. There is further a uniform increase of 5% excise duty on all articles unspecified in the schedule of articles !

The heavy increase in Petrol and Diesel will lead to an increase in Bus fares and freight charges on goods carried by lorries. This would further push up the prices.

The reduction in the excise duty on chemical fertilisers and light diesel used for pumpsets and the removal of excise duty on un-manufactured tobacco are welcome. However, the benefits would accrue in the main to the landlords and only a fraction of the peasantry would be benefited by these measures.

It is well known that last year prices of commercial crops like cotton, sugar-cane, Jute, etc. have crashed. Even the peasantry producing foodgrains in the grip of money-lenders, have been forced to make distress sales of their crops even below the support prices fixed by the Govt., which themselves are not remunerative. This is because the "Support Prices" are only in name in the absence of an effective Government machinery to purchase the produce from the peasants on a large scale. The mass of peasants face ruination.

The Budget has no proposals to alleviate the sufferings of the mass of peasants from this pitiable plight. The agricultural labourers also face a bleak prospect.

The Economic Survey for the year 1978-79 boasts of stability of wholesale prices whose index has risen by 1% during the year 1978. But what is the use of this average, when the prices of primary agricultural produce have crashed. This only means that this average of 1% increase of wholesale prices has been the result of steep increase in the prices of manufactured goods.

On the other hand, the consumer price index has risen by 4.8%.

All these show that the mass of the people, both consumers and producers, both in the rural and urban areas, have been fleeced. No wonder that with this tremendous erosion in the purchasing power of the common people, industrial growth during the year has steeply fallen from 7.5% to 3.4% in 1978-79.

With the further erosion of purchasing power as a result of the Budget levies, industries will be plunged into a greater stagnation. We are in for a period of stagflation i.e. stagnation combined with inflation.

DANGER OF MULTINATIONALS

Another important aspect of Government's policy that poses grave danger to the economic development of the country is the proliferation of Collaborative Agreements with multi-nationals and open and repeated invitations to them to invest in the country. Relaxations in the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act are being made to accommodate these companies because the World Bank demands that foreign capital should be given a freer hand in the Indian market. This has emboldened the representatives of the multinationals to demand more concessions. Mr. Freeman, American Joint President of the Indo-U.S. Business Council attacked Mr. George Fernandes for blowing hot and cold over big business houses and foreign capital. He would not have dared to speak in such a manner in any Atlantic countries. But, he demonstrated a sense of ownership when he demanded that foreign multinational drug companies must have the freedom of the Indian Market to loot the Indian people. He demanded that Indian interests should be subject to competition from foreign companies. But at the same time the USA raises its protection and imposes tariff barriers against import of commodities from India and other under-developed countries.

The Indian representative on Indo-American Council readily agreed to recommend to the Government that the situation should be re-assessed and the provisions of the FERA should be relaxed. These businessmen had no scruples to betray the Indian drug sector and sacrifice the independent development of our economy. Why? Because they were keen on joint ventures with foreign capital abroad, on sub-contracting and on some kind of agency partnership in other countries.

The Industries Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, while he boasted of his kicking out the Coca Cola Company, has sanctioned collaboration Agreements with multinationals, very rapidly. It is this double-faced attitude of the Industries minister as well as the eagerness of the Janata Government to accommodate the multinationals that have that have emboldened Mr. Freeman in his criticism of the Govt. and in demanding an open door to foreign capital.

It is against this attitude that has emboldened BHEL to propose an unprecedented collaboration with Siemens of West Germany for all the electrical and electronic products that BHEL is already manufacturing for 25 years, under the pretext of upgrading of technology. In the proposed agreement Siemens has made sure that every advantage: technical, financial and other, accrues to itself and has secured the broadest possible range of products (mechanical, electrical and electronic equipment) in the agreement. On the other hand, it has made no concrete commitment for and significant transfer of technology to BHEL.

If this agreement materilised, electricity production in India will be many times more costly and will be entirely dependent on the Siemens. It will put an end to all development of indigenous technology not only in these industries but also in many other vital sectors of our industries and place India permanently on dependence on the multinationals for its technological development. The trade union movement demands that the areement should not be finalised and the guilty and treacherous officials should be punished.

The Indira Gandhi Government had already succumbed to the pressures of the World Bank and started accommodating the multinationals. It was strange, however, to see that the ministers of the new Janata Government voted into power to defend democracy, vigorously pleaded for the entry of multinationals in the country's economy.

There were proposals to invite multinationals to start a steel plant with six million tonnes capacity, employing only two to three thousand workers. There were similar proposals about establishing an aluminium plant with their help. Attempts were afoot to enlist collaboration of West Germany and Japanese multinationals with the Bokaro Steel, though the USSR was giving every kind of aid and technology for the plant. Besides, there were proposals that multinationals should start giant concerns and export the entire product. This, it was said, would give foreign exchange to India for nothing and add to employment. In reality this is a proposal to loot both Indian labour and foreign markets.

Already in our country the multinationals are oppressing our people and refuse to accept either the trade union rights of the workers or obey the instructions of the Government or the public opinion. The multinational drug companies, Pfizer, & Glaxo have been victimising trade union workers and are declaring lock-outs to starve the workers.

On the other hand, they have been continuously pushing up the prices of vital drugs, and looting our people. Vital and life-saving drugs are now beyond the reach of the common people.

The Janata Government has reorganised the Electronics Commission, whose chairman was known to fight for the protection of the interests of the indigenous electronic industry and against the inroads of multi.nationals in this field. India possesses sufficient fund of knowledge and a large number of Electronic Engineers capable of developing indigenous technology. The reorganisation of the Electronics Commission is believed to scuttle the guidelines laid by the Commission in sanctioning new licences i.e. in the sphere which were weighted against the multinationals. A glaring instance of the solicitude of the Government to the multi-materials is the licence given to Siemens India, a wholly owned subsidiary of Siemens, to manufacture Data Loggers, ignoring the public protests of Shri Vijayakar, Chairman of the Electronics Corporation of India Ltd., a public sector undertaking, which had already started production of this product. The new imports in the Budget on electronic products will spell the death knell of the small-scale units in this industry and benefit the multi-national and other bigger units which have collaboration agreements with these multi-nationals.

Proposals are afoot which would be detrimental to the units manufacturing machinery for chemical fertiliser plants. India today manufactures plants capable of producing 900 tonnes per day. Under the pretext that plants with a capacity of 1300 tonnes per day will reduce the cost of production, it is being seriously proposed that these plants should be imported from the multinationals for manufacturing chemical fertilisers from the gas from Bombay High !

Comrades, a further dangerous trend is that multi-nationals are being preferred in certain quarters to our connections and relationship with the Socialist countries. The socialist countries, especially the USSR have given immense help to our country to lay the basis of heavy industry and keep the imperialist wolf at an arms' length. If some vested interests seek to break this bond, the working class must defeat their designs and demand closer relationship with the economies of the Socialist countries.

It cannot be said that our CITU Unions, our State Committees and our organisations have given sufficient attention to this menace of multinationals. It cannot be said that we have roused the working class to see this danger to our country's economy and independence, democracy and the rights of the trade unions. We must demand with one voice an end to the policy of concessions and invitations to the multi-nationals.

The exposure of the proposed BHEL—Siemens Agreement—has roused wide spread criticism from a wide section of the intellectual, scientific, engineering and technological community in the country. This has forced the Government to have serious misgivings about this proposal. This only shows the fund of anti-imperialism that exists in the country and if only the working class seizes upon it, it can emerge as a very big force. In this connection, it is necessary to expose the pretensions that that Multi-Nationals are seeking the development of industries in India and other under-developed countries. Capitalism is passing through a crisis which is daily deepening. They are seeking to transfer the burdens of the crisis to the peoples of the underdeveloped countries by new methods, and also on to the shoulders of the working class in their own countries.

The sharpness of this crisis is expressed in the mounting unemployment, inflation and the mounting strikes of workers in all the advanced countries. In Great Britain, for example, there was a strike-wave of an unprecedented nature in January—February last in which even civil servants joined.

We salute the brave workers of all the countries who are fighting the struggle against the common enemy, the multi-nationals and imperialists.

FIGHT AGAINST GOVERNMENT POLICY

The trade union movement has, in the recent period, conducted agitations and strike struggles, not only for the day to day economic demands, but also on questions of Government Policy directly affecting the working class. But the time has now come, when the trade union movement should take up united movements and struggles for alternative economic and democratic policies. In this, the CITU has the most significant role to play. It must constantly bring before the working class the urgent need to fight for radical agrarian reforms, take over of monopoly houses and foreign capital, moratorium on foreign debts, fight against the policy of increasing collaboration with multinationals and for encouragement of development of indigenous technology and scientific research. It must be realised that the rapid penetration of multinationals would sound the death knell of democracy and lead to rise of fascism.

The economic policies of the Government are enabling the working class to realise through their own experience that there is something basically wrong with these policies. While fighting against the attacks on the living standards and trade union rights, it is the task of the CITU Unions to constantly bring before the workers that unless the basic policies are changed, there is no question of any stable improvement in their conditions. The interests of the working class are inextricably bound with the interests of the entire people. On the other hand, the continuation of these policies will only intensify the misery, poverty and mass unemployment.

There is a growing radicalisation among the workers out of their own daily experience. This opens up for us great opportunity to rouse the working class to fight for the basic change in the policies on the lines indicated above.

The independent and intense activity of the CITU has always been the biggest factor in bringing about unity and united actions. The same devoted, sustained activity by the CITU Unions on the issues of basic economic policies can alone bring about united actions on those issues. For, these demands.

correspond to the realities of life and the direct daily experience of the working class.

It is out of this struggle that a re-alignment of class forces that a real left and democratic alternative would emerge capable of fighting effectively all reactionary forces and taking the country onwards along the path of rapid development and solve the problems of poverty and unemployment.

Comrades, in the period since the last Conference, our activists and workers had to go through the fire of intense and unprecedented repression. Scores of Comrades lost their lives in police firings, many died in prisons, many withstood torture in prison lock-ups. In many states our workers had to face armed attacks from the para-military forces organised by the ruling Parties and from the private army of the employers. In Tamil Nadu also, the AIADMK Govt. has made the CITU its main target of attack. Our Comrades and workers facing not only police repression, but also the armed attacks from the Private Army of the ruling party which is styled as the White Brigade. The Chief Minister has declared that he would put an end to all strikes within three months. We salute all these martyrs and brave workers !

In contrast to this record of this record of repression on the working class, stands the record of the West Bengal and Tripura Governments, where not a single worker was arrested, nor a single shot was fired on striking workers. The police have been strictly instructed not to interfere in strike struggles. We have already seen the extremely favourable settlement in Jute and engineering industries in West Bengal. Such settlements favorable to the workers have been effected in the Tea Gardens and several other factories. The Chief Minister does not come down on striking workers, but openly states that strikes are inevitable in a class society.

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

Comrades, if, to-day, the CITU is a major force in the working class movement in the country, which is looked upon

by all workers as the most reliable organisation for safeguarding interests of the workers, it is not because of any patronage from any Government or employer. It has grown to the present stature because, from its very foundation it stood unflinchingly by the interests of the working class, firmly charting the course of class struggle, and steadfastly adhered to the slogan of "UNITY AND UNITED STRUGGLE". It has been baptised in the fire of intense repression and sacrifice.

The growth of the CITU and the position acquired by it among the workers in our country is now beginning to get international recognition.

In 1977 the CITU was invited by the Anti-Apartheid Conference convened in Geneva by the I.L.O. The General Secretary attended the Conference and took the opportunity to go to Great Britain, France and Italy and had talks with some leaders of the British TUC, the General Secretary of the CGT of France and CGIL of Italy.

Last year the WFTU, which was so far shunning our Organisation, invited it to send an Observer Delegate to the Congress of WFTU at Prague, Czechoslovakia. The General Secretary attended the Congress, and although only an Observer, was allowed to fully participate in all the deliberations, including the Resolution Committee. As a result of his intervention a number of major amendments were incorporated in the main Resolution of the Congress. During the course of the Congress, he was able to establish contacts with the representatives of many trade union centres of other countries.

We have been receiving invitations from a number of TUIs of WFTU and many delegates from our organisation participated in these meetings.

The I.L.O. sent a team to India to study safety measures in the coal mines. The team visited the CITU office and had detailed discussions with the General Secretary and Secretary. It was very much impressed and it is reported that later when they met the Labour Ministry and confronted them with the facts given by us, the Labour Ministry officials were very much embarrassed and put on the defensive.

Two office-bearers of the British TUC visited the CITU office and had detailed discussions with us. They expressed a desire to have fraternal relations with us and exchange of literature. This has since started.

All these show that so long as we base ourselves on the working class, and defend their interests steadfastly, we are bound to grow. They also demonstrate the correctness of the line we have been pursuing since the foundation of our organisation.

Let us hold still higher the banner of 'unity and united struggles', take the struggle to the higher plane of united struggle for alternative policies. We will unite the entire working people around our class.