

THE VOICE

OF

THE WORKING WOMAN



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Re. 1

Palestine mother looking for her lost children



In This Issue

Dowry Victim Rajani	2
National T.U. Convention	2
Nurses Demand Staff Quarters	2
Bihar Rasta Roko Andolan	3
Children's Day	3
Bihar Working Women's Convention	3
Give Women Due Place	3
Hyderabad Nurses Win Demands	4
Session of Kerala Women NGOs	5
News Letter from Vaizag	6
Rajpura Women Hoist CITU Flag	7
Fight the Dowry Menace	8, 20
Maharashtra Agricultural Women	9
School Children Demonstrate	9
Women Delegates in R.B.	
Employees Conference	10
Release Maryam Ferooz	11
Focus in Parliament	12-14
World Conference of Women	14
Against War and for Peace	15
American Women Miners	15
News from Pakistan	16
Moscow Invitation to AICCWW	16
International	17-19
Atrocities on Women	19-20
Kerala Nurses Launch Struggles	21
The Teratogenic Drug	22-23
Demand for Uniform Civil Code	23
Did you Know	24

NURSES DEMAND STAFF QUARTERS

The married staff nurses of the Hindu Rao Hospital have in a memorandum to the Municipal Commissioner urged him to provide accommodation to them in the hospital premises.

A spokesman of the married staff nurses said today that there were staff quarters for nurses in all major hospitals in the city. The nurses of Hindu Rao Hospital however had to travel long distances to reach their place of work which was causing them great hardship. A memorandum had also highlighted the danger to women travelling at night.

Dowry Victim Rajani

THE AIDWA and AICCWW express deep shock at the horrifying goings-on in the Shahdara Hospital for Mental Diseases that have been reported in the press recently. The case of Rajani a dowry victim who was firstly turned out by greedy in-laws and then dumped in the hospital on the pretext of being mentally deranged, where she was subjected to further atrocities, is a case in point. The Government's apathy towards women who are victims of dowry, desertion, rape and other atrocities has led not only to neglect of women but their brutal exploitation by the corrupt administration of institutions which are ostensibly meant to provide rehabilitation. The recent investigation into the functioning of the Nari Niketan and the strictures passed by the supreme court on it and now the reports regarding the Shahdara Hospital only substantiate the charges levelled by the women's organisations regarding the corruption and mismanagement in these institutions.

The AIDWA and the AICCWW demands:

An immediate enquiry into the functioning of the Shahdara Hospital for Mental Diseases and deterrent punishment to those found guilty; Immediate steps to set-up shelter homes for women who are victims of atrocities so as to provide social and economic rehabilitation; Representatives of women's organisations be associated at every level from the process of enquiry to the stage of rehabilitation.

National Trade Union Convention

The Second National Trade Union Convention is going to be held at Delhi on August 21, i.e., one day before the meeting of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women. Women delegates therefore should make it convenient to attend the Trade Union Convention also.

20,000 Women Joined the Bihar Rasta Roko Andolan

THE economic and political situation in Bihar is very grave today. More than 100 people died due to starvation. 10 people from Santhal Parganas died according to the press reports. An old woman died in Pokharia Village under Pirnaul Polic Station. She came to get her old age pension which was not paid to her and collapsed at the Block Office. The Chief Minister, Jagannath Misra faced no-confidence motion moved by the opposition parties against the police tortures on Adivasis recently. Against this background the Joint Action Committee consisting of 8 left and democratic parties launched a movement of 'Rasta Roko' when over 1 lakh people participated and thirty thousands arrested during the six day 'Jail Bharo' Andolan from 9-14 May. The Government let loose the repressive machinery on the people, women too were not spared.

The participation of women in the Rasta Roko and Jail Bharo programme was unexpected. On the first day itself 5000 women got arrested. In Bhagalpur about 2000 women blocked the Collectorate gates and halted office work. Police lathicharged women and more than 70 women were injured and several of them seriously.

On May 10, a large number of women agitators courted arrest and they were being transported in three buses to Hazaribag. While two of the buses reached Hazaribag, the third was detained on the way and the policemen accompanying it tried to molest the arrested women. As the news reached Hunterganj, the angry local people gheraoed the police station on May 11. The police resorted to bursting of tear gas shells and firing resulting in the death of a CPM worker.

On 13th one batch of women satyagrahis under the leadership of Com. Sidha Bindu Mitra courted arrest in front of the office of District Magistrate of Vaishali.

The total movement and its impact was great all over Bihar when common men and women rose under the banner of Joint Action

Committee demanding the resignation of the Chief Minister who cannot run his administration without the help of landlord, mafia lobby, police and corrupt officials.

Children's Day Observed in Vaishali

A procession of children was taken out under the leadership of Com. Sudha Bindu Mitra, President of Bihar Janawadi Mahila Morcha on 1 June with the slogans of free education for children, tiffin for them in the schools, etc. The procession went around all the lanes and waited upon the District Magistrate, Vaishali. At 3. P.M. a meeting was held when Sudha Bindu Mitra spoke on the exploitation of children who are employed in hotels, factories etc. The other members in the deputation were Usha Varma, Pavithri Shubha, Manorama Devi, Laxmi Devi and Chandravati Devi.

Bihar State CITU decided to hold Working Womens' Convention.

A letter has been received by the All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women that the State Committee CITU, Bihar, has taken a decision to hold a convention of working women in the 3rd week of September 1983 at Patna. The date will be informed later as soon as the Ad hoc Committee is formed.

Give Women The Due Place—ILO

From December 7 to 12, 1982 the 8th session of the Technical Committee on work on plantations made the following observation:

Women make 85 per cent of the labour force on some plantations. And yet, women are subjected to intolerable discrimination with regard to wages, education, training and social promotion...

The delegates appeal for concrete measures to be taken aimed at recognition and respect of equality of rights for the women workers.

Hyderabad Nurses Win Major Demands

Com. Sujavathi

FOUR thousand and odd Government Staff Nurses of six crore populated Andhra Pradesh state are one amongst the worst sufferers of the ill planned policies and negligent attitude of the previous Government lack of proper promotional avenues, outdated bad working conditions and 8 to 12 hours duty a day. Nurses are over burdened with heavy work load. So far the new Government also did not give any thought to change the working conditions and creation of promotional avenues which are the need of the hour.

From a very long time the Nurses Association of the state are all demanding to implement yard stick G.O. which says 3:1 ratio should be maintained between patients and nurses. But the previous Govt. neither implemented G.O. nor it showed interest to implement it. Always it advocated the excuse that there are no trained nurses to implement this G.O. and obviously it had never put serious efforts to start more nursing schools and colleges, did not increase the strength in the existing institutions according to need.

Except in the Capital city, nurses in the districts and country side have to work 12 hours a day for two weeks in a month in the name of Lay off system. Nurses join their duty at 7'O Clock in the morning. Half of them leave the duty at 4 P.M. same day and work upto 7 P.M. This way nurses return home only after 12 hours. And night duty is still horrible. It starts at 7 P.M. and ends at 7. A.M. next day without any extra allowance, they are doing 12 hours duty.

Since a very long time Nurses' Associations are demanding for fixed duty hours through out the state and night duty allowances. After 3 days total strike in August 1982 the Congress(I) Government agreed for 6 hours fixed duty on trial in twin cities and to provide tea with snacks for night duty nurses. Fixed duty hours system is yet to be introduced in the districts and country side.

The August 1982 total strike by the Associations that is Telangana Nurses' Association and The Government Nurses' Association, Andhra Region could achieve some of the long pending demands, perhaps coming Assembly Election was one reason to accept nurses' demands which, in the past were either totally rejected or ignored. Congress(I) Government had gone to extent to ignoring the agreements. In 1979 also nurses went on strike. Government had come to an agreement on 19th April, 1979 but later it was ignored by the Government. Discussions held between the Health Minister, Officials of the Departments on May 2nd 1980, 16th September, 1981, 5th May 1982 and 15th June, 1982 on demands did not yield any to results. Thanks to the unity of both the Nurses' Associations that is Telanagana Nurses' Association and Government Nurses' Association, Andhra region, that the 3 days total strike in the August 1982 achieved some of the demands.

1. The uniform allowance was increased to Rs. 280 per year from Rs. 180 per year.
2. Student Nurses' monthly stipend was increased by Rs. 50.
3. Concessional bus passes for nurses.
4. Promotional avenues to vernacular nurses (Telugu trained) taking their service and age into consideration and other minor demands were achieved.
5. Separation of teaching, administration and public health. Promoting the senior most Nursing Superintendent Grade II to Nursing Superintendent Grade I by discussing the orders, promoting the tutors giving a chance to junior.
6. Implementation of yard stick G.O. fixed duty hours through out the state. Promotional avenues are still unsolved demands. Let us hope that the new Government will solve all these demands.

Special Session of Kerala Women NGOs

THE 20th Annual Conference of the Kerala N.G.O. Union was held from 14 to 16 May 1983 at Ernakulam. In connection with the Conference a Women's Session was held on 16th afternoon at the Bharathiya Vidya Bhawan Auditorium, Ernakulam. About five hundred women employees attended the session. The session was inaugurated by Com. K.R. Gowri, MLA. In her inaugural address she called upon to the women employees to become more demand-conscious and to play their role in the agitations for common demands. The working women have a lot of problems to be redressed. Special emphasis is to be given to their problems by the trade unions and other mass organisations when they chalk out demands and launch agitations. Any movement would be crippled unless adequate participation of women is assured. Com. Gowri appealed to the men employees to extend help to the women for their upliftment and to afford equal opportunity for them. Comrade Gouri, who is also the Deputy Leader of Opposition in the Kerala Legislature, recalled the measures taken by the Left and Democratic Front Government in Kerala during 1980 for the welfare of working women. Hostel facilities were directed to be provided for working women. Creches at Government expenses were sanctioned in institutions where a large number of women were working. Workers' Cooperatives in traditional industries like coir were given financial help to start creches. The present Government in Kerala have stopped these schemes because of financial difficulty. It was due to long and persistent struggles that those demands got approved by the Government. The working women should rise to resist these retrograde measures of the Government of Kerala. Another important factor to be taken note of is that the ruling class is making attempts to pit the unemployed against the employed. It is very dangerous and the working class must be cautious to guard this. She appealed to men to help working-women in their family burden. She thanked the union for having held such a separate session for focussing attention to the problems of women employees.

A resolution on the following problems of women employees was adopted in the Conference.

1. Give concession of one hour in office

hours to women employees; Reduce the work load in spheres where hard work is necessary.

2. Give one month's additional salary during maternity leave.

3. Arrange facilities for rest and dinning in offices.

Primary facilities may be provided in all offices.

4. Provide creches in offices where large number of women employees are working.

5. Give protection in the matter of transfer.

6. Provide Government Hostels.

7. Provide quarters to those working in remote areas.

8. Reduction may be allowed in the night duty hours.

9. Appointment of a committee to enquire into the problems of working women to be expedited and the women employees working under the Government may be brought under its purview of enquiry.

Twelve women delegates spoke on the resolution. Most of them criticised the callous attitude of the Government towards the genuine problems of women employees. They also explained the difficulties experienced by them in their field of work. Most of the women employees expressed views on the difficulties in their day to day journeys depending on public conveyances. It was due to the non-availability of quarters and houses they have to perform long journeys to reach their work-spot. Special facilities of conveyances are lacking for women employees. They also explained that they are not given opportunity to lead family life and employment simultaneously by providing convenient posting. In certain sectors of employment women are still kept out. They demanded the union to take measures to get rid of this discriminations. A Sub-Committee consisting 36 members were elected by the conference with Com. P. Soudamini as the Convenor. A warm send-off was given to Com. M.A. Mallika the then Convenor, who was due to retire from service in June 1983.

The conference evidenced that a strong force of women employees is gradually coming up within the N.G.O. movement in the State.

News Letter from Vaizag—Andhra Pradesh

Com. Punyavati writes:

“AS it was stated in our last letter we mobilised working women from most of the institutions here over the issue of Special Buses for Ladies and Children. We took signature campaign on that and could get nearly 1500 signatures from all institutions and submitted them along with the copy of memorandum to the Divisional Manager, APSRTC. In this connection, we could come into contact with many working women here. They all responded very actively on this issue. They came along with us on 13.6.83 to the Divisional Manager (APSRTC) and had participated in the discussions with him equally with us. In our delegation we could give him the stress on the necessity of special buses for ladies and children during peak hours as well as the issue of implementation of the 50% reservation of seats for ladies in all buses. We could convince him on these both issues.

He has assured us of looking into the matter immediately and to take necessary steps towards this. In addition to these issues we have represented the inconveniences incurred by the commuters as a whole over some of the local routes, adequate number of buses etc. He had given assurance to try his best within one month and meet again after one month is over. We are enclosing herewith a copy of the memorandum.

We now a days are going to different institutions to collect funds for our Convention and District AIDWA Conference as well.

We are happy to inform you that we are conducting the meetings of the Co-ordination Committee of Working Women almost every fortnight and trying our best to be in touch with the members continuously. ...”

MEMORANDUM

The Divisional Manager, A.P.S.R.T.C.,
R.T.C. Complex, Visakhapatnam

Dear Sir,

Re: Special Buses for Ladies and Children during peak hours and 50% reservation of seats in all buses for ladies.

We the following members of the Visakhapatnam District Co-ordination Committee of

Working Women would like to submit the following for your favourable consideration and approval.

Sir, you are aware that Visakhapatnam is predominantly an industrial city. A good number of offices and factories are situated throughout the stretch of the city. Almost 50% of the total working population are office employees. Among these office employees a fair number of women are there.

The experience of the working women, many of whom have to catch buses to reach their office—residential houses situated at one end and the offices situated at the other end—shows that it is becoming extremely difficult day by day to reach the offices in time. Even though they reach the bus stop well in advance, they are not able to get into the buses. Not only because the number of buses is inadequate but also because during these peak hours the buses are loaded fully making it virtually impossible for women to get in.

We, therefore, urge upon your goodself to consider our problems sympathetically and arrange for

1. Plying of ‘LADIES SPECIAL’ buses during peak hours in sufficient numbers.

2. Providing at least 50% of the seats to women who constitute 50% of the total population.

In this context our experience has been that even the existing reservation is not being properly implemented. The conductors are at times becoming helpless because of the male passengers are not co-operating. As such our demand for 50% reservation of seats should not only be met with but necessary protection from the police, if needed may be ensured.

We enclose herewith our proposals regarding the above demands and once again request you to favourably consider our demands.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,
Sd/- D. Sarada
Convenor

Visakhapatnam District
Co-ordination Committee
of Working Women

Rajpura Women Fight Hoist CITU Flag

RANJANA (Delhi)

AT the 5th State CITU Conference in Kanpur, two tall, militant women with fiery, sparkling eyes caught my attention. They were delegates from Punjab — Shanti Devi and Jaswant, who have been working at the Bharat Commerce Industries at Rajpura (Dist. Patiala), since 1964. They are part of a workforce of 3000 men and 500 women, who work there under the CITU flag. All the women workers in the mill are designated "reelers" regardless of whether they work at winding, reeling or on machines. Shanti Devi is the president of the union's sub-committee of the CITU union. Jaswant is a member of the working committee in the mill and also of the state committee, as well as vice-president of the Patiala District Democratic Women's Association. I asked both of them how they managed to fulfil their TU tasks and also household/family responsibilities. Shanti Devi said "when I joined the mill the conditions were horrifying, the management used to parade workmen with rejected yarn around their necks, all over the shopfloor. Payment was 75 paise per day. We workers had no rights or facilities and any protest was met with immediate dismissal. The first union was an INTUC one, formed in 1967 by the management through which we got no relief, but we were forced to join it, out of fear".

She further continued: This situation continued until 1968 when a new leader started work at the Bharat Commerce Industries. He immediately started to organise the workers and was dismissed after 15 days. A number of workers was dismissed for participating in union meetings, some were beaten with iron rods inside the mill and some were even thrown into the boiler. The leaders went on a 40 day hunger strike, and were arrested. Then on the basis of the management's promises, which later proved to be false, the hunger strike was withdrawn. The workers' demands were:—

- (1) A creche for the children of the workers
 - (2) A restroom for women
 - (3) Full wages
 - (4) 20% Bonus
 - (5) Uniform
 - (6) Conveyance allowance and
 - (7) Canteen facility.
- Till 1973 the struggle for these demands continued. The workers' first demand became the hoisting of

the CITU flag at the mill gate. Their leader went on an indefinite hunger strike. He was arrested after a month and tortured brutally by the police. However, he remained steadfast and continued the hunger strike for 104 days, when he was murdered by the police. A huge protest demonstration took place in which kisans from the neighbouring places, who had come to get him bailed out, also participated. The workers in the mill went on strike for 16 days. Hundreds of them were arrested and the strike was broken. But the workers' spirit remained unbroken and they fought on, until the CITU flag was hoisted triumphantly on 5th August, 1977. The CITU union got the workers' demands implemented and since then has had the support of the overwhelming majority of the workers. The pro-management INTUC union has barely 50 supporters, who are paid for their 'chamchagiri' by the management.

This long period of hard struggle in the mill was paralleled by the struggle these women workers had to wage in their personal lives. Jaswant showed us the blue welts on her back which she had received in September 1982 (seven months ago) when the police beat her brutally. The workers were struggling for implementation of the minimum wage in the mill and the management had declared a lock-out, which the police tried to enforce by terrorising the workers. A number of them were arrested but the struggle ultimately ended in victory for the workers. Said Jaswant: "I have been working since I was nine years old. Originally I had planned to devote my life to religion but through our struggle and the union we have gained so much. In 1964 we were paid 75 paise per day and now we get Rs. 20 per day and we have a creche, dispensary, restroom and canteen in the mill. I know how that we can solve our problems only through the union and our struggle." Both Shanti Devi and Jaswant, and countless others like them, have had a long experience of struggle, at work and in their personal lives. As a result they have emerged confident and steeled — ready to fight on and to lead others in the struggles under the CITU banner.

Fight the Dowry Menace

FIFTEEN young brides aged between 19 and 23 years only were set on fire and killed by the greedy, unscrupulous husbands and the in-laws who demanded exorbitant dowry price — scooters, T.V., gold and so on. It is a 'capital shame' for Indian people, as the editorial of Indian Express (7th June), correctly stated. These young girls were burnt to death between May 24 and June 4. Only three of these 15 cases have been registered as murders, the rest are considered to be suicides. Lekha Rani of Kalkaji died on 31st May, Kanti Devi of Nangal Rai on 2nd June, Nanki of Raghar-pura also on 31st May. Rani of Lodi Colony, only 18 year old set herself to fire on June 4. In her dying declaration she stated that her husband had illicit relations with his brother's wife and he used to beat her. Puranchand, her husband was arrested, but released on bail the next day. Santosh, a 20 year old bride of Sadar Bazar who died on June 4, an year after her marriage and was the second bride, set herself on fire. The first one too died the same way. Police refused to register a case here. The press reports say that two brides on an average are burnt to death or commit suicide every day in Delhi.

No doubt, there is resentment and disgust among the ordinary people, on the number of deaths of brides which brought more demonstrations of women and men at the house of bride burning. The parents of the brides are reporting the cases to the police and demanding enquiry in the death of their daughters which was not there before. The spate of the young brides burning, some with babies, aroused dismay and anger, so much so, that the announcement by the session judge Mr. S.M. Agarwal of the death sentences to the husband, his brother and the mother-in-law of Sudha (victim) brought a sign of relief for the people. Comments from the press, and the people, it seems, have done some justice to the case of the murdered wife. Mr. Agarwal praised the role of the tenants in Ashok Vihar who appeared as witnesses for Sudha during the trial and spoke without any fear in spite of the pressures brought from the accused. For the first time perhaps in our history the mother-in-law and her two sons were

sentenced to death for burning the bride. The balanced judgement of Mr. Agarwal states: "the accused persons had committed a cold blooded murder, motivated by their lust for monetary gain. Having failed to receive any commitment from the parental relations of Sudha (the victim) they ruthlessly executed their ill conceived but well-planned murder, not only causing the death of Sudha but also causing the destruction of the child who but for this incident would have taken birth within a week or so——".

Mr. Agarwal made another important point while condemning the conduct of Dr. R. Joseph of the St. Stephen Hospital and Surinder Dev, the sub-inspector investigating the case. He said, "their conduct was most reprehensible and condemnable as they have forged and fabricated the so called dying declaration in collusion with the accused party." He named them as "wolves masquerading in the uniform of police and doctor respectively". If one inquires from the activists of the women's organisations who take up the cases of dowry deaths they will immediately agree with the statement. In almost all cases, the FIR is not registered by the police, or it is registered due to pressure from below, the medical evidence, dying declarations etc. are forged or destroyed with the connivance of the police. It is an open secret that money plays an important part here.

The Parliamentary Committees and the Women's Organisations have been demanding for associating the Women's Organisations in the enquiries of dowry deaths and rape cases and in the law enforcing machinery. In a judgement given by the Supreme Court in the month of May by Mr. Bhagwati and Mr. Pathak, it was stated "Women officers should be involved in the investigation of dowry deaths". The court also recommended the application of the Coroners' Act 1971 to be extended to other cities than Bombay and Calcutta where it is already applicable, to make it possible an immediate inquiry into the causes of the death.

An Anti-Dowry cell to register the cases has

(Continued on page 20)

Maharashtra Agricultural Women Prepare for Struggle

MOST of the districts in Maharashtra have become drought stricken. The common people from these districts have become almost destitute due to acute poverty, unemployment and the rising prices. The present "employment guarantee scheme" introduced by Maharashtra Govt. for the benefit of the 68 lakh agricultural workers has become a cruel joke now. Despite the great requirement for the people's benefits the Government is not willing to create jobs for these workers. The present corruption while paying wages to the agricultural workers can be noted from the following example.

Com. Godavari Purulekar, along with other members of the Famine Relief Committee when visited Parner and Sangamner in Nagar District and Vaijapur taluq in Aurangabad District, found a number of irregularities in working of the scheme. In Vaijapur, hundreds of agricultural women are working in a big canal being constructed here. The pitiable condition of these women was described by Godavari with the following words: "The women were handing over big stones from one woman to another under the scorching heat, the children of these families were sitting under the sheds of the trees, nobody to look after, the woman who was supposed to look after them had disappeared, no provision of drinking water was there. Com. Godavari said, 'it was better not to talk about their wages! As we reached the spot, about 200 women assembled around us and started talking simultaneously about their wages. One woman said, there is corruption in the distribution of wages. We receive from 0.50 N.P. to Rs. 3 per day only. Prices have reached skyhigh. No ration is available in the shops! The woman said desperately, 'Now there was no other alternative for us but to die.'" A number of these women have come from Gangapur district where there was no rains, and no work in the field. Somehow they were passing their days on a meagre income.

The condition of the Adivasis is still worse, since there was no rain for a long time. These

people were working in salt lakes, brick kilns and so on. The only demand of these Adivasis was "give work and employment". In such helpless condition of these adivasis and agricultural workers, the landlords were naturally taking advantage by paying less wages and taking more work. The present situation was so acute in the villages with no availability of food, work and also no water that, the workers were compelled to leave the villages in search for work and food.

The members of the Famine Relief Committees have demanded the following from the Government; Immediate distribution of free food under the relief scheme; the government should take co-operation from the Kisan Sabhas and other organisations for this; relief from the debts who own minimum 5 acres of the land.

If these demands are not met, the workers including women have decided to launch a militant struggle. In the District of Thana, about 2000 men and women agricultural workers demonstrated in front of the Tahsil Office demanding Rs. 7 as wages per day, the demonstration was led by Com. Ahilya Rangnekar.

School Children Demonstrate

More than 700 children from various primary schools run by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi demonstrated at the office of the Chief Executive Councillor, Delhi, demanding free mid-day meals, free text books, free uniforms and recreation facilities in the schools, on June 1 on the International Children's Day. The demonstration of children, organised by Janawadi Mahila Samiti and the Democratic Youth Federation surrounded the office of the Chief Executive Councillor, Mr. Chandra. The small children aged from 8 to 14, many of whom were barefooted marched in the blistering heat, carrying placards and flags from Kashmiri gate to the Old Secretariat. The CEC was forced to commit to accept the demand while the children greeted the announcement with loud cheers.

Women Delegates in Reserve Bank Employees' Conference

Com. D. Saraswati, a member of Tamilnadu Coordination Committee and an active member of the Reserve Bank Employees' Association, Madras attended the All India Conference of the Association held at Trivandrum in May. She narrated her experiences in a letter to the Secretary of AICCWW. The letter itself speaks about the weaknesses of the organisation and also the possibilities of the growth. —Editor

"Dear Comrade,

Received your letter and noted the contents. Sorry for the delay.

The Conference was attended by 169 delegates and 39 observers from 20 units. Only 2 women delegates were represented by the Madras Unit. I am surprised that no lady delegate came even from Calcutta. I met the secretaries of the various units and discussed with them the involvement of women in Trade Union Movement and also canvassed for the "Voice of Working Women". To start with, they have ordered for few copies and promised to take more copies in future.

In general the union leaders felt that the ladies were not approached and encouraged to come forward in the Executive Committee. The norms of the Conference is that only Executive Committee members could participate as delegates.

Our comrades could not build up a woman cadre — might be by under-estimating the role of women's participation. Same is the plight in Madras unit also. Many of our comrades feel that it is an inappropriate time to bring ladies as delegates. As a lady delegate, when I proposed for the women's participation in General Council, I faced comments and criticism. Whenever I bring the problem of ladies, they are stamping me as feminist.

Jammu, the smallest unit, consisted of only 40 members, out of which 4 were ladies and I believe that they are very active in union. Due to some local problems, the members of the association squatted in the office of the manager in the month of November. Ladies have also participated in the squatting and remained till mid-night in the cold wave.

In Bhubneshwar, Jaipur, Chandigarh,

Kanpur, Hyderabad, Patna and New Delhi, the union leaders assured that they could build up a cadre. In Kanpur, the leader told me about a lady named Mrs. Mamlee Mukherjee, who could be contacted for a women forum also and could be involved as a member in the Working Women's Co-ordination Committee.

I discussed with the General Secretary about the creche facility also. He felt that the time is not ripe as women's movement in the banking sector is not very strong. He told me that the Working Women's Federation should take it up vigorously by establishing the same facility in Central and State Governments and should be followed up.

The RBI Association took its shape in the pre-independence era itself i.e. in the year 1926. It passed 57 years and created a history in the trade union movement, no doubt with the support of ladies also. Still the leaders feel that women movement in RBI is not strong. I do not understand what that means and when they expect it to become strong.

Just I am giving below the statistics of women in each unit and also the demands for the "Voice of Working Women" and addresses to be contacted for mailings.

Comrade, 'The Spirit' should come within. I do not think that with one meeting it could be aroused...."

Units	Strength of paid members	Women members
Bhubaneshwar	280	9
New Delhi	1,253	270
Calcutta	2,515	100
Jaipur	551	30
Hyderabad	490	104
Bangalore	851	200
Gauhati	451	20
Jammu	46	4
Patna	651	15
Nagpur	580	52
Lucknow	133	15
Kanpur	889	93
Trivandrum	354	100
Madras	1,646	350
Bombay	4,157 more that	1,000

Release Maryam Ferooz, the indefatigable fighter for the cause of Revolution in Iran

COM. Maryam Ferooz, a member of the Central Committee of the Tudeh Party of Iran and the leader of the Democratic Women's Organisation of Iran has been arrested along with thousands of comrades on fake charges and accusations against the Tudeh Party and the Women's Organisation. Maryam Ferooz with a wide and deep knowledge with her long experience of political struggle fought against imperialism, reaction and Pahlavis for the economic and political independence of her country. She has also endowed her entire life to mobilise the women of Iran in villages and in towns where feudal exploitation was immense. She participated in all the struggles waged by workers, peasants: She once said in her election campaign speech. "It is our duty to stay by the bed of the new born baby (The revolution) and guard it with soberness, and cut the hands of those cowards who are coming near our beloved having bad intentions". She performed a valuable service in getting women into the class struggle in all the socio-economic spheres.

Maryam Ferooz was born in 1913 in Karmanshah. She did her elementary, intermediate and higher education in Teheran. She actively participated in Freedom struggle since 1941 and began her activity in the women's movement in 1943, joining the Tudeh Party in Iran in 1944. She was elected on the Council of Tudeh Party in 1948. Here, for the first time in the 1948 February coup she was sentenced to 5 years imprisonment in her absence. Since 1948 she started working hard while she had to go underground, which continued for 8 years. This working underground became impossible and she had to leave the country. But in spite of her exile life, she continued to fight against the puppet regime of Shah till 1948. She was sentenced, first for ten years and second time life imprisonment with hard labour. It was an honour for her to be elected on the Central Committee of the Party in 1979.

When she was freed from her imprisonment Maryam started her revolutionary struggle to

mobilise women for the fight for equality and strengthening of the achievements of the great revolution of the people of Iran. She said "The Tudeh Party gave us the opportunity to realise our rights. And it was in the school of this great and revolutionary party that we learnt that the ability and personality of women are very important and esteemed?"

So, Maryam naturally became the target of reaction in Iran. More than 4 months have passed when thousands of activists of the Tudeh Party along with Maryam were arrested. It is heard that these people are physically tortured and a number of them have become victims already. Today in Iran, women and children related to the prisoners are also tortured and savagely assaulted. The progressive people and supporters of Tudeh Party who are the main fighters for freedom and revolution, for social justice are attacked by the reactionary, counter revolutionary forces of the ruling Islamic Republic of Iran, with the aim of abolishing the achievements of the February revolution, with the object of turning Iran again into "Island of stability" for Imperialism.

The All India Democratic Women's Organisation and other women's organisations expressed concern over the fate of Maryam Ferooz and demanded her release immediately. AIDWA sent a wire to Ayyatullah Khomeini, Iran demanding her immediate release, a copy of which was sent to Iranian Embassy India. When a deputation consisting of 4-5 women of AIDWA wanted to submit a memorandum on this to the Embassy here, the Embassy wanted only one person to come to hand over the memorandum. The behaviour of the staff in the Embassy was surprisingly arrogant with the result the AIDWA decided not to meet the representatives in the Embassy.

The methods of suppression of the rights of the people, repression in Iran, withdrawal of the concessions of the peoples achieved during the revolution, will not stop the democratic and fighting people of Iran from achieving the rights of the people and justice.

Demand for Women's Employment

"IT was exclusively their day" in Parliament in April, for the sponsors of the motion were all women — Bibha Ghosh (CPM), Pramila Dandavate (Janata), Geeta Mukherjee (CPI), Usha Prakash Choudhari and Vidya Chennupati. The issue of employment for women was put forth so forcefully that the Union Labour Minister Veerendra Patil had to assure the house that the Government was sympathetic to the cause. He said, "main thing is how to tackle this whole issue of women". All the women MPs criticised the Government for its neglect of the cause and demanded a statutory National Commission for Women.

Com. Bibha Ghosh in her speech quoted a number of statistics comparing the employment of women during last 20 years and how it was coming down in the factories and other establishments.

The Minister for Industry, N.D. Tiwari was severely castigated in Parliament by Bibha Ghosh Goswami, M.P. from West Bengal, and an Executive Committee member of the AIDWA, for his callous and hypocritical statement in the Lok Sabha on April 12, 1983. A number of MPs had tabled a Calling Attention Notice on the declining trend in women's employment. From the Minister's reply, the Central Government, it would appear, had done everything possible, had done enough to meet the situation. Everything was fine, and it was only some silly women's organisations which were making a great fuss over nothing.

Claiming that women's employment was in fact increasing, and that retrenchment could be of either men or women, the Minister first tried to palm off the responsibility on to the States, then made unspecified claims of greater placement of women outside of the Employment Exchange, as well as with regard to training facilities available to them.

The statement truly reflected the real apathy and unconcern of the Government towards women's problems, behind all the tall talks of deep commitment to uplift women.

For, as Bibha Ghosh very effectively demonstrated in the course of her intervention, all the evidence, and even statements of various departments of the Government show the opposite.

A Telling Comment

From the Ministry of Social Welfare itself, there has come a very telling comment, quoted by Bibha Ghosh, "the impact of transition to a modern economy has resulted in the exclusion of an increasing number of women from active participation in the productive process and only a limited recognition of their contribution and ability to contribute." What is the actual position?

According to the 1971 Census, while 52.5 per cent, of the male population or 149 million out of a total of 284 million were in employment, only 13.8 per cent of the female population or 31 million out of 264 million were employed. The fact remains that the decline in the case of women is greater — the male participation rate declined from 57.1 per cent to 52.53 per cent compared to the female rate from 28 per cent to 13.8 per cent.

Continuous Decline

This means that in the 20 years — 1961 to 1981, while the female population increased by 112 million, the female work force increased by less than nine million — that is why the participation rate has fallen by a quarter from 28 per cent to less than 21 per cent.

Still more significant is the fact that out of the total of 66.3 million working women recorded by the 1981 Census, only 45.9 million fall into the category of 'main' as opposed to helpers, called 'marginal' workers, who numbered 20.3 million. So 30 per cent of working women are marginal workers, and therefore not drawing a full wage, against only three per cent of the male workers. And while 51 per cent of the male workers have full-time jobs,

only 14 per cent of women workers are fully employed.

Most of our work-force is of course in agriculture and their percentage has remained more or less the same. However, within this sector the comparative position of women has deteriorated which illustrates how worthwhile economic opportunities are fast vanishing for women everywhere. Female cultivators who constituted 55 per cent of the female work-force in 1961, constituted 33 per cent in 1981. That means that women agriculturalists have been more and more relegated to the position of agricultural labourers. The absolute numbers bring out the position even more starkly; the number of male cultivators went up from 63.6 million in 1961 to 76.2 million in 1981, the number of female cultivators was reduced by nearly one half in the same 20 years, from 31.8 million to 15.1 million.

Driven out of Industry

If we take a bird's eye view over the last 70 years, from the 1911 Census to the 1981 Census, the picture shows that whereas in 1911 there were 525 female workers for every 1000 male workers, by 1951 this figure had come down to 408 : 1000, and in 1971, 210 : 1000. The 1981 figures show a small marginal increase.

The same story is repeated in the government services, and in the organised industrial sectors. The index of women's participation in government services fell from 100 in the base year 1901 to 96 in 1971.

Only six per cent of employed women work in organised industry and it is in this sector that they are being further driven out of employment. Take the case of jute. In 1944, 14 per cent of the total work-force in the jute mills were women; thirty years later, in 1972 they constituted 4 per cent. Today the number of women in jute mills is drastically being curtailed. In other words, women have been wiped out from the ranks of jute workers.

In the Bombay textile industry, women constituted 25 per cent of the work-force in 1951, or 40,000. Today they have been reduced to just 5 per cent or a mere 5, 00 in number.

In Plantations

Even in plantations, where in the processes of plucking, picking and weeding, women were always considered more efficient than their male counterparts, the trend is no different. In tea, up to 1971 women outnumbered men, but in the very next year the position was reversed and the number of men workers exceeded that of women by no less than 25,000. This indicates the extent of retrenchment that had taken place. Unfortunately this trend not only continues but has accelerated. The same has happened in the coffee plantations.

"Now", Bibha Goswami said, "I should like to ask the Minister a question: could it not be that the decreasing incidence of maternity benefit claims in plantations, over these last few years, is the result of the threat of retrenchment in service? Is the Government prepared to set up a committee of enquiry to examine what is happening there?"

Traditional Occupations

Regarding tobacco, coir, bidi industries, etc., the chapter on Women and Development in the Sixth Five Year Plan states that the modernisation of the traditional occupations of women such as spinning and weaving, match-making, coir, cashew, rural-marketing, agriculture, animal husbandry, fishery, etc., would be selective, and include simultaneous development of skills for alternative employment. Further, the impact of these new projects on women's employment would be monitored. What is the Minister doing about this?

In tobacco, due to the import of threshing machines, about one lakh workers face retrenchment. The Minister has said that modernisation is necessary for export. But this is not the case, because foreign buyers of these products desire, not machine-made, but hand-made goods. Still the import of threshing machines is permitted despite repeated representations by the workers and their organisations.

In Andhra Pradesh, 6000 women have been driven out of the Chirala Factory and Parchur Depot because of the new machinery. How many licences, Bibha Ghosh asked, have been granted for importing machineries in this industry and in the coir industry where the

employment of one lakh women workers is threatened?

In the bidi industry, something else is happening. Here where lakhs of women were employed in the bidi-rolling factories, the factories are being closed down in favour of production in the homes of workers as a cottage industry, in order to avoid implementation of labour laws. "What steps does the Government propose to take to stop this and protect the women?"

In Public Sector

Far from halting this trend in the public sector undertakings the Government in fact is taking the lead in systematically retrenching women.

In the mines, according to the official Indian Labour Journal, April, 1980 the percentage employment of women workers has gone down from 20 per cent in 1951 to 15.8 per cent in 1961, to 11.9 per cent in 1971; from 30,000 women in 1973 to 12,000 in 1982.

The continued discrimination against female workers in the BCCL is going to eliminate women totally from the coal mines. The Baveja Committee Report declared more than 50,000 women wagon loaders as surplus, without providing them substitute employment.

In a revealing case in the Ekra Vasudebpur colliery, the BCCL was a party to the tripartite settlement whereby all 25 male ex-contract labour were employed, throwing out all the 27 female workers. Even the intervention of the Union Labour Minister, Bhagwat Jha Azad, could not get them back their employment either on humanitarian, or on grounds of their fight. Bibha Ghosh sought the permission of the Chair to lay this Settlement on the Table of the House. "What is the Government going to do?" she questioned. "Since this is a public sector undertaking, do we take it that the Government itself has started making discrimination against women as its policy?",

"Why" she further queried, "are women not being taken for open-cast mining, which is surface work, and which is being expanded

as a matter of policy? Shell-picking is a very necessary process where mechanised loading is undertaken, to prevent stones from getting mixed up with the coal, with consequent damage to the boilers and blast furnaces.

Has the Ministry any course of action ready in regard to employment of women in the open-cast mines, any plans to arrest the growing displacement of women from public-sector undertakings?

Many Unanswered Questions

"There are a number of questions to which answers are required". "Why" queried Bibha further, "does the Minister not answer why the Government has delayed setting up the Commission on women"?

Another important question being evaded is whether in fact the Government is advocating relaxation of the protective laws for women? So far the Government has not come forward with any plan of subsidies, incentives and State care for children, taking up the issue as a social burden and recognising motherhood as a national responsibility? Will the Government do this in the very near future, not as a concession to the so-called 'handicap' suffered by women, but as a necessary provision to ensure the equal opportunity proclaimed by the Constitution?

"These", concluded Bibha Ghosh, "are the questions to which all colleagues here and I require answers. We further demand a full-scale discussion on the floor of this House regarding the problems of women, in particular, the question of employment of women".

World Conference of Women

A World Conference of Women will be held in 1985 to strengthen the efforts for peace all over the world. Mrs. Karen Talbot who represented the World Peace Council at the United Nations preparatory Committee for the World Conference said that efforts to prevent war and to achieve development and a new international economic order, cannot succeed without the maximum participation of women who constitute half of humanity.

Women Submit Mass Petition to President Reagan

THE Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) submitted one million signatures of women to the President of United States on March 8, 1983 demanding a stop to arms race, halt production and deployment of all midium range nuclear missiles in Europe and reach bilateral agreement with USSR on substantial reduction of strategic weapons. This campaign by WILPF had started on 8th March, 1982, the last International Women's Day. The campaign for peace and against war is gaining momentum in every nook and corner of USA and Europe since the people are immediately threatened with the MX missiles and other nuclear weapons. In most of the countries it is notable that women are in the forefront of this campaign. And it was but quite natural. The past two wars have left thousands of widows and children. One-half of those living below the poverty line are families headed by women with no husbands. The U.S. administration has cut down the programmes which provide meals for more than 800,000 children in day care homes and centres. This inhuman disregard and contempt for women and children has driven large numbers of women into the peace movement. A number of women's organisations such as National Assembly of Women's Religion, Women's International League for Peace, Women's Strike for Peace, Women's Christian Association of USA and so many others joined together to fight against the war preparation of Reagan who also stood against the Equal Rights Amendment for women.

The 'Peace Plane' brought over a hundred members and supporters of the WILPF with a million signatures to Brussels, at the Nato Headquarters, on March 8 International Women's Day, 1983 where the day was observed by delegates from many different countries. In Canada, Mother's Day was observed at Ottawa on March 8 through Women's Action Against War", when women formed a human chain around the Parliament Building in the

city demanding a ban against testing of cruise missiles in Canada and to declare the country to be a nuclear free zone.

The leaders of WILPF say "Our goals are not new, nor ours alone...It is time for women to be heard in unision and unequivocally, voting as a block for peace, exercising our enormous unexpected power demanding an end to the arms race."

American Women Miners to Visit India

The letter dated 15 April 1983 says:—

"Dear Mrs. Ranadive,

Jeanne Bales suggested I write to you. I have recently written a proposal for funding for a trip to visit India. A woman miner from Utah, Joy Huitt, and I would make the trip. The trip will only come about if we can raise the necessary funds.

The reason why I am writing is that Jeanne would like us to make contact when Joy and I get to New Delhi. We would be glad to meet with any women in India who would like to meet with us, ask-us questions, and share kuowledge. In fact, is there any way in which we may enhance your work when we visit?

Joy and I will be in India approximately three weeks. We hope to get a rail pass and travel from New Delhi to Calcutta to Mysore to Bombay, stopping along the way to visit women's groups, visit child care facilities and tour different kinds of mines.

We would appreciate any guidance or suggestion concerning our trip. I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely
Mary Anne Cabage.

Former Judge Supports Women's Struggles

WOMEN battling against the onslaught on their rights in the name of Islam in military-ruled Pakistan found welcome support from a former judge handpicked by President Gen. Zia-ul-Haq to sit in his Federal Advisory Council.

Justice Bashiruddin told women gathered under the banner of Women's Action Forum in Lahore recently that he approved of a statement made by one of them that women would erase all laws passed by a non-representative body like the General's Majlis-e Shoora. He said he himself had joined the Majlis not to make laws but only to advise. He had not been able to sleep since it approved of a law which gives only half weight to a woman's evidence than that of a man. He had on occasions sent men to the gallows on the evidence of only one woman, said the judge and declared that he would certainly accept the evidence of a lone woman in future too.

Islamic law required the presence of a second female witness only to help the first in financial cases, but if the first witness was a woman banker he would take her evidence as complete, said Justice Bashiruddin.

But with or without support from men like the courageous Judge, women though beaten and bruised, have not given up the fight and have challenged the martial law regime to refer the controversial law to the Shariat (Islamic Law) bench of the Supreme Court.

A Group of them coming from diverse professions, from social workers to lawyers, educationists to economists and journalists, told the General in a telegram that any law limiting or denying women their basic rights would lead to serious differences and frustrations among different sections of people.

The National Women Lawyers' Organisations reminded the Majlis the people's mandate that law making was the right and duty of an elected parliament alone and several other Women's Associations observed the International Women's Day as a day of protest.

Five Women's Organisations in Lahore sent a petition to the Chief Justice of the Lahore High Court asking him to appoint a judge of his court to inquire into the incident last February when police and lathi-charged a

procession of women protesting against the law of evidence. They did so when they learnt that the Lahore police had instead registered a counter case against some women on the charge of beating up and injuring some police men during the February incident.

A dozen odd women in the General's nominated Majlis were accused of a terrible let down and five male members were grilled over their endorsement of the controversial law at a meeting in Lahore.

When Mufti Naeemi suggested in defence that women were less intelligent, more sexually excitable as also tender hearted, and a woman magistrate was likely to be swayed in favour of a handsome young accused, there was an uproar!

Mufti Naeemi and other holy men had no answer to the question that when the Federal Shariat Court itself had ruled that a woman could be appointed a judge or a Quazi, why could she not be an independent witness.

Begum Raana Liaquat Ali Khan the President of All Pakistan Women's Association and the widow of first Prime Minister, sent a telegram to Gen. Zia seeking an assurance that the evidence law and other discriminatory laws would not be brought before the Majlis.

Moscow Invitation to AICCW

The All India Coordination Committee of Working Women received an invitation from the Vice-President of the Soviet Women's Committee for the participation in a Seminar on "Women's Position in society and participation in Peace struggle" As per the invitation, the Soviet and Indian sides will speak on various subjects for 15 minutes. The Seminar will be held from 16-26 July, 1983. This will be a bilateral Soviet-Indian seminar. Various Women's organisations in India will participate and submit papers on various topics.

The CITU has nominated Com. Vimal Ranadive for participating in the Seminar. The subject on which she will submit her paper is "Women's Labour Activity in Town and Country".

Palestine Women-Struggle Continues

HEROIC Women in Palestine have become a pride for all democratic women in other countries fighting for their liberation and against the military rulers supported by imperialism. The following interview reveals as to how the women in Palestine while taking up arms against Zionism also fought against male chauvinism in the liberation movement and also against the weaknesses in the women's movement. The General Secretary of Palestine Women (GUPW), Mrs. Jihan Helen explains in her interview (appeared in Women and Struggle in Iran) very important points regarding the liberation struggle and also women's movement.

The Role of the GUPW

The most important role of the GUPW is to mobilize Palestinian women, to organize their potentials so as to enable them to participate effectively in the national struggle against Zionism, imperialism and Arab reaction. We have a women's union because there is a women's cause; as Palestinian women we share the oppression of our brothers, but we face additional oppression due to the backward social and political system. To achieve this goal of mobilization and organization, we need specific programmes-political, economic, social, educational-that will help us to promote the situation of Palestinian women. Our women are uprooted from their homeland, and have less employment and educational opportunities. So we work on two levels: general struggle, and socio-economic programmes such as kindergartens, nurseries, literacy campaigns, political lectures, cadre training, vocational training and production centres. All are activities that help to change the situation of women.

When a women's union was first established in 1921, we perceived our role as a national one against British colonialism and Zionist settlements. We never thought that there could be a women's movement separated from the national struggle, because we can't be liberated

when our homeland is colonized and our society oppressed by Zionism and imperialism.

Of course there was enthusiasm, a readiness to die for Palestine, to carry arms, but at the same time there was a lack of cadre who were politically conscious and committed to full-time work. We faced the problem that when they married their time was less, if they continued at all, as they were not solid cadres who could really defend their position and their right to struggle as women. It is not easy to build women cadres, as they must face their society and family, and find time to work at home and in the struggle. So we can see that building up professional and committed cadres now has been one of the main achievements of the women's movement. These cadres are found in every camp, and our main cadres are from the camps.

Social Contradictions

Our primary aim is to mobilize women into the national struggle. You have to facilitate this by changing her social and economic situation at least to some extent, as you cannot make real root changes without a liberated land. All the programmes that we sponsor are aimed to objectively change the situation of women in general. When you have, for example, a kindergarten, you are helping to educate the children but are also easing some of the women's burdens, thus facilitating women's ability to struggle. Our aim is to alleviate these handicaps and burdens.

However, there are more sensitive and complex problems for a woman, such as her husband or father. It is not an easy thing. I still remember when it was difficult for a woman to say that she was participating in politics. Politics were for men. Women's participation in politics was not accepted in our society, especially in the camps. Socially we were very conservative. In the absence of revolution, the camps were very conservative and tried to preserve all the old traditions,

thinking this would make us better Palestinians. Of course, when we began to struggle, to carry arms, and regained our national identity and our self-confidence, then it became much easier to begin dropping some of the old values that did not help our struggle.

Many women find difficulties with their husbands. May be he is in the revolution, but still he thinks he should come home and find food prepared every day. He wants to maintain the traditions he was born into, and does not want his life disturbed by changes. There is a contradiction between what he says and what he practices. We discuss these things in our lectures and meetings. It is better to discuss in a group than to face their problems alone. Unfortunately, we do not really have the obligatory programmes and laws that are necessary.

Speaking about women, you must always identify at what stage of revolution we are, what threats we face. You can't speak in a vacuum. As a resistance movement, we are still in the defensive stage. We are still defending our existence. In the camps and parts of the South we have what looks like liberated land, but it is not really so. You cannot compare it to a liberated area as in other revolutions. We do not have an economy — we are still part of the Lebanese economy, so is our education system. We must speak about passing civil and family laws, but at the same time we face daily Zionist and fascist attacks and we must have priorities.

Mass Mobilisation

The revolution's influence is mainly in the areas where there is struggle, mass mobilisation and direct confrontation with the enemy, be it Arab reaction, Zionist occupation or other tools of imperialism. Mass mobilisation, for men and women, is much less out side the hot spots. We must also look at the stage of the revolution. Though our organized struggle has been for 17 years, and our people have been struggling for more than 60 years, we have unfortunately not reached an equal balance of power with the enemy. We are part of the Arab liberation movement, and imperialism's schemes are aimed not only at the Palestinian people but at the Arab masses and resources. Now we are passing through a

bad period. Arab reaction is dominating parts of the Arab world, and the Egyptian regime has isolated the great potential of the Egyptian people. So when we see we are still in this stage, we cannot expect to move as if we were Hanoi. We must recognize our objective conditions.

Today we have many institutions that we did not have 10 years ago because of lack of cadres and means. Now we are supported by friendly organisations, the socialist community and UN institutions. The GUPW is a leading member of the Women's International Democratic Federation, as well as the All Arab Women's Federation. We have developed strong relations with the liberation movements, women's organisations in the socialist community and the third world and progressive women's groups in the capitalist countries. Our role with the UN has increased at the last women's conference in Copenhagen. Palestinian women were a special topic on the agenda.

Though we still lack resources, we have been able to establish many institutions. These include 12 kindergartens, a nursery, literacy classes in every camp, several vocational training centres and Beit al Samoud, a center established to care for homeless children from Tell al Zaatar. We have reached many women. but it needs development in the struggle itself to be able to mobilize all. When there are attacks, our women and all our people are willing to come out and do anything, but unfortunately we cannot maintain this situation when the fighting is over. What we are struggling for now is how to organize these spontaneous emotions into a permanent reality. There are changes; we have progressed much compared to the past.

Women's Self-Perception

We are able to talk about the women's problems scientifically. I know from my experience that, first of all, we did not have enough self-confidence. We were brought up in a man's world and were limited to the household affairs and working with our mothers. We were raised to see marriage as our only goal, while men were oriented to a profession and self-fulfilment. So we have a sort of inferiority complex in a man's society.

Another thing we face is that we live in a bourgeois society — really a distorted bourgeois society — so how do we perceive ourselves as real human beings and not just objects in a consumer society. We are influenced by the mass media and by the education system. It is not easy for a woman to change the outlook of society. Here the revolution has really helped us in getting rid of these ideas. Our participation in revolution has increased our confidence. Now women are ready to work with each other and accept each other's leadership, as they see this is how we can gain our rights. Not in a chauvinist or solely feminist way, but through understanding of our humanity and potentials.

You cannot have a women's movement without the support, understanding and co-operation of men and the political organisations. But I think that women have a greater and more immediate advantage in understanding the necessity of their liberation, so there is an opening in their mind to the knowledge that women liberation is connected to the broader struggle. Men understand theoretically, but in practice they feel as if they are losing a lot. We tell them that on the strategic level it is to their advantage; it is better to live with a comrade as your wife instead of someone who cooks well but is not developing. Men say that we have hundreds of years of backward traditions, or that their work is much more important. This is partly true, but is also an excuse. If they don't struggle themselves against these values, they can become reactionaries in practice, only using progressive words, being two men in one.

An example of women perpetuating traditional values is the mother-in-law syndrome. Women suffer much abuse from their mother-in-laws, but when they become mother-in-laws themselves they act in the same way. This is the result of the traditional society, and was true also in China and Vietnam. People tend to perpetuate the role of the society they are born in if they are not given the alternatives. The women may not defend the backward ideas, but they cannot see the light of their liberation. It is comparable to the working class, many times, when they are not organized in parties or unions; they are tools in the hands of the bourgeoisie not because they like

the situation, but because they don't see any alternative and are afraid of a change.

It is the role of the vanguard of women to present an alternative. As the GUPW, our first aim is how to change women from being passive human beings, in society to active human beings. This is very important. What do I mean by passive? She is brought up to think that her most important role in her kingdom is to make her satisfied at home. So, she is passive; she does not really care for what happens outside her home, in society or politics. It is enough that her husband, daughter or son is participating, but not she. How do we change her outlook? This is why we stress on social and economic programmes. Of course she will say, "I live in Palestine". But she does not think she has a concrete role in the struggle. So we start with the concrete programme to change her self-outlook. The mere fact may be she comes to a production centre at a certain hour means that she has the opportunity to meet other women to gain new ideas — then she may begin to be more active and productive.

We often say, though not in a chauvinist way, that women are more revolutionary and patient. I was happy to hear, when I was in Vietnam last year, that they say the same. We women have a double interest in the liberation of Palestine — as Palestinian people and as women. We can't see how our problems will ever be solved unless we build a progressive society in Palestine.

Atrocities on Women

(Excerpt from Com Umanath's speech on the resolution adopted in the Kanpur Conference of CITU on April 16, 1983).

"...The assaults on women, atrocities of various types are now assuming a mass character. Even the guardians of law rape women in custody. The capitalists and the landlords humiliate fighting women in the class struggles. A serious note must be taken of the substance and content of the resolution. It has become a real weapon in the hands of landlords-bourgeois section to suppress the working class movement. What is more serious that even workers are resorting to such gruesome acts". Com. Umanath vehemently condemned these acts not on humanitarian basis but from

the angle of class consciousness of working men whose anger is supposed to rouse in such circumstances and against all kinds of atrocities. "But unfortunately CITU is not reaching to them and the apathy is immensely deep rooted and must be got rid off. CITU must react in any part of the country if an atrocity is committed anywhere in the country". He gave an example of a lady doctor whose husband was in the bank. "There was a gruesome murder...There is a daily news in the press that stove burst and daughter-in-law died. But never the mother-in-law? The stove burst is not an accident." He further asked the trade unions — where do they come in? The anger of the working class must be roused.

(Contd. from page 8)

been set up under the Delhi Administration under a woman Deputy Commissioner of Police. So far so good. But without investing with full statutory powers to investigate and prosecute dowry cases and without associating it with women's representatives this cell will not be of much use to lessen the number of dowry deaths in Delhi.

Mr. K.F. Rustumji, member of the National Police Commission also was of the opinion that policewomen should deal with such dowry cases. While pointing out that "neither society nor the husband and his relatives have accepted the change in the young brides today, the liberal education of these young girls refuses to tolerate much what their mothers did. These girls will naturally challenge the traditional behavior by the husbands and in-laws, with the result that the conflict is bound to come. The Joint family is no longer capable of absorbing these strains because, every member of the family is involved with the conflict". This shameful affair of bride burning is resulting in the slow but sure awakening of the masses, the active role of women's organisation, the important role of the press in exposing the cases, educating the people, and the various court judgements specially the determined, forceful and outright judgement of Mr. Agarwal. All these are welcome features in the present context.

In spite of repeated demands by the women

This lethargy must go. In one of the public sector unions, a chageman burnt his wife and he walked out. The workers opened the door, took the wife to the hospital. But she died. She declared who set her on fire — it was the husband. She had the courage to declare that. I admire her for that. The employees of the union, bribed the police and managed to get him acquitted. He was a murder but he was also a leader of the union. He was moving as if nothing happened! Comrades say the wife had illicit relation with somebody! What a shame to say that? Our class must react, move in such cases. This present attitude must change. We must wake up — react and act..."

MPs in the Parliament to pass the anti-dowry Act in the last session, the furious discussion in Parliament on the numerous dowry deaths in Delhi while condemning the callous attitude of the Delhi Administration and the police, in spite of the rising anger demonstrated in various women's meetings, processions, and rallies, no steps have been taken by the Central Government under the woman Prime Minister, to curb the ghastly murders. It is a challenge for the women's organisations and the mass movements, a challenge to the men and women with conscience to come forward to protect the honour of a woman, and the moral values in the society which are disappearing rapidly. They have to come forward to fight against these social evils while helping the brides in difficulty, who dream at the wedding of their bright future, but find themselves cornered by the unhappy and cruel events after their marriage resulting in setting themselves on fire. The present social system based on private property treat women as bonded labourers, as second citizens with the right to sell or purchase them at their will, kill them or burn them when the need is no more. The anger of a common person against such cruel deaths, against the gang rapes of Harijan and agricultural women must be converted into an active opposition to such heinous acts of mad and insane people in the society who are after money only. The students and youth and trade unions have to play a big role in making people conscious to fight against these social evils along with Womens' Organisations.

Kerala Nurses Launch Struggles

(By the Joint Secretary of the Nurses' Association)

NEARLY 5000 nurses working in the Government Hospitals of Kerala organised under the same flag are on the path of agitation. Twenty five years have elapsed after the formation of our organisation in 1957. Kerala Govt. Nurses' Association which is as old as Kerala itself is the victim of the present rulers.

Working Conditions

Eight hours work, as far as the govt. nurses of Kerala are concerned is an unfulfilled dream. Here we have to work for 14 hours per day. In the case of salary also we are far behind compared to other states. As the human lives are depending on us we did not take to the path of agitation. But govt. was thinking that this is a weakness on our part and they were not heeding to our legitimate demands. The Valayudhan Commission appointed on 1968 to study the conditions of wage and job facilities of nurses has recommended to stop the mess allowance we were getting. Internationally accepted designations as Head Nurse and Staff Nurse were changed to senior and junior nurses in order to make confusion. Pai Committee report has stopped the opportunity to study Post Basic BSc. Courses by the nurses in service. In other states Nurses' Council has approved the Ratio 3:1 i.e., 3 patients for a nurse. In Kerala, the ratio is 6:1 i.e., 6 patients for a nurse. But in practice we have to take care of 100-150 patients. The conditions of hospital equipments are extremely pitiable. With one needle we have to inject thousands of patients. No hospital is provided with lotion or spirit.

The Health Ministry in Kerala is in utter corruption from top to bottom. Even in the case of transfer the Government is not keeping the norms. The Government is unaware of the insecurity of nurses working in rural areas of Kerala. In many places nurses are the victims of the anti-social elements and their living facilities are very poor.

The Struggles

We conducted a protest day on 5th May 1981. On that day we wore badges and raised

slogans before joining duty. We conducted agitational campaign on vehicles from February 9, 1983 to 20 which began from Cannanore to Trivandrum. On 22 Feb. 1983 we conducted a Dharna in front of Secretariat which was inaugurated by the opposition leader Com. E.K. Nayanar. 1001 nurses participated in it. Even then the Government did not start discussions. So, the K.G.N.A. General Secretary, Smt. A.K. Rajamma began an indefinite hunger strike from 21 March onwards. Hunger strike was inaugurated by A. George, M.L.A. Due to deteriorated health conditions Rajamma was hospitalised and replaced by M.N. Chellammal, former President of our organisation. In support to this hunger strike we conducted torch light demonstration. From 24th March the nurses went on strike in all the district centres. On the sixth day of strike the Government came down to discuss and we withdrew the strike. Still many of the demands were not achieved.

Our demands:

1. All the agreements approved in the discussion on 15.5.81 should be implemented.
2. Working time should be decreased to 8 hours from 14 hours.
3. Three patients for a nurse ratio should be approved.
4. Quarters for nurses should be allotted.
5. Illegal transfer should be stopped.
6. Appointment of nurse superintendents in all the taluk hospitals.
7. Wage commission should be reconstituted with our representatives.
8. Interim benefit should be given.
9. Dearness allowance with outstanding dues should be disbursed immediately.
10. Uniform allowance should be increased.
11. Make arrangement for higher studies.

(Contd. on page 23)

Government's Quibbling on the Teratogenic Drug

IN a notification issued on June 21, 1983, the Government of India has banned the manufacture of the Oestrogen-Progesterone combination drugs (EP drugs) after December 31, 1982 and their sale after June 30, 1983. The reason for the ban is the large scale reports of their teratogenic effects, i.e. formation of deformed babies.

Initially these synthetic sex hormones were found useful for the treatment of amenorrhoea, i.e., no menstruation or delayed menstruation. The intake of the hormones artificially raises their levels in the body, and when the intake is stopped, i.e., at the end of the prescribed course, the abrupt drop in their levels triggers a breakthrough bleeding. However, during conception this breakthrough bleeding does not occur. This property was utilised in the western countries during 1950s by the multinational drug companies for pregnancy test apart from the treatment of amenorrhoea. But it was found that these synthetic hormones act by altering the maternal hormonal balance and since they directly affect the uterus, so it is natural that they will affect the foetus of a pregnant woman.

Since 1960s research studies with survey of deformed babies have confirmed the teratogenic effect of those sex hormones from the fact that the concerned mothers had intake of these hormones during their early pregnancy. On ever increasing reports about deformed babies during the '70s the World Health Organisation informed all the countries about the adverse effects of these drugs, which compelled a number of Governments to withdraw the drugs from the markets. A number of articles were published in various world medical journals confirming the positive connection between these synthetic hormones and the deformed babies. In 1975 the British Medical Journal published a conclusive study on 149 abnormal babies born due to the effects of the drugs. The same year the International Journal of Gynaecology and Obstetrics published their similar positive findings. The researchers found that the intake of these hormones resulted in somewhat similar foetal anomalies like what is called VACTERL anomalies, i.e., the Vertebral, Anal, Cardiac,

Tracheo-Esophageal, Renal and Limb anomalies, which were the characteristic features of the famous (nay notorious) Thalidomide Baby.

With so many confirmed reports and the principal manufacturing western countries being compelled to withdraw these EP drugs, the Government of India, evidently under the pressure of the notorious organisation of the multinational drug companies in India, viz, Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers in India (OPPI), made a compromise with them in 1976 to issue an instruction to incorporate the following "warning" in the packings:

"There is some evidence to show that hormonal preparations when used during pregnancy may lead to foetal abnormalities, and as such, should not be used during pregnancy or for pregnancy diagnosis unless a decision has been taken to terminate the pregnancy after its confirmation."

This "warning" was unnecessary and uncalled for, because as a rule, all drugs carry this warning for pregnant women during the first trimester of pregnancy. But it was found that even this compromise formula was openly violated by the multinational and Indian monopoly drug companies. A document, "Abuse of Female Hormone Drugs" revealed that 16EP drugs were being sold to 1,80,000 pregnant women in India every year without the statutory "warning". In February, 1979 a team of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Kilpauk Medical College, Madras showed that 31 per cent of mothers who gave birth to deformed babies had ingested the EP drugs. Even after this the Government of India, still hesitant to ban the drugs, issued another "directive" on March 18, 1982 to "prominently" display the warning in the packings. However, due to growing demands raised by various mass organisations the Government ultimately issued the ban order. The All India Conference of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists held at Pune in December 1982 supported the ban. But the Government's submission to the multinationals is thoroughly exposed. Knowing fully well of their horrifying effects the drugs were allowed to be manufactured for

full six months after the issue of the notice, and then allowed to be sold for another six months in the open market. Thus after maximum productions the drug cartels will be able to reap home super profits through black market while the innocent mothers will go on producing the teratogenes and bear the terrible psychological brunt of having borne an abnormal child and also to rear it up.

The OPPI has started a virulent campaign against the ban order through cooked up reports in favour of the drugs to pressurise the Government to withdraw the ban. Since June 1983 is already over a powerful joint movement is needed by the women's organisations, other mass organisations and the democratic and scientific institutions including the Indian Medical Association demanding of the Government to immediately seize all the EP drugs still available in the markets and stop their sale.

The EP drugs are being marketed in India under the following brand names: Voldys 21 (Glaxo); Duoluton and Primolut-N (German Remedies), Orasecron Forte and Disecron Forte (Nicholas), Menstrogen, Orgaluten and Lynoral (Organon); Norlestrin (Parke-Davis); Secrodyl (Allenbury-Glaxo); Cyclenorm (MPI); Lut-Estron Forte (Mac); Gestaplon (Khandelwal); E.P. Forte (Unichem); Oestron (Lyka), etc.

(from page 21)

12. 5 per cent seats for admission in medical colleges should be allotted to nurses.
13. Male nurses training should be started again.
14. Stipend to nurse students should be increased.
15. The corruption in Health Ministry should be abolished,

Demand for Uniform Civil Code

A strong demand for reforms in the muslim personal Law was made at a seminar organized by the National Federation of Indian Women in New Delhi on Saturday. It was pointed out that the Muslim Personal Law, as practised in India, hindered the social advancement of Muslim women and in fact the religious fanatics used it to suppress the women.

Mrs Noorjahan Razack, MP, said that it was a "funny" law, and ought to be replaced by a Uniform Civil Code. The Muslim Personal Law was the biggest stumbling block in the way of the progress of Muslim women, and in asking for changes in it for its replacement they were not asking for any favour from the Government.

"We are only demanding our right to be treated as equal human beings on a par with all Indian women irrespective of their caste or religion", she said.

Mrs Razack said that the most "shameful" aspect of the divorce law was the one that gave a man the right to remarry the woman he had divorced. And for this the woman had to go through the humiliating experience of marrying another man for one day, and then seeking divorce from the second man to remarry her first husband.

"In many cases, the second husband refuses to agree to a divorce and to get over this many families obtain an advance 'talaqnaama' from so that he cannot retract from the arrangement. Often, the girl is married to an old or disabled person to meet the technicality of a second marriage," she said.

Mrs Razack quoted Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Sir Syed Ahmed and Mr Krishna Iyer to emphasize the discriminatory character of the Muslim Personal Law. She said that women had waited for too long and their patience was running out. She pointed out that the question of changes in the Muslim Personal Law could not be left to the Government alone and the women themselves should get together to start a struggle for equal status.

Did you Know ?

Harassment of Women in U.K.

Most women employed in British Government offices are likely to be sexually harassed at work, reports Reuter quoting a survey by the Inland Revenue Staff Federation.

Hundreds of women civil servants were interviewed for the survey, which defined harassment as anything from teasing to touching, brushing and grabbing.

London, June 27, 1983

Out of Each 1,000 Live-Born Infants

Approximately 100 die before the age of one. Such is the world infant mortality rate. It is only an average. The levels are less than 10 per 1,000 in the four countries of Northern Europe, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Japan. In France, it is 10 per 1,000. But in Mali, Guinea and Afghanistan infant mortality reaches the frightful level of 200 per 1,000 followed by Angola, Zaire, Ethiopia, Laos and Bolivia.

Parliament to Pass Anti-Dowry Bill

New Delhi, Thursday—The Union Home Minister, Mr. P.C. Sethi, today told a Mahila Dakshata Samiti delegation that the Dowry Prohibition Amendment Bill providing for setting up of a special court to try dowry death cases would be passed in the ensuing monsoon session of Parliament.

He also agreed to consider a proposal to set up a Coroner's Court in Delhi and convene a meeting of the representatives of the social organisations engaged in anti-dowry movement, along with the Lieutenant-Governor of Delhi, the Police Commissioner and other concerned officers in the last week of June to consider the situation arising out of the large number of dowry deaths.

The delegation composed of Mrs. Pramila Dandavate, MP, Mrs. Kailash Rekhi, Mrs. Suman Krishankant, Mrs. Manju Mohan and others presented to the Home Minister a memorandum regarding the dowry deaths.

Statesman, June 7, 1983

Greedy Husband's Night in Jail

DEHRADUN, May 29—A dowry-seeking bridegroom spent his nuptial night in jail.

Shankar Dayal, a junior engineer of the irrigation department felt that the dowry he received was inadequate and demanded a motorcycle and Rs 10,000 in cash.

The bride's father, Mr Haridev Singh, virtually begged the bridegroom to take the bride with him though he could not arrange for the money having already spent heavily on the marriage.

The bridegroom remained adamant. Someone informed the police who swooped down on the marriage party and arrested the bridegroom, his brother and an uncle. The rest of the "baratis" beat a hasty retreat.

The marriage party had come from Faizabad to Vikasnagar, about 50 km from here.

Indian Express, May 30, 1983

13 Cops Sent to Lines for Rape

BASTI May, 10: The Station House Officer, three Sub-Inspectors and nine constables of the Paikawaliya police station in Basti district have been sent to the police lines on the orders of the District Police Chief on a charge of committing mass rape of married women at Khajhuha village on the night of April 28.

The District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police visited the village to apprise themselves of the facts of the incident before orders were issued to send the 13 policemen to the lines.

According to Mr Ambika Singh, a Congress (I) MLA, the Paikawaliya police not only committed mass rape, but beat up one person to death while he was in police-custody.

The police party, Mr Singh said, went to the village to commit dacoity, but when a constable was caught by the villagers the Station House Officer lost his temper and led a large police force to the village for a raid. They committed the indignities on the women.

The allegation against the police were found correct during preliminary investigations, according to Mr Singh.

Times of India, May 11, 1983