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Delhi Nurses Marching to the Prime Minister's Residence on 10th January 1987. Will the Health Ministry Consider their Demands ?



Courtesy — **STATESMAN**

UNITE AND FIGHT

1986—The Year of Misery and Growing Struggle

1986 was an year of all round misery for the people in our country and for women in particular. The prices of rice, kerosene, gas, vegetables and so on increased considerably. Gas cost Rs. 57.60 instead of 51.35. The bus and train fares went up beyond the means of common people. The Christmas gift recently was an increase in postal rates! The Congress rulers have not even left the life-saving drugs out of the net of high prices!

Dowry deaths were 30 in four months in Bombay alone while the number in Delhi went on increasing despite the Dowry Amendment Act. The rapes on Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes women numbered 492 during six months in 1986. Even the right to maintenance for muslim women is denied by the congress rule.

The economic policies of Rajiv Gandhi Government is turning our country into a gold mine for the multinationals. Privatisation of Public Sector will throw lakhs of women and men out of job. Women will be the first to be fired, from banks and offices when computers are installed in the near future. Besides another obnoxious attack on women has been unleashed this year. Well, there can not be two opinions on the desirability of family planning. But was it essential to make it a law for discontinuation of maternity benefit to working women after two children? Is it advisable to bring the family planning by coersion through denying the benefit to thousands of women? Should the family Welfare Ministry be not serious about increasing the provision of creche for Working Mothers in offices, banks and other places instead of issuing statements of allotment of money to be given in ICDS Scheme and creche? Lakhs of women are thrown out from the organised to unorganised, homebased sectors. Self-employment is encouraged as a remedy for the 3 crores of unemployed people. Even after 10 years of continuous work in Telephone, in electronics etc. women are not made permanent. Despite the legislation of Minimum wage for agricultural women, nothing has been done for its implementation. Poor wages, long hours of work, denial of maternity benefit and other benefits have become the lot of poor working women, in the unorganised sector.

It was also an year of increasing struggles of all sections. This surely promises better future for us. Nurses, Teachers, State Government employees in almost all the states are launching struggles. Nurses are organising to

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Conference of Working Women In Orissa

MARSA SAMAD, about 40 years old, a wagon loader at Roksy in one of the iron ore area in Sundargarh Distt. of Orissa was addressing the working women's conference held at Barbil on 8th of Dec. '86. She is working here for 20 years now. Many contractors have come and gone but she is there fighting undaunted despite attacks by anti-socials, goondas of BJP, INTUC and management. She said "I am working here for 20 years. There are no roads in the jungle to reach the working place, no housing is provided for us, we live in "Huttings", no creches for our children or hospital. Our children remain dirty, there is no medicine or hospital nearby, if there is injury or accident! This is the situation in almost all the mines. Some five years back, CITU union started here, the workers fought unitedly and now some results are there. Wages are increased to Rs. 13.50 from Rs. 4-5 per day, Maternity benefit, leave and other benefits are now available, some sort of creche has come into existence..." and with great pride she was telling the delegates of the achievements under CITU. And it was a fact to be known to workers belonging to other Unions.

Conference Begins

This was the second conference of working women held on 9-10th alongwith the 4th conference of Orissa State-CITU from 10th to 12th of December, 1986 attended by about 200 delegates, mainly from limedolo, iron and manganese mines, steel plant, construction, textile & spinning, agriculture farm etc. The delegates from teaching and Nursing professions were there. The conference was inaugurated by the Secretary of All India Working Womens Co-ordination Committee, Vimal Ranadive after hoisting red flag and offering flowers on the Martyrs Column. A presidium was constituted with Com, Kalyani Das, Jogmaya Dei, Indumati Nandi, Marsa Samad, Parbati Dei and Kumari Usha Rani Mishra to conduct the conference. The condolence resolution was moved on behalf of the presidium, one minute silence was observed by the conference. Barbil, a place in Keonjhar Dist. was chosen particularly for this reason, that CITU has come to stay in the mining areas since 5 years challenging the traditional exploitation by reactionery forces and opportunism by other Trade Unions. The workers challenged the undisputed rule of unruly regime of mine owners. This was a jungle rule which they expected to be continued forever. This is reported to be one of the biggest Iron ore belt of Asia, mostly exported to Japan and South Korea. Roksi is one of the important loading stations where a large number of women are employed.

The workers revolted against the contract system, the barbarous methods of exploitation by contractors and management for non-implementation of mines Act, against poor wages and against the sexual and other harassment by the goondas. Now they are proud to hold the CITU conference at the place where CITU flag is flying.

The panda! where both the conferences were held was named "Mata-Masuri Nagar", Mata Munda, a male worker and Masuri Munda, a 25 year old woman. A procession of 400-500 men and women workers was taken out in 1982 demanding Maternity benefit and wages for digging the earth at Bhadrasahi. While it was proceeding to the office of Mining management, to terrorise them the contracter's truck dashed in the procession killing Mata and Masuri on the spot! The procession on the 12th December started from this place only where a martyrs' tomb was raised. The procession began after Com. B.T. Ranadive garlanded the martyrs tomb.

During last 5 years, the leaders were attacked and murdered. Shiblata Raut while speaking on the report placed by Indumati Nandi, Secretary could not control her emotions while referring about her son Sanjay, the only son of Anant Raut, the leader in Toda Kalta mines area killed by the goondas in a clash when they attacked their house to kill Anant Raut. He was not at home at that

time so they killed his son, attacked Shiblata and her sister-in-law. Siblata has now become an organiser and leader of the area. At about 10 in the night on her way to Barbil 100-150 women gave reception to Vimal Ranadive, shouting slogans enthusiastically at this place. Once a dreaded place but now women workers gather with pride with red flags to receive their leaders.

Next attack was on Govind Munda in 1983 in Tensa who was murdered in his house in the dead of night. He could not be saved because the attack was murderous. And then Mata and Masuri Munda killed by the truck. Blood spilt was not in vain. The workers, rose in revolt, demands for minimum wages, Bonus, M.B. implementation of the mines Act etc. were raised, unity of the workers strengthened under the UMMU Union. The holding of the conference in the mines belt was a talk of the town, and naturally so. After such a situation workers felt very proud to hold the conference here.

While inaugurating the conference Vimal Ranadive emphasised on the point that the women constitute half of the society and working women are vital force in the class struggle. It is a failure of the Indian Trade Union Movement that women workers have still not been organised in Trade Unions which are considered to be schools of class struggle. It is also a failure that working class is not yet able to support the cause of women's emancipation as they should. Unless the weaknesses are rapidly removed by concious efforts, the women's liberation will be a far cry. She pinpointed in her address that the working women of Orissa should get organised, participate in the struggles launched by their women's organisations as well as trade unions.

The Convener of state level co-ordination committee Com. Indumati Nandi placed a seven paged printed report before the conference for discussion.

The report mentioned about various struggles fought including women employees in Rourkela Steel Plant. She demanded that the right to work should be a fundamental right, incorporated in the Constitution, equal pay for equal work and other legislation should be implemented. No further retrenchment be made of women workers in mines, textile and other industries. The provision of creche and Maternity benefit should exist as per the rules. She said at some places women are working in the night shifts and it should be immediately stopped. The report mentioned that due to working in Magenese and Iron ore mines, workers Suffers from T.B., Cancer and so on. There should be provision for the T.B. Hospitals. The workers have to go to Ranchi T.B. Hospital to get the treatment.

Marsa while speaking on the report narrated the incident at Barsoa Station on the 27th Nov. '86, when a joint demonstration on National Integration was attacked by R.P. Singh, a B.M.S. agent and others. She said "we were about 500 women. At 4 P.M. we started from Barsua when suddenly these goondas attacked me by "Danda" on my head. I fell unconscious, Suleman Tapnu, Phulmani, Divagi, Dayamani all were injured. We were taken to the Police Thana. Police teased me saying, "let her die, "why medicine"? No medicines were given except some tablets...." Marsa in fact became the real leader when she along with so many workers sent back the "pay loader machine" in the month of November. The management with the help of the Contractor at Roksy tried to mechanise the wagon loading and brought the machine. But women held Dharna, Satyagraha for days and did not allow the pay loader to enter! This was the victory for women workers who would have fired first if this machine was introduced. With what confidence she was telling about this incident! She ended her speech with "If such situation again arise, we will again fight ... we have power to fight, we will organise...."

Balmati Manda from Tode stood before the mike for the first time. She said a few words only 'After joining CITU we got our demands...." Kumudini Behera, an office employee said "we have a chance to discuss our various problems here. There is no equal wage, no maternity benefit. Some times women continue to work for 10 hours". Mariam from Manganese Mines said there were no roads in our area, no school or creche. Since the CITU came to our area, at least now we get proper wages...." Vasanti Devi from Beherampur who is a teacher

described the present status of women who are 50 per cent in the society, and are exploited at home and outside. A large unemployment exist among women. Look at Socialist countries. There are no atrocities on women there like in India. No illeterate women in socialist countries. Rajiv Gandhi's policy of education promises model school! Who will pay for that? We have to raise our voice against these policies of the Congress Rule ... Let us pledge today...." Usha Mishra, employed in Baripada Spinning Mill where about 160 women are working out of 1200 total workers narrated her experience. "The management on 14th Nov. suddenly told us to work in Ring frame department.... We refused, we do not know the work. He immediately suspended me as I took the lead and spoke on behalf of all women. The object of the management was to see that we are dismissed. When negotiation started they said they would not take me back! No one went to work.... Now after many days the case has gone to the Labour Minister and it is reported that he said "women will work where they were working before...." Young Usha is the leader and said, "our Union will be affiliated to CITU now...." How poorly these women are paid can be seen from the present Rs. 350/- wage only. No D.A. some housing allowance of Rs. 40+20 medical allowance! Rahil Puthy from Roksy said now they got maternity leave, the same thing Marsha Dura also said. Promodini Saha, Malati Naik, Jogmaya Day, Nitula Naik, Susheela Singh also spoke. Nitila Nayak from Rourkela Plant described as to how they fought for 33 days. After the reply, the report was passed unanimously.

The resolutions were moved. One on "atrocities on women" moved by Banadivi Das, supported by Helen, and on "working women demands" moved by Kalyani Das, an employee of R.S. Plant since many years who has fought many struggles against the management of plant.

While summing up Vimal Ranadive said a number of attacks against women's employment, were coming. She gave instances how all the sections of women are in the areas of struggles. Women are uniting against the present economic policies of the Congress Rule. She appealed to the delegates to make 21st January 1987 Public Sector General strike a success.

Com. B.T. Ranadive addressed the conference with a few words. He said "where women are in majority, male workers dominate the Union. Women should take their proper place in the Union and in the leadership, and they have to prepare for that struggle.

Comrade Shivaji Patnaik, President Orissa State CITU greeted the delegates. He said Orissa was the state where the atrocities are the largest. He also explained that the existing feudal tendencies among the leadership of Trade Unions must be corrected. Turning to the international situation he spoke on the horribie effects of Nuclear war being instigated by the American imperialists and appealed to women to fight for peace. Com. Viswal, the Chairman of the Reception Committee thanked the delegates and with shouting slogans by women the conference came to an end, after formation of a co-ordination committee of 12, with Indumati Nandi as Secretary.

In the rally on 12th, women were predominant. When it entered the Mata — Masuri Maidan — there was a sea of red flags! So beautiful and proud sight for these workers exploited terribly for years, but now becoming the fighters in the struggle for the emancipation of the working class!

Do you know ?

Paris city fathers on Friday banned posters advertising the country's first call-girl service for subscribers to state-run telephone's company's videotext line, AFP reports.

A spokesman said several Parisians had complained about the posters, displayed on newspaper stands, and city authorities had now asked the advertising firms NMPP and AAP to pull down the posters.

Nurses in Delhi Plan Indefinite Strike

DELHI has never witnessed such militancy among the nurses in Ram-Manohar Lohia Hospital, AIIMS, Hindu Rao, Safdarjung, Post graduate Institute of Medicine (PGI) Chandigarh and other hospitals. On December 5, 1986, Nurses came out in large numbers on the streets of the capital to demand better working conditions. About 3000 nurses of all cadres, employed in all Central, Delhi State Municipal hospitals and AIIMS marched to the Boat Club and held a rally under the banner of the Delhi Hospital Nurses Joint Action Committee. They submitted a memorandum to the Health Minister through the Lok Sabha Speaker Balram Jakhar.

They demanded a higher pay scale, 50 per cent basic pay as non-practising allowance, an increase in uniform allowance from Rs. 305 to Rs. 3000 per year, and an increase in washing allowance from Rs. 25 to Rs. 100 per month. They complained against the breach of ILO conventions which prescribe a 40-hour week and demanded overtime allowance for extra hours of duty. They also criticized the violation of the recommended nurse-patient ratio in city hospitals and non-provision of meal breaks and rest breaks during duty. The nurses pointed out that they had no security whatsoever during night duty and had to fear for their personnal safety. They demanded implementation of the Third Pay Commission's recommendations that nurses be given family accommodation near their place of work or be given transport facilities.

Recently, about 200 nurses representing all the hospitals of Delhi staged a Dharna on 29th December at the AIIMS demanding better pay scales and working conditions. Earlier the nurses submitted a memorandum to the Union Health Minister expressing concern over the "step motherly" treatment by the ministry in not taking the correct decision. A Joint action Council (JACN) was formed, the convener being Mrs. G.K. Khurana. Mrs. Khurana in a press statement on 21st of December said that the nurses are planning to launch an agitation from Dec. 22 to 24 by wearing black badges. After this they held Dharnas at various places from December 29th to January 2nd 1987. She also demanded an immediate dialogue with the authorities to settle the issue amicably. With no response from the authorlties, the nurses held a big demonstration in front of Lohia hospital on 2nd of January in support of their demands for pay revision and better allowances. In a General body held in the Lohia Hospital, the decision to go on strike from January 19th was unanimously taken. The spokeswoman for nurses Joint Action Committee said that if hospital services are disrupted as a result of their strike, the authorities should be blamed for refusing to negotiate their demands. The next phase of the agitation included a mass dharna at Nirman Bhawan from January 5-7 and a hunger strike from January 8-9. The nurses will march to the Prime Minister house on January 12 to draw his attention to their plight. And if all the efforts to settle the demands fail, the nurses will have no other alternative but to go on indefinite strike from January 19. Addressing the nurses who were on hunger strike, Vimal Ranadive, Secretary All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women congratulated them for their unity and gave all the support to their just demands.

The following Press Statement was issued by Vimal Ranadive, on 4th January 1987 in support of the Nurses Demands.

"The All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women (AICCWW) congratulates the nurses in Lohia, AIIMS, Hindu Rao, Safdarjung and in other hospitals in Delhi for their courageous struggles launched from Dec. 29 through Dharanas, hunger strikes, demonstration etc. on their just demands for pay revision and better allowances, and supports them.

The AICCWW demands that the Health Ministry should negotiate with the struggling nurses without any delay so that the health of the patients in hospitals is not endangered especially as the Joint Action Council of nurses has specifically informed the concerned authorities that if the just settlement is not arrived at, they would be compelled to go on an indefinite strike on January 19th as decided by the Action Committee.

The AICCWW appeals to all Central Trade Unions and democratic mass organisations to support the just struggle of the Nurses."

The ICDS—"The Only Programme Anywhere In The World"—Congress (I)

IN his address in the two day Convention held on October 1st — 2nd 1986 at Vigyan Bhawan for discussing the ICDS scheme in the 7th Five Year Plan, Dr. B. N. Tandon, the Chairman of the Central Technical Committee of the ICDS, described the ICDS as the "Only programme of its size for mother and children anywhere in the world". Perhaps, in his enthusiasm to increase the number of ICDS, he forgot that in Soviet Union, China, Poland and other socialist countries there are plenty of such mother and child care centres. Children are looked after by the State as their own property and given all nutrition, food, education etc. Even if, Mr. Tandon fulfills the promise he made in the convention, the children and women will wish him good. But things do not happen as our Congress rulers wish them to be. According to the report, the ICDS projects are functioning in no less than 393 districts of our country, out of which the largest number of projects are in U. P. (176), followed by Bihar (119), West Bengal (110) and Maharashtra (95). The conditions of these projects are not very good except West Bengal where genuine attempts were made by the Welfare Ministry to employ women, to give some nutritious food to children. In the 2 day convention it was decided that at the end of 7th Five Year Plan, the number of ICDS projects are expected to increase from the 1,346 projects sanctioned as in June 1986 to 2,200. Mr. Dayal, the Joint Secretary in the Ministry of human Resources development also promised that the ICDS projects would be introduced "in a big way in the tribal areas, SC/ST dominant block and drought prone and backward areas..." He also promised that in the 7th Plan target, the pre-school education projects of ICDS will cover 66 lakh children in the age group of three to five, belonging to low income group and will be opened throughout the country. A total of 22 lakh Anganavadis are expected to be functioning by the end of Seventh Plan under the ICDS programme. Sometimes it become difficult to believe the figures quoted by the Government agencies easily, which comes to, "lakhs", when even thousand children cannot be benefited by the schemes. Who would believe except those planners that too not certain — that at present more than 40 lakhs are beneficiaries under these projects? The conditions of these projects are well known to everybody.

Yes, the ICDS scheme was launched on Gandhi Jayanti, 11 years ago. The objective was to help mothers to look after their children by proper education and nutrition. These bright ideas remain as 'bright' on the paper till today.

An inauguration of the said convention by a four year old girl from one of the lower income group families in Shastri Nagar in Delhi will only add insults to injury to these poor deprived families instead of their false glorification.

Discrimination Against Women in Bank Posts

SEVERAL women candidates figuring in the merit list of the Union Bank of India's examination for probationary officers have been denied appointment primarily because they are women.

This blatant discrimination has been accepted by the chairman and managing director of the bank, Mr. J. S. Bhatnagar, in his reply to the additional secretary, banking ministry of finance, who had asked him to explain the large scale irregularities indulged into by the bank authorities in the 1978 examination, which had come to light recently.

Sources said in an "explanatory note" attached with his letter (No. MDO 437, dated December 3, 1986), Mr. Bhatnagar has pointed out that since there were not enough successful candidates in U. P. and Bombay, the bank management decided to fill up the vacancies in these zones by offering jobs to the candidates figuring in the list of north zone.

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Kanak Mukherjee, M.P. on the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Bill, 1986

SIR, this Bill, though a piecemeal and partial one, has certainly got some value and the Objects and Reason sound well, but I am afraid, like many other Bill recently passed, this Bill will also remain useless and in effective.

These Bills have no significance nowadays, when the bill on 'Sati' or for re-marriage of widows was passed in the 19th century, they did something for social reform. But now we are passing the bills without meaning anything. Why is it so? Government is introducing and passing such bills, but you see their economic policy, their industrial policy, their policy on education, their policy of appeasement to the fundamentalists. The same Government has just passed a bill on Muslim women taking away the minimum rights they had.

What is the effect of this Bill? With these policies of the Government, unemployment among women and illiteracy is increasing, the status of women is going down. The Statement of Objects and Reasons sounds very nice. It says:

> "Inspite of these provisions, there is a growing body of indecent representation of women or references to women in publications, particularly advertisements, etc. which have the effect of denigrating women and are derogatory to women.... It is proposed to prohibit all advertisements, publications etc. which contain indecent representation of women in any form."

It sounds very nice. But who are to do it? Who will prevent it? Who is responsible for this denigradation of women? In TV serials, in print media, in film advertisements, in all sorts of advertisements there is indecent representation of women. Who is responsible for this? Mainly it is in the Government media that such indecent representation of women takes place. Take TV serials. Take Chitrahar, various advertisements. Almost naked women are shown in TV serials. Last year I had to write a letter to the Minister for Information and Broadcasting. While doing propaganda for family planning, they showed a naked women lying down on the table and the young doctor doing the necessary operation and all these things. We cannot see such things with our children.

These are the sort of things that they show on T.V. So, I had to write a letter to them. How are films like "Her Nights" and "Sexy Nights" passed by censors? In TV serials, in films, in film advertisements, in all the print media there are innumerable pictures. When this Bill was introduced, women came to me and gave me so many pictures. I can lay these pictures on the Table. These are horribly obscene.

Not only this is indecent, obscene and derogatory, but what kind of morals are we preaching? What is the ideology behind this? Look at these things. There was a feature "Kahan Gaye Woh Log". In that a woman commits "sati" and the commentary was: "Ah, look at this. Nowadays we will not get such women". So they are eulogising 'sati', one and a half century after Raja Ram Mohan Ray took so much pain to have it abolished. The other day, in Bombay, women had demonstrated before the Godrej Company. What was that company advertising? "I have never had to change my fridge or my wife". So fridge is equated with wife.

Here it is obscenity, absolutely; Take the VIP underwear advertisement. The boss is in underwear and the secretary girl is holding the telephone. Then see the Fair and Lovely cream, snow, powder, lipstic advertisements. Obscene! Only sex appeal! They are using women for these things. Not only that, Sir.

Come to the text-books. I am happy that the honourable Minister has mentioned about books. Here is an article from the *Economic and Political Weekly* of May 3, 1986. Here is the result of a computer survey of 41 Indian schools text-books of the NCERT of the Central Government and the Central Board of Secondary Education. The article is "Women and Sexism" written by Narendra

Nath Kalia. What is there in those books? He writes:

> "Almost 20 years ago, India's official educators promised to deliver a curriculum that would recognise and nurture the fundamental equality between men and women (Education Commission, India, 1965:4). The Indian Govt agreed to rewrite the text-books of independent India to prepare its young for an era of equality...."

Then he writes:

> "...stereotypes of 'masculine' and 'feminine' personalities do more harm than good".

He writes again:

> "To determine the extent of sexism in Indian text-books, I conducted a computer-aided content analysis of 21 English and 20 Hindi language — instruction text-books...."

and what is there in those text-books? He writes:

> "Men routinely abused and violently beat women in many lessons. Over 100 female characters were victimised as a result of their sex roles".

Will these 41 books of the NCERT and the Central Board of Secondary Education be banned after this Bill is passed? I ask the Honourable Minister to say. These are the morals we are teaching our children.

What are our children learning from the TV from the advertisements, the print media and from their own text-books? That women and men are never equal. In our Constitution we say that there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex, but so much discrimination is there. What is the basic reason for this humiliating image of women?

In this society based on private property, they think that women are also property of men. Here these propertied men think that women are second class citizens. They do not consider that women are equal to men and as honourable citizens as men are. Now this society based on property and ruled by the propertied class looks down upon women. So, women are used in the media as sex symbols. If you insult mothers and sisters like this, what will be the image of women? The image of the society itself. Therefore, it is not the concern of women only. When some obscene advertisements appear on the TV, it is the women only who protest. Why is it not the concern of men also? Is it not the concern of the society as a whole? If your mother and wife and sister are insulted, is it not an insult to the whole society? The image of women is the image of the entire society. They constitute half the society and they, as mothers and sisters rear up the children and set the moral tones of our future generations. Women are equal to men and they are as good citizens as men are.

(*Contd. from page 7*)

The note further explains that "these candidates were to be offered postings in the northern region itself against vacancies to be identified in early 1979. It was with this intention that these candidates were left out. However, in view of setting up of the Banking Service Recruitment Board (BSRB), the existing empanelled list could not be utilised and therefore these remaining candidates, although in the merit list, could not be offered postings".

One of the affected woman candidates pointed out that "how did the management on its own presume that the 'lady candidates' will not join outside Delhi. Moreover, even if the bank would have offered us jobs the next year, as they had intended to do, it would have affected our seniority in the bank, and thus they did not have any right to do so in the absence of our consent. In any case, we have not been appointed despite having made it to the merit list".

Prasav Sevikas in Bihar Court Arrest in Thousands

MORE than 70,000 Bihar Medical and Public Health Employees have decided to go on indefinite general strike from 15th January 1987.The "Prasav Sevikas" village 'Daies' as they are called are going to court arrest in thousands from that day. Since last 3 years these employees have been launching struggle for their demands through Dharnas, demonstrations in all the districts. Thousands of the Prasav Sevikas held a magnificient demonstration in 1985 in Patna, and submitted a memorandum to the State and Central Health Ministry. After this, some decisions were taken on the Central level by the Government. But to utter disappointment of all the employees, no decisions have been implemented by any State Governments including Bihar, nor any talks were held with the organisation on the demands. There is no alternative now before the employees but to launch a big struggle. A convention held on 4th January 1987 in Patna where 300 delegates attended, a decision was taken to go on indefinite strike from 15th January. The present policies of the Congress Government with regard to drug industry is to invite the multinationals and loot our people, with the result those non-essential drugs are flooded in the market while the life-saving drugs are not available. The convention decided to launch struggles to reverse the present economic policies of the Congress. In fact the amount Rs. 50/- sanctioned by the Health Ministry is not paid to the Prasav Sevikas who are working in villages. There is no other way now for them except to court arrest and go on indefinite strike. An appeal has been made to all political parties, mass organisations to press the Central Government to grant their demands so that the General strike can be averted. The convention was addressed by Dr. C.P. Thakur, Radha Raman Sinha, J.S. Majumdar, Ganesh Shanker Vidhyarthi and others.

Maternity Leave Denied in AIIMS

A copy of the letter writen by Vasudev Acharya to Shri P.V. Narsimha Rao, Minister of Health and Family welfare on 30.12.86.

This has reference to my D.O. letters Nos. SM/4422/F-12/86 dated 14.7.86 and SM/4910/F-12/86 dated 29.11.86 acknowledged vide No. 152/HFM/86/VIP dated 23.7.86. and No. 715/HFM/86-VIP dated 5.11.86 respectively. The case relates to denial of maternity leave to Smt. Mariam Sebastian, staff Nurse of AIIMS, New Delhi.

In continuation of my above letters I am enclosing a copy of Smt. Vimala Ranadive, Secretary, All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women (CITU)'s letter dated 27.12.86 together with an appeal from Mrs. Mariam Sebastian, for your special attention. Also enclosed please find copy of Mr. Margaret Alva, Minister of Women Welfare's letter No. WA. 9-43/85-WW dated 22.11.86 to me assuring me that the case is being urgently enquired into by their complaints Cell.

It appears that the AIIMS authorities have been denying full maternity benefit to the staff nurses in cases of miscarriages by sanctioning leave only on the basis of Doctor's recommendation which in most of the time was subject to pressure from the administration. In this case it is clear that original recommendation of leave for six weeks was altered and reduced. Hence Mrs. Sebastian has raised certain legitimate questions which the officils are avoiding to answer. It is good that Mrs. Sebastian has not claimed that the reduction of leave by the Doctor is the result of malafide pressure. Hence a thorough enquiry and remedial measures is necessary. I shall be thankful for an early reply in this regard.

With regards,

Early to Work ... and Late Coming Home

"I leave home at 7 a.m. and sometimes don't get back until 8 p.m. Can you imagine how tired I am? And then the house work still has to be done".

"Now there is so much overcrowding in the trains, we feel sick and faint — it is suffocating."

"We now have a 12-14 hour working day. What time do we have to care for our families?"

All the women, commuters from Badli, Narela, Sonepat to Delhi crowded around, agitatedly raising these questions. They work in banks, insurance, private offices, non-Central Government offices and other institutions in Delhi. When the office timings of the Central Government employees were changed, the Railway authorities changed the time schedules of shuttles from areas surrounding Delhi. In spite of the fact that only 35 per cent of commuters are Central Government employees, the Railway authorities did not think it necessary to consider the needs of the other 65 per cent of the commuters. When a deputation of the affected commuters went to the Railway authorities they were told brusquesly "If the timings of the trains don't suit you, then stay at home. ("Another play to push women out of jobes?)

To press for a solution of this problem, a deputation of the Delhi Coordination Committee of Working women, including Ranjana Nirula Rama Dixit of LIC, and affected commuters, along with Hannan Mollah, M.P. met the Minister of State for Railways, Shri Madhav Rao Scindia. A memorandum signed by hundreds of women, was presented to him, and the demand made that additional shuttles be run at the old timings, and proper security arrangements be made on the trains. The Minister assured the deputation that he would look into the demands, and referred the matter to Shri Wanchoo of the Railway Board. At a later meeting, Shri Wanchoo posed all sorts of excuses and took a rather non-serious view of the matter.

It appears that the railway authorities have not learned any lessons from the experience of the DTC management, which, a few months ago, re-routed many buses in Delhi (as per a plan worked out by a computer) but without consulting the commuters. There was an immediate protest and widespread resistance by thousands of commuters and the DTC authorities were forced to revert to the old routes. Similarly, women and men commuters from Palwal and Faridabad picketed the shuttles from there and faced police lathis and beatings, but they succeeded in getting the new schedule reversed!

It is clear that the railway authorities will pay need only to a militant action by the commuters — and that is exactly what the working women and other commuters are now planning to do!

Successful Strike of Delhi Nurses

DELHI Nurses in hundreds from all the major hospitals in Delhi took out a magnificient procession in the AIIMS compound shouting slogans like "Our Unity Zindabad" "Forth Pay Commission Murdabad". These young and vociferous girls shouting slogans brought the members and patients out to watch it. This proved beyond doubt they decided to continue the strike despite the appeal made by the Human Resources Development Minister Shri P. V. Naresimha Rao and the Minister of State for Health Saroj Khaparde. It was reported that some members of the Action Committee went to see the authorities in Nirman Bhavan at the invitation from the Health Department on 19th of January when the delegation approached, the question was raised "who called you here?" This insulting behaviour was not expected by the delegation! The nurses were always for negotiations to settle their demands. Enraged with the attitude of the authorities, they protested and walked out. In a largly attended meeting, a new action committee was formed with Smt Saraswathi as Convener. Smt. Saraswathi spoke and introduced the members of the Action Committee and appealed to keep the unity of the nurses to fight for

their reasonable demands.

Vrunda Karat and Vimal Ranadive congratulated the nurses while giving full support to their struggle on behalf of JMS and AICCWW.

The following statement was issued by Vimal Randive, Secretary, All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women (CITU). AICCWW warmly congratulates the Nurses of All India Institute of Medical Science and other hospitals in Delhi who have struck work upholding the unanimous decision taken earlier by them. It is unfortunate that a section of leadership of the Joint Action Committee could not understand the trap set by the Govt. through a last minute negotiation and discussion for deferment by a week and agreed to the same without consulting the masses of Nurses who were not prepared to continue to be discriminated any more. Their demands for upward revision of their wages which the 4th Pay Commission promised but failed to do and other allowances are just and there was no point in postponing the action for a week. The AICCWW hopes that all nurses would unitedly struggle to win their just demands and extends full support to these struggling nurses.

The AICCWW also demands of the Govt and the Delhi Administration to immediately negotiate and settle the demands in order to save the patients who are undergoing hardships, something which they should have seriously done as soon as the Nurses came on to the street in a public out-burst of their pent-up resentment. The AICCWW warns the Govt that any attempt to browbeat or penalise the struggling nurses would be seriously viewed by the Trade Union movement.

The AICCWW appeals to all trade union centres and democratic mass organisations to raise their powerful voice of protest against the Govt's policy and extend their full support to the nurses who are in struggle to-day."

Regularise Our Services — Telephone Operators

700 women Telephones Operators working in Delhi in the capacity of Short Duty Telephone Operators and Operators of Reserved Trained Pool together with the male colleagues were forced to launch an agitation demanding that their services be regularised. These telephones operators have been working as temporary employees in the Telephone Department and thereafter in the Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited for more than three years now. After going on a strike in the month of December 1985, a settlement had been reached with the management that their services would be regularised by 31.3.86. This settlement was, however, not adhered to. Instead of regularising the services of the women operators, the management recently issued a ctrcular on December 19, 1986 asking all the SD/TO women operators to sit for a "so-called" productivity linked aptitude test" for which no syllabus was prescribed. The women operators, who do not have any organised union as yet, got together and made representations and protested to their management about the said test. The women operators also made a detailed representation to Mr. Arjun Singh, the Minister of Communications demanding regularisation of their services and scrapping of the proposed aptitude test. They pointed out that the test was clearly discriminatory as it was confined to only women operators as male operators who were working in the same category were not being asked to sit for the alleged aptitude test. The women operators also pointed out that the test was merely a device not to regularise their services and to find a way to terminate their services. It is relevant to mention that all the telephone operators enter the service after completing an open written and oral examination. After this they undergo a three months training period and another final test. There is no logical reason why only temporary women operators should therefore be made to sit for a productivity linked aptitude test and not all the other operators also including other regular men and women telephone operators and the temporary male telephone operators.

The management of Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited instead of meeting these justified demands is again trying to evade the real issues. In one meeting with the management representatives, the women operators were asked, of all things, to meditate for 20 minutes for reasons best known to management. The women operators have, however, formed an action committee to fight for their demands.

March of Women for Literacy

Mrunalini Dasgupta

THE Eighth September is the declared International Literacy Day. India the abode of the highest number of illiterate persons of the world is also celebrating the International Literacy Day.

The most deplorable condition indeed that after the lapse of forty years since independence, the percentage of literacy in India is 40 only, and that of male and female is 50'49 and 30'33 respectively. It is strange enough to note that in Indian Constitution the Government promised within ten years primary education would be made compulsory, and free for all children in India for 6-11 year age group so that today there should have not been any illiterate below 25 years of age. The four decades have passed with no result. Central Government brings new schemes for the removal of illiteracy just before each assembly and parliament election, this year also is no exception, but with no effective result as yet reflected in the census report.

The picture of the Women Literacy in India is totally blurred-surprising enough to note that there are certain districts in Rajasthan State where women literacy rate is below three. Is'nt it a pity that the women folk in India are not treated as persons to be responsible citizens of the country, rather it seems that women are like second class-citizen.

In West Bengal the literacy rate of Women is above that of India, though not satisfactory. A big rally of about 1000 adult women was organised-consisting of learners in adult education centres and their teachers with their illiterate sisters from Calcutta and neighbouring districts with festoon and placards-written in bold and bright types "WE WANT EDUCATION" "EDUCATE US" — "WORKERS IN FACTORY, DAILY WAGE LABOURER IN FIELD, TAKEUP THE BOOKS, THOSE AREYOUR HATIYAR' 'ILLITERACY IS A CURSE", 'UNITEDLY FIGHT AGAINST THAT'. It is true that rally for one day is not enough but it will hammer in the brain of those who plan for adult education and make a farce of it.

New Project For Adult Education

The new project for adult education-as brought out by the Central Government is futile. The course will run for 11 months with 30 learners under one teacher. The remuneration for the teacher is fixed at Rs. 100/- p.m. and a contingency has been fixed at Rs. 25/- only per month for kerosene consumption and purchase of other necessary materials. No room rent has been sanctioned. It has been sanctioned that the instructional materials will be provided by the Government. It is sure the learner will forget everything and would be back to illiteracy within a short time. It is quite clear that one teacher without any helper is of no good, because if the teacher is absent, which may occur quite naturally, the centre will be closed for indefinite period and those who have any experience, will admit that any break of attendance of this type of learners, from their education centre, is damaging. Secondly, it is very difficult to find out School Final Passed instructors at such a poor pay.

It is the Central Government's duty to plan for eradication of illiteracy jointly with the State and people of locality under the supervision of the Panchayet and other democratic organisations -- the scheme should be planned with the help of those who are really in touch with those huge illiterate mass — The scheme made by those who are far from the grass root is bound to be ineffective. Before going to organise model schools in each district, schemes must be made to march towards 2000 A.D. with whole generation of literate boys & girls.

West Bengal Women's Convention Against Separatism

A Convention of women was held in Siliguri West Bengal under the auspicious of Gantantrik Mahila Samithi attended by more than 1000 women from Darjeeling, Cooch Bihar, West Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and Maldah. The attendance of Nepali women belonging to other hill tribes was remarkable. Leaders addressing the convention called upon the delegates to further intensify struggle against separatist forces such as GNLF. Kanak Mukherjee, President P. B. G. M. S. explained the imperialist hand behind all such activities along with active participation of Congress party to instigate these divisive forces, with the sole object of putting the Left Front Government in trouble. She also referred the irresponsible statement by the Prime Minister equating, CPM with GNLF who were killing CPM supporters and burning their houses. She refuted the slander about not paying attention to the development of Gorkhas stating that the the state Govt of West Bengal spends Rs. 423 per head while the centre spends only Rs. 140/-. Nirupama Chatterjee, the Minister for Relief, W. Bengal accused the congress Government for neglecting the interest of West Bengal.

The main resolution of the convention was moved by Shyamali Gupta, General Secretary of the Mahila Samithi and explained by Radhika Sinha in Nepali.

Take Stern Action on Culprits—Mahila Sangh Hyderabad

A massive colourful procession was taken out on the evening of 14.12.86 from R.T.C. X Roads to Abids, C. M.'s residence, protesting against increasing "Dowry deaths and atrocities on women" and demanding stern action on the culprits.

More than 150 processionists marched in a disciplined manner under the banner of A. P. Mahila Sangam, Hyderabad City Committee expressing anguish and anger over the alarming growth of dowry deaths and atrocities on women.

The women raising slogans like "condemn dowry deaths", "Take stern action on culprits", "Stop atrocities on women", "plug loopholes in the women's acts and "Implement the acts with strictness" appealed to the public to fight against the social evils.

After reaching Feroz Gandhi Park a delegation consisting of Secretary Smt. A Vijaya Laxmi, Vice Presidents Ch. Padmini, A. Sarada, Joint Secretaries, Smt. Aruna, Vimala, Treasurer, Smt. A. Vardhani and convener of working women co ordination Committee Smt. S. Sujavathi met Chief Minister's P. S. and submitted a memorandum and demanded for appropriate action immediately. Later they addressed the women gathering at the park; and C.I.T.U. City Vice-President P. Venkateswara Rao, General Secretary D. G. Narasimha Rao and M. Krupender, Corporator addressed the gathering.

The Multipurpose Scheme in Bihar Discriminates Women

The multipurpose Scheme introduced by the Central Government has changed, the set-up of health employees and resulted in an undeclared, ban on promotion of female employees.

Formerly, each health sub-centre had three employees one Assistant Health Worker (Female), one Health Worker (Male) and one Health Servant (Male).

Now, only one worker is appointed to do all the jobs with less pay and the other two posts have been abolished. In many places in Bihar, male employees with lesser qualifications have been preferred and retained and women employees with more qualifications have been removed from their jobs.

Usha Misra Appeals to Prime Minister

IN a memorandum signed by about 68 women workers in Baripada Spinning Mill, in Orissa, Usha Misra has stated in detail their plight besides her own suspension. A few points from the memorandum are given below:

"The Working women of Baripada Spinning Mill, Kethpal, humbly submit your honourable authority to prevail upon the precarious situation which is prevailing here since last September '86. We are subjected to attack, humiliation not only as common workers; but as working women our sufferings are still more acute and many pronged in this backward District of Orissa. Most of us the working women here, are from Adivasi and backward class. Anti-worker attitude of the management have created a serious situation for our existence and respectable living in the mill.

"That the management with the intention to increase work load and subject to loss of earning have imposed lock-out in Ring Frame Dept. since last 10.11.86. In the meantime, more than 45 days have passed. Most of the working women are working in Winding Realing and Doubling Deptt. Our wage has been reduced day by day due to illegal unskilled labour appointment in the lock-out Ring Frame Deptt. and fall of production in the said Department. This lock-out situation have badly reduced our earning. Hence, the lock-out should be declared anti-social and illegal.

That the management does not implement the statutory provisions specifically for working women in the mill. The creche facility is completely absent, the latrine and urinals are uncleaned and dirty. Above all, the maternity benefit is arbitrarily fixed in each case of woman with partiality. The law is not observed in this case. The Dist. Labour Officer, Baripada and other labour authority, simply sit over the matter, never take any step on the management. Rather, the Dist. Labour Officer Baripada inflict most humiliating terms in respect of working women of this mill in specific and in general also.

That certain officers and with their help some of the staff of the spinning mill, always carry untold humiliation on us. Those who oppose their game, they are threatened with serious results. subjected to hard work, discriminatory attitude with ulterior motive so that some may succumb to their lust. An anti-social has been put as Canteen contractor who can threat any woman's prestige at his sweet will. We always feel insecured when time and again attempts are made to put women workers at work at isolated place in the mill.

The most glaring example of this anti-working women attitude of the management is the suspension of an unmarried young working girl, miss Usarani Mishra. She alone can explain her miseries. To crush her moral and uprightness, her wages and suspension allowance is not paid by the management. She is left to suffer in the street.

All India Convention of Working Women

It was decided in the Secretariat meeting of CITU held on 23.12.86 that the convention of working women will be held during the CITU session in Bombay. The working women from all spheres, organised and unorganised should try to attend. The convention will review the work done during the period of the first convention in Madras 1979 and the two conferences of working women in Delhi in 1981 and 1983 along with Parliament March. The report from the State Co-ordination Committee on their work will be placed in the convention and a fresh Charter of Demands will be drawn on the basis of the discussion. The details of the delegations from each state and other matters concerning the convention will be communicated in due time.

On The Problems of Women Agricultural Workers

THE Second conference of AIDWA expresses grave concern at the growing impoverishment of the agricultural workers all over the country. The emphasis of the Government on the so-called "Green Revolution" and provision of inputs, loans, irrigation facilities etc, to the rich peasants and landlords rather than serious implementation of its own limited land reforms legislation has led to this state of affairs.

The women agricultural workers are the hardest hit by this situation. Factors like seasonal work, non-availability of alternate employment opportunities, low subsistance and unequal wages, high maternal and infants mortality rates make them to economic and social exploitation that defies description.

Central to their problems is the question of land. Land reform and land distribution is the only solution open to them. For the women workers, their right to the land distribution through struggles and through the medium of Left Front Governments gains added significance. Since the Government at the Centre and Congress and non-Congress Governments in the States, with the noble exceptions of the Left Front Governments, have proved their complete inability to confront landlordism in all its different manifestations, it becomes the responsibility of the democratic mass organisation and the Left Parties to take up this task. The AIDWA considers the struggle for land to be part of the womens' struggle for equality and emancipation and resolves to bring vast masses of rural women into its fold to both organise their struggles for land and for their other demands and to participate in similar struggles launched by other organisations.

In many parts of the country, where our organisation and the organisations and movement of the agricultural workers and peasantry are strong, innumerable struggles for land, equal and increased wages, fixation of working hours, maternity benefits etc have been launched. In West Bengal, women have been in the forefront of many struggles. During the 1st United Front Government, women participated in the movement for forcible occupation of vested lands in a big way and, in the recent 'Operation Barga' launched by the Left Front Government they have not only participated but have greatly benefited by the registration of sharecroppers. In Kerala, the women agricultural workers all over the State, especially in Palghat and Kuttanad (Alleppey Dist.) have suffered and struggled in countless battles which have resulted in their winning the right to land patas and house-sites among other achievements. In Andhra, several districts have a strong movement as also in Tamil Nadu. It is noteworthy that in Punjab, despite the turmoil created by the divisive forces, our women's organisation has continued to play a role in organising localised struggles of agricultural workers. In Tripura also the movement among the agricultural workers is very strong and has been built up with enormous sacrifice and struggle.

This Conference demands:

1. Implementation of land reform
2. Enactment of Central legislation regularising the wages, working conditions, etc. of agricultural workers.
3. Equal pay for equal work.
4. Implementation of food-for-work programmes.
5. Nutrition programmes for rural children.
6. Allotment of house-plots.
7. Provision of maternity leave and benefits for women agricultural workers and creches for their infants.

The Voice Of The Working Woman wishes its readers & subscribers, a very Happy New Year.

A Call to Halt Nuclear Stockpiles

THE following Letter was received from the Vice-President of Soviet Women's Committee by All India Coordination Committee Of Working Women in November 1986.

"As you know, on October 11-12 there was a meeting in Iceland's capital, Reykjavik, between Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, and President Ronald Reagan. The meeting proved an important event in international life and in the struggle to stop the arms race, ban and destroy nuclear arms, and ward off the threat of war from humanity.

The Soviet Union had come to the meeting with a package of major proposals. If these had been accepted, they would have opened a new epoch in humanity's life: a nuclear-free epoch. They would have brought closer the day of liberation from the nuclear menace and contributed to the elimination of nuclear weapons by the end of the country.

The Soviet position at the summit was based on the priniciples of equality and equal security and took into account the interests of both countries, their allies, and all other nations. We would like to call your attention to the fact that the USSR proposed opening immediate talks on medium-range missiles in the Asian part of this country as well.

The Soviet Union's new compromise proposals made it possible to agree on such major issues as the reduction and, eventually, the complete destruction of strategic offensive arms, and the dismantlement of medium-range missiles in Europe. But this accord was not translated into binding agreements because of the American administration's position in favour of militarising space.

Still, we are convinced that the Reykjavik meeting was a useful one. It has made for a potential step towards a practical shift for the better. The Soviet platform outlined at Reykjavik presents a historical chance of solving the problems of war and peace in a cardinal manner. It is necessary to do everything possible for this chance to be used in the vital interests of nations, in the interests of all of humanity. We call on people all over the world to contribute to the efforts to halt the nuclear stockpiles."

Stop Nuclear Test

The following telegramme was received by the AICCWW on 20.12.86 from the Soviet Womens Committee.

"With 18 months old unilateral Soviet moratorium On Nuclear Explosions expiring January 1, 1987, Soviet Union, December 18th again urged immediate full scale talks about total nuclear test ban and voiced readyness to abide by moratorium provided USA Stopped Testing. But USSR will resume Nuclear testing after first US Nuclear Explosion in new Year. At this crucial moment we call for determined action to make U.S. administration stop nuclear tests."

The following telegramme was despatched to the President on 24.12.86 by AICCWW:

Mr Ronald Reagan, President

United States of America
Washington D.C.

'Indian Working Women Demand no Further Nuclear Test.

Join Test Ban Treaty Resume Negotiations for a Nuclear Arms-Free Twenty-First Century.

(Mrs) Vimal Ranadive

All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women. CITUCENT, New Delhi.

Fate Of Part-timers in England—A TUC Discussion

WOMEN make up 86 per cent of part-time workers. 41 per cent of all women work less than 30 hrs a week-which is how government statistics define 'Part-time'. The reasons are quite clearly to do with women's unpaid work and their 'careing' role in the home.

Part-time workers usually suffer from low pay, poor conditions, few promotion prospects and little job security or legal protection. What can unions do about this?

It's very convenient for employers to use part-time labour. The number of part-time workers doubled between 1961 and 1980. Part times give employers too flexibility to lengthen opening hours, cope with peaks in demand, (Extra workers in the shop on Saturdays for example), or use machinery for longer (the 'twilight' shifts). Part-time labour is often cheaper, and cuts down on overtime or 'unsocial' hours' payments to other staff. Part-times are usually easier to sack when business drops — and many don't qualify for redundancy payments.

So employers aren't doing part-time women a 'favour', as they so often make out.

What Are Our Problems?

These are some of the problems part-time workers face:

* Women working part-time earn £ 1.92 an hour on average, compared with £ 2.41 for full-time women, and £ 3.31 for full-time men (1981 figures).
* Many part-timers aren't fully covered by company sick pay, and are often excluded from pension schemes, agreements on redundancy, maternity leave, and so on.
* Few part-timers get any over-time pay (unless they work longer than the standard working week), or any unsocial hours payments.
* Most part-timers are stuck on the lowest grades and have no training opportunities — even though they may stay with the same employer for years.
* If part-timers work less than 16 hours a week (or 8 hours after 5 years service) they have no legal rights to redundancy pay, maternity pay and leave, or protection from unfair dismissal.
* Women can lose their legal rights if they don't have *continuous employment* — like some women in education who aren't paid during holidays but are taken on every term as "temporary part-time workers".
* Twilight shifts' have been the first to go when firms are in trouble.
* Public sector cuts are hitting part-timers' job in the health service, education and local government — between June 1979 and September 1980, full-time jobs in local authorities fell by 1½ per cent, but part-time jobs fell by 7 per cent.
* A number of job security agreements still say 'part-timers first'.

In 1981 when a Birmingham ammunition factory wanted to cut employees because of falling orders, it was the 60 part-time women workers who were told to go.

Many of them had worked there as long as 20 years. The full-timers were covered by a 'last in — first out' redundancy agreement. But not the part-timers.

The women took their case to a tribunal. The final verdict was that the 'part-timers first' arrangement was unlawful. It was a case of 'indirect discrimination' against women, since most part-timers are women.

What are the Policies

The TUC has asked unions to include these 'priorities' for part-time workers in agreements negotiated with employers:

* hourly wage rates equivalent to those paid to full-time workers,
* entitlement to benefits such as sick pay, pensions and paid holiday, on the same basis as full-time workers,
* allowances — such as London weighting,
* pension rights,
* inclusion in job security agreements,

(*Contd. on page 19*)

Strengthen the Punjab Janawadi Stree Sabha—A Call from the Conference

THE attendance of about 600-700 women, Sikhs and Hindus in Batala town, Gurudaspur district, in the Conference held on 7th of January 1987 was significant considering the serious political situation existing since long in this district in particular. A few days before the Conference, a doctor was killed, 3 electricity workers were murdered by the extremists and the curfew was imposed for twenty four hours for 3 days. But all these happenings did not budge the women from arriving from Pathankot subdivision, Kanthi Saria, Kahanawal, Simbal, Shahpur, Kulara, Kala Awmana, Faizabad and other places in various buses shouting slogans all the time. To hold the Conference and taking out a procession in the thickly populated locality was really a courageous step in the midst of various incidents of looting and murders. It surely strengthened the forces who stand today for unity of the country.

The Conference began at 1 PM. The whole agenda had to be finished by 4 PM since no bus is allowed to ply after 4 PM. The report of the work done during last few years was placed by the secretary, Punjab Stree Sabha Gurumej Kour for approval. Rajender Kour, the state secretary and CEC member from Punjab explained the present political situation in detail while appealing to women to come forward to help those widows and sisters whose husbands and brothers were murdered by the extremists.

Vimal Ranadive, Vice-president of AIDWA while inaugurating the Conference, paid homage to those killed in Punjab. She praised the courage of those hundreds of women assembled here despite the danger to their lives any moment! This gathering of hundreds of women, she said, would give hope to others for better future for our country. She explained the role of Pakistan and USA in Punjab who are mainly responsible to divide our country. If the Rajiv-Longowal Accord had come into existence, perhaps, situation today would have been better. She spoke about the wide mass support to AIDWA among women all over India, the membership being more than 18 lakhs. While appealing to fight against the divisive forces, and for communal harmony, she spoke about the danger of Nuclear War, instigated by USA and warned that if we did not fight the war danger the ghastly tragedy for the people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki would be repeated with much more serious effects for our country and the world. The peace proposals forwarded to M. Gorbachov, the Soviet leader must be supported and the Nuclear tests should be banned.

Coms. Bishan Singh and Dalip Singh spoke few words appealing to strengthen the orgonisation. A new committee was formed with Surjeet Kumari as President and Gurumej Kour as Secretary. Resolutions on Communal harmony and against molestation of women were passed.

The enthusiasm among women could be noted from the procession starting immediatly after the Conference with all the leaders in the fore front. The slogans like "Hindu Sikh Bhai Bhai" "Those Against, are the enemy" "Janawadi Mahila Samiti Zindabad" "Atankwad Murdabad" raised and appreciated by the people around. The procession reached the office of SDM and a memorandum was submitted, the main demand being an early implementation of Rajiv-Longowal Accord!

(*Contd. from page 18*)

* adequate meal and tea breaks,
* inclusion in training schemes and no bar on promotion,
* no discrimination between part-time and full-time workers in redundancy agreements.

Other Policies that would help are:

* Shorter working hours
* more childcare facilities.

A lot of part-timers are contract workers (for example cleaners or canteen workers). Their conditions are almost always far worse than those of direct employees. We need strategies for giving support to these workers as well.

Smash Apartheid

IN the living hell that is South Africa apartheid, the oppression of women reflects the most intense contradictions of that tortured society. Apartheid is not simply a particularly vicious form of racism whose excesses might be purged while leaving the capitalist structure of the society intact. South Africa capitalism is fundamentally based on the structures of apartheid the migrant labour system, centrally in the mines, and the so-called "homeland" system for blacks, the barren wasteland bantustans where the black women of Sough Africa live and die, forcibly separated from their working men, left to tend the young, the aged and the dying in starvation conditions. All the mines, industries, ports, the rail system, the good land, in short all the wealth and development accumulated through the sweat of superexploited black labour are in the hands of the white minority.

In no other country in the world is the entire majority population denied their very birthright their right to be at home in their own country. Winnie Mandela, called by many blacks "the mother of her country," the heroic wife of imprisoned Africa National Congress (ANC) leader Nelson Mandela, expressed that better truth for all black South Africans. After her arrests last December by the white police state as she tried to return to her home in Soweto after her banning restrictions were loosened, she stated: "I am charged with a crime that does not exist in most of the democratic, civilized world-being at home" (New York Times, 26 December 1985).

The vicious apartheid system, centrally the bantustans, exacerbates all the oppression black women face, not only as blacks, but also as women. Accompanying the virtual enslavement of the black majority is the systemic government repression in all spheres of life, not least in the realm of sexual relations. Indeed, apartheid South Africa magnifies and institutionalizes all that is backward, brutal and sick in capitalist society. Given its dependence on the migratory labour force and the bantustans from which that labour is drawn, apartheid capitalism also finds it useful to deliberately maintain and foster tribalism.

The Bantustans: Industrial Reserves of the Unemployed

Four million Africa women are relegated to the bantustans where, on an inadequate plot of impoverished land, they are supposed to scratch out of the brush and rock the subsistence to nourish and raise a family, care for the sick, the aged and the unemployed. These inhuman conditions lead inevitably to disease and early death. The South Africa government keeps no moratality statistics for blacks, but it is estimated that in some rural areas infant mortality is over 25 per cent.

Many black women in South Africa do work-some as agricultural workers, some in textile industries and many of these have participated in union organizing struggles — but always, under the hideous deformations of apartheid. In Soweto some black women work as nurses at the huge Baragwanath Hospital, largest in the Southern hemisphere. A bitter strike by black nurses and auxiliary workers last fall exposed the starvation wage conditions in this medical outpost of the forced labour camp that is South African apartheid. Yet such jobs are considered among "best" black women can find.

Most black women who work in the cities are domestic servants, paid hardly anything at all because they have the "privilege" of living in the house of the white 'baas' (boss): that is, forcibly separated from their husbands or their children, who grow up on the bantustans cared for by female relatives. "You go to the butcher and get their meat and servants' meat. They call it servants meat. They write 'servants' on the label. You don't know whether you eat good meat or old or bad," said one black woman.

The heart of apartheid is the migratory labor system, the reduction of South Africa blacks to dispossessed foreigners within their own country and the reduction of the surrounding black states to labor colonies for South Africa's mines, factories and farms. The bantustans with their forced evictions and tribalization, the contract labor system, the

onerous pass laws, all exist to turn Southern Africa into a vast reservoir of superexploited black labor. It is on the bantustans that the next generation of wage slaves is raised. It is to the bantustans that black workers must return when they are unemployed or injured, or to be buried by their widows. (As late as 1981, in one year over 600 workers were killed in the gold mines alone, another 119 in the coal mines.) Thousands of workers, maimed for life while toiling for the white ruling class, are dumped back on the bantustans. The full brunt of "social insurance" for South Africa's black proletariat is borne by the women relegated to these unspeakably destitute "homeland."

Defiant black South Africans have made it clear they refuse to take the degradation and humiliation of apartheid any longer. At the same time, the white supremacist police state, armed to the teeth, confronts an outrage which is disarmed both politically and militarily. So far, the South African security forces have been battling unarmed schoolchildren-not a Bolshevik-led workers revolution.

The women of South Africa are destined to play a crucial role in the South African workers revolution, as the women of Russia were key to the Ocotber Revolution. During the 1950s, when the Pass Laws were extended to women, there was a massive mobilization black, Indian, coloured and white women from all over South Africa-very often walking for hundreds of miles in a massive pilgrimage. They gathered 20,000 — strong in Johannesburg and sang the freedom song whose lyrics must resound soon: "Now you have touched the woman, you have struck a rock, you have dislodged a boulder, you will be crushed."

(A few excerpts from women and Revolution)

75th Anniversary

AICCWW Greets ANC

ON 8 January, 1987 the African National Congress of South Africa will be 75 years old.

As the struggle of the South African people to eradicate the apartheid system intensified, increased international support for the broad democratic movement for change has become imperative. The imposition of comprehensive and mandatory sanctions on the racist regime remains the major responsibility of the international community.

The 75th anniversary of the ANC will be observed as a year for redoubled solidarity activity. In many countries adhoc committees have been formed to co-ordinate and promote the observance of the anniversary throughout 1987. Large numbers of peace organisations are taking part in the work of these commitees or are assisting with their formation.

1987 will be year in which the fight to free South Africa will reach a new level. Therefore the ANC's 75th anniversary will be of special importance, a means of further mobilizing public opinion for the rapid elimination of apartheid, the creation of a democratic society in South Africa and the establishment of peace and stability in the region. The demand for the release of Nelson Mendela and other political prisoners will be voiced from all the democratic people including the All India co-ordination committee of Working Women. We assure the African National Congress on their 75th Anniversary our full support for the demands and fighting for the same.

US Women for Abolishing All Nuclear Weapons by the 2000

Together with other women's peace, solidarity and anti-war groups and organisations, WREE (*Women for Racial and Economic Equality*) is active in the preparations for a national coordinated day of action around the slogan "United for peace, job and justice on Saturday 25 October". A leaflet issued for the occasion calls for the abolition of all nuclear weapons by the year 2000 and says that the Reagan administration's refusal to halt nuclear warhead testing and abide by the SALT II agreement has poisoned the atmosphere between the US and the Soviet Union, making comprehensive disarmament negotiations more difficult.

Poligamy Abolition Urged in SAARC

IN a recently held workshop on "Women and the law" at Dhaka, attended by SAARC countries, a recommendation of abolition of both polygamy and polyandry was made. This recommendation assumes importance since the majority of the countries in this region were Muslim dominated. The work shop also pleaded that unilateral divorce should not be permitted. A three member delegation from India was led by Mrs. Rama Devi, member-secretary of the Indian Law Commission and included Dr. Latika Sarkar, a retired law professor of Delhi University, and Mrs. Sakina Hassan, a social worker. During the three days, work shop discussion ranged from the issue of maternity benefit to right to property. The workshop noted that almost in all SAARC countries "Women allowed to reach only the secondary level of Government services. There was resistance to giving women their due recognition and in decision making and grade one posts" Not only that the report said those fortunate women who reached the top, they are usually fitted in some "innocuous" positions! The delegates demanded the women should be given their position at all levels. It was noted that even after the constitutional provisions in the countries for equality, all these remain on paper only. There is no implementation of the laws. The workshop recommended that the age limit for entry into civil service for women should be raised to 30 from 25 so that women can have less responsibility of looking after their children.

After the discussion on the right to property the workshop recommended that women should have the equal right in inheritance, the son and daughter should have equal share in the property of their parents. It was noted that when India was still debating about a "Uniform civil code" the SAARC workshop pleaded for a unified Civil Code for the region. "In place of the different laws now applicable, it has recommended a unified civil code based on the non-discriminatory principles in different region and customery laws". Some discussion also took place on the atrocities on women and their trial in the courts. An amendment of the law was suggested so that a "time limit is fixed for concluding the trial". Moreover the commission said that "during the rape trial no question should be asked about the past sexual conduct of the victim as this may prejudice the case" The three day workshop was attended by delegates from Bhutan, Sri-Lanka, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh.

Will the delegates from India ensure that these recommendations are turned into legislations in our country and those deprived women get justice?

Need for Action! : TNA

Having said goodbye to 198 6 and entering the year 1987, it seems to be an appropriate time to take a stock of the situation regarding professional matters.

1986 was the year of the Pay Commission: The Trained Nurses' Association of India had done a lot of home work and submitted memoranda to the Fourth Central Pay Commission right from the time of its constitution. The details have been given in the Journal from time to time and they do not have to be recounied.

At a meeting with the representatives of TNAI and the newly formed Joint Action Committee of Delhi Nurses, the Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, Miss Saroj Khaparde, and senior officials of the Ministry had given an assurance on December 4 last that the demands of the nurses were being given due consideration. Miss Khaparde told the nurses that if necessary she would lead a group of the aggrived nurses to the Prime Minister. She would get in touch with these representatives soon, she had promised.

A concrete action from the Government is still awailed. The delay in the promised response has resulted in tremendous frustration among the members of the Nursing community. The plans of Delhi Nurses for an indefinite agiiation from the end of December and a possible strike in January are due to these frustrations.

We hope that the Government would hold some meaningful discussions with the representatives of the nurses and arrive at certain solutions to their problems, without any

(*Contd. on page 23*)

Revolutionary Greetings to Federation of Cuban Women

The people in Cuba achieved their revolution 28 years back under the leadership of Fidel Castro. They defeated American imperialism on January 1st 1959. On their Anniversary the voice of the working woman sends its revolutionary greetings and publish this article on the splendid work the Federation of Cuban Women have been doing in their country.

THE Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) has 3,100,000 women in its rank –80 per cent of the country's women.

The 4th Congress of the FMC clearly showed the organization's stability as well as the depth and critical spirit with which its members face the problems that still hinder the full exercise of women's equality.

Women currently comprise 37.3 per cent of the country's active labour force in the State civilian sector, up from 32.4 per cent in 1980. They are 55.4 per cent of the technical force, that is, technicians and college graduates.

The number of women holding managerial posts has gone up, although the increase is moderate. Women comprise 13.8 per cent of the Party cadre, but the figure is lower in the executive bureaus at the municipal and provincial levels. Similarly, slight progress has been made in the promotion of women to positions of responsibility in state agencies, administration and local bodies of People's power.

During the next few years we must continue our determined struggle to implement the party's policy for the total emancipation of women. This will require a sustained effort to create increasingly favourable material conditions. Above all, it requires constant, effective ideological effort, largely educational, and an unflinching struggle against the prejudices and discriminatory attitudes that still block the full development of women's potential, both at home and in their professional and social life.

We must continue to increase women's participation in management, in keeping with their ability, experience, knowledge and revolutionary attitude. This struggle, like the overall effort to achieve women's full equality, is a task for our entire society; one for which the party, the UJC, the FMC, the trade unions, mass and student organizations, and state agencies must all take responsibility.

In this period, the many projects of the Federation of Cuban Women have shown favourable results. Outstanding among them was the effort launched to incorporate housewives into the compaign for all adults to achieve at least a nine-grade education; 99,392 women have already graduated and 18,048 others are currently studying. The FMC has continued to give its multifaceted support to our schools; more than 1.5 million women are active members of the Mothers' Movement for Education. Women's outstanding contributions are also evident in the health field. More than two million PAP tests were done in the five-year period; house wives were vaccinated against tetanus, and the 58,000 women members of health brigades did noteworthy work.

The FMC has systematically mobilized its members for defense tasks. A total of 1,800,000 voiced their willingness to join the Territorial Troop Militias. The weapons at our disposal and our organizational possibilities have enabled us to call more than a million women into active duty. In addition, over 20,000 women have been trained as commanding officers.

The participation of Cuban women in each and every one of the tasks set by the Revolution and the party during these years has been worthy of admiration and recognition.

(*Contd. from page 22*)

further delay. The immediate task is to award a justifiable pay scale and allowance structure, The long-term grievances can be looked into by the high power committee that had been promised by the late Prime Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi, days before her dreadful association.

From
(The Nursing Journal) December 22, 1986

(from page 2)

demand better scales from Health Ministry. Housewives are in the streets against dowry deaths and demolition of their hutments. State Government employees marched to Parliament in a mammoth procession, women in the forefront in the month of November, 1986. Women in Coir in Kerala are on the war path. All these would surely result in the strike of the Public Sector on 21st January being a success.

Considering the heavy hands of attacks of the Congress rule, women have to launch still greater and united struggles to face these policies, to compel the Government to withdraw their repressive steps. The issues do not limit only to economic policies.

Not a day passes when there is no murder by extremists in Punjab. In Darjeeling, houses are burnt by GNLF, workers are killed. Both Tribals and non-tribals are shot by TNV in Tripura. A few dozens are killed in language riots in Goa or Karnataka. This is the "National Integration" of Rajiv Gandhi.

The crucial question before us today is who will defend the national unity and our country against the divisive forces and imperialist conspiracies? Who will fight for protecting the democratic rights of our people and women? And how best we can do it?

Only with joint actions, we strengthen ourselves and defend our country. Let us pledge this when we enter the new year.



Vimal Ranadive addressing the delegates in Batala Conference in Punjab On 7th January, 1987.