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THE WORKING CLASS

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**HAIL THE PEOPLE'S VERDICT!
SAFEGUARD CLASS INTERESTS!**



A SECTION OF THE HUGE MAY DAY RALLY AT BANGALORE

“United States of Shame”

Graphic photographs showing the torture and sexual abuse of Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison outside Baghdad by US soldiers, have shocked the world community. The images of a hooded prisoner with electrical wires fixed to his body and nude inmates piled in a human pyramid have provoked outrage and condemnation the world over. Many of the prisoners were innocent Iraqis, picked up at random by US troops and incarcerated by under-qualified intelligence officers. The photographs appeared first on CBS Television, an American Television channel.

Stories of American excesses are hardly new. Long before Abu Ghraib, pictures of Guantanamo Bay showed the inhuman treatment of POWs who had not been tried or convicted. The fact that scores of pictures of abuse are surfacing now, and that it is not just US but British troops also who are involved, suggests that the excesses are both systematic and widespread. Even the closest US allies have bowed their heads in shame. The revelations are even more damaging precisely because Bush and Blair had justified the war on high moral grounds, in order ‘to restore democracy’ by overthrowing a regime which, according to them, “specialized in abuse and torture” of the Iraqi people.

US based human rights groups and legal scholars say that the Bush administration’s war on terror has spawned a set of aggressive detention and interrogation practices that violate the time-honoured taboo against torture and expose prisoners to the depredations of interrogators and guards who know the usual rules no longer apply. From the notorious Guantanamo to the numerous detention centers run offshore by CIA so as to exclude the purview of US courts, prisoners are routinely humiliated or subjected to physical abuse and violence.

But in Iraq the American forces use force while interrogating anti-American captives, fused with the violent logic of military occupation, to produce a deadly cocktail of humiliating prison rituals, sexual sadism and torture. Far from being aberrations, the US soldiers shown smiling next

to their stripped trophies are the logical product of the “gloves” coming off.

Torin Nelson, who served as a military intelligence officer at Guantanamo Bay before moving to Abu Ghraib as a private contractor last year, blamed the abuses on a failure of command in US military intelligence and an over-reliance on private firms. He alleged that these companies were so anxious to meet the demand for their services they sent “cooks and truck drivers” to work as interrogators. He estimated that a third or more of the inmates at the controversial prison camp had no connection to terrorism.

The outrage against the abuse has forced the US military to make an unusual public apology. George Bush’s description of the abuses as “an aberration” dittoed that of his Indian counter-part, Advani, on the state sponsored riots in Gujarat, where thousands of innocent Muslims were maimed, raped and killed.

But the fact is that Abu Ghraib is no aberration. It is all too consistent with America’s models of incarceration. An internal US army report into the Abu Ghraib abuses makes it clear that much of the torture was linked to interrogations and was therefore the product of an official writ rather than individual perversity. US attempts to gloss over its responsibility for these barbaric acts of cruelty and injustice deserve the severest condemnation. A review of the changing US policy towards torture and other forms of unlawful interrogation by the Center for Cooperative Research has produced scores of documented examples of violence against US held prisoners - in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantanamo Bay, as well as against the prisoners the US handed over to its allies.

There is strong protest and condemnation of the abuse worldwide. But in India, the Vajpayee government kept silent. Considering the track record of the Vajpayee government in appeasing the US, its silence on the issue is not surprising. But democratic forces in our country have rightly condemned the atrocities, which expose so vividly the violence of the US military forces and deceit of the US Administration.

THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

JUNE 2004

YOU SAID IT by Laxman



For hours, we debated, discussed and analysed the reason for our defeat and came to the conclusion it was due to lack of popular support...just as we had guessed!

Courtesy: The Times of India

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EDITORIAL

HAIL THE PEOPLE'S VERDICT! SAFEGUARD CLASS INTERESTS!

The working people of India share the rejoice of the millions of the countrymen at the ouster of the erstwhile National Democratic Alliance government, whose track record in office had been disastrous for all sections of the Indian society except the vastly affluent few.

The formation of the new United Progressive Alliance government at the centre has come as a welcome relief, especially at this juncture.

The people who have given this massive verdict for a change in governance do expect the new government to devote itself to the urgent task of cleansing the governance which was based on politics of hatred and violence, divisiveness, sectarian intolerance, minority bashing, intoxication and saffronisation of every institution under the polity and usher in a new period of freedom, inclusiveness and openness, refurbishing the secular democratic fabric of our society. It is also widely expected that the new government will repeal the draconian POTA, which is an unwanted incursion into the democratic rights of the people in a republic like ours.

The verdict is not just for a change of government - it is for change of policies as well. The UPA government should fulfill the people's aspirations by embarking on an exercise to bring about a paradigm shift in the economic policies, which under the earlier regime had resulted in reducing the benefits accruing to the rural and weaker sections, giving multinationals substantial access to domestic savings, resorting to indiscriminate privatisation, even of the profit making public enterprises, leading to "privatisation of profits and nationalisation of losses" and massive casualisation of work force, weakening the ability of the state to effectively intervene in the economy in favour of the vast majority of people who are close to destitution.

While congratulating the working people and the employees for defeating the anti-worker, anti-people NDA Government, the Central Trade Union Organisations appealed for wider unity of the working class to safeguard their interests and the interests of the country as a whole.

As we go for printing, the exercise of installing the new Union Council of Ministers has been completed and the draft of a Common Minimum Programme of the alliance parties is doing its rounds. We shall wait to have a close look at it after finalisation and respond appropriately.

Let us hail the people's verdict! At the same time let us steadfastly move forward to defend our class interests, through wider unity and mobilisations for actions!

PRIORITY TASKS OF UPA GOVERNMENT ON LABOUR

As the dust settles down and the new UPA government at the centre gets down to work, it is natural for the trade union movement to draw the attention of the new government to some of the pressing issues concerning labour.

During the past few years, all the central trade unions and independent unions and federations in the country, had jointly formulated the following eight-point demands:

- ◆ Halt to privatisation of profit making and potentially viable public sector undertakings

- ◆ No Change in the labour laws in favour of the employers and against the interest of the workers

- ◆ Immediate enactment of comprehensive legislation for agricultural workers

- ◆ No to policies leading to severe aggravation of joblessness and unemployment

- ◆ Widen comprehensive social security schemes for all, including workers in unorganised sector

- ◆ Restoration of quantitative restrictions on imports

- ◆ Amendment of Payment of Bonus Act by removing all ceilings

- ◆ Restoration of 12% interest rate on P F Deposits.

Besides the above, the entire spectrum of the trade union movement in the country denounced the Supreme Court

pronouncement against the right to strike demanded that the central government take appropriate steps to negate the pernicious impact of the said judgement of the Supreme Court.

In line with the above, we list the specific issues and demands on which the new government is expected to initiate speedy action.

- First and foremost, the impasse created by the Supreme Court verdict on the right to strike be cleared by bringing before the Parliament an appropriate legislation guaranteeing all sections of workers their democratic right to strike.

- Initiate steps to ratify the core ILO conventions on the right to association and right to collective bargaining (ILO Conventions 87 and 98), as also the ILO Conventions 151 and 154, relating to government employees.

- End reckless privatisation of profit making and strategically important PSUs; halt disinvestment; nurse back and revive the sick and potentially viable PSUs.

- Restore quantitative restrictions on imports to safeguard agriculture, indigenous industry and national interest as a whole.

- Reverse measures like ban on recruitment in government offices, railways and public sector enterprises and systematic down-sizing of

workforce; undertake a crash programme for creating jobs to reduce the colossal volume of unemployment.

- Take immediate measures to tackle the crisis in the traditional industries like tea, jute, textile, coir, handloom, beedi, sugar etc.

- Streamline functioning of the Labour Ministry; activate the tripartite mechanism including Tripartite Committees, the Indian Labour Conference and Standing Labour Committee.

- End the whimsical and partisan manner of deciding representation of central trade unions in tripartite committees; follow the representative coefficient for deciding the allocation of seats to the CTUOs; reckon the membership of the CTUOs in respective industry for deciding the representation in industry-wise committees.

- Reverse the whole gamut of legislative changes, carried out as well as contemplated, in detriment to the interests of labour; annul the exemption given to Export Promotion Zones / Special Economic Zones from application of Labour laws and social security schemes.

- Initiate an in-depth discussion with the central trade unions for making the labour legislations more meaningful and effective and for strengthening the implementation machinery.

■ Rescind forthwith the notification introducing a new classification of "fixed term employment workman" under the Model Standing Order Rules, which will wipe out permanency in all jobs even in the organised sector.

■ Take steps to enact, in consultation with the trade unions, a legislation to protect and advance the interests of vast multitudes of the workers in the unorganised sector comprising almost 93 per cent of the work force in the country, who languish without any social security or safety net.

■ Reverse the retrograde measure replacing the existing benefit defined pension scheme by a new contribution defined pension scheme for new recruits in the government service.

■ Evolve a national social security policy to provide for a comprehensive scheme, covering all sections of workers and extending relief to those who are involuntarily unemployed, for early implementation.

■ Restore the 12 per cent interest on the Employees Provident Fund, small savings, general provident fund, public provident fund etc.

■ Review the present social security schemes under the Employees Provident Fund Organisation and the Employees State Insurance Corporation be in consultation with the central trade unions for a thorough overhaul, to ensure their better functioning and universal coverage.

■ Take expeditious steps to enact legislation for

preventing sexual harassment of women at workplace as per the Supreme Court guidelines.

■ Enact a comprehensive Agricultural Workers Bill to guarantee minimum wage and give social protection to the vast multitude of agricultural labourers.

■ Amend the present provisions in the Bonus Act to remove the income ceilings for eligibility and calculation of Bonus.

■ Amend all labour legislations, in consultation with the CTUOs, providing for a uniform definition of 'workman' and 'industry'; make them applicable to all workmen doing away with income parameters/ceilings of any kind.

■ Reverse the repeal of the Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, restoring the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) and its Appellate Authority (AAIFR); strengthen the mechanism of BIFR/AAIFR; revamp them with appropriate arrangements for finances for ensuring rehabilitation/revival of the sick companies; create an appropriate mechanism for rehabilitation of sick small scale industries, which are outside the purview of SICA.

■ Annul, by bringing in appropriate legislation in the Parliament, the adverse impact of the Supreme Court judgements, which have reversed its earlier beneficial ruling in Air India case in favour of contract workers and ruled that teachers employed in private schools and educational institutions could not be

construed as 'workman' and thus declared them to be ineligible for gratuity and other statutory benefits even.

■ Review the Electricity Bill enacted recently; withdraw the Bills pending in Parliament for the Privatisation of Banks, Coal mining etc.

■ Protect the interests of Inter-State Migrant workers and amend the Inter-State Migrant Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act 1979 for extending its coverage.

■ Redress the growing problems of fishermen and stop the increasing use of mechanical vessels for fishing in the coastal regions.

■ On the issue of prevention, withdrawal and rehabilitation child labour, review the government policy, through ratification of UN Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC), 1993. The strategy for elimination of child labour should comprise state-funded universalisation of elementary education, withdrawal of children from labour and mainstreaming them into formal education, poverty alleviation and enhancing the livelihood and income earning of the parents.

■ Take immediate steps to enact the Workers Participation in Management Bill.

■ Appoint a new review committee to devise a truly transparent mechanism of compiling the cost of living indices, with monitoring role for the CTUOs.

■ Include the May Day as a national holiday.

THE STOCK MARKET "BLOOD BATH"

M K Pandhe

"Bloodbath, mayhem, carnage... call it what you wish, but all these words seemed grossly inadequate to convey the havoc wrecked by the tornado that hit the market. It was black Friday all the way, from the moment the opening bell was rung to close the trading, leaving a trail of blood, gore and bruised wallets. Here is the casualty list: Rs 1 lakh crore or about \$22 billion of shareholders wealth eroded in one day. That is close to 20% of India's foreign exchange reserves!" Thus wrote The Economic Times on 15 May 2004.

On 17th May the Sensex further collapsed by 842 points in one day. Never before was such a drastic fall reported in the stock market. Business Line reported on 18th May, "The selling fury triggered for the first time, index based circuit filters that halted trading twice during the day, reducing trading time by three hours. Today's fall also eroded more than 2 lakh crores in value from stocks."

The sudden jerk in the share market led to a warning by Dr Manmohan Singh, "We are not in government, we do not have details. But if there is any evidence we will take action against those who seek to manipulate the markets.... They have to take responsibility." (Business Line).

What is the cause of the blood bath or fall of sensex by 330 points in just one day? The so-called black Friday was caused only due to a statement made by the Left parties demanding scrapping of the Disinvestment Ministry by the new government, wrote share market pundits.

Several stock market commentators as well as some leading economists blamed the fall on irresponsible statements made by some left leaders on 14th May. These commentators and economists conveniently forgot to note the circular issued by foreign brokerage, Credit Lyonnais Securities, on the same morning which stated, "The (electoral) verdict has brought the risk of discontinuity in policy in key economic measures or reform initiatives, especially with Left Parties being a major source of support to the

government. The thrust of infrastructure development should continue. However, privatisation, phasing out of subsidies, labour reforms will be pushed back also raising the risk of fiscal slippages or tax measures that could dampen growth."

These commentators also failed to note the withdrawal of over Rs 1500 crores from the share market. This figure is gross underestimation since many foreign investors undertake benami transactions in share market due to the permission granted to them by Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI). Sebi has legalised the use of participatory notes which allowed foreign investors not to disclose their identity while investing in the country. (The Telegraph, Kolkata, 18 May 2004).

These commentators also forgot to note that after the exit poll results were declared indicating that BJP would come back to power, the SENSEX jumped by 260 points. Can it be called addition to the wealth of the shareholders by artificial boosting of share market index?

Some economists argue that the share market index is the mirror of health of the economy. This is an attempt to cover up the manipulations of the share market who swindle hundreds of crores of rupees every month. Two Joint Parliamentary Committees in their report have categorically exposed the unscrupulous operators of the share market but the central government has not taken firm action against these operators. Many of these operators are the donors of the political parties who give them sufficient protection. Harshad Mehta and Ketan Parekh are not the only swindlers who operate in the share market. There are many others who indulge in artificially boosting and bringing down the market and indulge in speculative activities. When the market goes up it is called a bullish trend and it goes down it is known as bearish trend.

The notorious Disinvestment Minister, Arun Shourie, openly admitted that 10 major share brokers have formed a bear cartel but he refused

to reveal their names. Thus the political patronage given to the bear cartel is responsible for the prevalence of the racket.

The banks are giving liberal finances to these share brokers who push up the prices of some shares by making large purchases and selling them when the share prices reach high level and pocket huge amount of money.

The foreign speculators are playing a major role in the scam. There are 542 Foreign Institutional Investors, (FIIs). The total amount of investment by these investors is estimated at Rs 1,11,126.30 crores. The FIIs were given huge allotments in the shares of ONGC, GAIL, IPCL, IBP and several other public sector undertakings. These foreign investors when they heard the opposition of leftists to the policy of disinvestment withdraw their investment to bring pressure on the share market and create a scare about the stability of investment. It is not the statement of the Left but blackmailing tactics of foreign investors which initiated the fall in the share market. Some leading share brokers in India also joined hands with them to create a crisis. It was also meant to pressurise the Congress Party not to listen to the view of the Left on the policy of disinvestment. The pro-BJP elements in the share market had their hand in this game. Their views were clearly reflected when Arun Jaitley made a statement, "Left leaders are making outlandish statements aimed at hijacking the mandate. This is indirect political pressure with an element of economic adventurism to disturb sentiments of the markets". As expected, Jaitley rejected any possibility of the market having been manipulated and shamelessly protected the anti-social speculators.

One should only note here the crash in the stock market during the NDA rule in February 2000 after Yashwant Sinha, the then Finance Minister, presented the budget. The sensex fell by 293 points when Sinha said, "The manner in which stock markets are behaving leaves much to be desired. It is very silly behaviour."

The BJP president, Venkaiah Naidu, did not want to remain behind. He made a statement, "This is only a trailer of the coming scenario. It is the country's misfortune that this combination has come to power." He rejected the demand for investigation into a bear cartel. All these

statements explain who had the role in creating the stock market crisis.

It is interesting to see how Sebi reacted to the whole drama. As reported by Hindustan Times on 20 May 2004, "While the Sensex was in free fall on Monday, top bosses of market regulator, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) could only watch - from Jordan. Nearly the entire Sebi brass, including Chairman, G N Bajpai was in the West Asian country attending a conference." These top officials left after witnessing the 329 point fall in sensex. After his return from abroad Bajpai told the press, "How could I have prevented." (the Monday crash)

The Joint Parliamentary Committee on share market scam recommended that Sebi should inquire about the earlier market manipulation but during the last 2 years not much progress has been made.

Sebi officials have been involved in "insider trading" by using the information about certain companies' shares. They involve themselves in benami trading and make huge ill-gotten money. Some leading figures have been removed but the practice is still continuing.

Report of the committee and matters relating thereto has noted, "...repeated misconduct in the stock market have led to an image of disarray, lack of transparency and fraud dominating the financial sector. Consequent collapses in the stock market have resulted in such a loss of confidence in the minds of investors, domestic and foreign" (Vol 1 page 7).

The report further observed, "This scam is basically the manipulation of the capital market to benefit market operators, brokers, corporate bodies, and their promoters and managements. Certain banks, notably private and cooperative stock exchanges, overseas corporate bodies, and financial institutions were willing facilitators in this exercise. The scam lies not in the rise and fall in the prices in the stock market but in large scale manipulations like diversion of funds, fraudulent use of bank funds, use of public funds by institutions like Unit Trust of India, violation of risk norms on the stock exchanges and the banks and use of funds coming through overseas corporate bodies to transfer stock holdings and stock market profits out of the country. These activities went

largely unnoticed, while stock market was rising. There was inadequate attempt to ensure that this was not due to malpractices. In contrast, during the precipitous fall in March 2001 the regulators showed greater concern." (Vol I page 10).

These observations were totally ignored by the NDA Government with the result that the role of manipulators of the stock market today continues unabated. The ordinary investor is defrauded by the racketeers in the stock market while the foreign share market mafia is freely allowed to indulge in speculative activities and make ill-gotten profits without contributing anything in the economic development of the country.

The new government formed at the centre has to make inquiries

in depth on how the manipulators and racketeers have deliberately brought down the sensex to bring political pressure on the government on the policy of disinvestment. The opposition expressed by the BJP leaders for any investigation on this question shows their complicity in the entire episode. The entire week reflected crash in the global market scenario. The Dow Jones industrial average was down by 105.25 points while the technology laced Nasdaq composite index was down 24.46 points. The European market also showed similar decline. On 17th May the Asian stock markets also tumbled. Share markets were down in Hong Kong and Tokyo. However the fall in India was the highest compared to the global share market scenario.

When Sonia Gnadhi declined to become Prime Minister, and Dr Manmohan Singh's name was proposed the stock market in Mumbai immediately jumped by 129 points which clearly shows the manipulators were hoping for a stable government. All this convincingly proved that the crash was purposefully planned by the manipulators which can come to light only by a thorough probe by the government.

The conspiracy must be thoroughly exposed and manipulators of stock markets should be severely dealt with by the new government. The speculators should not be allowed to hold the society to ransom. Such a chaotic phenomenon should not be allowed to occur once again in our "volatile" share market.

COMRADE E K NAYANAR

We record with deep grief at the passing away of Comrade E. K. Nayanar, a member of the Polit Bureau of the CPI (M) and a dedicated revolutionary. He was the Chief Minister of Kerala for 3 terms, the longest serving Chief Minister of that state. He was hospitalised for some time in Delhi and died on 19 May 19 2004. He was 85 years old.

Coming from a family of freedom fighters, he joined the freedom struggle at a young age. He participated in the anti-imperialist struggle in North Malabar. Altogether he spent 11 years underground and 4 years in jail.

Nayanar joined the Communist Party in 1939 and became an activist of the Kisan movement and organiser for the Party. Imbued with the Marxist outlook, he would not compromise with any deviations. He played an important role in the fight against revisionism and joined CPI (M) in 1964. He was a member of the Central Committee of CPI (M) from the 7th Congress and elected to the Polit Bureau at the 14th Congress.

As a communist leader, Nayanar was above all a man of the people. He was one of the leaders in Kerala most liked by the people. He was a capable journalist, having edited the *Deshabhimani* daily. He will be remembered for his immense contribution to the Communist movement in Kerala. In his death, the left and democratic movement has lost an experienced mass leader. The CITU and 'The Working Class' pay respectful homage to Comrade Nayanar and offer heartfelt condolences to his wife Sharada teacher, two sons, two daughters and other family members.

DEVELOPMENT, MARKET DRIVEN COMPETITION AND CLASS STRUGGLE

Chittabrata Majumdar

Back to the history of development of capitalism, the aim of capital was to penetrate and to develop the market all over the world for what it produced. Now a day also, the capitalism has been thriving for capturing the world market. This way both by character are the process of globalisation, but have clear distinctions, which cannot be missed to underline. The former process of capitalist development however in fact could succeed to grow the market at least to a certain extent and for a certain period, due to the very reason that despite of the natural predominant motto of garnering the profit and ensuring the growth of capital through enormous exploitation of labour by capital, it has also given a leap to the human development at least to a certain degree. This positive contribution of capitalism towards the improvement of living standard vis-à-vis purchasing capacity of toiling mass all over the world whatever meagre it was, has thus acted as stimulator for capitalist development through the growth of the market. That is the reason, that the capitalism of that stage has been viewed by many as the progressive stage of capitalism.

The capitalist system, which from its womb has given birth to and obviously has been fostering a class divided society, cannot

survive even without the direct exploitation of labour by capital, which in turn makes the class struggle in the society inevitable. With the process of increased dominance of capital over the global market, the entire humanity through day by day has been exposed to the capitalist exploitation overtly and covertly. The un-relinquished severe exploitation of toiling mass as a whole within the entire capitalist world has ensured the sharp decline of capacity of this vast population to purchase and to consume. The very existence and sharp shoot up of the help less, exploited and pauper mass across the world, constituting the overwhelming majority, has proved the reality and the real face of the capitalism itself. The capitalism thus for natural and with utter-arrogant and consistent denial of the reality has created an acute deficiency of demand in the market driven capitalist economy. While with the accelerated pace of capitalist exploitation of working class and also with the aid of advanced technology the society has ensured the growth of production, at the same time toiling mass, pauperised by the very same exploitative capitalism, has failed to ensure the total lifting, disposal and consumption of the same. The persisting mismatch between the production and

consumption, also known as the demand and supply gap, has lead to the crisis of over productivity, where the capitalist can no longer satisfy their greed to enjoy the profit and more profit. This has been nothing but the obvious and inherent crisis of capitalism, which has been repeatedly erupted and proved the historical limitation of capitalism. Trapped in the crisis of excess production, the desperation of capitalism to get rid of the same has been heightened fast. The manifestation have been marked by growing attack on the working class by desperate capital, frequent wars waged by capitalist countries to penetrate and capture the market. As a resort, also the intervention of governments in demand management has been sought for. Such, multi prone efforts by the capitalist order, could however succeed to halt the impact of intensified crises of capitalism, whatever short lived the time was.

But the complex process of capitalism has brought the market and demand to saturation. Decades and century long capitalist exploitation has put a strong deterrent to the demand growth. Along with this, the amazing growth and development of technology particularly during the post second world war era added a new dimension to the

world order. The capitalism has also established its unparalleled control over the technology, which have been proved to be the pre-requisite to the modern productivity. To satisfy the capitalists' interest, the production in the capitalist system has become more and more capital intensive, doing away with the necessity of deployment of labour in large scale. This further lead to the labour surplus situation, where the unemployment all over the world has been increasing by leaps and bound.

The modernisation has significantly enhanced the productive capacity and created the unemployment, unemployment has further aggravated the demand sluggishness, thus has lead to a vicious cycle, where the capitalists have felt it convenient to cater the market by capital-intensive method of production, which need a few direct labours. Thus along with the traditional efforts to combat the situation sought by capitalist in earlier days also, methods of indiscriminate closures of the industrial units at a mass scale, dismantling of productive capacity in a huge way and other bunch of anti-people policies have been applied.

Desperate to ensure the sustained growth of capital and to over come the accentuated crises, the capital has also adjusted its form and the world capitalism today has been predominantly ruled by international finance capital.

Encountered by the decline in the profit from industrial activities as well as in service sector, capitalists to test the desired level of appreciation of wealth and to satisfy their lust for the profit have turned their eyes to elsewhere and have been deploying their accumulated wealth in speculative activities for quick appreciation of capital. It is, therefore, the era of de-industrialisation; the world has been passing through, where we witness a distinct feature of jobless growth. The tangible investment in any of the third world countries in this present time in fact has been nothing but the plying of capital from developed countries or other third world countries, not really the addition in the productive capacity.

The globalisation being the tool of imperialist capital in the contemporary world has been determined to establish its hegemony and putting the continuous and severe pressure on developing countries to follow its dictates, which are not only detrimental to the interest of the people of those countries but at the same time against the national interests as well. There is hardly any doubt that the globalisation as has been operating today is solely to further the interest of imperial monopoly capital, which is facing a growing and intensified crises. The penetration of imperial capital in the developing third world through the contemporary phase of globalisation has also made the economy severely vulnerable, through the bulldozing techniques of de-

industrialisation. Most of the governments in the developing countries are also too keen to prove them as close ally to the imperial power has been non-hesitant to follow the dictates of the imperialism.

The on process globalisation has been ruining our indigenous industries both in private and public sector, detracting the nation from its long ushered path of economic and industrial self reliance. The process of import liberalisation by withdrawing the tariff as well as quantitative restrictions has made the import cheaper. Contrary to this the burden of indirect taxes, like excise duty has not been lessened, rather has been increased in some cases. The over all impact in totality has been havoc on the domestic economy, making the imported items both industrial and agriculture cheaper to domestic product. This has lead to reduction in industrial employment and hardship situation in agrarian sector, shoot up of joblessness and poverty both in rural and countryside.

In this backdrop, the imperialist monopoly is advising the developing countries to develop themselves industrially to attain the at par level to compete with the former. But the ground reality is the perennial absence of level playing field. Though the ability to compete may be enhanced by mass production to some extent, in handful sectors, the areas and scope for the same is a little and limited at the same

time. In reality, there is hardly any globalisation of technology rather the total dominance of monopoly capital over the same. The developed countries at best allow the developing countries to access to the age-old technology that too on non-transferable conditions, while they themselves enjoy the full benefit of latest technology. Thus by this way the very concept of competition has been defeated. The change in patent law at the instance of the developed countries has further debarred us from the right of research and development, which might be the avenue of achieving the competitive edge to meet the challenge from the developed nations at least to some extent.

The call by imperialist for opening the economy has been totally ill motivated, due to continuous double standard on the part of the developed countries in the question of subsidy, which is not an exception, like all other issues. These countries are totally arrogant and determined in subsidising the commodities including the agriculture in a huge quantum in their respective territories. But at the same time the same power is determined to compel the developing countries to withdraw the prevalent subsidies in their respective boundaries, which are basically for the interest of the common people and the countries as a whole. The same is the experience in the international trade domain, while the third world has been compelled to open its market to

the developed countries; the former has not tested the reciprocation. The developed countries in general and US in particular under different pretexts continuously have been denying the access of third world's commodities to their own territories.

Thus the very concept of much hyped competition has been proved to be utopia, due to the intrinsic hypocrisy of the capitalism. The real face of the contemporary competition, the capitalism has been hawking through out the world has been beyond any ambiguity to make the world believe the necessity of sacrifice on the part of workers as a class, that too to foster the capitalists' interest.

Up-bit by the so-called slogan of global competition, the domestic bourgeois joined with the monopoly international capital with determination of robbing the workers right. They are harmonised and arrogant to establish their right to retrench indiscriminately, to replace the permanent workforce by contract labour to their utter convenience. The desperate demands for scrapping of existing labour laws, implementation of twelve hours working day replacing eight hours a day, scrapping the existing social securities, curtailment of dearness allowance, curbing of right of collective bargaining, right to strike have been the agenda of the capitalist force. And these are, as conceived by capital, to come out from the natural crises

of capital, which has been predestined to be futile.

The crises of capitalism, the world today has been witnessing, has resulted in sharp decline in global demand and living standard of toiling mass, squeeze in the capitalist market and has reached at a level height and seemingly can not be able to overcome. But for the very existence, capitalist class which is by nature opposed to the historical truth, by all means including the use of state power, has been pursuing all sorts of anti people activities, intensifying the attacks on working class, thus leading to the collapse of the society and the system.

Only the organised working class, empowered with the power of clear and strong class-consciousness across the countries can only put the formidable political challenge to the capitalist class to change the world in favour of the vast majority of the humanity, namely the toiling mass.

This is the historical destiny of the human civilisation.

The historical teaching of May Day and entire history of class struggle all over the world calls upon the working class and bestowed on it to shoulder this political responsibility. And the working class must once again take the oath to uphold the revolutionary spirit and march forward to defeat the ruling class to liberate the human race from the yoke of the century long exploitation.

BMS: RUNNING WITH THE HARE AND HUNTING WITH THE HOUND

M K Pandhe

Writing in the April 2004 issue of Vishwakarma Sanket, the monthly journal of BMS, Uday Patwardhan, General Secretary of BMS, has made unfounded attacks on the left trade unions. Unfortunately he had chosen to use the constitution of the Second National Commission on Labour to attack the left trade unions.

Patwardhan wrote: "One of the major victories for workers in the past five decades of freedom has been the launch of Second National Commission on Labour." He further noted: "With the fast pace at which changes have occurred in technology, the structure of industrial relations needed another face lift. Globalisation made every one realise this urge, which finally culminated in shaping the Second Commission."

BMS along with CITU and other trade unions wrote to the Government of India that the terms of reference and composition of the commission should be finalised in consultation with trade unions. The NDA Government, to whom Patwardhan has given so much credit, did not accept this legitimate suggestion and the composition and terms of reference were unilaterally announced by the NDA Government. We can understand the happiness of BMS in its composition since pro-RSS elements were given undue weightage in the composition but the terms of reference provided to make changes in labour laws in tune with the policies of globalisation.

The terms of reference of first National Labour Commission was finalised in a tripartite meeting, while wider consultation was done in deciding the composition of the commission. The CITU and AITUC strongly objected to the undemocratic manner in which the Second National Commission on Labour was constituted and decided to boycott it. The outcome of the commission was as predicted.

Patwardhan had no word to say on these aspects of the commission. BMS appended a note of dissent to the report of the commission and CITU published it in its journal. Instead of appreciating

this stand of CITU, Patwardhan had the following words to say:

"It is for them to dictate of prophet and demand for even minor changes of dot and comma would be blasphemy. Some time during couple of years, they had issued "Fatwa" calling on a "Jehad" against the indulgent."

We expected Patwardhan to know that CITU and other leftist trade unions do not believe in the very concept of prophet. We would have been happy if he would have informed us when we issued any "Fatwa" and gave a call for "Jehad". When a person is short of arguments he uses such terms which have no relevance to the debate.

We have no objection to have a debate on our differences on issues concerning the workers' problems. But mudslinging cannot help a debate among the trade unions. The events have proved that boycott of the Second National Commission on Labour by CITU and AITUC was correct. The joint note written by all the trade unions including BMS on the labour law amendments recommended by the CITU and AITUC during the recent Indian Labour Conference categorically opposed the Bills initiated by the Government of India. In view of this we would like to know why the BMS has started having second thoughts on this question.

Regarding the recommendations of the SNCL, Patwardhan noted, "It is a mixed package of good, bad and evil."

In every official report there are always some good words for the workers to make the report saleable among them. However, we have to see the main thrust and direction of the report. It is against the interest of the working class and the retrograde recommendations are opposed by the trade union movement.

Now, what are the good points of the SNCL? According to BMS it is the recommendation of Social Security Bill for the unorganized workers. The Bill on Social Security for the Unorganised Labour, drafted by the Union Labour Ministry, was

discussed at length in the seminar organised by the VV Giri National Labour Institute. The proposal was criticised by all the trade unions including BMS and unanimous recommendations were made to change the Bill. The CITU and BMS were together on the question. The Labour Ministry, however, did not accept the recommendations and failed to bring a Bill in Parliament.

On the eve of the Parliamentary elections, Sahib Singh Verma, Union Labour Minister, unilaterally announced the scheme without any legal support as recommended by the seminar. There is no word of criticism of this approach of the Labour Ministry by Patwardhan.

The Union Government did not call any meeting of trade unions to discuss the proposals of the government in a final form. In the name of helping 37 crore of unorganised workers, the scheme was announced only to get electoral advantage. The CITU rightly termed it as an election gimmick.

The West Bengal government also pointed out to the Union Labour Ministry that the scheme would be unworkable without a back up legislation. The non-serious approach of the central government could be seen from the vote on account placed in Parliament prior to the elections which did not provide any fund for the social security scheme.

The Labour Ministry had taken Rs 5 crore from Central PF organisation illegally for the scheme. How 37 crore workers could benefit from this a paltry amount? Even for 50 districts how the scheme will be implemented without any legal sanction? Is there anywhere in the world a social security scheme was implemented without framing a law and setting up an administrative machinery to implement it.

All these aspects are totally ignored by BMS. The BMS had practically joined the BJP's game of hoodwinking the working class for getting electoral advantage. The optimism of BMS has floundered in the face of the people's verdict.

In the same issue, Patwardhan charged the left trade unions in Bhandare Ordnance Factory for demanding overtime during Kargil war while speaking in a meeting organised by Pratiraksha Mazdoor Sangh. He praised BMS workers for working without overtime during the war.

Patwardhan had no words to say about the corruption involved in purchasing coffins from USA

at substantially higher prices for the heroes of the Kargil war. He also prefers to keep mum at the huge amount of ammunition purchased by Defence Ministry after their date of expiry. Nor did he have any word of criticism at the time of Tehelka exposures. All this can pass off but to Patwardhan it is a crime only if the workers claim statutory compensation for working more hours than their normal duty hours. Surprisingly, Patwardhan in the same speech audaciously claimed that no other trade union opposed the central government's anti-labour policies as much as BMS in the country. IBMS vociferously opposed all the struggles of the workers against anti-working class policies of the government. The BMS joined the other trade unions only in the public sector strike during 2002. However, due to pressure from some unknown quarters BMS did not join the other nationwide actions of the workers. It is almost a fashion with some BMS leaders to characterise every nationwide action as politically motivated.

Some time BMS does speak against the Central Govt's economic policies. This is because BMS workers also are victims of the economic policies. In several struggles BMS unions participate in action.

BMS has been in a dilemma. It had to keep its ranks happy by opposing the government's policies. But it had also to keep BJP party happy by opposing the action programmes unitedly planned by other trade unions. The BMS been the beneficiary of several special favours like allotment of nominations on various committees, under the BJP dispensation. BMS attempted to point a rosy picture about the former Prime Minister when it issued a statement that Vajpayee disagreed with Supreme Court judgement denying workers their right to strike. The PMO, however, promptly denied of any such assurance to BMS delegation.

Therefore, the BMS policy "running with the hare and hunting with the hound" does not help in building united movement of the working class. It only helps the ruling classes to divide the trade union and blunt the edge of their struggles. Will the BMS leadership have introspection and give up their prevarication, at least after the rout of the NDA government?

ECONOMY DERAILED ...

BIG BUSINESS PROFIT SOARS WHILE WORKERS LOSE WAGES

The record rate of economic growth(?), the exceptionally good industrial growth numbers(?) and the unprecedented corporate results are all very good news. But when one looks at the distributional aspects of this broadbased recovery in terms of factor-incomes, there is an issue: while corporate profits are soaring, growth in labour compensation has been exceptionally sluggish resulting in a decline in the share of wages in gross domestic product.

If the present trend continues, the economy will soon see a landmark crossover; the share of profit will be higher than the share of wages in GDP. In the organized sector, the share of wages in GDP for the listed companies has dropped from 4.2 per cent in 1996 to 3.2 per cent in 2003 and is likely to be a bit under 3 per cent in 2004. The share of profit on the other hand has increased from 0.5 per cent in 1990 to 2.9 per cent in 2003.... Looking at the growth scenario, what stands out is that a historically low share of income growth in the corporate sector is accounted for by labour compensation, while a historically high

share is accounted for by corporate profits. Profit has never fared so better earlier nor wage and salary income fared so poorly as in this period of business cycle. Since the turnaround started, between June and December 2003, corporate profit have expanded by 37.5 per cent while the private wage and salary income has contracted substantially....

This lopsided trends in profits and wages is potentially bad news for the economy as it is bound to threaten growth. Labour compensation is more likely to be converted to demand for domestic production and fuel a sustained growth spiral. In contrast, as is presently happening, when income goes to corporate profits, a larger share is going to pay down debt, instead of being used to make fresh investment....

A sustained self-reinforcing growth cycle cannot occur without a recovery in jobs that allows wages and salary incomes to grow. This recovery will not be on sound footing until a sustained growth in incomes (and jobs) kicks in.

(Haseeb A Drabu. *Business Standard*, 29-04-2004)

CORPORATE GAINS...

An Economic times Study of the results of 582 major listed companies of the corporate sector for 2003-04 reveals:

The sales has grown by 22% over the previous

year, the gross profit rose by 27.1% but the net profit (after tax and depreciation) has grown by hopping 47%. During the same period, the staff cost has grown only by 13.2%.....

(Source: *Economic Times*, 03-05-2004)

IMPORTS MAKE FARMERS, SSIs FEEL BAD

There has been major spurts in the import of agricultural goods, particularly the sensitive items like edible oil, rubber as well as SSI products. Hence the rural India as well as SSIs to some extent are reluctant to climb aboard the NDA's feel-good bandwagon as they are feeling the heat of competition from imported goods.

Imports of 300 sensitive items rose by 27% last

year including edible oil, cotton and silk, fruits and vegetables, rubber, milk and milk products, alcoholic beverages, SSI and other products increased substantially. Import of crude palm oil increased by 20% while that of refined palm oil and palmolein increased by 121% as per data released by Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT).....

(*Economic Times* 29-04-2004)

DOWN THE DISASTER LANE !

PRE-REFORM Vs POST-REFORM ! DARKNESS BENEATH THE SHINE...

The paper published by S Mahendra Dev of the Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Hyderabad observed, "...the rural India, after all, is not shining. Growth rates in foodgrains and all crops declined significantly in the nineties. Public investment in agriculture and the credit-deposit ratios in rural areas also declined in the same period. Also farmers' suicides have increased in recent years. Rural poverty is high among the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and agricultural labour households. Employment growth was much lower in the nineties as compared to eighties. Growth in agricultural employment was almost zero. Migration has

increased during the reform period from rural-urban areas."

Not a single statement above can be factually contested... And contrasting the 1983-84 to 1993-94 pre-reform period with the 1993-94 to 1999-2000 post reform period, the conclusions are unambiguous. The rate of growth in employment has slowed down in the post reform period, agriculture has failed to absorb unorganised sector employment... It is not surprising that the employment-elasticity of growth has dropped in the post reform period. After all, the composition of growth is just as important as the growth itself.....

(BIBEK DEBROY, *The Telegraph*, 28-04-2003)

SELL-OFF CALL: BSNL STARTS ASSET VALUATION...

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) has kicked off a valuation exercise of its countrywide telecom assets. The objective seems to be getting the current book value of all fixed assets which the company inherited from the Department of Telecom and built over the past three years. The valuation exercise is seen as a precursor to a

possible disinvestments of the company after the Lok Sabha elections... As per the Director (Finance) of the company, "BSNL's total asset base has doubled to nearly Rs 70,000 crore in three years, but efforts are on to determine the true book value".....

(*Economic Times*, 29-04-2004)

PER CAPITA WATER WITHDRAWALS FOR PERSONAL USE

	(LITRES PER DAY)
AFRICA	47
ASIA	85
UK	334
USA	587

By 2025, more than 2.8 billion people living in 48 countries will face water scarcity, based on the recently revised UN population projections. By 2050 the number of countries that will face water scarcity will rise to 54, and their combined population to 4 billion people - 40 per cent of the projected global population of 9.4 billion.

Price of 1 glass of bottled water = price of 10,000 glasses of tap water.

In some cities the poor pay as much as 100 times more for water than the rich.

(Courtesy: Down to Earth)

28 April : World Day for Safety and Health at Work: Two million work deaths a year

"One death every fifteen seconds. Six thousand a day. Work kills more people than wars. And it injures and mutilates, too. Almost 270 million accidents are recorded each year, of which 350,000 are fatal. Many of these tragedies could be prevented. And yet, twenty years after the Bhopal disaster, which killed 2,500 people and injured 200,000 in the space of a few hours, the situation has scarcely improved."

by Luc Demaret and Ahmed Khalef (ILO)

The International Labour Organization, a UN tripartite agency (governments/employers/unions), estimates that 2.2 million people die from work-related causes every year: 750,000 women and 1,500,000 men. The difference in the figures for men and women is mainly due to the distribution of the two sexes within dangerous jobs. However, as the ILO notes, the large number of women working in agriculture in developing countries makes them particularly vulnerable to work-related infectious diseases. By any standards, six thousand deaths a day - one every fifteen seconds - add up to more than the ravages caused by war each year.

Of these deaths, almost 350,000 occur during work accidents. The rest are due to work-related illnesses. Thus, more than 400,000 deaths are caused by exposure to chemicals. Such exposure is also responsible for 35 million of the 160 million cases of occupational sickness recorded worldwide. More than 300,000 cancers per year are due to dangerous substances.

Employers' Negligence to Safety for Profit

Even though there is no such thing as zero risk, work accidents

must not be seen as fated. They don't just happen. They are caused. The causes can be many and varied, but they all come down to negligence: by unscrupulous employers who, in the name of profit, begrudge every penny spent on safety; by governments who ratify as few international Conventions as possible and do not give their labour inspectors the means to enforce even those they do ratify.

Health and safety in the workplace are the sole responsibility of the employer. Some employers take this obligation seriously. Others seem to put short-term profit before safety.

How else can we explain the fact that millions of workers are still exposed to asbestos, when we know that its fibres kill more than 100,000 people each year? Negligence, too, by those governments who appear to be in no hurry to ratify and implement the international Convention adopted by the ILO in 1986, banning some kinds of asbestos. To date, this Convention has been ratified by only 27 of the ILO's 177 member States.

Another clear sign of negligence is that every year 22,000

children, who ought to have been at school, die at work. This despite a whole arsenal of international conventions, declarations and legislation.

"We work to live, but work still means death." So says the food, agriculture and allied workers' international IUF. Of the 270 million work accidents recorded each year worldwide, a large proportion are in agriculture. It accounts for more than half of all fatal accidents: 170,000 in 2003. Many countries have brought in legislation to tackle the most obviously negligent attitudes to work safety. But the penalties are often derisory.

The price of negligence

Nor is poverty any excuse for holding back on the implementation of safety standards. As a matter of fact, inaction costs a lot more. Expenditure due to occupational illnesses and work accidents adds up to 4 per cent of the GNP of all the countries on the planet. The industrialized countries must take part of the blame. "In fact," ILO specialist Takala says, "one of the trends is that industrialized countries are exporting their hazards to developing countries. Labour there is not only cheaper but also significantly less protected."

Dirty and difficult jobs are left to the South. That includes mining, of course." So while the mining diseases commonly known as pneumoconioses, including silicosis, have virtually disappeared in the industrialized countries, they are still claiming fresh victims every day in the developing world. For instance, on current estimates 10 million workers are at risk from silicosis, and the death-dealing dust causes 5,000 fatalities every year.

The statistics also show that the social and economic burden of work-related accidents and illnesses is not evenly distributed. Mortality rates in various parts of the Middle East and Asia can reach four times the level of those in the industrialized countries.

Similarly, social coverage for occupational safety and health varies greatly from one part of the world to another. Workers in the Nordic countries have almost universal coverage, whereas only 10 per cent - or even less - of developing country workplaces are covered in any way. In many developed countries, meanwhile, only half the workforce may be covered against injuries and

occupational diseases.

Boosting safety

Yet many disasters and everyday hazardous practices at work are preventable. Priority must be given to overcoming them, and ILO standards can help to achieve this. Almost half of the 184 Conventions adopted by the ILO have a bearing on health and safety issues.

Ratification of these standards, i.e. countries' formal commitment to respect them, is uneven. For instance, Convention 155 on worker safety and health has garnered just 42 ratifications.

In addition to these standards, all the available studies confirm that the existence of social dialogue within a workplace boosts health and safety. Where unions are fully recognized and there is a workplace health and safety committee (with equal representation of management and the unions), the serious accident rate may be halved in relation to workplaces where unions are not recognized and no such committee is in place.

Another study shows that, in one country, more than 80 per cent of unionized workplaces had a high level of compliance with safety and health legislation,

whereas only 54 to 61 per cent of non-unionized workplaces achieved similar compliance. Union action to promote health and safety must have helped save millions of lives, according to one ILO officer. So it is no surprise that, in 1984, trade unions in Bhopal warned of a disaster in the making. Tragically, their warnings went unheeded. Although trade union freedom is a vital factor in workplace safety, all too often it is still flouted. And the price to be paid for improving conditions at work is sometimes high. Across the world, two hundred trade unionists are murdered every year.

Although he was receiving death threats, Cambodian union leader Chea Vichea never abandoned his struggle, which secured marked improvements in working conditions for some two hundred thousand women in the country's garment industry. On 22 January 2004, in Phnom Penh, he was killed by three bullets fired at close range.

"Safe Work is not only sound economic policy," declared UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2002, "it is a basic human right." Getting that basic right respected everywhere will take

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THE VOICE OF THE WORKING WOMAN

Now, a monthly journal of the
All India Coordination Committee of Working Women

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(Cuban Workers' Trade Union Central, Havana, has issued an appeal dated May 12, 2004, to all trade unions and the workers the world over to extend solidarity and support to them in their struggle to defeat the US conspiracy to give legitimacy to the US nurtured so-called independent trade union of Cuba in exile. Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary had sent in a message pledging solid support to the Cuban Trade Union from the CITU. We publish hereunder the Havana appeal - Editor)

US CONSPIRACY: CUBAN TRADE UNION APPEAL

The Cuban Workers Trade Union Central the sole and only Cuban Central Trade Union during the last 65 years, has been denouncing since many years the plans of the US government and their specialised agencies along with the support of some national and international trade union organisations, in promoting the creation in Cuba of alleged independent trade unions that will serve the purpose of destroying the Cuban Revolution and taking possession of our country, a dream that the Empire of the North have been cherishing since long ago.

We have always said clearly that the alleged existence of the so-called independent unions in Cuba, is nothing else than a direct creation of the government of the United States, of its agencies and its Interest Section in Havana, the ones who finances and promotes these so-called independent unions around the world, in their efforts of creating an image of trade union repression and violation of workers' rights in Cuba. The measures adopted recently by president Bush, are undoubtedly directed towards changing the economic and political regime that we Cubans have decided to embrace, substituting it by our annexation to that country, by the way of a transition, in even a worst style than that being enforced by their troops in Iraq, entailing a serious threat for the safety of our country that even today, is being recognised by important US personalities. These measures help to demonstrate how fair and just are the reasons we have, when denouncing the direct participation of the United States and their accomplices in the creation of these alleged trade unions.

When presenting the new measures for the "Acceleration of a Rapid Transition in Cuba", the document endorsed by Mr. Bush says textually: "To ensure that the representatives of the Cuban independent trade unions may participate in the

International Labor Organization in order to expose the conditions of labor exploitation in Cuba and to help the Cuban workers to obtain compensation because of such abuses; to cooperate with the NGOs and other interested bodies in order to ensure that an independent Cuban trade union representative, or a representative of a trade union in exile, could be able to speak during the ILO Conference.

On this point we ask ourselves: What does the government of the US mean when speaking about "cooperating with the NGO's" in order to accomplish US objectives? Could it be the case of ICFTU and WCL, two of the main NGO's acting within the ILO and which coincidentally have been using the same language in their attacks against Cuba?

Lets take a look at what they have said in this regard. On one hand, the Bush program and the other hand, the complaints from the ICFTU dated April 15th. 2003.

BUSH'S PROGRAMME

"Currently workers in Cuba do not have the right to organize independent unions. The government controls hiring and firing. Workers have no right to independent unions and are denied the right to strike or to bargaining collectively. Those who attempt to organize have been persecuted and in some cases, imprisoned."

"To fully recognise the basic rights in the workplace, a transition government should enact a new labour legislation and to such purpose, the US Department of Labour (DOL) could provide Cuba with appropriate technical assistance and training."

The Bush programme also certifies that: "USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) are already providing support to Cuba's incipient independent trade union movement

through grants to US NGOs".

ICFTU COMPLAINTS

"The Cuban authorities only recognize one single trade union central...strongly under state control.....the government prohibits the existence of independent unions. There are no collective negotiations". "The right to strike is not recognized by law and is practically non existent"...Workers who tries to join these trade unions are persecuted and likely to loose their jobs", "they are harassed and imprisoned", "the government has not fulfilled its promise of reforming the labor code".

As you can see, these are not simple coincidences. You are therefore able to appreciate that it seems that the ICFTU have advised the Bush administration in relation to their plans for changing the Cuban government, considering that on the only issue on which they do not coincide is on that related to the ICFTU no risking to propose to the US Labor Department, that they should give advise in terms of labor to the "so-called" transition government.

Could it be, that the ICFTU is well aware that the AFL-CIO itself recognizes that the US labor legislation is perhaps one of the worst in the world, and that among many other arbitrariness and violations of the ILO international Conventions, million of workers are denied the right to organize themselves in unions, because in 22 states, there is the "so-called Right to Works Act", and thus denied the right to collective negotiations.

They do not ignore the fact the US is in the world, the country that have ratified less International Conventions and that despite the frequent denounces made by north american trade unions in relation to the serious violations committed in that country, including the death of children who works illegally in agriculture, the ICFTU or the WCL have never promoted the idea of including the US government in the list of countries that should provide explanations at the Standard Commission because of their violations of the ILO's International Conventions.

This same year we have witnessed and we should ask why, the US together with Israel and another small group of nations, are not reflected in the Report of the Commission of Experts on the

Application of the ILO International Standards. Is it perhaps that these Conventions are no longer violated in the United States, or that the AFL-CIO, the ICFTU and the WCL, who are so concerned about the rights of workers in Cuba, are not concerned about the rights of the North American workers?

Another difference is perhaps, that the US government do recognize publicly that their agencies have funded and continue to fund the "so-called" independent trade unions in Cuba through US NGOs, while the ICFTU and the WCL persists in saying that these "independent unions" do not maintains any links with the government of the United States, and some even dears to justify such service to a foreign Superpower against their own people.

It could be argued now that the government of the United States was the one who took hold of the ICFTU's language in order to prepare their plans of aggression against Cuba. This could be believed only by the naïve. Those who are very well aware of the methods used by the government of the United States in their pursuit to act against the independence and sovereignty of states and institutions, imposing their doctrines around the world, will be able to properly distinguish, who is serving whom.

The Cuban workers know very well that the large masses of workers in the world understands the need of defending Cuba and they give us their permanent solidarity. We are also aware that there are dignified and true trade union leaders who understand that the present program for Cuba designed by the United States government, is not simply part of their electoral rhetoric but rather a dangerous adventure intended to surrender us by hunger and to prepare "the internal and external conditions" for unleashing a direct military attack against our country. From our friends, we expect solidarity and support.

We also hope that those who claim to speak on behalf of the workers and that at certain point in time, confused or not, joined ranks with these aggressions, may not insist in providing the government of the United States with the necessary justifications for launching a war against Cuba.

REPORTS & EVENTS

GWALIOR: CAMPAIGN AGAINST "FEEL GOOD LIES"

DISTRICT COLLECTOR'S THREATS

The Collector of the Gwalior District, who must be under the dictates of the BJP Govt in Madhya Pradesh threatened the General Secretary of the Gwalior Division Insurance Employees' Association and also the Gwalior United Council of Trade Unions with dire consequences for issuing leaflets against the so called 'feel good' lie campaign by the NDA Govt through media.

On 31st March 2004, the GDIEA General Secretary, M K Jaiswal issued a leaflet refuting the feel good campaign by the NDA Govt through Media. At this, the City Magistrate had sent a letter to

Jaiswal on 19th April 2004 threatening him with action to be taken against him for anti-Govt campaign and for violation of model code of conduct framed by the election commission. The local Hindi dailies also carried news that action is going to be taken against Jaiswal for anti-govt campaign.

This has created serious resentment among the entire trade union circle and Gwalior United Council of Trade Unions, a joint platform of Trade Unions and employees' associations of the Gwalior city sharply reacted to such action by the District collector and issued press Statement

challenging the stand taken by the Collector, obviously under the instruction of the BJP Govt in the State. The statement observed that the BJP led govt has been trying to curb the democratic right of the workers and unions to express and propagate their opinions in the midst of the election process and the allegation of violation of model code of conduct is patently false and unfounded.

It also called upon the workers and employees to carry on intensive campaign against the BJP led governance and ensure their defeat.

Women's Convention of AIRRBEA

The first national convention of the Regional Rural Bank Women Employees was held at Tirupati on 28-29 February 2004. The convention was convened by the Women's Sub Committee of the All India Regional Rural Bank Employees' Association. Sucharita Biswas, the Chairperson of the Women's Sub Committee introduced the report for discussion.

Sucharita dealt with the situation in the banking industry, particularly in the Regional Rural Banks (RRBs). She said that during the last decade or so, banks have

thrown to the winds their avowed social responsibility to the masses, and their focus has shifted from mass banking to class banking. In the rural areas, the Credit Deposit ratio has come down sharply. The number of rural branches has been reduced from 35,000 in 1995 to 32,000 in 2002. The number of priority sector borrower accounts has come down drastically from 346 lakhs in 1994 to 27 lakhs in 2000. Lending to agriculture touched an all time low of 9.20% of total lending. Over 10% of the staff in the banking industry has already been pushed out through

VRS and many more are in the process of being shown the door. Cooperative banking has been severely attacked and its local feel and democratic functioning are being seriously jeopardised by some amendments in the Banking Regulations Act.

In line with the liberalisation policies, the Government is out to destroy the unique rural infrastructure which implemented over 35% of the poverty alleviation schemes and organised or credit linked, over 50% of the Self Help Groups so far. The AIRRBEA had proposed for consolidation of

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RRBs into State/ Zonal level rural banks under the aegis of a National Rural Bank and with the NABARD (National Bank for Rural Development) as the sole sponsor bank. This has generated much interest and has become the demand of the rural masses.

After discussing the problems of women in the banking industry, the convention adopted a charter of demands which included the demand to reverse the anti women policies of globalisation and liberalisation, stop the anti worker

amendments to the labour laws, ban retrenchment of women, ensure eight hour work in a day for working women, equal wages and equal opportunities of work for women; minimum wages to be decided as per the recommendations of the 15th Indian Labour Conference, and maternity benefit for all working women including those in the unorganised sector. The Convention also demanded that promotional avenues should be opened up with equal opportunities

for women staff; all benefits like proportionate scale wages at par with sponsor banks rules to be extended to part time sweepers, most of who are women; and that no woman employee should be posted at any branch where normal civic facilities are not available.

The convention called upon the participants to come forward to take their due place in the organisation and in the society at large and to play a more active role in struggles.

ICDS employees Workshop in Jodhpur

The 'Rajasthan Mahila Evam Bal Vikas Karmachari Union held State level Workshop at Jodhpur on 8-9 May 2004 Vikas Karmachari Union', held a state level Workshop at the Railway Employees' Union Office in Jodhpur on 8-9 May 2004. 51 activists comprising of ICDS Supervisors, anganwadi workers and helpers from 10 districts - Jodhpur, Jhunjhunu, Jalore, Jhalawar, Churu, Dungarpur, Pali, Bharatpur, Ajmer, and Hanumangarh - participated in the Workshop. Bhanwari Mirdha, President of the Union presided while the General Secretary, Kaushalya Sankhla explained the purpose of the work shop. Ravindra Shukla, General Secretary of the State Committee of CITU, and several other leaders of CITU and the Railway

Employees' Union greeted the workshop. Inaugurating the workshop, Hemalata, General Secretary of the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers said that though the supervisors, who were Government employees, and the anganwadi workers and helpers, who were not recognised by the Government as its employees, had different types of problems, they shared some common problems also. Most important of these was the necessity to save the ICDS Scheme, which was being adversely affected by the policies of the NDA Government.

As part of its policy of withdrawing from welfare activities, the Government was trying to hand over the implementation of the Scheme to the Panchayats or Non

Government Organisations. The number of supervisors was being sought to be reduced; supervisors and other officers are being appointed on contract basis. Some State Governments were taking steps to bring down the number of supervisors. She emphasised that these policies must be fought together by all concerned. It was good that all the employees in the Women and Child Development Department in the State, including supervisors, office staff, anganwadi workers and helpers in the State have come together to form a joint union and within a short time span, the union had already organised massive demonstrations in Jaipur and Jodhpur on some major issues. She also stressed the importance of giving due importance to the problems of the anganwadi

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workers and helpers, who form a large part of the Women and Child Development Department employees. The Union leaders assured her that they were addressing the specific problems

of anganwadi workers and helpers also. A charter of demands was formulated by the work shop and it was decided to take up a mass signature campaign on these demands. The work shop also

decided to strengthen the organisation by enrolling members through a membership drive, organise conferences and form elected committees from sector level to State level.

AROUND THE WORLD

DOWN WITH WORLD BANK-IMF !

April 25, 2004-the city of Washington DC in USA witnessed a huge demonstration by the workers, students and people from other walks of life before the FUND/BANK headquarters on the 60th birth anniversary day of these infamous duo. "Globalise justice, not capitalism" was the main slogan chanted thunderously by the militant demonstrators while demanding reversal of the damaging role played by these two institutions for the toiling people in

general.

The demonstration also raised the slogan "Money for Jobs and Education, not for War and Occupation" while pointing to the supportive role of the Fund/Bank duo towards the imperialist aggression on the developing countries by the US administration and their allies.

The demonstrators assembled in a square near the Mall of Central Washington before starting the procession. Amidst huge police

arrangement to guard the portals of World Bank and IMF the protestors surrounded the entire area and staged thunderous shouting demonstration. On being interviewed by the Press, Robert Weissman, one of the organisers of the Protest groups said, "The Fund/Bank officials are behind fences, but the people know how they are harmed by these institutions. A better World is possible and we must achieve that."

(AFP)

IRELAND

AGAINST THE MOVE TO BAN STRIKE

In the background of spreading discontent among the workers in the midst of economic crisis and increasing phenomenon of industrial action by the workers in Ireland, the Irish Employers Organisation—IBEC has mooted a proposal to the government to impose a blanket ban on strike in public services. The proposal to introduce a 'no strike clause' in

essential service has been rejected outright by the trade unions.

The Irish trade unions, as per existing legal provisions in the country, have to satisfy a number of industrial relations and legal procedures such as reference of the dispute to third-party agency for resolution, conducting secret ballot, providing notice period etc before they can officially initiate

strike actions. But despite such hurdles, the growing unrest among the workers led to steep increase in industrial actions in the country. The mandays lost due to strike has increased from 21257 in 2002 to 37482 in 2003. In this background the move is on to curb the right to strike on the part of the employers class but the trade union movement is resolutely opposing such move.

(Source: EIR Online, April 2004)

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CYPRUS

MOVE TO BAN STRIKE FOILED

In March 2004, a tripartite agreement on the procedure of resolving labour disputes in essential services was signed between the Govt, employers organisation and the trade unions in Cyprus following protracted negotiation. The Accord though introduces an arbitration procedure in such disputes, does not rule out industrial action including strike. The Agreement took place after years long efforts by the govt and the employers to put a ban on strike in so called essential services

failed due to resistance by the trade union movement. In fact a Bill was introduced a year back in the Cyprus Parliament in that regard but subsequently had to be withdrawn.

The tripartite Agreement concretely defined the 'essential services' without keeping any scope for wide interpretation to the advantage of the employers. It provided for reference of any labour dispute in any essential service so defined to arbitration after failure of bipartite negotiation

with an obligatory provision for the arbitrator agency to give its report/recommendation within stipulated time frame. In the event of the arbitration award not being acceptable to workers/unions, the union retains the right to go for strike action giving 25 days notice in the concerned sector, though identified as essential service, while maintaining 'minimum service' as defined by ILO.

(EIR Online, April 2004)

GERMANY

GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN WAGES AND EMPLOYMENT

In March 2004, the Federal Statistical Office of Germany reported that in 2003, the average monthly income of women in Germany was 30% below that of man-the same gap as found in 2002. Also in March the Institute of Economic and Social Research (WSI) issued a study which revealed that low pay is particularly widespread in private sector services with high proportion of female employees. The study revealed that female blue

collar workers in the processing industries had an average monthly income of EUR 1885 which was 26% less than men. In eastern Germany the gender pay-gap is less marked than in western Germany.

Given the general wage differences between the western and eastern Germany, it is no surprise that low pay is particularly marked in eastern Germany. Moreover, the wages of workers who are not covered by collective

agreements are likely to be even lower. Overall collective bargaining coverage was 70% in western Germany and 55% in eastern Germany. In many private services, bargaining coverage is considerably lower.

With regard to women's wages, WSI data reveal that low pay is particularly widespread where the work is characterised by high proportion of female employees, i.e., in private sector services.

(Source: EIR Online, April 2004)

ITALY

AUTOMOBILE WORKERS IN STRIKE

The impact of a labour related dispute at a Fiat car-parts

factory in Southern Italy got spread over to other units of the

company resulting in strike action by the workers from Monday, 26th

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April 2004, braving police onslaughts.

The strike spread over the Alfa Romeo plant in Pomigliano, near Naples, and also the production centers of Fiat in Turin and Termine Imerese and Melfi. The striking workers blockaded the roads around the factories to

prevent entry of spares. Police tried to break the pickets by the striking workers by force resulting in severe injury to nine workers on 26th. Strike already resulted in loss of production to the tune of 12000 cars. Better pay and change of shift pattern had been the main issues leading to the strike action.

The FIOM-CGIL metal workers union called for a four hours nationwide strike on 28th April in solidarity with the striking Fiat workers which was responded to magnificently by the Italian metal workers.

(Rentres)

IRAQI WOKERS: REPREHENSIBLE STAND OF AFL-CIO

Ever since the US and its allies occupied Iraq, the Iraqi workers are facing greater difficulties than they faced under the regime of Saddam Hussein. Unemployment has reached an all time high of 70%. Most of the workers who do get some employment are paid only USD 60 per month as an 'emergency wage'; they get no overtime wages though they are usually forced to work for more than 12 hours a day. Bonuses, which earlier constituted around half of the workers' earnings, have been abolished. The workers find it very difficult to manage their families with the prices of all essential commodities continuously rising. No safety equipment is provided to the workers. There is no system of compensation for work place injuries. In many places workers have held big demonstrations and taken to the streets against the Coalition Provincial Authority demanding jobs. But the Coalition Authority had arrested the leaders of such protests in stead of

providing them any relief. Several of them were shot and killed.

In such a situation solidarity to the Iraq workers' struggles from any Trade Union from other countries should be welcome. But the statement issued by the President of the AFL - CIO John Sweeney calling for a new 'Labour Code for Iraq' and its timing raise certain doubts. Sweeney has not condemned the deplorable conditions of the workers in Iraq under the US occupation. He does not condemn the occupation of Iraq by the USA and its allies, nor does he condemn the war itself. Rather, while the workers all over the world, including millions of people in the US, were strongly opposing the US war on Iraq. Sweeney openly supported the war. Well before the war started in October 2002, when a war resolution was being debated in the Congress, Sweeney wrote to the US law makers 'Saddam Hussein is a menace to his own people, to stability in a critical region of the world and potentially to America

and our allies'. When the bombing began, he wrote 'The Iraqi regime is a brutal dictatorship that is a threat to its neighbours and its own citizens. We support fully the goal of ridding Iraq of weapons of mass destruction... We are unequivocal in our support of our country'. He also endorsed Bush's request to Congress for the money to carry out the onslaught.

Then why this concern for a 'new labour code for Iraq' now? It has less to do with the conditions of the workers or their democratic rights but more with the handsome fee that the AFL- CIO can get by getting the role of advisor to the US occupation authority in Iraq and may be some contracts in the 'reconstruction' of Iraq. Sweeney hints at this purpose by stating 'Training and other kinds of support from the international trade union movement should be encouraged'. It is also significant that this statement came only two days after the State of the Union speech in which Bush proposed to double the funding for the Government

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financed National Endowment for Democracy, in which an additional \$40 million would go to the Middle East.

Incidentally, AFL-CIO, through its American Centre for International Labour Solidarity is a constituent of the NED, which was formed in 1983 to influence and finance various groups around the world, which are seen as capable of countering popular opposition to the US policies. It has become a conduit for funds that were earlier funnelled covertly through the

CIA. It provided money and technical support to conservative, pro US trade unions in Korea, as an alternative to the unions that organised the strikes and factory occupations that led to the overthrow of the US backed military dictatorship there. The American Institute for Free Labour Development (AIFLD) was created by the AFL - CIO in collaboration with the CIA in 1959, after the Cuban revolution, to insure control of the labour movements in Latin America.

Recently, using NED money, the AFL - CIO worked hand in glove with the CIA and the US State Department in preparing the aborted coup against Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez in April 2002.

The mobilisation of American working people against the occupation and future wars is possible only in direct opposition to the AFL - CIO bureaucracy, which shares the political responsibility for the killings in Iraq.

USE OF SYNTHETIC BAGS FOR FOODGRAINS PACKAGING: CITU CONDEMNS GOVT. ORDER

The Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, by an order (No.SO 507(E) on the 16th April 2004, permitted usage of synthetic bags for packaging of food grains up to 40%. This was till recently prohibited and 100% usage of jute bags was mandatory. The same Government order has also enhanced the quota of usage of synthetic bags from 10% to 50%, reducing the quota of jute bags by 40% (from 90% to 50%) for packaging of sugar.

Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary, Centre of Indian Trade Unions, has expressed grave concern over this move in a statement issued on April 24, 2004. He noted:

"The order has been passed totally undermining the interest of the jute industry on which the livelihood of 40 lakh jute growers and 2.5 lakh workers are dependent. It may be pointed out that the order has been hastily passed without giving chance to the Indian Jute Mills Association, which has been advised by the Central Government itself to make their representation on the subject by 30.4.2004 before the Standing Advisory Committee, which is scheduled to meet on 5th May 2004. Meanwhile, a SLP is pending before the Supreme Court on the same matter, filed by the IJMA, on which a final decision is expected any day. Also such a vital order has been passed unilaterally by the Central Government bypassing Parliament, at a time when the country is going through the parliamentary election process, undermining the electoral ethics and democratic norms.

"Further more, it may be noted that the WHO has recommended internationally a lesser use of synthetic material for packaging of food grains from the health point of view. The order of the Government of India is contrary to this recommendation and detrimental to the ideal health norms to be followed."

The CITU condemned this move by the Central Government, which clearly showed its indifference to the health aspect as the well as interests of the jute industry and jute growers for the reasons better known to them. The CITU also demanded scrapping of the order and restoration of original status, till the passing of the final decision by the Supreme Court.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX NUMBERS FOR INDUSTRIAL WORKERS ON BASE 1982=100

State	Sr. No.	Centre	Month		State	Sr. No.	Centre	Month	
			Feb.' 04	Mar.' 04				Feb.' 04	Mar.' 04
Andhra Pradesh	1	Gudur	472	471	Maharashtra	38	Mumbai	594	596
	2	Guntur	505	502		39	Nagpur	508	510
	3	Hyderabad	506	506		40	Nasik	542	538
	4	Visakhapatnam	492	493		41	Pune	564	565
	5	Warangal	519	520		42	Solapur	530	521
Assam	6	D.D.Tinsukia	428	423	Orissa	43	Barbil	440	443
	7	Guwahati	508	505		44	Rourkela	441	438
	8	Labac-Silchar	398	400	Punjab	45	Amritsar	442	446
	9	Mariani-Jorhat	439	437		46	Ludhiana	452	462
	10	Rangapara-Tezpur	426	423	Rajasthan	47	Ajmer	491	494
Bihar	11	Monghyr	476	474		48	Jaipur	460	461
Chhattisgarh	12	Bhillai	447	451	Tamil Nadu	49	Chennai	538	536
Gujarat	13	Ahmedabad	494	494		50	Coimbatore	503	499
	14	Bhavnagar	503	507		51	Coonoor	497	494
	15	Rajkot	454	453		52	Madurai	489	485
	16	Surat	477	480		53	Salem	482	477
	17	Vadodra	470	472		54	Tiruchirapally	535	528
Haryana	18	Faridabad	524	525	Uttar Pradesh	55	Agra	472	473
	19	Yamunanagar	468	473		56	Ghaziabad	506	513
J & K	20	Srinagar	593	598		57	Kanpur	480	483
Jharkhand	21	Jamshedpur	472	471		58	Saharanpur	461	463
	22	Jharia	405	404		59	Varanasi	516	521
	23	Kodarma	413	416	West Bengal	60	Asansol	481	482
	24	Noamundi	450	453		61	Darjeeling	419	417
	25	Ranchi-Hatia	457	456		62	Durgapur	565	570
Karnataka	26	Bangalore	492	490		63	Haldia	602	602
	27	Belgaum	557	552		64	Howrah	564	561
	28	Hubli-Dharwar	506	501		65	Jalpaiguri	435	431
	29	Mercara	480	477		66	Kolkata	555	554
Kerala	30	Alwaye	500	505		67	Raniganj	438	439
	31	Mundakayam	493	491	Chandigarh	68	Chandigarh	545	543
	32	Quilon	531	527	Delhi	69	Delhi	581	583
	33	Thiruvananthapuram	573	569	Pondicherry	70	Pondicherry	540	533
Madhya Pradesh	34	Balaghat	449	450					
	35	Bhopal	535	532					
	36	Indore	519	520					
	37	Jabalpur	494	495					
								ALL-INDIA	504
									504

Additional Series of Labour Bureau

State	Centre	February 2004	March 2004
Andhra Pradesh	1 Kethgudem	495	486
Himachal Pradesh	2 Himachal Pradesh	477	478
Rajasthan	3 Bhilwara	494	496
Madhya Pradesh	4 Chhindwara	455	453
Tripura	5 Tripura	449	441
Goa	6 Goa	608	609

FAIR GLOBALISATION?

...The current process of globalisation is generating unbalanced outcomes, both between and within countries. Wealth is being created, but too many countries and people are not sharing in its benefits. They also have little or no voice in shaping the process. Seen through the eyes of the vast majority of women and men, globalisation has not met their simple and legitimate aspirations for decent jobs and a better future for their children....

These global imbalances are morally unacceptable and politically unsustainable....Market opening measures and financial and economic considerations predominate over social ones....The multilateral systems responsible for designing and implementing international policies is also underperforming. It lacks policy coherence as a whole and is not sufficiently democratic, transparent and accountable.

These rules and policies are the outcome of a system of global governance largely shaped by powerful countries and powerful players. There is a serious democratic deficit at the heart of the system....Workers and the poor have little or no voice in this governance process....

It is striking that since 1990 global GDP growth has been slower than in previous decades, the period in which globalisation has been most pronounced....Growth has also been unevenly distributed across countries, among both industrialised and developed countries. In terms of per capita income growth, only 16 developing countries grew at more than 3 per cent per annum between 1985 and 2000. In contrast 55 developing countries grew at less than 2 per cent per annum, and of those 23 suffered negative growth.

At the same time, the income gap between the richest and the poorest countries increased significantly. Between 1960-62 and 2000-02, the per capita GDP in 20 poorest countries has marginally moved from US\$ 212 to only US\$ 267 whereas the per-capita GDP in the 20 richest countries has gone up by almost three times from

US \$ 11417 to US \$ 32339 (at 1995 US \$ price). For the world as a whole latest ILO estimates show that open unemployment has increased over the last decade to about 188 million in 2003....It is also noticeable that within the developing world, unemployment rates increased since 1990 in Latin America, Caribbean and South East Asia and since 1995 in East Asia...

Increasing tax competition, together with the new doctrine in favour of a reduced role for the State, is widely believed to have reduced the fiscal capacity of the governments. In many cases, this has led to a reduction in govt expenditures vital to the poor such as those on health, education, social safety nets, agricultural extension services and poverty reduction. For example, in several regions of the world expenditure on education has sharply declined in the latter part of 1990s....As a result, of the 680 million children of primary school age in developing countries, 115 million are not in school, 65 million of them girls. And of the children who start primary school, only one in two complete it....

There is a growing evidence illustrating the ways in which substantial numbers of women have been adversely affected by globalisation, both absolutely as well as in relation to men....

The practice on the ground often belies the commitments that have been taken at the highest political level - revealing a picture of widespread discrimination and blatant violation of labour and trade union rights. It shows discrimination based on sex, age, disability and HIV/AIDS status to be virulent in the world of work today. Growing economic insecurity and inequality have exacerbated problems of xenophobia and racial discrimination....Violation of trade union rights continue to be a daily occurrence and many workers face both political and administrative hurdles when trying to make their voices heard. There are continued reports of imprisonment, disappearance or murder of trade unionists who try to exercise their rights.

(Selected excerpts from the Report of the world Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation)

B T Ranadive on Govt. Employees and Their Tasks

The struggle for better economic conditions for the Central and State employees is an integral part of the struggle for better living conditions, for democracy and socialism conducted by the working class and our people. It is part of the great struggle of the Indian toilers against poverty, unemployment and impoverishment accentuated by the heavy burdens of foreign loans. It is clear that the growing unemployment among the educated which makes jobs scarce for the sons and daughters, brothers and sisters of the employees, cannot be fought, cured or lessened on the strength of the Central employees, that retrenchment cannot be prevented under these conditions and security of jobs maintained unless the democratic struggle defeats the policies leading to unemployment. The rising price spiral cannot be controlled on the strength of the Central employees. The latter at best only fight for the D.A. which is never adequate. Once again, the people must defeat it. Even the partial demands of the employees are part of the democratic struggle of the people.

The Central and State employees are virtually reduced to the ranks of second grade citizens by depriving them of the right of political expression and action. This is having harmful consequences for their immediate movement. They have been forced to keep themselves away from the main trade union organisations and plough lonely furrow. So much is the fear of political contamination that in one of the most well-organised strikes of State employees in one State, I found the leadership of the employees disinclined to address meetings called in their support, by the political parties.

Apart from isolating the Government employees this situation leads to absurd results. The demands of the employees are addressed to the Government. Government policies are responsible for their plight. And yet, in the name of avoiding politics they are not supposed to analyse the basic Government policies dealing with economy, foreign policy, taxation, prices. The Government refused D.A. or need-based wage to the employees but spends Rs.1000 crores annually on military expenditure which is necessitated by its wrong foreign policy. If the employees counter the Government's refusal in this way, then it becomes politics. The Government, goes in for deficit financing to finance the capitalist path and raises prices. But the employees cannot demand a change in this basic Policy without inviting the charge of politics or Communalism.

The employees are therefore forced to voice their economic demands only, and avoid all political contacts with other sections fighting the Government's basic policies except perhaps in West Bengal. No where do the State or Central Employees show much concern for the common movement of the people against economic misery, against the Government. They thereby create a gulf between themselves and the people from whose ranks they come an estrangement which is exploited by the Government to beat down the resistance.

Don't Alienate the People

Every demand of the Central and State employees has to be met from public treasury. This fact the Government utilises to tell the people that the employees want to advance their demands at the expense of the people. And the Government often succeeds in creating apathy in the minds of the people because the latter hardly find the employees taking interest in protesting against taxation on the common man or the rise in prices, or joining popular protests any time. They appear before the public only with their demands. Besides, the employees do not realise that they stand in special need of cultivating the friendship and understanding of the people as is through a large number of them that the misdeeds of the administration and the social system are passed on to the people. They are the innocent vehicles of all that bad in the administration. Some of them instead of cultivating public sympathy, actually alienate it by their behaviour. The rupture of the link with the people, the lack of common bond through common suffering and struggle is likely to prove costly to the employees' movement.

The Central and state employees' organisations must overcome these weaknesses.

(from The Working Class, Vol. 1 No 4, December 1971)