THE VOICE
OF
THE WORKING WOMAN

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Com. B.T. Ranadive, President, CITU addressing the mass rally at Boat Club, New Delhi on December 9, 1987



Homage to Com. PR

THE Voice of the Working Woman expresses its deep sorrow and grief over the passing away of Com. P. Ramamurti, one of the founders of CITU, its first General Secretary. It was during Com. P.R's tenure as General Secretary, the CITU took shape, made rapid progress and advanced as one of the leading centres of the Indian Trade Union movement. His stature as an all India leader in the Trade Union movement helped in spreading the message of CITU to a large sections of workers and Trade Unions.

Com. P.R. reached his position of eminence in the All India Trade Union movement by years of work in the trade union movement. He was the builder of the trade union movement in Tamilnadu where he started his activities nearly 50 years back. Since then there was not one important strike in Tamilnadu with which he was not directly or indirectly associated.

Com. P.R. emerged as a successful leader of the Trade Union movement because he developed a revolutionery understanding of the role of the Trade Union movement in the anti-imperialist struggle for liberation and subsequently in the struggle of the workers and people in post-independent India. During these years Com. P.R. had to face intense repression, he was jailed several times for his trade union and political activities.

He played a leading role in the formation of the UCTU which laid the formation for broader Trade Union Unity. He played an important role in the formation of the National Campaign Committee. Com. P.R. was a brilliant debator in Parliament. He continued to work for the CITU and CPM till the end of his life. His death has deprived the CITU of its foremost champion and organiser. It has inflicted an irreparable loss on the common movement of the working class. While paying homage to his memories, the Voice of the Working Woman sends condolences to Com. P.R's wife and daughters.

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Edited and published by Vimal Ranadive on behalf of the All-India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women-(CITU), from 6, Talkatora Road, N. Delhi-110001. Tel : 384071 and printed by her at Progressive Printers, C-52,53, DDA Sheds Industrials Estate, Okhla Phase-I, New Delhi-20

LIC in Tamil Nadu Held Conventions of Working Women

CONVENTIONS of women working in LIC in Coimbatore, Madurai and Tanjore divisions were held on 26th July, 22nd August and 23rd August 1987 with well prepared agenda and organisational work. The unions prepared a complete list of the names of women employees in every division, sent a circular to all branches informing the importance of organising working women, and advised them to mobilise their women members to attend the conventions. Sponsoring women employees sent printed invitation to each employee through their branches along with agenda, and time schedule etc. Not only that, the divisional unions paid the to and fro travelling fare to all the women employees!

The preparations made by the unions was bound to pay rich dividends. Out of 165 total women employed in Coimbatore division, 101 delegates attended and 20 as fraternal. The total employees in Madurai division are 85 out of which 60 delegates attended the convention, while in Tanjore division, 56 women out of total 75 women employees attended.

All the 3 conventions started at 3 PM with a presidium of 2 to 4 women employees who conducted all the proceedings. The Keynote address was given by Mythily Shivraman when she explained the problems of working women and the need for their association in union activities etc. In all 34 women spoke in conventions on the various problems concerning women employees. The speakers came forward on their own, spoke without any inhibitions, forcefully, fluently on their urgent problems. The main demands arose out of the discussion, were the need for creche, separate toilet and rest rooms for women, ladies special buses, working women hostels, medical facilities and welfare measure schemes to help education of their children. It was also demanded that when working women are called to the Headquarters for training, LIC management should arrange for their stay for the duration of the training period.

There was good discussion on the question of transfer on promotion, the question rightly posed as it creates genuine difficulty for women employees under the present set up of the society. It was proposed, therefore, women on promotion should be retained in their original places or post them to the nearest branches. As well, women who have been posted to far away branches, must be brought to the branches nearest to their place and women should be given priority in general in Transfer to join their husbands.

Some speakers expressed-their inability to associate with the union activities, howsoever they desire because of over burden with domestic work. Some others also said, union leaders should encourage them to associate with union activities which happens rarely.

In fact the points raised by women employees were a surprise for the leadership because they were never prepared for it. They never thought there would be so much discussion on their problems and they would speak them out boldly. At the conclusion of every convention, the leading office bearer of the union used to wind up the discussions and the resolutions were passed.

The Conventions passed resolutions such as equal job opportunities for women, against dowry atrocities, for working women's hostels etc.

The women employees in LIC in these 3 divisions were very happy to come to attend such conventions where they were asked to speak about their problems and they wanted such conventions to be held often. The leaders of the LIC also could understand the problems of LIC women employees. The loyalty and confidence in AIIEA among women employees has further deepened because they found that it was the union leadership that took initiative to mobilise them and gave an opportunity to express their demands and opinions for the first time, with the results some employees expressed their desire to work actively in the unions.

The impact of the discussions in the conventions was further expressed by one delegate thus:

"I now realise that an important part of my life has been wasted without involving in union activities. Hereafter I will work actively and in the next union conference I will come as a union delegate.

Working Women in Kerala March Ahead Under CITU

A Nazimunisa

FROM our Bulletin we understand that some progress is there in the working women's movement in different States. The Kerala State Committee of CITU had decided to hold women's sessions in the CITU District Conferences and prepared a report on the problems of working women in our State and their participation in trade union for discussion in the sessions. In almost all district conferences women's session was held and the report was printed and distributed among the delegates. It was presented by the District Secretaries or State committee members of Co-ordination Committee. Women from various sections attended the session and participated in discussions. In Palghat the session was held as a special convention and a new committee was formed.

These sessions helped to hold a successful State conference of CITU. Women from all the districts and various industries could attend the State Conference held at Ernakulam from October 16th to 18th. There were 72 women delegates out of a total of 600 delegates. In the State Conference there was a 3 hour women's session in which nine delegates participated in the discussion on the resolution presented by the Secretary, Working Women Co-ordination Committee. In the general session also four women comrades participated in the discussion on the General Secretary's report. Moreover the inaugural session of the conference was attended by many women workers from various industries in Ernakulam district and in the mass rally on 18th large number of women workers participated. A special feature of the rally was that the women and children of the workers families were also present in it.

The CITU district committees are trying to reorganise the women's committees, Quilon, Ernakulam and Trichur Committees were reorganised. Trivandrum District committee has planned to hold special meetings of women workers in coir, cashew, textile and artisan at Taluk level on 26th and 29th November. Such meetings are held in various industries in other districts also.

Women were elected to the CITU district committees and councils. Com. Nazimuneeza was elected vice-President and Com. K.R. Padma and Com. M. Kamalamma were elected to the State Committee in the State Conference of CITU.

The Artisans Union is paying attention to organise their women. In all their district conferences Women's problems were discussed and in the State Conference held at Palghat District on 9th October there was women's session which was attended by large number of women. Working Women's Co-ordination Committee helped to hold these meetings.

The State Government employees also take interest in highlighting women's causes. The women's wing of NGO union held a train Jatha demanding women's Commission, maternity benefits, prvisions for creche, transport facilities etc. The Jatha started from Kasargode, the northern district of Kerala. Receiving warm receptions by large number of women and men workers and employees in all the important Railway stations, the Jatha reached Trivandrum on 24th September 1987. Women from all the districts joined the Jatha, which was welcomed by hundreds of men and women workers from different sectors. A meeting was held at the Trivandrum Railway Station premises Com. Nabeesa Ummal MLA welcomed the comrades. The Jatha captain was Com. K.R. Bhanumathy, Convener of NGO Union Women's wing. She is also the State President of our Co-ordination committee. On 25th September a demonstration and dharna was held in front of the Government Secretariat. The dharna was inaugurated by Com. Nazimuneeza. Various union leaders and women leaders greeted the dharna. The demonstratrs later presented a memorandum to the Chief Minister.

The Anganwadi workers and Helpers Association also held conventions, Dharnas,

and demonstrations demanding higher wages and other benefits. Com. Girija Potti, State Treasurer of our co-ordination committee is, one of the patrons of the Association. Our District committees also take interest to organise the Anganwadi workers.

The CITU also organise workers in private hospitals. In Trivandrum, the staff, working in a private maternity hospital, formed a union with the help of us and put some demands before the management. The management refused the demands, threatened the women workers, dismissed one male worker and formed a parallel union to attack the workers as most of them are women. With the help of CITU and our committee the workers launehed strike and then the management was forced to recongnise the union and at last it discussed with the unions, conceded most of the demands and reinstated the dismissed worker.

In the Kerala State Electricity Board, a referendum was conducted on 23rd October to find out unions which represent more than 20 per cent of workers. Our union stood first in the referendum with 45 per cent of the votes defeating the claim of the AITUC led federation that they are majority union. INTUC union and all category unions lost recognition. In connection with the referendum we were able to organise women workers in the Electricity Industry in our union. Formerly majority of women in KSE Board were in non-political unions. The frequent struggles we fought for the demands of the total workers and joint actions on various issues helped to win over the women workers. The working women's movement in different sectors also inspired them to join our union. Moreover our attitude towards women's problems, especially when they were put in convenient places in the general transfer held recently, made them to think it over and decide to join our union. By vigorous membership campaign now we are able to enroll more than 50 per cent of the women workers in our union. Women comrades participated very actively in all the campaign works for the referendum.

They went to different offices, and house to house campaigns, attended women's meetings in large numbers; they spoke on gate meetings in the various offices of the State. Now there are a new set of active women workers and with the active participation of women workers we won the referendum as majority union.

The P&T union also decided to observe a 'Demands Day' highlighting women's demands.

Totally the working women's movement is getting momentum for which we are thankful to the CITU. In all our struggles we get the help of AIDWA. The joint struggle against 'Sati' organised in different parts of the State was also attended by working women.

We have decided to subscribe for 200 copies of Voice of the Working Woman.

In Parliament

"Couples to be posted in same place of work"— States The Minister of Information

THE Government has decided that when it transfers a woman employee, her husband would also be posted "as far as possible at the same place, the Information and Broadcasting Minister, Mr Ajit Kumar Panja said in the Rajya Sabha today.

While this was not always possible every effort would be made to ensure that they stayed together, the Minister said.

Mr Panja who was deputising for the Labour Minister stated while replying to a discussion on the Equal Remuneration (Amendment) Bill, 1987, that the provisions of the Act on the question of such transfer, however, would not cover women employed in private undertakings. The Act would come into force only when the women were denied transfer facilities, promotions and subjected to acts of discrimination, he said.

Mr Panja said while effecting transfer of women employees, it would also be ensured that there was no disruption in studies of school-going children. All efforts would be made to see that the transfers were made before the commencement of the academic year.

Decisions Taken in Coordination Committee Meeting at Chandigarh

THE meeting of the available members of the AICCWW was held on 30.11.1987 at Chandigarh. Com. Vimal Ranadive spoke on the major points raised in the report. An important point made was, the Bombay session of working women held along with the CITU Conference helped the State CITU committees and Co-ordination Committees to further the cause of working women. A number of conventions were held in different states and committees formed. But the progress in enrolling the membership and the participation of women in the committees is still not satisfactory as it should be. She reported about the circular on the question of transfer issued by the Union Labour Ministry which might help working women who have been given transfers. Secondly she reported about the Amendment Bill on Maternity Benefit Act 1987 which has to be discussed by the committees and our suggestions to be sent to the Government.

After the reporting in detail the discussion started. Com. Surinder Kour from Punjab reported about the work done in various districts. She said six conventions of working women were held with attendance from 250-300 on an avarage, where teachers, nurses, Anganwadi workers participated and gave the charter of demands. Then she reported the struggle of nurses which continued for 3 months. They were jailed, lathicharged and later betrayed by the reformist leaders. We supported them, even went to jail. Com. Surinder reported that about 2000 women under the banner of Co-ordination Committee demonstrated on 18th November for the implementation of Pay Commission recommendations. On the whole, she said despite the extremist activities, work continued and is increasing. The coordination committee members welcomed the report of Punjab.

Com. Ranjana from Delhi reported about the various activities in Delhi, Gaziabad and Faridabad while asserting that after the Bombay Conference, comrades have taken up the work of working women seriously. Then she reported about the nurses union which has began the work under our guidance and we may further have contacts in other hospitals. The recent grand strike in Delhi on Minimum wage, was unprecedented where women participated on a large scale and a good convention was held of working women to support the strike. The conditions of women in Anganwadi are bad and they are under the reformist leadership in Delhi. With regard to women in the unorganised sector, we have to do it under the CITU. We should observe one day as a day for 'creche' and against discontinuation of Maternity Benefit after two children. She gave some suggestion for increasing the sale of Voice of the Working Women, and for a Trade Union Class for working women.

Com. D. Saraswathi said, the LIC Conventions were good and the RBI too should have such conventions. After so many years, two meetings of Equal Remuneration Advisory Committees were held and Com. Mythily attended. The women in ICDS are organised by NGO union where 18,000 women are employed. In Tamilnadu the wages are Rs 195/- for teachers and Rs 70/- for Ayas. It was reported that 16 lakhs of women were employed by the Government for the 'middlay meal scheme' and they were paid Rs 50-60 only. Then she said we have a problem of fund. CITU unions should form their sub-committees. A day for creche should be observed.

Com. Rampukari from Bihar said there is yet no decision to function the Co-Committee. When the decision was taken it could not be held due to drought situation. Then she reported about the work in Muzaffarpur District in support of NGOs and Teachers. The Municipal workers strike continued when 250 women gheraoed the DM for five hours and the leaders were released. With regard to Gram Sevikas, about 884 posts are sanctioned but they are lying vacant. With regard to the question of discontinuation of maternity leave after two children it was told that women will be deprived of increment and promotions if they have more than two children. She said that the Co-ordination Committee will be formed in the month of April. She suggested

the circulars should be sent in Hindi, while Voice of the Working Women should have a few pages in Hindi.

Com. Sarada from Kerala mentioned about the commission appointed by Kerala Left Front Government to study and proposed remedies for problems of working women. With regard to nurses, they had to work for 14 hours at a stetch. After our Government came into power, eight hours day was ordered. Family pension started for Caschew, Coir workers etc. Women in Anganwadi are geeting Rs 275/- and Rs 110, at the Central rate. The seats are reserved for women, two in Panchayat, three in Municipality and four in Corporation.

After the discussion on the report and work report from the states some suggestions have come about the attendance in the meeting. Besides the large expenses for the comrades in Kerala to travel, it was felt, at least one comrade should be sent from each state.

After the discussion on the future programme, it was decided to take up the following issues in the next four months in consultation with State CITU.

1. Since the question of Anganwadis is coming up in a big way in every state, the convention and conference should be organised on their common demands. The states should *send the present working conditions of women in Anganwadis as early as possible* so that a common charter of demands be prepared and sent to the states.

2. On the issue of discontinuation of maternity benefit after two children, signature campaigns, telegrammes, resolutions should be sent to the Labour Minister protesting against it. A delegation from the Centre on this issue should meet the Minister with a memorandom.

3. An "All India creche Day" with a convention of working women should be organised in the states. It can also take up the question of Maternity Benefit.

4. The question of women in the unorganised sector was not taken up seriously by our committees so far. Only one convention in Tamilnadu was held. After discussion with the state CITU, their demands such as minimum wages, legislations etc should be taken up.

5. The sale of Voice of the Working Woman is slowly increasing but the need of Hindi is greater as per the discussion among comrades. There were two suggestions. One, a few pages in Hindi should be included in the present 24 pages with the same price, Re 1/- Another suggestion was pages should be increased to 30 with increase in price, as Rs 1.50 or even Rs 2/-. The CITU should discuss the issue seriously and take decision as early as possible.

The Centre also should decide organising women in ICDS under Trade Unions, and direct the states accordingly.

The meeting was held on the 1st December 1987 when Com. B. T. Ranadive guided the deleberations. He said "Our progress is slow. Not that some people are trying to put it off. Even among our leaders, the old ideas still prevail. Few comrades attend meeting because, the thinking is not serious enough on this issue. Some work is going on in Kerala, position is improving. The situation in Bengal is not good, and there is need to move faster. Yes, the women in Anganwadis are the lowest section of working women, they are rural women and they must be organised. There is no need of conflict between AIDWA and Co-ordination committee of working women. We organise working women as workers and they must be a part of Trade Union movement. AIDWA sees women as women, citizen and workers. It won't be correct to organise Harijan workers as Harijans, the same way women workers being organised only as women is not correct. If trade unions are lazy then sometime AIDWA takes initiative. But working women must be organised in their class organisation which can take them forward. Working women's fight is against capitalism and urgent and the Trade Union leaders should take it up.

"There is a lot of discontent in the masses, and they are getting ready for struggle and for organisation. We must take the initiative to organise the Anganwadi women. If we work with them, sometimes they won't form a union initially, won't come to CITU immediately. Where we are strong, we don't face this problem."

P & T Workers in Kerala Observe 'Women's Demand Day'

P.S. Ramankutty
Convenor NFPTE, Kerala

ENTIRE members of NFPTE in Kerala, men and women observed 24th November, the foundation day of NFPTE, this year as 'Women's Demand Day'. Joint demonstrations were organised in front of P&T offices throughout the state and the employees attended to duties wearing badges demanding 'settle issues pointed out in the Charter of Demands" submitted by the Mahila Sub-Committee of NFPTE some time back to the Postmaster General and Telecommunications General Manager of Kerala. Following demands were included in the Charter.

1. Creche or Child Care Centres be opened in all main P&T offices.

2. Rest rooms, dining rooms, toilets etc., may be provided exclusively for the lady officials in all P&T Offices.

3. Period of Maternity Leave be enhanced to six months; one month's salary be granted as maternity allowance.

4. Maternity Leave be granted to Ed and RTP employees.

5. Convenient and light duties be given to ladies during pregnancy and one year after delivery.

6. Husband and wife, even if working in different departments, be given posting in the same station.

7. Lady officials in the P&T may be given 2 hours relief per duty.

8. Safety may be ensured to lady officials performing outdoor duty.

9. Conveyance may be provided for lady officials atleast in the main cities and towns.

10. Ambulance may be provided by the P&T Department in main centres.

11. Women Attendants may be posted in all P&T offices with ten or more lady officials working.

12. Duty time may be re-arranged considering the conveyance facilities available in the concerned stations.

13. Lady officials having infant child/ children may be granted special leave with allowance or even without salary for the period requested for by them.

14. Extra Relief be granted to the lady officials for breast-feeding their children.

15. Harassment of lady officials by officers be stopped. Strict and stringent action may be taken against those indulging in such actions.

16. Condition of one year's stay for applying for transfer imposed in Kerala Telecom Circle be lifted immediately.

17. Hostel facilities may be provided in the cities and town for lady officials. Ladies may not be posted to place where hostel facilities or accommodation are not available, unless such officials express their willingness.

The State Mahila Sub Cdmmittee of NFPTE has decided to organise trade union classes for lady officials in all revenue districts. Mahila Conventions are being held at district and taluk levels now. No doubt, the discussions and deliberations in such conventions show remarkable improvement in the conciousness and deep understanding of women employees of the international, national and local situation.

BHEL expects Women to wear One Saree and One Blouse in a Year !

A memorandum was submitted by 165 Women, working in Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited in Tiruchirapalli, Tamilnadu to the Director, BHEL, New Delhi on the meagre supply of Uniform material to women, the copy of which was sent by the secretary of BHEL Workers' Union to AICCWW. The memorandum speaks itself as to how the women employees are treated in such a renowned company, by the employers.

"We enclose herewith the copy of the mamorandum received from the working women in our unit. They have focused their inconvenience regarding the uniforms. Now BHEL, Triuchy unit issued the following quantities of uniform materials to lady employees.

Saree	: 1 No. once in a year.
Blouse	: 1 No."
Petticoat	: 1 No."
Chappal	: 1 No. once in 2 years.

The above employees requested in their memorandum regarding their requirements of additional sets as below.

Blouse	: 3 Nos once in a year.
Petticoat	: 2 Nos once in a year.
Chappal	: 1 No. once in a year.

As we are one of the Participative union, we have discussed this issue with executive Director/Tiruchy Unit in detail and ED told that this subject is referred to corporate office.

Our union would like to say the justification in this case, for your kind consideration and favourable action please. It is not reasonable and justifiable one to compare with gents regarding the issue of quantum of uniforms supplied once in a year. Generally the female employees are using the thin cloth for their shirts etc. due to natural justification. Moreover a pair of chappal normally comes to a life of 6 to 9 months. It is difficult for the female employees to use the above chappal daily throughout two years. Hence as a humanitarian ground the management should consider their grievances and do the needful.

When we compare the above uniform materials on cost-wise as mentioned below, the management can consider their grievances.

For Females	Price in Rs.	*For gents:*	
Chappal	53.00	Shoe	167.00
Saree	185.02	Pant	104.92
Blouse	18.40	Shirt	73.00
Petticoat	29.78	——	
Stitching charge	15.00	Stitching charge	60.00
Total	301.18		404.72

With the above difficulties/grievances, it is difficult for them to wear the uniform daily.

Hence our union request you to kindly consider the above matter as a genuine case and accept their grievances.

(2) Moreover, in our Tiruchy Unit, the management is supplying safety shoes with socks for the shop side workers/supervisors/ executives and north star shos for office side employees without socks. Our union and works committee forums have also emphasised this issue on many occasions regarding providing of socks for north star shoes also and the manage ment have informed that the corporate sanction has to be obtained for issue of socks. Hence kindly consider the above issue and arrange for providing of socks to all.

Our union expects your favourable reply early."

Com. Dipen Ghose on the Equal Remuneration Amendment Bill 1987 on 23.11.87

MR. Panja had stated that this important legislation had been enacted by the Parliament of India in order to ensure payment of equal remuneration to men and women.

Our experience is that though there have been legislations in all cases, equal remuneration is not being paid. The coal-mines are under the public sector. And the public sector is the offending organisation in the matter of the application of the Equal Remuneration Act, still. Similar is the case of plantations — tea plantations, tobacco plantations and rubber estates. Here also we find still the Equal Remuneration Act is not being implemented faithfully.

Mr. Panja will also appreciate, by virtue of his experience in his profession before he became a Minister, that by making mere legislation or by even amending the existing legislation or making it more stringent the purpose for which this legislation is sought to be made cannot be fulfilled, because we are living, good, bad or indifferent, in a male dominated society and mostly the executives are the people suffering from male chauvinism and, therefore, they are little concerned about the implementation of the legislation.

So my first question is this.

While replying to this debate will he be in a position to tell us to what extent the principal Act which was passed by Parliament is being implemented? Has the Minister of labour come across any instances of failure of this legislation whether in the public or in the private sector? What machinery, the monitoring machinery, the overseeing machinery, this Ministry, the Ministry of Labour, has since consituted to ensure that the provisions of these legislations are implemented?

In the Nilgiri Tea Estate where the Minimum Wages Act is in vogue and all workers, whether male or female, should be paid a minimum wage of Rs. 12 a day, my information is that a male worker is paid Rs. 8 a day while a female worker is paid Rs. 7.50 a day. And what is worse, when there was an agitation, when there was a movement, by the female workers in that tea estate, the employer brought hirelings from outside to break that agitation. There is neither labour machinery nor any other machinery operating there to ensure that the minimum wage is paid equally to both male and female workers. Similarly in the construction work — under the public sector — a male worker is paid Rs. 12 to Rs. 15 a day while a female worker is paid only Rs. 9 a day. In Assam Tea Estate — there is no equal remuneration between male and female workers and there is no machinery to implement the Equal Remuneration Act. Here so far as this particular amending piece of legislation is concerned, the words "work of a similar nature" in the earlier Section 5 are now sought to be replaced by the words — after the words "work of a similar nature" — "or in any condition of service subsequent to recruitment such as promotions, training or transfer,". Mr. Panja, by virtue of his experience in this profession, will share my concern that this term "work of a similar nature" is a vague term and there is scope to misinterpret in the other way round in order to pay less to a female worker; there is scope on the part of the employer to prove that by nature the work is not similar. There are hundreds of situations like that in tea estates, in tobacco plantations, in rubber plantations, etc. They say, this work is not of a similar nature. Therefore, I would be happy if, by virtue of the experience gained in the Ministry of Labour, in this amending law the Minister specifies or defines the words "similar nature of work". In Kokrajar, a Tea Estate in Assam there was an agitation over this particular issue where the employer sought to take advantage of these words, "similar nature of work", in order to pay less to the female workers' he tried to interpret that the work was not of a similar nature. Representations were made to the Labour Ministry but the Labour Ministry did not intervene to define or clarify what "similar nature of work" was or is. About this amending clause Mr. Panja has said that this Equal Remuneration Act was conceived of for payment of remuneration at the time of recruitment. But during the course

of service in respect of certain other benefits, what does an employee get?

Concern was not taken that the principle of equality should be followed and that is why this section has been sought to be amended by inserting a few words — "or in any condition of service subsequent to recruitment such as promotions, training or transfer." But, Sir, what about the cases of retrenchment?

In view of my experience, I am only giving the specific cases. In the case of retrenchment, it is our experience that women workers are made the victims of retrenchment, particularly in the mines, in the plantations and in the unorganised sectors. Even now care has been sought to be taken to see that in the case of retrenchment at least this discrimination is not followed, some rules, some provisions of equality are followed. Here, I would only draw the attention of Minister to another aspect. Condition of service includes transfer. In the case of transfer, concern has been expressed to see that discrimination is not made. But, Sir, surely you will agree that in the case of transfer, particularly the transfer of women workers, some special care needs to be taken because the fall-out in the family, if a woman worker is transferred, is not the same as that of a male worker/when he is transferred looking at the question of equality, yes, remuneration has to be equal, equality has to be ensured in the case of other conditions of service and in the case of transfer there should be equality. But, Sir, in the social set-up that we are having today, care has to be taken in the case of transfer because if a married woman worker is transferred, immediately the apprehension of breaking up of the family arises. So, I want to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to this particular aspect. It is not simply a legalistic point of view. It is a question of social viewpoint as in the present family set-up and the social set-up that we are having now. So, in the matter of transfer of women workers particular care should be taken, particular view should be taken to see that such transfers do not result in the breaking up of the families by creating some problems. In such cases, transfer of women workers should be avoided, simply equality should not be maintained.

Lastly, Sir, it is true that under Section 10, the punishment has been sought to be increased from Rs. 1000 to Rs. 10,000. But I don't think — I don't think the Minister also will believe it — that by simply raising the amount of punishment from Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 10000 it can deter the employers whether in the public sector or the private sector from following these discriminatory policies between the male and woman worker. Therefore, I think, an awareness has to be created among the employers. And particularly from the Government of India's point of view, from the Labour Ministry's point of view, a straight monitoring, overseeing machinery has to be created to see that these laws — the amending Bill and whatever provisions are there — are implemented. Otherwise this will remain only a piece of legislation to be quoted as a good measure of the Government, but the women workers will not be benefited.

On Transfer

Mr. Minister, I raised that question of transfer. This Act has been constituted with the idea of enforcing equality. But in the case of transfer, possibly a doctrine of reverse discrimination should be there because in the case of transfer of a married women, it involves the breaking of family. So, in that case, not simply equality, but some more protection is necessarily to be given for the woman worker in the case of transfer. As you are saying, there is a procedure in the Government of India that if both the husband and wife are working, then they should be posted in the same place. But the experience that you have or the experience that we have is that whenever the husband is transferred somewhere else, a request comes from the wife that she should also be posted there.

But when a women worker is transferred somewhere else, then the request does not come from the husband that he too should be posted there. Then, take the case of women workers in mines or plantations. Their husbands may not necessarily be Government employees or bank employees or LIC employees' so that they could be transferred to these places. They may be agricultural labourers, farm workers or working somewhere else. That is why our request was to see that at the time of effecting a transfer in respect of a married woman worker, from the social point of view, some protection is necessary.

Cooperative Achievements in West Bengal

At present 68 lakh families are within the fold of cooperatives in the State.

Under the Universal Membership Programme, 7.62 lakh families of weaker sections have so far been enrolled as members of cooperatives.

In 1986-87 short-term production loan sanctioned to agriculturists was Rs. 52 crores as against Rs. 43 crores in the previous year; and Rs. 10.53 crores were sanctioned by the Cooperative Land Development Banks as long-term credit.

Cooperative Marketing Societies purchased 5.95 lakh bales of jute in the price-support programme and distributed 2.48 lakh MT of fertilizers.

Consumer Cooperatives sold consumer goods worth Rs. 200 crores in 1986-87.

To alleviate housing problem of the middle-class and lower middle-class people, 19,283 residential flats/houses have been built by Cooperative Housing Societies.

There are 35 cooperative cold storages for potatoes with a total capacity of 1.26 lakh MT. 8 more units will be commissioned shortly. There are 1524 cooperative godowns with a capacity of 1.75 lakh MT. Some 700 godowns with a capacity of 1.75 lakh MT are under construction under NCDC-III Programme.

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

ICA/5444/87

Grand Participation of Women Workers in Delhi Strike

Ranjana Nirula

AFTER the All India CITU Conference at Bombay, 5 meetings of the Delhi CCWW have been held. Attendance at these meetings varied from 50 per cent to 70 per cent. The committee functioning has improved. Meetings are held regularly, work is distributed and checked up. Now more committee members are working actively and our activities have increased.

Work in CITU Unions

Ghaziabad: Two new units in Sahibabad and NOIDA are coming to our union, where more than 1000 women are employed. 4 meetings were held of the women workers from these units — Super Cassettes and Binatone — and a total of about 200 women attended these meetings. A memorandum was given at the Collector's Office in Ghaziabad, demanding action to solve the problems faced by the women working in the Ghaziabad, NOIDA and Sahibabad iudustrial areas. At the Towers and Transformers factory in Sahibabad, the management hired goondas as security men. When these goondas misbehaved with some of the women workers, they were beaten soundly. Later, the women gheraoed the manager for over 6 hours when these goondas brandished a pistol to threaten the union leaders. After a three month struggle and lock-out, the workers are back at work.

Social Welfare Centres: (Delhi): A deputation met the Director and apprised him of the lack of work and attempts to shut down some centres. He assured his help and subsequently visited some centres and has scotched attempts to close them down. The women workers are now planning another strike to demand regularisation and pension.

Nafed: The union here has twice come to CITU and then the management purchased some of the leaders. Once again, the women have brought the union back to CITU and this time they are determined to stay under our flag.

Nurses union: This union is not yet affiliated to CITU. The union submitted a mamorandum with almost 200 signatures to the Director AIIMS demanding housing facilities. The Director met a deputation from the union and promised to implement some of the demands, and action is being taken on our demand already. The union membership is growing slowly and some new contacts have been made in a nearby hospital also.

Wazirpur Thread Factory: About 30 women work in this factory and the management has been harassing the workers ever since they formed a CITU Union. The women prevented the machines being removed from the factory and put up a militant struggle when the police (at the managements behest) abused the women, our unions held a huge demonstration at the Police Station and the concerned policeman was suspended.

Representation on Labour Committee: We have been given representation on the Labour Advisory Board of the Delhi Administration dealing with employment problems of women.

Sale of Literature: We have sold 80 copies of the Working Women's Report, and we sell 100 copies of the Voice of the Working Women, regularly.

Working Women's Convention: A Working Women's Convention in support of the CITU call for a 72 hour strike was organised on 15th November '87. 74 women from 16 industries/ in Delhi, Faridabad, Ghaziabad, NOIDA and Sahibabad attended the Convention, which was inaugurated by Com. Vimal Ranadive. 16 women spoke on the main resolution, supporting the strike call, as well as highlighting their problems at work and their experiences in their unions. The women were greatly enthused and vowed to ensure the success of the strike in their own and neighbouring factories.

72 Hour Strike: The women in CITU unions participated wholeheartedly in the campaign and the strike.

Why Only Working Women Should be Punished

A deputation from the All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) met the Union Labour Minister, Shri P.A. Sangma, on 15th December, and presented a memorandum apprising him of the difficulties being faced by women workers regarding maternity benefits. The deputation, which was led by Vimala Ranadive, Secretary (AICCWW), and Basudev Achary M.P, CPI(M), included Ranjana Nirula, Pramila Pandhe (Delhi CCWW), Rama Dixit (LIC) and Nina (RBI).

The memorandum presented stated that family planning should not be implemented forcibly by penalisation of working women having more than two children. A much broader approach which ensures a rise in the educational, social, cultural and living standards of the people could alone ensure a successful family planning programme. The deputation protested against the Orissa Government order curtailing maternity leave to only two children, and the denial of promotion and increment by the leave. The minister vehemently stated that under the provisions of both the existing and proposed amended maternity Benefit Acts there was no such curtailment of maternity benefit to only two children, and the 4th Pay Commission's recommendation to the contrary is not acceptable. He promised to look into the matter, as also to enquire into why a certificate from the civil surgeon is demanded before granting maternity leave, in the Union Territory of Chandigarh.

Mr. Sangma stated categorically that he had recommended flexibility in granting of maternity leave, which should be taken as desired by the mother.

Further amendments proposed in the forthcoming amended Act include representation of Trade Unions and voluntary organisations on inspection and implementation bodies, with the statutory powers. The period of continuous service required to avail of maternity benefits will be reduced from 160 to 90 days.

While welcoming these positive suggestions by the minister, the members of the deputation urged him to enhance the medical bonus to Rs. 500/- and to ensure stringent punishment to errant employers for any denial of maternity benefits to working women.

The Following Memorandum was Submitted to the Union Labour Minister by the ALCCWW.

"We are surprised to learn that the recommendation of the 4th Pay Commission to pay maternity benefit upto two children is being forcefully implemented in different states without any consideration of the women workers who are below poverty line. In Orissa the orders have already passed by the Government to implement the recommendations. In Punjab under the U.T. a certificate is required signed by the civil surgeon for entitlement of the maternity benefit. In Bihar women are threatened to deprivation of increment and promotion. It appears the Central Government is bent upon to introduce it all over India under the slogan of "Small family norms" for the population control.

The AICCWW is totally opposed to such forcible measures for implementation of family planning, when only women employees are to be punished for implementation of population control programme.

The Majority of the people in our country being under poverty line, vast number of people in rural areas being illiterate with no proper facilities of welfare measures and cultural environment the population growth is bound to be there. Unless the social conditions are changed, such measures will not be successful though no sane person will deny the necessity of family planning.

It can be noted, that wherever people have education, culture, and means of livelihood to their satisfaction, those advanced countries do not face the problem of population seriously. No compulsion for family planning is neecssary. Unless those social conditions are changed, it will be difficult for the Government to reach the target of family planning announced.

The declared welfare measures, by the Government are not reached to the workers in

(*Contd. on page 15*)

Mammoth Sea of Reds is 9th December

IT was a mammoth Sea of red flags on 19th December 1987 at New Delhi's Boat Club covering the entire area upto India Gate. The one million rally, organised by the Left Parties with 24 mass organisations surpassed all expectations. The workers, peasants, agricultural workers, students, women, from Bihar, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and other placcs overfulfilled their quotas, upsetting the calculations of the organisers. Even the burgeoise press had to accept it as one of the biggest rallies ever held in Delhi. It was deciplined, they came to listen to the leaders waiting for the call for action. There was only one slogan from the Morcha "Rajiv Gandhi Istifa Do". People are no longer prepared to tolerate the anti-people policies of Rajiv Gandhi. How long can they suffer?

Who were the people who attended the rally? They were the have nots — the ordinary peasants, agricultural workers, men and women, Adivasi and so on, who have nothing to loose. They wanted land, employment, minimum wage, reduction in prices, social justice, education, equality and to live with dignity, in the society. And they poured into Delhi by road, railway, truck and by foot and by whatever means they could avail at the call of the Left Parties. In the process they had to face the lathis of the police at the stations, were fined for travelling without ticket, received imprisonment for one day!

The Central Campaign Committee highlighted the degrading position of women under the Congress rule when women are murdered in the name of Sati! The AIDWA and NFIW were also associated with the Central Campaign Committee of mass organisations. The result could be seen in a large participation of women in Jathas and on 9th December itself. Out of about 200 people from Bombay who were compelled to get down at Ratlam, 25-30 were women. In Bihar camp, more than 25 per cent were women who came from Ranchi, Jamashetpur, Muzaffarpur, Adivasi women too were there. From Madhya Pradesh about 40-50 women were there. More than 250 women came from Maharashtra. Com. Rajender Kour, member of AIDWA was in the Punjab Jatha till it arrived one day before. They were all enthusiastic to shout slogans no doubt.

The rally was the culmination of the month long campaign launched by the mass organisations in the states for day's together, thousands of people attended the numerous meetings covered by Jathas which gave expression to the feelings of the common man and also their hope for the future. The speakers in the Jathas also spoke about the performance of the Left Front Governments which brought out the difference between them and the Congress ruled states. They also spoke about the present situation in Darjeeling, Punjab, Tripura and Assam as to how the divisive forces are disrupting the unity of the country. 9th December Morcha-and the slogans showed clearly the anti communal' stand of the sponsors of the Rally vis-a-vis BJP and Congress.

It required more than 3 hours for the procession to reach the Boat Club from behind the Redfort. Com. B.T.R. President when spoke and gave the call for Bharat Bundh, the sea of reds gave a big ovation, appreciating the slogan. Com. Jyoti Basu, Chief Minister of West Bengal, Com. Surjeet, Com. Indrajet Gupta, Homi Daji and others spoke supporting the resolution. Com. Kanak Mukherjee and Vimala Faruque on behalf of AIDWA and NFIW supported the demands.

The masses returned with the hope that a new alternative to the Congress rule has to be brought early if we have to live as human beings!

(*Contd. from page 14*)

rural and urban areas, and least to the women who are backward and exploited.

The AICCWW demands that the recommendations of the 4th Pay Commission should not be implemented if the 1975 Emergency performance is not to be repeated. The Government should take Co-operation of women's organisations and Trade Unions and other mass organisations while educating the people, and improving the economic conditions of the workers so that they are able to accept the small family norm for their own benefit.

Convention of Women Workers in South Canara

THE 3rd Conference of Daxina Kannada District CITU was held on 20-22nd of December, with 178 delegates out of which 75 were women, at Kundapur, near Mangalore. The venue of the conference was named as P. Ramamurti Nagar. The special session on unemployment and working women were held along with the deleberations on the report of the General Secretary. A convention of working women was held as a part of the conference on 22nd Dec. with Com. K. Moosabba presiding. Com. B. Madhava, General Secretary welcomed the gathering and explained the purpose of convening the special convention. The convener of the Karnataka State Working Women's Co-ordination Committee, M. M. Rajamma, and K. Padmavathi, member, addressed the delegates while narrating the progress made in forming the committees in various districts. Nine delegates participated, while one male delegate spoke.

Vimala Ranadive, Secretary of the AICCWW addressed the convention. While speaking on the problems of working women, she called upon the women to take active interest in the trade union activities of their unions, rise up to the level of leadership and devote their attention to organise the lakhs of unorganised women workers in the districts. The following women participated.

Yamuna from Cashew industry said, to get equal rights, we women have to come forward and work for it. We must face all the problems in the way and fight against the difficulties. We have to take with us unemployed women also.

Kamla from Beedi industry said, unless we organise ourselves who is going to help us? It is sad that the Christain missionaries and Congress people come to house for canvassing. But what about us? We have no education. I request our leaders that this matter should be looked into, and needful to be done.

Suryakawathi said when we are young, we are looked after by our parents. After we have children we have a family bondage. It is surprising even our own comrades do not allow their family to come out and work for women's movement.

Lalita, a nurse from the Private hospital complained that nobody comes to organise us, and we have very bad working conditions.....

Vedavathi a beedi worker said, she was prepared to fight with others against the employer, but young girls find very difficult to come to street.....

Ophelia Fernadis explained as to how women were working in socialist countries and why. They have got all amenities at their disposal ———

Jaywathi a beedi worker said we got threats from the family and neighbours when we want to work in Trade Unions.

Pushpa said they were trying to organise women and people joke whether we will get girls to work.....

Bahudeva Adiza Secretary Beedi union said while organising women we should give preference to women Beedi workers here because many educated women are coming forward to our fold due to unemployment. We have women as vice-presidents and committee members, but even then we failed to form a group of women either in village or in town. This is our main drawback. Wherever we work. their families too join us. We should not loose the opportunities to organise them."

Shed away inferiorty Complex: Comrade Ramani tells Women Workers

PARTICIPATING in the discussions on the Secretary's Report at the III Conference of Dekshina Kannada District CITU, Comrade Ramani, the young woman Secretary of the Moodabidri Beedi Labour Union called upon

the working women to shed away their inferiority complex. She asked them to demolish the notion that women are the weaker sex. Pointing at Comrade Vimala Ranadive, she asked the women delegates: Is not this great leader a woman? She said it is high time we realise that women have every right to be equals in society.

Moodbirdri is in Karkala Taluk, of the only Taluk in Dakshina Kannada district where the CITU had no organisation until the Beedi Workers Union came up just two years ago. Recalling the day when she attended a Beedi Workers' Convention at Mangalore for the first time in her life, she said she was totally ignorant of the strength of Unity till then. Just like the lakhs of the unorganised beedi workers of the district, she was also mutely, suffering the exploitations and injustice, she recalled. When at the convention she heard reports of the militant struggles conducted by women beedi workers in the various parts of the district, she was greatly inspired and realised that she too has the capacity to organise and fight. It was thus that she helped the CITU comrades to form a Union of beedi workers in her area and became its Secretary.

She also called upon the women workers, the delegates in particular, to shed away their shyness. The time worn values inherited from feudal society, compel women to live a life of seclusion. Men comrades are our own brothers. Do we not talk to our brothers at home? Then why should we hesitate to talk in the Conference before our men comrades, she asked the women delegates who were not coming forward to speak at the Conference.

She also spoke of the evil of dowry that is rampent in this part of the country. Many working class families are ruined by this great menace and it is high time we create awarences among the working class about the necessity of fighting this evil, she said.

Pointing out that there are lakhs of unorganised beedi workers in the district, she appealed to women comrades to take up leadership in the Unions since the men comrades alone cannot fulfil this task as the bulk of the beedi workers are women.

A Dedicated Party Comrade

Maina Gawankar

COM. Maina Gawankar breathed her last on 15th December 1987 after a prolonged illness for more than 13 years. She suffered with acute Rheumatism which affected her in 1956 when thousands of men and women came to Delhi for Dharna demanding Sanyukta Maharashtra in December and sat throughout in the night in biting cold. Maina became victim of the cold since then and never recovered fully. One will never come to know that she was suffering because she lived a life of Party Comrade who was fully alive with day to day political happenings and used to discuss politics whenever you meet her. Herself very active in her life, she used to feel why things were not moving fast enough! In fact she continued to bear her acute pains because she was living in politics. It was a pitiable sight to look at her in her latter days.

She became party member in 1940, worked on students front when Party was illegal, became lawyer and practiced in the interest of working class in Bombay, she rushed to work in the Adivasi area in Thane when so much repression was going on in 1945-46. She was the Vice-President of the Bombay Pharmaceutical Union, and was connected with Race course Union, Britania Biscuits and Engineering Unions. When the workers in Britania Buiscuits factory were on strike for two months in 1964-65, women workers picketed the gates and did not allow the vans to come out, 40 girls were arrested, lathicharged and jailed. Com. Maina defended the girls in the Court and they were released. The last case she argued was in 1975 when the clients took her to the Court in a chair !

Com. Gawankar and Maina after getting married in 1948 were both working in the Trade unions. Maina was a regular reader of the Voice of the Working woman and used to give her suggestions. In her death, Bombay committee lost a faithful conscious Party comrade. Maina died but her militant spirit will live forever;

Working Women in Reserve Bank Protest against IBA for Reducing the Maternity Leave

THE 181 women employees in Reserve Bank have written to the Chairman demanding continuation of the present maternity leave. A copy of the letter was sent to AICCWW with signatures. We are producing below the letter signed by women employees.

The Chairman
Indian Banks Association
Veer Nariman Road
Bombay

Sir,

We, the working women employees in various banks, have been distressed to note the anti-women welfare attitude of I.B.A. displayed by them during the process of negotiations with some unions on wages and service conditions of bank employees. We have been informed by the circular issued by the Bank Employees Federation of India that the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) have in its counter demands for a package deal asked the two unions viz., AIBEA and NCBE to accept reduction in the entitlement of Maternity Leave to six months instead of existing one year and limited to 2 occasions instead of existing 4 occasions. This rank discrimination wherein instead of marching forward, the efforts are to take us back to primitive periods is highly condemnable. Rightly, the BEFI which has not been called for negotiations on charter of demands submitted by it, has opposed this demand and we are one in opposing this feudalistic approach of the employers represented by I.B.A. We, therefore demand of you to shun this approach and instead evolve such policies which may bring more relief and bitter service conditions for the women bank employees.

Thanking you,

"The Wife of a Martyr never becomes a Widow..."

TWO of the most electrifying and touching moments in the 3rd All India DYFI Conference-moments that no one who was present, will ever forget-occurred when Satinder Kaur, wife of martyr Gurnam Singh Uppal, and Meena Rai, wife of martyr Nirai Rai, were called up to the stage to address the Conference. Gurnam Singh had fallen a prey to the bullets of Khalistani extremists, and Niraj Rai fell fighting the GNLF hooldums in the Darjeeling hills.

Both Satinder Kaur and Meena Rai were themselves delegates to the DYFI Conference, and it gave both of them a magnificent standing ovation that reverberated across the hall, and changed the entire atmosphere of the Conference in a flash. They were deeply moving occasions, which could not have failed to bring tears to several eyes. But they were also deeply inspiring occasions, which could not have failed to fuel undying hatred for the enemy, and further steel the determination to destroy them.

Satinder Kaur, in her address in Panjabi, said, "It was before we got married that Comrade Gurnam warned me of the threat to his life, and told me not to take the risk. But I took the risk-and I am proud of it, Never for a moment do I forget that it is not only Gurnam who has been killed; there are several other fighters in Punjab who have been similarly martyred in this bitter struggle against the Khalistani demons, imperialist-backed traitors to our country. But heroism and sacrifice are not new to Punjab, the land of the immortal Bhagat Singh. And today I am more certain than ever before that we shall triumph in the end, I shall work for it, as Comrade Gurnam would want me to do.

"There are some people who call me a widow. But I want to say this that the wife of martyr never becomes a widow, because the tilak on her forehead is not sindoor, but is the very blood of her husband;"

If this is not courage, then nothing is.

(*Contd. on page 19*)

Anganwadi Women in Bombay Organised

A meeting of women Anganwadi workers was held on 2nd January 1988 in Dharavi Centre with about 150 women attending.Prabha Savant, President of Shramik Mahila Sangh presided. 5 women workers spoke about their worsening conditions and resolved to fight against the injustice. Some women complained that after the first child they do not get maternity benefit. A resolution was passed in support of the 14 demands made in the Charter. It was decided that the women should contact the other centres and have a broader meeting so that a conference of Anganwadi women should be held within 2 months.

The Charter of Demands

1. Anganwadi Scheme is run by the Central Government, under "Integrated child Developing scheme". So Anganwadi workers should be treated as central government employees, and should be given pay scale accordingly.

2. We have been treated as social workers and instead of giving pay they call it as honourarium, this should be stopped immediately and we should be treated as government employees.

3. Balwadi and Primary Teachers are getting Rs. 260, Rs. 290 respectively as basic pay including Dearness allowance and other allowances, they are getting Rs. 900 to 1000/- a month.

But we Anganwadi workers are getting a megre wage of Rs. 275 to Rs. 225 for workers and Rs. 110 for helper, with no other allowances. We are working for 7 hours a day with heavy burden of writing various informations in Registers, this is sheer exploitation as day by day the prices of essential commodities are rising high. It is very difficult to carry on our family responsibilities.

We therefore demand Rs. 600/-as interim relief as long as our pay scales are being settled.

4. We demand one month casual leave and 7 days sick leave. At present we are getting only 20 days leave.

5. We deemed that our service must be permanent and we must get all the facilities as other permanent workers.

6. There must be promotion according to the rules.

7. Sufficient teaching mediums must be provided to attract Anganwadi children to attend.

8. The place where Anganwadi children attend must be clean and independent. Today Anganwadi is being held in such a place where somebody is staying with the family.

9. We have to spend from our own pockets to carry on practicals of showing how to prepare nourishing food to the parents, this should be stopped and we must get money before hand for the purpose.

10. Ruled Register forms, pencils, refills etc should be provided in time and regularly.

11. Pay should be given on 1st day of the month.

12. Each worker must be provided with identity card.

13. Bonus for festival season.

(*Contd. from page 18*)

Meena Rai, in her address in Nepali, said, "We all know that Comrade Niraj was killed by these GNLF beasts. He is now no more, but his inspiration and his memory lives forever in my heart. And that is why I have decided to follow in his path, to work for the ideals which he held so dear, to complete his unfinished tasks. And that is why I am here today. There have been many others like Niraj who have been cut down because they defended the noble cause of national unity.

"Attempts are being made by these dark forces to mislead the tribals and the minorities. But I have come here because I have the deepest conviction that if anyone can really save the tribals and the minorities, if anyone can really keep this country together, it is only the Communists."

If this is not conviction, then nothing is.

AIDWA Protests Barbaric Pak Death Sentence

A Mass deputation of women by the All India Democratic Women's Association went to the Embassy of Pakistan on December 21, to protest against the barbaric sentence of death by stoning given by the Additional Sessions Judge, Karachi. The women were not allowed inside the Embassy. Mr. Haroon Rana, Second Secretary, came to the gate to meet the deputationist and received the memorandum, which he agreed to immediately forward to the Pakistan Government.

Memorandum

"On behalf of the All India Democratic Women's Association we would like to express our horror, revulsion and strong condemnation of the barbaric sentence, of lapidation passed by the Additional Sessions Judge of Karachi on November 7, 1987. According to the Judgement 26-year old Shahida Parveen and 35-year old Mohammed Sarwar are guilty of adultery and have therefore been given the extreme sentence of death by stoning. The sentence is all the more shocking because it makes a criminal of a woman who in fact was earlier the victim of a forced marriage to a man of forty when she was only thirteen. Instead of helping her to make a new life after the trauma of a hateful matrimonial tie the greatest injustice has been meted out to her in the name of religious law.

"It is unthinkable that such an extreme offence against human rights should be made, and further defended in the name of religion. We are in full agreement with the women's organisations and others in Pakistan who have denounced and challenged the *Hadod* ordinance which sanctions such punishment in the first place.

"We who are fighting for women's rights in India, express our solidarity with the people of Pakistan, particularly the women, who have raised their voice against this barbaric sentence. We would like to convey through you our demand to the Government of Pakistan to immediately withdraw the sentence against both Sahida Parveen and Mohammed Sarwar and release them forthwith."

Sundergarh Distt. Convention on Sati

A Convention sponsored by All India Democratic Women's Association, Sundergarh District Committee, against 'SATI' was held at Rourkela (Orissa) on 28th November under presidentship of Mrs. Janaki Mudali.

Seventy four women delegates attended the convention. Eighteen delegates including Mrs. Kalyani Das, District Secretary of the Democratic Women's Association, Mrs. Reba Chakravorty, Subhra Mukherjee, Binapani Das, Chanda paul addressed the delegates.

The speakers in their speech strongly condemned the brutal murder of 18 years old 'Roop Kanwar' at Deorala, Rajasthan, under the cover of Sati.

They appealed the people to raise their voice against religious fundamentalists, who want revival of Medieval culture in the name of Religion. Speakers congratulated the Secular Democratic and left organisations and people for their strong voice against religious obscurantists.

A resolution was passed demanding resignation of Harideo Joshi Government of Rajasthan for their failure to protect the life of a young, inocent lady and surrender before the Hindu fundamentalists, inspite of High Court's injunction. The resolution demanded stern action against Sankaracharya of Puri and other religious fundamentalists who are responsible for the Murder and glorification of Sati.

Another resolution was passed demanding to stop atrocities on women, stern action against the culprits responsible for bride burning, torture and rape of women. The resolution demanded employment to women and more funds in budget for women's Education.

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Griha, Saiyada Development Centre, Bhavanagar Mahila Mandal and JMS together with many other local groups.

This Dharna programmes was the first public action programme against Sati Pratha in Gujarata State.

Women Workers Attend in Hundreds in Karnataka

AFTER the CITU Conference at Bombay CITU State Committee decided that Com. Rajamma along with Com. Padmavathi from Mangalore who is another General Council Member of CITU and Com. Khurshid Begum a state Council member of CITU from Bangalore should attend district and local conventions of Working Women.

The first such convention was held on 14-8-87 at Dharwar. About 200 working women attended this convention. Workers of TIWAC Industries, Beedi Workers, Plywood workers, Karnataka University employees and a few sympathiswers were present. Smt. Susheela Chikodi from Karnataka University presided over the function. The committee elected at the convention is that it comprises members from unions not affiliated to CITU. The Co-ordination Committee elected at Dharwar has Com. Meera Halakatti as Convenor.

The Second Convention was held at Hassan on 2-10-87. Nearly 600 women workers from Coffee Curing, Plantations and a Buiscuit factory attend the meeting. Com. Saroja, a CITU State Committee Member was in the chair. A ten member Working Women's Co-ordination Committee with Com. Sathyawathi is formed in the convention. The general problems of the workers here are lack of creche, hyginic conditions etc.

Next day i.e., 3-10-87 another convention was held at Sakleshpur, Hassan district with about 300-400 women workers participating. They were plantation workers. Com. Vanaja from Mudsagar Coffee Estate presided. The workers who spoke in the convention admitted that their condition improved after joining the CITU Unions. However facilities in creche etc need further improvement.

The same day a meeting of working women belonging to a plywood factory at Belur was held at Belur T.B. A five member Working Women's Co-ordination Committee with Com. Rajamma (Plywood) as convenor was formed in the meeting.

On 4.10.87 the Convention was held at Chickmagalur. Nearly 400 women workers participated in the same. Com. S. Radha of Mainad Coffee Curing Works presided over. The workers here also have similar problems related to Creche Maternity Benefit. The managements are restricting number of children and age limit for admission to creche.

A meeting of Working Women of Krishnarajapur Area in Bangalore was held on 26-7-87 which was attended by 61 women workers. A thirteen member Co-ordination Committee was formed with Coms. Knrshid Begum and Gowramma as convenors.

Mass Dharna Programme on Sati at Bhavanagar

SATI-TRADITION must be lockstock and barrel, buried forever, and the custom of making any woman a Sati, must be considered genocide for which stricktest punishments must be inflicted forthwith. —Centre must promulgate Anti Sathi legislation to be uniformly applied to all states, — Wherever sati funds have been by now collected, they should be forthwith forfeited and transformed into widow-relief funds and centre too must formulate widow welfare schemes, — Ministers who believe in Sathi practice must be forthwith removed form ministership and declared unfit for any social work."

This was the gist of the speeches delivered by leaders of various social organisation that participated in Mass Dharna programme that took place under jointauspices of the organisations, on 16 November at Goha Gate Chowk in Bhavnagar, attended by inumerable participants where huge mass listened to their speeches with rapt attention for three hours and responded to the slogans with spirited indignation towards Sati Pratha. Those who addressed were Prof. Ushababen Desai of Mahila College (SNDT) Niruben patel, General Secretary, JMS, Ushabahen Patel well known varsatile women leader, young lawyer Nathibahen Jadeja, Zebunissabahen-pioneer or various activities in women's field, Manjulabahen Shah devoted life timer for women's cause and Ivaben Mehta, leader of teachers and students, Kashibahen Buraiya and Laxmibenhen who have braved imprisonment with many a people's struggles.

This programme was conducted included Bhavanagar Mahila Sangh, Tapi Bai Vikas

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The Unerring, Socialist Way

Nguyen Thi Dinh
IDWF Vice-President

MARXISM sees the status of women as part of humankind's historical development upon the actual conditions prevailing under different socio-economic systems.

In Pre-capitalist society the problem was chiefly in defining the role of women in rela tion to the family rather than society, for with rare exceptions the activity of women was limited to the household. State and church, legislation and ethics formalised sex inequality, reducing women to a humiliating status and brutally persecuting those of them who were not submissive.

Capitalism initiated the employment of large numbers of women in industry exploiting their labour and doubling their burden — at the workplace and in the home. Under pressure from progressive public opinion women's civil and political rights were gradually expended in formal terms. But discrimination continues in exploiting tates to this day, although under a veneer of decorum in some of these states.

Working women can become really free and take part in all areas of material and intellectual life on an equal footing with men only where private property exploitation has been eliminated. But social emancipation does not come of itself. It has to be won by struggle. This is precisely why the aims of the women's movement coincide with the revolutionary objectives of the working class. The women's question is part of the question of the proletarian, revolution of its potentialities and motive forces, and of the building of socialism and communism.

Let me remind you of words spoken by Lenin on this subject: "If women are not drawn into public service, into the militia, into political life, if women are not torn out of their stupefying house and kitchen environment, it will be impossible to gurantee real freedom, it will be impossible to build even democracy, let alone socialism."

This thesis applied directly to the historical destiny of the women of Vietnam as well. Sixty years ago, in spreading the Marxist-Leninist teaching in Indochina, Ho Chi Minh wrote that the Russian revolution owed its rapid triumph and unbreakable strength to, among other things, the participotion in it of women or all ages. This link is to be seen also in the Vietnamese revolution. Ho Chi Minh wrote: "Women bear a terrible burden of suffering and are therefore brimming over with the spirit of revolutionary struggle. They are a significant force of the revolution, and we shall not be able to triumph without their participation ..... If women want to be free they have to rebel and join the revolution of their people and their class."

Marxist-Leninist postulate on this issue are reflected in many documents of the Communist Party of Vietnam. I shall name only one, which was adopted back in 1930, immediately after the CPV was formed. This was a resolution of a CC plenary meeting on the mobilisation of women, saying that women had to be drawn into the revolutionary struggle and that it was vital to work for their emancipation, for sex equality, and for the condition allowing talent to flourish.

This approach is to be seen in the resolutions and other documents of all of our party's congresses. At the Sixth Congress of the CPV (December 1986) it was noted that the targets for the country's socio-economic development could be attained only with the active participation of mass public organisations, including women's organisations, and with a fuller account of the specific distinctions of the various groups of the population. The role played by women in all areas of life will continue to expand in the coming years. The number of women in the party is expected to grow. This is recognition of their enormous contribution to our country's liberaation and of the role played by them in the national-democratic and socialist revolutions.

The August Revolution of 1945 opened a new era for the Vietnamese nation — the era of national independence, freedom, and socialism. Legislation has recognised the equality of women in the family and in society. The Constitution has proclaimed: "Women and men shall enjoy equal rights in all areas of political economic, and cultural life, in society, and in the family...Women shall receive equal pay with men for equal work, women shall be entitled to a paid maternity leave...The state and society shall concern themselves with enlarging the network of maternity homes, kindergartens, and pre-school upbringing groups...Marriage and the family shall be under the protection of the state." The marriage and family law, passed in early 1950, was aimed at extirpating survivals of feudalism.

However, the peaceful and gratifying life in which the enforcement of these legislative acts had been started was cut short by aggressions by two leading imperialist powers — first by France and then by the USA. Throughout all the war years the Vietnamese women, free and equal daughters of their people, participated selflessly in the resistance to the invaders, worked in the rear areas, and brought up their children by themselves. It would be impossible to count how many women's militia units guarded villages and hamlets in the North and the South, or how many women's special-purpose units and women partisans fought the enemy on occupied territory.

Artillery batteries with women crews fought gallantly in many pitched battles with US naval vessels and aircraft. Units of women volunteers blazed trails to the firing lines with bombs and shells raining down on them. These young women carried food and amunitions to the front on their shoulders Hungry and suffering in turn from cold and from heat, they guarded every grain of rice, every bullet, and every set of clothes designated for troops of the people's army.

The girls never retreated an inch from the bridges and road sectors entrusted to them, rapidly rapairing them to ensure the transportation of supplied for the troops and the civilian population.

Thanks to this secret route established by women behind the enemy's lines, our troops struck deadly blows at the enemy, sowing confusion in his ranks and paving the way for the general offensive of the spring of 1975.

Then there were the women's units called the 'long-haired army' by the people. Unarmed, they formed an insaperable wall, halting puppet punitive units and compelling them to retreat and go back to where they came from. Countless women bore with suffering in prisons and in exile, in so-called tiger cages, staunchly enduring brutal torture and remaing true to their credo that it was better to die than to betray the revolution. None of this will ever be forgotten by the people. Women who displayed valour and gallantry in the struggle for the salvation of their country are called 'heroic', indomitable, true and intrepid' by the people.

After the victory the working people of Vietnam addressed the tasks of the new period of their society's development — the building of socialism on the scale of the entire country and the defence of the socialist homeland.

In this work we are experiencing the bitter effects of the war of attrition and of continuous natural disasters. Our economy is as yet unstable and poorly developed and the rapidly growing population encounters serious material difficulties. In this situation the Vietnamese women are displaying a high level of consciousness and sense of responsibility in their approach to their political and social duties, and helping to carry out three revolutions the revolution in the relations of productions the revolution in science and technology and cultural-ideological revolution.

Independence, freedom, and socialist construction have led to visible changes in our socio-economic structure. Every working person has the right to decide his or her own destiny. Relations of equality between citizens are being consolidated and the conditions are being created for the encouragement of initiatives and talent. Socialism has laid the foundation for the emancipations of female labour. A steadily expanding network of creches, kindergartens, and cultural, medical and general educational facilities is partially unburdening women of concern for the family and giving them time for recreation, study and health care.

Our Union has always played a major role in shaping the consciousness of Vietnamese women and in defending their rights as citizens, mothers, and working persons. It has been functioning for 56 years and throughout all that time it has been active in the revolutionary movement of the Vietnamese people, uniting, enlightening and mobilising large number of women for the struggle for freedom and equality.

There are over ten million members in our Union, whose work is best described as organising the mass movement under the motto: 'The New Woman Builds and Defends Her Country". We hold that every woman of socialist Vietnam should be a conscious citizen and patriot, a person who is ideologically educated and does her work creatively. She has to be able to combine her personal interests with those of her work collective and of society as a whole. She shold steadfastly add to her knowledge of all areas of life. In parallel, she should be an exemplary mother, bringing up a happy family, in which all members are equal and respect one another.

Our Union helps women to find their role in carrying out the tasks being set by the Communist Party of Vietnam. The emulation movement for high standards in production is spreading far and wide. The slogan 'Quality and Efficiency Are Criteria of the Consciouness of Women is sinking ever deeper roots.

To help mothers the Union has organised course on the care and upbringing of children. In the past three years these course have been attended by 5,500,000 women. We co-operate with institutions providing health protection for mothers and children and help to improve gynaecological and pediatric services and the services at maternity homes.

To this day our country has to counter the subversive activities of reactionary forces and be ready to resist aggression. In this situation our Union is showing untiring concern for the troops in border areas and supports them morally and materially so that they can creditably perfom their duty. Women are working in industry on assignments from the Armed Forces, helping the families of wounded soldier and of soldiers killed in action, and taking care of orphas.

All these aspects of life are components of "The New Women Builds and Defends Her Country's movement, Participation in this movement has made working women more mature in political and moral terms. For five years in succession 4,500,000 women have been earning the title 'New Woman', this being evidence that the people have a profound understanding of the country's vital needs.

Our aspirations can be realised only if there is peace on our planet. We whole heartedly support the Soviet peace intiatives put forward by Mikhail Gorbachov and aimed at eliminating all nuclear weapons in the world by the end of this century.

Peace is the aspiration of all women in the world. To defend it is to counter the aggressive designs of monopoly capital and international reaction, who are out to perpetuate national and class oppression. Participation in the struggle for national and class liberation and in building the new society is the only way to freedom and equality for women.

Decisions Taken by AIDWA Office Bearers Meeting

THE Secretariat of the AIDWA, took the following decisions on 2-3 Jan.

I. **Against Sati** While greeting its Units throughout the country and other Women's Organisations who through their militant struggle had forced the Central Government to accept the demand for a central legislation, the AIDWA Secretariat has called upon them to unitedly protest against the anomalies in the new Bill which defeats the very purpose for which it has been ostensibly framed.

II. **March 8th-International Women's Day** will be observed all over the country by a week-long programme (March 3-8th).

III. **Rural women's convention**

The AIDWA will hold a rural women's convention in April when about 1,000 rural women from the States will discuss their specific problems in all aspects of life and adopt a Charter of demands that will be taken up for national campaign.

IV. All the State Units of AIDWA will launch anti-price rise agitations including black flag demonstrations against Central Ministers visiting the States.