



Vol. 29

No. 5

January 1999

Price: Rupees Four

THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU



MOUNT RESISTANCE TO THE POLICIES RUINING THE COUNTRY: CITU WORKING COMMITTEE CALL

The meeting of the CITU Working Committee at Ahmedabad got off to a flying start with the mass rally in the evening of 21st December, 1998.

The procession participated by workers, kisans, rural workers, women, students and youth from various districts of Gujarat started from Sarangpur circle chowk. Passing through the main streets of the city, watched by hundreds of people, it culminated in the venue of public meeting near Kankaria Talav.

Presided over by Subodh Mehta, the meeting was addressed by M.K. Pandhe, Niren Ghosh, Haroobhai Mehta, Nalini Bahen Jadeja, Kuberbhai Patel, G.K. Parmar, Mohan Bundela, Arun Mehta, Raghuvir Mali and others.

The three days long session of the Working Committee began with hoisting of the CITU flag by E. Balanandan on 22nd December, 1998.

After welcome by Subodh Mehta, the meeting adopted the resolution on condolence and observed silence in homage to martyrs.

E. Balanandan, delivered his Presidential address dealing with international and national developments. M.K. Pandhe, introduced the General Secretary's report.

The Working Committee passed unanimously

MONTH LONG CAMPAIGN DURING JANUARY'99

ON:

PRICE RISE
UNEMPLOYMENT
SICKNESS AND CLOSURE OF INDUSTRIES
PRIVATISATION AND DISINVESTMENT
IRA AND PATENT BILLS
ANTI LABOUR AMENDMENTS TO LABOUR LAWS

CULMINATING IN:

ALL INDIA PROTEST DAY ON 2ND FEBRUARY'99

STATE COMMITTEES TO DRAW UP
PROGRAMME AND INTIMATE CITU CENTRE

resolutions -

* Condemning the US & UK air-strikes against Iraq;
* Opposing the India Patents Act Amendment Bill introduced in the Rajya Sabha;

* Congratulating the insurance employees and pledged support to the fight to defeat the IRA Bill;

* Greeting the working class of Gujarat for their struggle against the policies of the Central and State Governments;

* Resolving to carry forward the struggle against price rise, privatisation and the disastrous economic policies of the BJP led Government at the Centre in implementation of which the Congress(I) unashamedly acquiesced to the detriment of the national economy;

* Condemning the increasing attacks against minorities by the members of Sangh Parivar; and

* Calling upon the working people to fight against Communalism and fundamentalism.

87 members of the working committee and 7 invitees attended the meeting.

The working committee reviewed the NPMO campaign and general strike on 11th December and decided to plan for a further sustained resistance struggle to the BJP Government policies, in consultation with the other constituents of NPMO.

The working committee called for an intensive campaign against communalism and other divisive forces. The working committee also called for a month long campaign in January '99 on the following issues:

- Price-rise
- Unemployment
- Sickness and closure of industries
- Privatisation and disinvestment
- IRA and Patent Bills
- Anti-labour amendments to labour laws, which would culminating in the observance of **ALL INDIA PROTEST DAY ON 2ND FEBRUARY '99.**

[In his report to the CITU Working Committee meeting, M K Pandhe, General Secretary, dealt with the national developments and called for carrying forward the struggle to defeat the anti-national economic policies of the BJP Government. Here are a few excerpts. - Editor]

FORWARD TO INTENSIFICATION OF STRUGGLES

M K Pandhe

Since last General Council meeting in April 1998, the economic situation in the country got worsened at a much faster pace under the stewardship of BJP-led Govt at the Centre. During this period, the budget placed by the Govt set the direction of all round decline in all sectors of the economy. The two major pillars of the economy, both industry and agriculture, witnessed sharp decline in growth rate, having its natural reflection on the livelihood of the common people.

All the sectors of the economy have marked a faster decline during the 8 months long BJP regime and MNCs could broaden their grip on Indian economy. The budget 1998 is directed towards the desperate exercise of conferring bonanzas for the foreign companies and the Indian monopoly houses as their junior partners. As observed by 'Economic Times,' major multinational companies operating in India have already crossed the profit level of last year (1997-98) within first six months of the current fiscal year (1998-99) whereas the Indian companies are showing the opposite trend.

Further, owing to liberalisation of import and concessions to foreign companies, deliberate indulgence and inaction towards dumping by the foreign companies on Indian soil, the entire manufacturing and capital goods sector have been put to severe difficulties. This has led to widespread closure, spread of sickness and sharp decline in profitability even in the erstwhile profit making industrial units.

One of the worst features of liberalisation has been the drastic reduction of jobs of the regular employees and increase in the jobs of the casual, temporary and contract nature. Moreover, the voluntary retirement schemes are reducing the regular jobs and converting the regular employees into unemployed or casual employees. This question assumes seriousness when the Government has declared that 45 lakhs of

employees in public and private sectors are surplus in India.

In totality, the all round downfall has pushed the entire economy and the people in dire straits barring the Multinational Companies whose profitability is showing a upswing. Thus, the gameplan of the World Bank and IMF to convert the manufacturing economy of the country to a marketing centre for foreign companies with the active support of the BJP-led Govt at the Centre has fully unfolded. This is destined to take the country towards disaster.

While campaigning against economic policies of the Government we must link up the proposals put forward by the trade unions with the common interests of the people. Unless this is done it would not be possible to ensure the support of the common people in the struggle against the policies of globalisation.

The nationwide strike on 11th December 1998 received a massive response in most of the states. The countrywide campaign through holding of state level and district level conventions, holding of rallies on 30th November, holding of local rallies, circulation of several lakhs of copies of the resolution of the 12th August convention in different languages all over the country, etc., created good impact among the working class and other toiling sections of the people. The CITU Centre published two booklets in English and Hindi on unemployment and public sector to educate the masses on the issues involved in the strike. The CITU journals also regularly published campaign materials for the strike.

The remarkable success of the strike has created a wave of enthusiasm among the workers. It is only through such massive struggle, the unity of the working class and other sections of the toiling masses can be achieved, and more people can be drawn into the fold of struggle and higher consciousness.

(Cont. on page 5)

WORLD IN RECESSION, NATION IN CRISIS INTENSIFY FIGHT AGAINST ANTI PEOPLE POLICIES

E BALANANDAN

Many industrial and financial managers- have expressed loss of confidence about the developing crisis and the very sustainability of the capitalist system itself. The experience of the last eight months is that the scenario is getting bleak and the World Bank itself has come out with the alarming statement that they cannot rule out the possibility of a World Economic recession in the year 1999.

The Indian Express dated 4.12.1998 reproduced a report from the Wall Street Journal, as below:

“The Bank said on (2.12.1998) in its annual economic prospects that “there is still a substantial risk that the world economy will plunge into recession in 1999.”

“The Bank said the recession scenario will come into play if Japan’s recession worsens, investor anxiety about emerging markets intensifies, private capital flows to the developing world dry up, and a large, sustained stock market correction - 20% to 30% - depresses growth in the U.S and Europe.”

“Already, Brazil, Indonesia, Russia and 33 other countries in the developing world and former Soviet bloc are likely to see a drop in per-capita output which will grow at a mere 0.4% this year before resuming its usual pace of 3.5% after the turn of the millennium, the Bank predicted.”

“Mr Stiglitz - the World Bank’s Chief Economist said a major source of the crisis was the sudden exodus of foreign investment from Asian economies, a capital flight that then spread to other developing countries. Controls on such capital movements are among the most contentious issues in the debate over how to prevent further financial crisis.

“While the bank stopped well short of advocating limits on investors’ ability to withdraw their money from a country, the report endorsed the use of taxes or other tools that discourage the inflow of short-term capital. Chile which, amid the global turmoil, has experienced relative stability in foreign- capital flows, essentially imposed taxes on short-term inflows, while allowing freer access for long-term investors.”

“We have to take actions to mitigate that type of excess risk-taking,” Mr Stiglitz said of the short-term emerging - market investments”.

From the above it can be seen that the Bank itself is not confident that the World output will not plunge below 1% in the year 1999- and they themselves want to restrict the short term fund (i.e. speculative investment) into the country as part of globalisation - and that they want to restrict the same by imposing taxes or by other methods. At last World Bank has to come out against unbridled opening up of the economy. They have also said that the Japanese and the Third World economy does not register growth and that will depress the economy of US and Europe. However, the world economic situation as a whole is faced with a serious recession in the coming year which is going to be like that of the great depression of 1930s. The claims made by the big imperialist powers that they will build a crisis free capitalist society is shattered to pieces. Now many bourgeois economic pundits and journalists are profusely quoting from the Communist Manifesto about the inevitable collapse of the capitalist system.

The steps being taken in the economic sphere need no elaboration. The opening of insurance sector and complete privatisation of public sector industries including the profit making ones and the closure of sick industries etc. are known to us in detail, against which we have launched uncompromising struggle. But in the matter of insurance bill, the BJP stands terribly exposed. They were saying that the insurance sector should not be opened up to the foreign multinationals before they were coming to power. Now they make volte-face and now want to give 40% participation for foreign multinationals and the NRIs. Many sections of the ruling coalition have come out against the bill including a large number of BJP MPs, though their dissent has been temporarily hushed up. However, it is very difficult to get this bill passed in the house because of stiff opposition of the working class and several political parties. On Patent Law

amendment also, which the BJP was opposing before coming to power, but now they are compromising their position in order to placate United States.

Here, we should not miss the point that the Congress (I) in Parliament did not oppose the economic policies of the BJP Government, their attempt to introduce the IRA Bill and the Patent Law Amendment Legislation - Since they are the real originators of these policies. This also needs exposure.

The recently held elections for the four state assemblies, viz., Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Mizoram has given a square defeat to the the BJP. They are terribly exposed and the people in a big way have turned against them. In Delhi and Rajasthan they were the ruling party, now become a small opposition in the legislature. Madhya Pradesh they were boasting about coming to power could not succeed. Mizoram, the Congress Party which was the ruling party, has been defeated in the election as a result of their misrule and the ethnic consolidation of the voters.

The defeat of BJP in this election was the result of the policies they have pursued as narrated before, especially the attack against the minorities, attempt of Hinduisation of educational system. etc. and above all, the economic policy and the sky rocketing price rise of essential commodities like onions, potatoes and other vegetables.

The ruling BJP coalition had no policy cohesion from the very inception. Each party was taking its own position on every issue of importance and together. Vajpayee was put into great trouble to keep them. Now after the defeat in the elections, the

divergence of these parties have come to the fore and nobody can predict how soon the breaking point will come. However, it is not far off.

We have found that the peoples support for the general strike call of the NPMO on 11th of December was unprecedented. Therefore, the working class should see that the fight against the government and its policies has to be further strengthened. We should discuss ways and intensify the agitation against the anti-national and anti-people's policy of the government and chalk out a programme or action. Wider unity of the masses seen in the December 11th action should be taken note of and suitable measures to be taken for further widening it for a final assault against BJP rule.

The efforts we have made for ensuring wider unity of the trade unions towards forming a confederation must be vigorously pursued. We have seen in the recent action that large sections of trade unions with different organisational political affiliations have enthusiastically joined the strike. This was not only the result of our propaganda but also the actual experience of the workers which forced them to join these actions irrespective of difference in outlooks. Therefore, it is opportune time for taking up this issue again with different trade union organisations. This should be done by us without loss of time.

The organisational strength of the CITU has shown some improvement in recent period as a result of our efforts. But this has to be continued with added vigour so that our independent strength can be developed which will be the basis for building wider trade union unity.

(Excerpts from the Presidential Speech to the CITU Working Committee, Ahmedabad, 22-24 Dec. 1998)

(cont. from page 3)

The favourable nationwide atmosphere created by the strike should be fully utilised to prepare for a bigger struggle against the World Bank-IMF dictated policies pursued by the BJP government.

Immediately after the BJP's humiliating defeat in Delhi, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, the nationwide strike action has given a big blow.

Since the BJP Government is determined to hive off the national interests at the altar of the World Bank and the IMF, it is the duty of the working

class and other toiling sections of society to rise against the threat to national self-reliance and to the secular fabric of the country. The BJP is out to destroy the rich cultural heritage of the country in the garb of obscurantist *Hindutva* ideology.

Let us prepare for the next round of massive nationwide resistance programmes to the policies of the Government which is ruining the destiny of the people of our country.

We can win if we are united and determined!

NATION-WIDE GENERAL STRIKE, A MASSIVE SUCCESS SEVEREST INDICTMENT OF BJP GOVT.

The National Platform of Mass Organisations (NPMO), congratulated the workers, peasants, agricultural workers, women, students, and youth, who came out in millions all throughout the country, to make the all India general strike on 11.12.98 a massive success. The NPMO described the strike as the biggest ever mass action and a severe indictment of the BJP led Government at the Centre.

The general strike peaked in its sweep and reach, in terms of mass mobilisation and participation, ever since the advent of Fund Bank dictated economic reforms process, accepted by the Government of India in implicit obedience and carried forward with religious devotion by the present BJP Government.

Workers and employees bravely defied repressive measures and intimidatory steps, as witnessed in Haryana and Punjab. Reports of arrests and police interference have come from Orissa, UP, Bhopal, Hardwar, Delhi, Noida and other places.

All the constituents of the NPMO rightly rejected the last minute farcial appeal by the Labour Minister and the mock negotiations with the trade union leaders, less than 48 hours before the commencement of the strike. The strike completely paralysed the normal activities in several states. Political parties, of which

some are still allies of the Government at the centres came out extending full support to the strike. In states like Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura, Bihar, Assam etc., it was a bundh like situation. Train services were paralysed in these States as well as in Mumbai.

Striking workers joined by mass of rural workers, peasants, women, students and youth, staged *rail-roko* and *rasta roko* at innumerable places throughout the country, intermittantly paralysing rail/road traffic. All the major ports of the country were brought to standstill. Indian Airlines flights got practically paralysed. Banks, Insurance and other financial institutions

remained closed.

The central public sector industries, in all the sectors, were severely hit by the strike, manifesting the indignation and wrath of the employees against closures, disinvestment and privatisation.

The peasantry, facing the most acute conditions of debt, impoverishment, loss of crops etc with scores of suicides by farmers in several parts of the country, joined by rural workers tossed between penury and loss of earnings, turned the rural India into a battle-field, to oppose the degradations brought in by the liberalisation policies.

Women, urban and rural, facing the severest impact of the all-

CONDEMN US BOMBING ON IRAQ : CITU

CITU condemns the sudden Bombing over civilian locations in Iraq on the plea of so called Iraqi non-compliance with the arrangement of UN inspection of armament installations.

It is a matter of serious concern for all peace loving people of the world the manner US Administration has arrogated itself as the self appointed policeman of the international political order through its inhuman muscle-flexing gangsterism and 'don't care' attitude to the sovereignty and right of other countries.

It is unfortunate that the United Nations has also remained as mere onlooker to the shameless arrogance of the US Govt. including the continuance of most inhuman economic sanction of Iraq since last eight years severe hardship and miseries for the Iraqi people.

CITU demands the United Nations to exercise its authority to discipline the US Govt. and restrain its gangsterism on the world community including Iraq. CITU also calls upon the working class and democratic people to raise their voice of protest against the inhuman crime being perpetrated on Iraqi people by the US Govt., through demonstration and protest action all over the country.

round crisis intensifying everyday, joined the strike not only to demand basic policy changes but also seeking empowerment.

The students and youth, thrown to a dark future by the module of jobless growth, with the unemployment scenario unfolding in bigger and bigger dimensions, also contributed to the massive success of the strike call.

Even some sections of ordinary citizens, who would otherwise scoff at the mention of a strike, voluntarily extended support,

which is a reflection of the impact of sufferings inflicted on the people by the stupendous rise in prices, disturbing communal situation, attacks on minorities etc. In Bangalore, however, the strike in the city based public sector units was held on 14th December in view of the 'air show' taking place there.

NPMO thanked the members of both houses of the Parliament for raising their voice of support to the countrywide strike action inside the Parliament on 10th December

and bringing the proceedings to standstill on the strike day.

The NPMO asserted that the strike is not just a one off protest. It marks heralding of a new phase of mass struggles which will be intensified further in the coming period. The NPMO declared its determination to pursue the demands for total reversal of the present disastrous economic policies and for a pro-people alternative by further sustained action programmes, after a detailed review.

STRIKE

Workers and employees in all factories including steel, oil, engineering, jute, cotton and other industries, in all coal mines and plantations, port and dock; Employees in all offices - mercantile, bank, insurance, railway, central and state government offices;

Students and teachers in all educational institutions; and Cultivators and agricultural workers in fields and farms responded spontaneously to the strike call.

Railways, road and water transport

throughout the State was at stand still. There were no take offs and landings at Calcutta airport. The entire urban and rural transport system underwent a complete shutdown.

Shops and markets, big and small, remained closed right from the morning.

A significant development arising out of the strike-call was that the State Legislature (Vidhan Sabha) bore a totally deserted look with not a single MLA, irrespective of political affiliation, cared to attend the house.

Right from the morning demonstrations in support of the strike call was held in both urban and rural areas. Most production units witnessed gate-meetings; processions were taken out all over the state from the early hours of the morning and from where slogans rang out on the issues that form the basis of the strike action. It is quite clear that the strike to which the people responded in a magnificently spontaneous manner has remained unprecedentedly total, complete and peaceful throughout the state.

WEST BENGAL REPORT

STRIKE

The general strike was peaceful and complete in Kerala. In Trivandrum, Alleppey and Palakkad districts, trains could not be moved in time because of *rail rokho*. The workers belonging to the INTUC were also on strike in

almost all districts. In factories like FACT, HMT, Cochin Port, Cochin Shipyard etc., INTUC workers totally participated in the strike.

Meetings were held in front of the factories and in the industrial

KERALA REPORT

centres. Demonstrations were held in all the districts on area basis and in front of the Secretariat, Trivandrum. Shops and establishments remained shut down. Vehicles were off the road. In plantations, strike was complete

except for a section of INTUC workers in Tea plantation.

Attendance in government offices was very thin. The strike was almost total in KSRTC and KSEB.

STRIKE

The general strike in industries, banks, and insurance in Karnataka was successful. JAF of PSUs in Bangalore has deferred the strike to 14th December. Hence only BHEL among PSUs in Bangalore went on strike. (On 14th, PSU strike was total) Among large factories, Kirloskar, NGEF, Mysore Lamps, West Coast Paper Mills, etc., the strike was total. In MICO, it was partial.

A vast majority of officers were also on strike in KSEB.

STU (Trade Union organisation owing allegiance to Muslim League, a constituent of UDF) has

In the industrial areas around Bangalore like K R Puram Whitfield, Mysore Road, Hosur Road etc., the strike was almost total.

Colleges had gone on strike throughout the state. RSS men at certain places in Bangalore beat up students.

In outlying districts like South Canara, Raichur, Bellary, Gulbarga etc., where bandh has

cooperated with the NPMO from the campaign programme onwards. The BMS workers were running auto riskhaws in certain parts of Kasaragode district.

KARNATAKA REPORT

taken place state transport was also paralysed.

In Bangalore, although Janata Dal State President supported the strike, state transport was run and police deployed to thwart any bandh.

Rastha-roko in rural places was successful. Hundreds of persons were arrested in different places in North Karnataka and Bangalore.

VALUE OF RUPEE

Since the introduction of economic reforms the value of rupee has been on the decline. Here are the details furnished by the Finance Minister.

Year	Value of Rupees in paise based on 1990
1990	100.00
1991	87.83
1992	78.57
1993	73.89
1994	67.22
1995	60.85
1996	55.75
1997	52.01
1998(May)	47.87

Steps taken by Government to check further decline? The Finance Minister has the usual 'beat around the bush rhetoric.' He said: "Since reduction in the value of rupee is influenced directly by the changes in the general price level, it becomes important to ensure that the inflation remains under control. A number of policy instruments are put into effect by the Government to bring about moderation in the growth of prices. Fiscal prudence, check in money supply growth and supply side management of wage goods are the principal instruments operated by the Government to contain inflationary pressures and thereby attempt to prevent erosion of the rupee."

STRIKE: CGT

MESSAGE TO CITU

"On the eve of the nation-wide united strike which trade unions are preparing now in India, the French CGT extends to you and all your members its most fraternal greetings. The CGT fully supports the Indian unions and workers' protest against the attempts by the government to revise the labour legislation as well as other laws, against the privatisation and also against the increased price of staple foods, which affects very seriously the mass of the population, in particular the poorest sections.

The CGT assures you of its solidarity in your struggles and wishes full success to the December 11 general strike, for the defence of rights obtained through hard struggles, in particular the trade union rights, for liberties and for social justice."

Alphouse Veronese

Secretary of the CGT

In charge of International Relations

STRIKE

Eleventh December has become a historic day of people's action in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry with overwhelming support to the general strike call. This strike got a boost, when political parties including the ruling DMK, TMC, CPM, CPI and Janata Dal supported the general strike call.

Then came the announcement from AIADMK, a partner in the BJP front at Delhi, Janata Party, Dravidar Kazhagam (DK), Indian National League (INL) and many small groups.

Various sections of traders, theatres and film exhibitors and small and tiny sector employers' associations also supported the call.

With the announcement of

Railways, withdrawing the suburban and express trains from 6 am to 6 pm, the stage was set for a complete general strike.

In all the factories and industrial estates in and around Chennai, including the Madras Export Promotion Zone (MEPZ), the strike was complete.

Reports from Coimbatore, Tirupur, Trichy, Madurai, Cuddalore, Dindigul, Nagerkoil, Kancheepuram and all other centres are also identical.

In traditional industries like beedi, cashew, handloom, powerloom, pappad, headload and constructions, the strike was complete. Plantation workers in Kanyakumari joined the strike in full.

Strike was almost complete in

the central public sector industries, including Neyveli Lignite, BHEL, Salem, Steel, Kalpakkam Atomic Power Station, Indian Oil, Hindusthan Photo Films and Hindusthan Teleprinters. In some establishments, a section of officers also joined the strike.

In the transport sector, all the buses including private buses and auto-rickshaws were off the road. In Tuticorin Port the strike was complete. In Chennai, it was 80%. Electricity workers in all parts of the state also joined the strike.

Banking, insurance, telecom and postal employees joined the strike in full. Almost all the central and state government employees joined the strike. Very few offices were open with skeleton staff attending work.

STRIKE

In Delhi and adjoining areas, about 10 lakh workers participated in the strike.

In connection with the strike, CITU leader H C Pant was arrested and the Delhi police resorted to lathicharge on a massive rally of workers in Wazirpur Industrial area. Several workers were injured in the police action. Another rally of 3,000 workers was taken out in Kirti Nagar-Naraina industrial area. The police resorted to pressure tactics in Noida. Yet, mass rallies were taken out in several sectors. Mass rallies were also taken out in Apsara Border and Zhilmil

industrial areas. The road remained blocked for over two hours.

Several factories and offices were closed in industrial areas of Kirti Nagar, Naraina, Rajasthan Udyog Nagar, Wazirpur, GT Karnala Road, Rama Raod, Mayapuri, Najafgarh No.4 Udyog Nagar Nangloi, Okhla, Badli, Zhilmil, Friends Colony, Patparganj, Vishwas Nagar, Karawal Nagar and Rajinder Nagar in Ghaziabad. The strike was complete in CEL, Babur, Havel, Hero, Atlas, Kwality Ice Cream, Escorts, Bata and several other companies. The workers at Terminal II Cargo

Complex at Airport were on total strike. The workers of Indian Airlines held a dharna at Safdarjung airport. BEL employees held a day-long dharna at Ghaziabad. In Faridabad, a huge rally of workers was taken out. DLF and other border areas observed near total strike.

DELHI REPORT

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The industrial workers and middle class employees from banks, LIC, general insurance, headquartered company offices, public sector employees from oil industry like Hindustan Petroleum, state and central government services, Mumbai Harbor, Jawaharlal Nehru Port at Nava Sheva, college teachers in all parts of the State, overwhelmingly participated. Reports indicated

that not only industrial activities came to standstill but agricultural front also was seriously affected because the agriculture workers and kisans in rural Maharashtra participated in this strike action. In many Tahisil, head quarters, they also staged massive *rastaroko* agitations such as in Aurangabad, Jalna, Kolhapur, Ichalkaranji, and Raigad etc. Many districts and session courts

did not work as the government employees were on strike.

In Mumbai, the agitation was spearheaded by the Joint Trade Union Action Committee comprising of central trade unions and other organisations. It is, however, unfortunate that the HMKP disassociated from this action. Despite their opposition a large number of their followers participated.

THE WORLD OF HUNGRY PEOPLE

- * The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations has released the annual state of food and agriculture report, which reveals as under:
- * The number of undernourished people in the world has increased since the early 1990s, mainly because there has been little progress in reducing poverty.
- * The total number of chronically undernourished people in developing countries is now estimated to be 828 million for the 1994-96 period, up from 822 million for 1990-92. In addition to weather-related crop damage, leading to less domestic food availability in many countries, the problem was compounded by foreign exchange constraints that prevented the import of food to make up the domestic shortfall.
- * Global financial turmoil now threatens the earlier economic gains, including improved food security, made by many Asian and Latin American countries. Its negative effects on household incomes, employment and prospects for agricultural production and trade could lead to greater food insecurity for millions of people.
- * The widening gap in income distribution in many parts of the world is also an important factor in undernourishment.
- * The largest absolute numbers of undernourished people are in Asia, while the largest proportion of the population that is undernourished is in sub-Saharan Africa.
- * Contrary to the overall tendency in the developing countries as a whole, the poorest group of countries has not been able to reduce the number or percentage of undernourished since 1969-71.
- * The number of countries facing food emergencies rose from 29 in mid-1997 to 36 in mid-1998, mainly owing to the effects of the El Nino weather phenomenon. That number has risen to 40 now.

The general strike in Bihar was successful. Coal workers' strike was complete in BCCL, CCL as well as ECL in entire Jharkhand areas. Management of CCL called police inside CCL

headquarters in Darbhanga House, Ranchi, who arrested NCOEA (CITU) President D D Ramanandan and General Secretary Mihir Chaudhury with 4 others, against which

demonstration was held in front of Kotwali. Stone quarries, beedi, units in industrial areas, Bokaro-HEC, Fertiliser, Refractory, Bharat Wagon, Mica and Iron ore Mines, steel, electricity in Bihar

(Cont. on page 12)

(The INTUC, almost on the eve of the general strike, held a meeting of its national office bearers on 6.12.1998 and chose to denounce the strike. M.K. Panhe, General Secretary, CITU clarified the NPMO position in this regard, in a statement released on 9.12.1998. Though the glorious success of the strike itself is a fitting rebuff to the INTUC leadership's insinuating remarks, we publish Pandhe's statement to set the records straight. - Editor)

11 DEC. STRIKE AND INTUC LEADERSHIP

The very fact that the INTUC had, in their meeting on 6 December 1998, decided to observe a PROTEST DAY on 11 December, by wearing black badges, protest meetings etc. "against sickness of industries, closures of industries, privatisation and price increase as also to demand introduction of unemployment benefit scheme", vindicates the stand of the NPMO and is more than ample justification for the need to make the 11 Dec. strike successful.

The attempt of the INTUC leadership to give a political colour to the strike call, which has been supported by various national and regional mass organisations, transcending party affiliations, is regrettable. It is sad that INTUC, which shuns the "role of crying boys" and seeks to "come up as sensible and strong trade union representatives", is singing the song of 'There Is No Alternative' to the ongoing economic reforms. The INTUC has come to a fatalistic conclusion that "Moreover, the disinvestment and privatisation, though the issues are economic, mostly depending on the political decision of the party in power, any number of agitation of the trade union may not bring any result". One needs to pause here and wonder how the INTUC believes to "bring results" by observing a protest day only, as against a one day strike?

It is nothing new that INTUC has its own views on disinvestment, different from the central trade unions that are part of the NPMO. Even now, the INTUC has stated its position to be that "disinvestment should be limited upto 30% and this 30% shares should be given to the employees of the company and general public and not to the multinationals". But, the INTUC leaders are aware that the present BJP led Government at the centre has announced disinvestment upto 74% of shares and outright closure/sale of so-called non-core PSUs. Does this not call for a more serious protest?

The INTUC "strongly feels that a tripartite discussion can alone work out a smooth solution of the problem of disinvestment and privatisation of PSUs". It also hopes to "enter into dialogues with and pressurise the Govt. to achieve desired modification in the policy to protect the interest of the working class and the nation as a whole".

The INTUC leadership knows it very well that ever since the initiation of the economic reforms process, successive Governments at the centre did not hold any meaningful discussion with the trade unions. Rather, the attempt had been to marginalise the trade unions and deny them any role as a social partner. The general strike on 11 December is only to assert that the people of India will not allow this Government to foist the agenda dictated by the MNCs and their representative world financial institutions.

Whatever be the official position taken by the INTUC, it is heartening to note that, across the length and breadth of the country, several INTUC affiliates, including some state units of INTUC, are coming forward to join ranks with the NPMO to make the strike on 11 Dec. successful. This will surely prevail upon the national leadership of the INTUC to reexamine its stand and join the mainstream of national resistance to the disastrous economic policies.

The President of the INTUC, in an obvious bid to cover up the divergence of perception between the national leadership and the grass-root affiliates, has chosen to term the Dec.11 strike in West Bengal and Kerala as state sponsored bundh. This is nothing but a travesty of truth. The INTUC in West Bengal is a willing participant in the general strike and actually campaigning vigorously on its own as well as with the NPMO affiliates. The Dec. 11 action is only a general strike all over the country and nowhere it is a government sponsored Bundh.

State Electricity Board and NTPC, pharmaceutical, state government employees, auto drivers, were all on strike. Strike by students and teachers in university, colleges and schools was total. Banks, including most of SBI branches, were closed. Movement of trains and long distance buses was seriously affected. In many

STRIKE

People of Assam from all walks of life today responded massively to the call of general strike. It turned into a total and spontaneous bandh completely paralysing the state. People of both the Brahmaputra and Barak Vallies as well as the autonomous districts of Karbi, Anglong and North Cachar Hills, responded like one man.

STRIKE

The general strike called by the Manipur Platform of Mass Organisations was peacefully and successfully conducted. In this strike, all the offices under the central government, post and telegraph, AG, telecommunications, banks,

STRIKE

Living up to their tradition of joining forces with any nationwide democratic movement, the people of Tripura spontaneously joined the general strike. Schools and colleges, offices and institutions remained

district-towns, markets and roads were deserted, though at Patna and Ranchi, markets and local communications were not affected, consequent to Patna High Court order imposing ban on Bihar bandh call given by seven left parties-CPI(M), CPI, RSP, AIFB, SUCI, MCPI, MCC. Rallies were brought out there too.

All the state and central government establishments including the NF Rly Headquarters at Maligaon, LIC and GIC offices, nationalised Banks, FCI, Oil, Electricity and other public and private sector undertakings remained closed. Communications came to a standstill as private and public transport were off the roads and

insurance, state govt staff etc., had successfully participated. It has also been reported that not only in the Imphal District but also in the other districts the strike was a total success. In all the educational institutions, from KG to university, the teachers and other

closed. Vehicles remained off the roads and shops downed their shutters for the day. All industrial concerns including the tea gardens and the Tripura Jute Mills remained closed. Workers held protest demonstrations in the jute

Hundreds of left parties and mass organisation leaders and functionaries have been arrested, which included State Secretary of CPI(M) Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, Secretariat member Subodh Roy, Ram Nath, Sarangdhar Paswan, Rajendra Pd Singh MLA and others. CPI leaders were also arrested.

ASSAM REPORT

flights and trains could not operate. Even rickshaws and *thelas* also did not ply. The strike was total and peaceful. Police, however, arrested about hundred volunteers at Guwahati. The Ganamancha, Assam strongly condemned such police highhandedness.

MANIPUR REPORT

staff did not attend. In the national and state highways, trucks, buses, taxis etc did not ply. Markets and shops remained closed, all the cinema houses and theatres were closed. No flight landed in Imphal. Manipur was totally cut off from the rest of the country.

TRIPURA REPORT

mills, the tea gardens and the office of the ONGC. In a word, the general strike has taken the shape of a total and peaceful bandh with no report of any untoward incident from anywhere in the state.

STRIKE

In Orissa, the strike was fairly successful with the airport not working, buses off the roads, rail transport badly affected, and shops and commercial establishments closed. All banks,

(barring a few branches of the State Bank of India) and insurance offices were closed. There was a complete shut-down in the mines, and even the Orissa High Court could not function as advocates

ORISSA REPORT

refused to attend work. More than 600 volunteers and leaders were arrested in the different towns including Bhubaneswar and Cuttack.

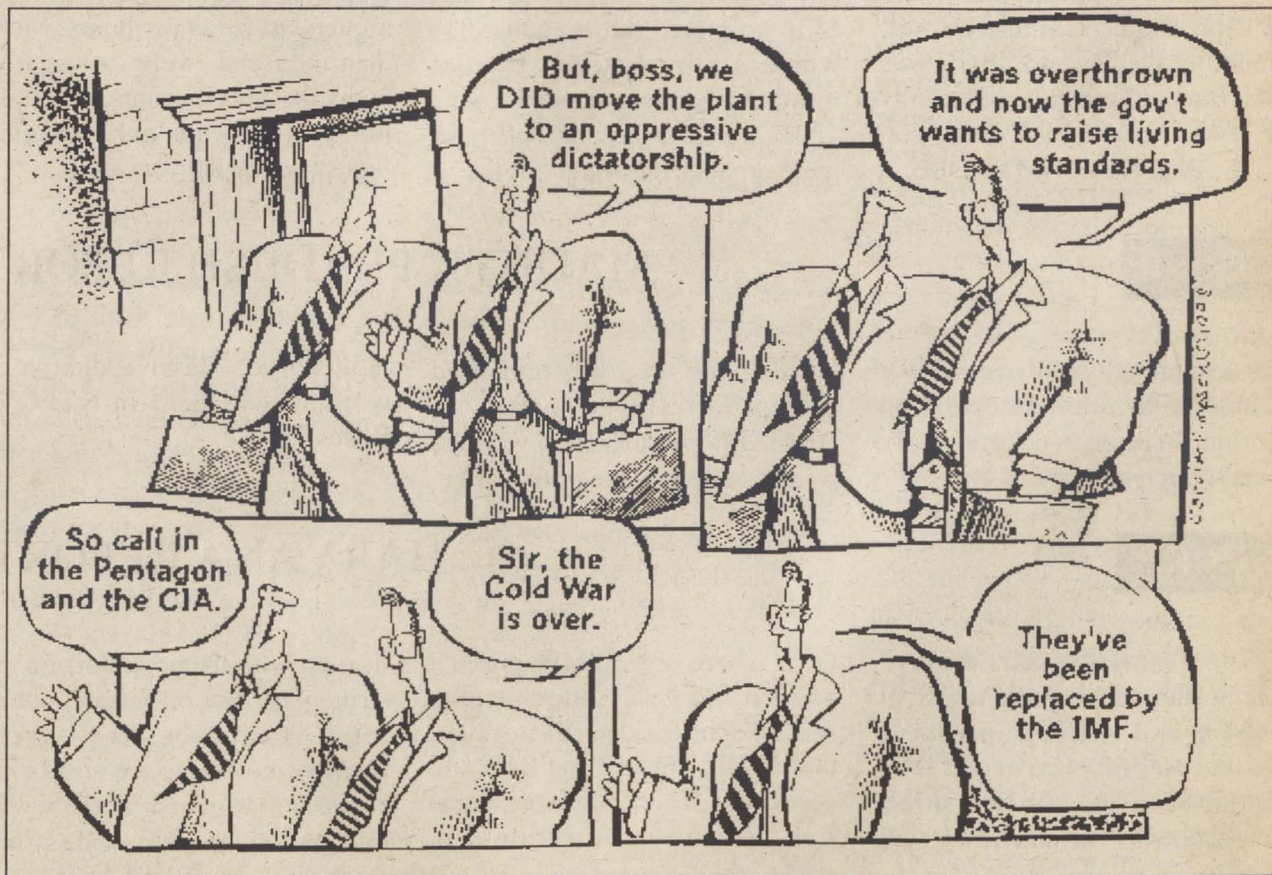
STRIKE

The strike was a great success in Gujarat with the biggest mobilisation taking place in Bhavnagar with thousand joining a rally from Moti Baug to Ghoga Gate. *Rail roko, rasta roko*, and a total students' strike marked the day in this district. The LIC, Bank and Airlines observed complete

strike. Women participated in big numbers. The dock and stevedore workers, machine tool workers, municipal corporation employees and others joined the strike. In Baroda, strike action took place in RTCL, Brown Boverly, Petrofil, Makarpura, GIDC, banks and the LIC. In Ahmedabad, all the

GUJRAT REPORT

participating mass organisations took out a big rally which turned into a "Labour Human Chain" at Nehru Bridge. In Rajkot, Indian Airlines, Coop Banks, General Insurance, LIC and banks remained closed. *Rasta roko* and rallies took place in Junagardh, Patan, Surat, and Sabarkantha.



IDPL WORKERS DEMAND REVIVAL

Nearly 1000 workers and employees of IDPL held a mass demonstration on 18.12.98 on Parliament Street, New Delhi, demanding immediate revival of the INDIAN DRUGS & PHARMACEUTICALS LTD. They came from Hyderabad, Rishikesh, Gurgaon, Chennai and Muzaffarpur.

Earlier, a delegation had visited the Prime Minister and the Minister for Chemical, who assured to consider the revival of the company and tentatively fixed another meeting during 1st week of January '99. The workers decided to carry forward the agitation till the company is revived.

DEMONSTRATION AGAINST PATENT BILL

FMRAI organised a demonstration on 18.12.98 against the Govt. move to amend the Indian Patent Act, in front of the main Parliament gate. Rapid Action Force Police, however, swooped on the

demonstrators, dragged then into vehicles and took them to the Parliament Street Police Station. The matter was raised in Parliament by several MPs, who demanded withdrawal of the Patent Amendment Bill.

NPCC WORKERS' DHARNA

The National Projects Construction Corporation is one of those ill fated PSUs declared sick. The deterioration of this Company started in 1990 onward due to gross mismanagement, massive corruption and non-bagging of new works. As a result, about 2000 employees posted at remote sites have not been paid even their salaries for a period ranging 7 to 20 months, besides being denied other statutory dues. The NPCC unions belonging to CITU, AITUC and INTUC jointly staged Dharna in Delhi from 14th to 24th Dec. '98 in protest against non-payment of salaries, etc. and demanding for revival/revamping of the NPCC.

STRIKE

In many districts like Vijayawada, Guntur, Karnul, Anantpur, Vizag etc. there was total Bandh. In public sector units at Hyderabad and Vizag Viz. ECIL, BEL HCL, HMT, IDPL,

Hindustan Zinc, Hindustan Shipyard etc. more than 80% workers joined strike. In coal mines in Singareni, strike was 100%. *Rasta roko* and *rail roko* were organised throughout the

state, severely disrupting train movement for many hours. More than thousand were arrested in many districts throughout A.P. In jute, textile, beedi, polymers, etc., industries, strike was total.

ANDHRA PRADESH REPORT

STRIKE

In several industrial centres like Indore, Gwalior, Bhopal, and Korba, striking workers' rally faced police repression. In

Gwalior rail roko was organised disrupting railway traffic. In BHEL-Bhopal, picketing workers were arrested by the police after

lathicharge. Massive dharna of workers was held in NTPC at Korba.

MADHYA PRADESH REPORT

STRIKE

The HVP-BJP Bansi Lal Govt. in Haryana resorted to use of ESMA and other repressive measures to terrorise the participants in the 11th Dec. strike. This echoed in Parliament on 10th

Dec., where several MPs raised a powerful protest. Unfortunately, instead of restraining themselves, the leaders of HVP and BJP, and especially Chief Minister Bansi Lal, became more ruthless in

dealing with the protestors on the strike day. Not only this, out of total vengeance, the severe punitive measures are still being carried out to punish all those who took part in the nationwide strike.

HARYANA REPORT

Some instances of repression are cited below:

ESMA was invoked against any form of protest actions by employees.

Midnight police raids were conducted on the houses of leaders of mass organisations and trade unions, from 8th Dec. onwards. Approximately, 300 were arrested in the midnight police raids.

Sec. 144 was declared throughout the state. Even indoor meetings were practically banned. On 8th night, the whole executive

committee of Sarv Karmachari Sangh, Haryana, comprising 42 members, was arrested while they were having a meeting at Hissar. The State Govt. also declared that video films of any procession or gathering would be prepared on the day of strike to identify participants for initiating punitive actions.

The whole of the state was converted into a police cantonment on 11th Dec. 1998. At many places, police prevented the people who assembled and

dispersed them by threatening with dire consequences. The police resorted to lathi charge at peaceful processions at Faridabad and Hissar.

Reports of suspension of employees under ESMA are coming in.

The state government of Haryana is resorting to turn Haryana into an authoritarian state by violating and crushing the constitutional, democratic and human rights of the people. But the working class will mete out a stiff resistance to these repressive rulers.

STRIKE

Coal Industry: Around 70% Coal Miners participated all over the country. In Raniganj Coal Belt only one mine was reported working. In ECL strike was near total. In BCCL & CEL strike was more than 75%. In WCL & NCL, SECL overwhelming majority of workers joined the strike.

Steel Industry: In Durgapur Steel Plant, 75% workers joined strike. In Alloy Steels plant at Durgapur and IISCO at Burnpur, strike was 95% & 85%. In Bokaro Steel Plant, 70% workers participated. In Salem Steel Plant strike was near total. In Vizag Steel Plant workers joined strike in a massive way braving police repression.

Airlines: Airlines service got virtually paralysed. In all the major Airports like Calcutta, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Kochi etc. strike was reported to be near total. In Delhi Airport, strike was partial.

BHEL: Strike was massive in all the plants of BHEL, all over the

country. In the BHEL plants at Trichy & Ranipet, strike was near total. In BHEL, Hardwar CISF heavily lathicharged the picketing workers severely injuring B.K. Singh of CITU and several others. At Electronics Union of BHEL at Bangalore, 100% of workers and 30% of supervisors and officers stayed away from work.

Fertiliser : In the fertiliser plants at Namrup, Barauni, Sindhri, Durgapur, Haldia, Ramagundam, Talchal, Cochin and the offices at Calcutta and Delhi, strike was almost total.

Oil: In all the offices and installations and depots of Indo Burma Petroleum, scattered all over the country, complete strike was observed by the entire workforce. In Bharat Petroleum strike was massive in Eastern & Northern regions, despite opposition of some of the unions. In Southern region, BPCL units at Kochi reported complete strike. Oil installation and refineries

under BRPL, Indian Oil in the North Eastern region got almost paralysed owing to strike. In HPCL refinery at Vizag and other installations in the country witnessed massive strike by the workers.

Anganwadi Workers:

Anganwadi Workers throughout the country took part in the strike in a massive way.

Banks and Insurance: More than 80% of Banking and Insurance employees joined the strike all over the country.

State Govt. Employees: At the call of All India State Govt. Employees' Federation, out of 40 lakh state govt. employees under different state govts, - more than 80% employees took part in the strike and strike was total in West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura, Tamilnadu, A.P., Maharashtra, Assam, Manipur, Bihar, UP, MP, Rajasthan, Orissa and Haryana.

[NOTE: These are reports received till the time of going to press.-Editor]

IN DIFFERENT SECTORS

COMBAT LIBERALISATION: STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Chittabrata Majumdar

LIBERALISATION AND THE PEOPLE

In the backdrop of the unprecedented crisis worldwide, the process of liberalisation has served to intensify the global crisis of capitalism. A press release of ILO dated 29 May 1996 shows that by the beginning of the year 2000, the number of urban unemployed and quasi-unemployed would increase from 40 crores (400 million) as at the beginning of this decade to 100 crores (1 billion).

The population of industrially developed nations gets to remain more-or-less stable. But in Africa and Asia, the mounting poverty in the rural areas has caused a wide and continuous migration of pollution from the villages to the urban centres, and this has resulted in an unprecedented influx of population in the towns and cities of the third world. In the developing nations, the urban population was 50% of the total urban population in 1970. This figure stands at 65% in 1994. If the present urban rural 'one way nexus' continues, the figure will touch 80%.

Catherine Hagen, ILO's Deputy Director General has commented that **a production enhancing employment scenario alone can counter the terrible pressure of joblessness in urban centres worldwide.** But in the background of mounting poverty, the capitalist system has gone in for a policy of liberalisation that encourages job-cuts rather than job expansion.

The past two decades have seen productive employment getting reduced by 15%. The corresponding figures in other EU countries are: England (43%), France (23%), and Germany (14%). In the remaining EU countries, the rate has crossed 10%. Even the US is no exception in this regard, generally speaking.

As per the ILO survey, the little improvement that could be achieved in productive employment in some developing countries remains marginal in terms of the urban population. In these countries, the wages of workers are equivalent of quasi-unemployment.

Whatever little social security the organised sector of workers enjoys is not available to their unorganised counter parts.

In sub-Saharan Africa, 60% of the workers are to contend with very low wages. In the Latin American and Caribbean countries (1990-94) 83% of the workforce are engaged in the unorganised sector. In India and Pakistan 75% & 70% respectively of the productive workforce are in the unorganised sector.

LIBERALISATION AND THE WORKING CLASS

The assaults on the working classes are not merely confined to curtailment of employment opportunities. The unprecedented development of science and technology and the equally unprecedented contraction of the market in the capitalist system have served to organise fresh attacks on the working class. The drive by the TNC's to capture limited markets available, has led them to destroy established traditional industries of the Third world while intensifying *inter se* competition. The competition skills over run into areas of technological innovations and reduction of production costs. All over the world, production units are victims of wide-scale retrenchment of workers.

This has also affected adversely the conditions of wage earning of workers. Temporary/casual workers are employed in a big way to deprive the workers of their organised strength. Existing labour legislation is not paid heed to. Hard-earned rights of workers are being taken away from them. Labour laws are being revised in the interest of the capitalists. In the third world, the circumstances of extreme poverty and unemployment have tended to make the workers agree to any amount of wages and to any working condition.

The ILO Report on World Labour, 1997-98, given us an idea about the statues till date in the real collective bargaining. In countries like Belaruss, France, Germany, Grease, Ireland, Sweden, Spain

and Holland, 97.7% to 80% of workers enjoy this right. In Europe, England occupies the bottom spot with a mere 36.5% of the workforce getting to enjoy collective bargaining.

In the two Americas, in 12 countries, the coverage of collective bargaining ranges from 11.1% to 98.2%. Cuba enjoys the highest figure, while USA languishes at 11.7%. In eight countries of Africa, the range is 40% to 25%. In Australia and Asia, the Australian worker enjoys the highest benefit with 65% of the workforce having the scope of collective bargaining. The figures for India 2%, Malaysia 2.6%, Taiwan 3.4%, and Philippines 3.7% represent the so-called 'low end' of the scale.

WORKING CLASS:

ORGANISATION AND STRUGGLE

There is a vituperative campaign that TUs are no longer able to look after the interests of the working class. The proprietors are more interested in maintaining individual based, as opposed to collective relations, with the working class. Working class are allegedly 'moving' away from TUs, leading to reduction in TU membership.

It is true that in the emerging scenario of globalisation and liberalisation, the capitalist class has acquired more power and control and this is being imposed on the working class in an aggressive and cruel manner. It is also true that the TUs are not able to attain success through persisting with traditional forms of movement. But there is no evidence either of reduction of TU membership or of a lack of urge on the part of the working class to struggle for its rights.

ILO Report (1997-98) provides data pertinent to such issues and we note that in 1985, the total TU membership for 37 countries in all the continents was 180,182,000. This increased to 192,947,000 in 1995. Continent-wise breakup and details in respect of some countries are given in the box. (see next column)

The contraction of industries in Europe and the facts concerning collective bargaining go to how the reasons why TU membership has gone down. In USA, we have seen wide-scale retrenchment. In other parts of America, TU membership has gone up. In developed capitalist countries, unemployed has a social security net. This is not in evidence elsewhere. Unemployment gets aggravated in the developing

TU Membership		
	1985	1995
Europe	57,121,000	47,274,000
Americas	25,140,000	25,129,000
Africa	5,393,000	7,769,000
Asia & Australia	92,523,000	113,775,000
Country	% Increase	
Swaziland	975.7%	
South Africa	126.7%	
Chile	89.6%	
Korea	60.8%	
Bangladesh	57.8%	
Hong Kong	53.0%	

world. The increase in TU membership in Asia and Africa shows that the working class has moved closer to TU organisation.

The ILO Report also gives details of man-days lost due to strikes and lockouts in 39 countries between 1993 and 1995:

Year	Man-Days Lost
1993	24,708,000
1994	23,611,000
1995	26,847,000

The unprecedented crisis of world capitalisation and the drive towards globalisation and liberalisation in this backdrop has created a new situation for the world workers' movement. De-industrialisation and of this situation. These circumstances have tended to create some problems for TUs who would confine themselves to their own narrow ambit of demands and to traditional forms of movements and struggles. Gradually, it has dawned to the working class, through their experience of struggles, that it is the true process of globalisation and liberalisation which is squarely responsible for their problems of life and livelihood. The same evil has affected various other sections of people in different forms. Only by ensuring the decline and fall of globalisation and liberalisation, can the working class stave off the present assaults successfully. It is necessary for them to organise all other sections of the people who are concurrently attacked and to draw them into the fold of struggles and movements.

This realisation has made the working class in various countries to break out of their own kind of struggles and to join up with the struggle of other sections of people. Only by a process of transformation of the working class struggle into a struggle to safeguard social interests can the working class forge ahead.

PRICE RISE - WHOM DOES 'SULTANI' SERVE?

Dr. Vandana Shiva

In 1991, trade liberalisation was introduced, in the form of the New Economic Policy (NEP), through the structural adjustment programs of the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The liberalisation was later reinforced through the free-trade regime of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Since then, three successive Indian governments, each with different ideologies and hues, have shared a commitment to promote free trade by reducing public policy interventions in the interest of citizen welfare and increasing government decision-making.

The sectoral adjustment programme for agricultural, prescribed by the WB in 1991, recommended the following:

- * Deregulating the wheat, rice, sugarcane, cotton, edible oil and oilseed industries.

- * Dismantling the food security system.

- * Removing controls on markets, traders and processors, and also subsidies to cooperatives.

- * Abolishing the Essential Commodities Act (ECA).

- * Abolishing the general ban on futures trading.

- * Abolishing inventory controls.

This is a clear recipe for encouraging hoarding and profiteering.

The rise in prices of essential food commodities is a necessary and inevitable outcome of trade

liberalisation. In its Poverty Report on India (PRI), the WB has categorically recommended that India allow the prices of its agricultural products to rise to international levels.

In 1998, under the title, 'Getting Agriculture Going', the WB report recommended that India "Allow agricultural as well as farmgate prices to increase by linking them more closely with world prices, by eliminating controls on international trade including canalisation (import restrictions will be phased out by 2003), and phasing out controls on domestic trade, such as movement and storage controls, and pan-territorial and pan-seasonal pricing for rice and wheat distributed through the TPDS".

(*WB Report No.18080-IN of 'India 1998 Macro Economic Update: Reforming for Growth and Poverty Reduction'*.)

As if the crisis crushing the majority of Indians isn't enough, the WB wants to push such economic policies further, in the direction that undermines the average citizen's food rights.

The gulf between international prices and Indian incomes and wages implies that, as a result of liberalisation policies, essential food items will increasingly go beyond the reach of an increasing number of Indians.

Trade liberalisation, by its very nature, generates market fluctuations and a volatile supply.

Trade 'pundits' have repeatedly been saying that export competitiveness is the key to Indian agricultural exports, which would pay for buying food from the international market. They have promoted onion exports on the grounds of export competitiveness.

Results based on the analysis of export competitiveness reveal that produce like rice, banana, grapes, sapota, lychees, onions, tomatoes and mushrooms are highly competitive. Wheat, mangoes and potatoes are moderately competitive. The vulnerable section, comprising less competitive or not competitive crops, includes maize, sorghum, soyabean, oil palm, pulses, coconut, clove, spices, jute and several other crops.

First, onions were exported in the name of export promotion. When exports created a domestic scarcity, exports were banned, and the competitive advantage disappeared. Then, importing onions was announced as a measure for price reduction. Imports have not significantly reduced prices for consumers, but they crashed prices for farmers. A new crisis of low farm prices has thus been created without solving the problem of high food prices. The Prime Minister, in his characteristic, poetic style, said the price rise was due to 'asmani' (the weather) and not 'sultani' (the government). However, trade

liberalisation policies contributing to the price rise and instability are government policies, a 'sultani' factor. Further, the edible oil crisis, the rise in salt prices and the free import of pulses have no relationship to the weather.

The rise in prices is clearly a gift of the 'sultani' promotion of free trade in food and agriculture. The government, in partnership with global agrobusiness and Indian industry, is choreographing a food crisis in order to establish corporate monopolies on food and agriculture.

In August and September, a crisis was engineered in mustard oil and other indigenous edible oils. The crisis was resolved through the free import of soyabean and sunflower, and a 'packaging order'. The first decision benefited the global soya lobby at the cost of the Indian farmer and oil extractors. The second decision benefited the large-scale solvent extraction industry at the cost of the 'ghani' operators and small mill sector which so far has contributed 80 per cent of the edible oil in India.

October was the month of the onion crisis and November and December will be the months of the salt, vegetable and pulse crises. Immediately after the panic created by a tenfold rise in salt prices, Tata salt had full-page advertisements in all leading dailies. The choreographed crisis thus converted the most expensive salt into the lowest cost option for consumers, further destroying the economic space for small-scale salt producers already struggling for survival due to the ban on the

sale of non-iodised salt.

A salt monopoly has thus been further facilitated through the engineering of the salt crisis. Just as a soya monopoly was facilitated through the engineering of the mustard oil crisis. In neither of these crises did the 'asman' contribute. 'Sultani' decisions and 'sultani' conspiracies have either engineered the crises - to promote the interests of big business and global corporations - or they have used the crises generated by globalisation to further integrate India's food economy into unstable, unreliable and volatile global markets.

No matter what the problem, free imports are being offered as a solution. However, free imports will generate their own problems without necessarily bringing safe and cheap food to Indian consumers.

The government has announced the duty-free import of pulses, even though there was no sudden pulse crisis. The scarcity of pulses in India was a result of the Green revolution. In Punjab, the area for pulses declined from 13 per cent in 1966 to 3 per cent in 1985 as the mixed cropping systems based on pulses and cereals were replaced by monocultures of rice and wheat. As a result, India has been converted from a net exporter of pulses to being a net importer. In 1994-95 we imported \$182.7 million worth of pulses. With free trade in pulses, the drain of our scarce foreign exchange will increase even further, prices will continue to rise and farmers will continue to either riot or commit suicide.

Free import of pulses will in fact generate a crisis for Indian farmers and consumers. India is the most important producer and consumer of pulses. Leguminous crops are a very significant source of protein in Indian diets. Rajma, pigeon pea, black gram, green gram, bhat, chick pea, moth bean, guar bean, lobia, kulath and navrangi are some of the diverse pulses grown and eaten in India. We consume this diversity in culturally different ways - as dal, roti, sattu, badi, bada, sambar, namkeen, papad, etc.

Most of these pulses are not grown in other countries. Importing pulses will mean importing soyabean. Or importing Indian pigeon pea and chick pea from Australia, which took Indian varieties from ICRISAT in Hyderabad and tried to patent them in the first place.

Indian pulses grow in the most fragile ecosystems. They provide nutrition to the most impoverished communities and the most impoverished soils. The guar bean, which grows in the deserts of Rajasthan and Gujarat, produces 200 kg/ha nitrogen, and takes up only 50 kg/ha, thus enriching the soil by 150 kg/ha of nitrogen. Pulse production in India contributes to biodiversity conservation, conserving soil fertility, and the cultural diversity of our food systems. It also saves the farmers and the country from debt, and ensures food security through sustainable production.

Importing free pulses will destroy this diversity of leguminous crops so necessary for sustenance

(Cont. on page 21)

Kali Ghosh

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Recognition of Union by the employers was the universal demand of the trade union movement in India. Trade Union Act was passed in 1926, which gave legal sanction to form a union and get it registered. But there is no obligation on the part of the employers to recognise and negotiate with the registered unions. For obvious reasons, employers are opposed to the formation of any union. To establish the right to form a union, many workers had laid down their lives, many were victimised. With the progress and advance of the working class movement, the demand for recognition of union became irresistible. The employers played sinister role on the question of recognition too. It was our common experience that employers recognised and/or negotiated only with those unions which are pliant, not militant and could be purchased.

The British Govt. sensed the resentment of the working class on this issue. In February 1946, with a view to regulate and channalise the discontent in constitutional method, they introduced a Bill in the then Central Legislative Council amending the TU Act. It laid down procedures for recognition of trade unions by the employers. This Bill was finally adopted in November, 1947. On the basis of the said amendment, a draft Regulation was also prepared. But our new rulers thought it wise not to give effect to the said Act. Thereafter, how company sponsored and ruling party patronised unions were recognised and thrust upon the workers is a matter of history. The 16th Indian Labour Conference also introduced a procedure which was very much arbitrary in nature and did not reflect the genuine and democratic opinion of the workers.

It is in this background the trade union movement, particularly the Left trade union movement of our country, had been demanding recognition of trade unions by secret ballot.

In 1969, the then United Front Govt. of West Bengal

passed a Bill providing for recognition of trade unions by secret ballot. The Congress Govt. at the Centre, as they were principally opposed to the idea, sat tight on it. The Bill failed to receive the Presidential assent.

Again in 1983, the Left Front Govt. of West Bengal passed another Bill amending the Trade Union Act with the provision for recognition by secret ballot. After a lapse of 9 years, this Bill received the Presidential assent in 1992.

SALIENT FEATURES

1. Recognition of Trade Union is granted in two cases (1) Unitwise, (2) Any class of industry, local area wise
2. In an unit where there is only one union that union will be treated as recognised union.
3. Where there is more than one union, the election will be held by secret ballot and the union which receives more than 50% of votes cast shall be treated as the Sole Bargaining Agent.
4. If none of the unions secures more than 50% of votes, a Joint Bargaining Council will be constituted with the unions, securing not less than 10% of votes in any class of industry in a local area and 15% in the case of an industrial unit. However, the union securing 40% or more votes will be recognised as the Principal Bargaining Agent. Where there is a Joint Bargaining Council, no settlement shall be entered into without the Principal Bargaining Agent.
5. Where there is no Principal Bargaining Agent two or more Unions recognised as constituents of Joint Bargaining Council together having more than 50% of votes, shall be eligible to sign any settlement.
6. The constituents of Joint Bargaining Council shall have the right to participate in any negotiation, discussion or settlement.
7. Recognition granted shall be valid for 2 years or thereafter for a period of six months or until a fresh election takes place.
8. After expiry of six months of giving recognition,

if a substantial number of workers - at least 10% or 15% as the case may be - jointly apply for recognition of any other union, the Registrar of Trade Unions may hold enquiry and take appropriate decision.

9. RIGHTS OF THE RECOGNISED UNIONS

(a) To raise industrial dispute and enter into agreement with the employer(s) on general questions concerning employment or non-employment, terms and conditions of employment of any workman and/ or workmen in general.

(b) To collect membership fee and other dues from the members within the premises of the industrial establishments as may be prescribed.

(c) Put up notices on the notice board within the premises of the industrial establishment. But it should not be abusive, indecent, or contrary to discipline or otherwise against the provision of any law.

(d) To hold discussions with the workmen who are members of the trade unions, at a suitable place within the factory premises, with the consent of the employer.

(e) To meet and discuss with the employer or any person appointed by him.

(f) To nominate representatives on non-statutory bipartite committee, house allotment committee, safety committee etc. that may be set up by the employers.

(g) Employer shall grant leave for attending negotiations/conciliations to representatives of recognised trade unions and shall give protection for conducting lawful trade unions activity.

It is to be noted that this is without prejudice to the rights of a registered but unrecognised trade union as provided under I.D. Act.

10. Trade Unions who are eligible to apply for recognition:

(a) A registered trade union functioning at least for six months in an unit or class of industry in the area.

(b) The membership of the union is open to all without any discrimination.

(c) The union holds its annual conference and elects its office-bearers every year.

(d) Executive Committee meeting is held at least once in every three months.

11. (a) All workmen who are above the age of eighteen years and are in service for 120 days in a period of twelve months immediately before the date of announcement of election, are eligible for voting.

(b) The entire process of election and granting of recognition to unions shall be conducted by the Registrar of Trade Unions.

The Rules and procedures for conducting election have been framed, to be approved by the legislature.

(PRICE RISE cont. from page 19)

reduce our diets to soyabean for protein and soyabean for edible oil, with all the anti-nutritional and toxic elements. It will impoverish our soils since farmers will stop growing pulses when cheap imports of soyabean destroy their markets.

By removing import duty and allowing import of pulses under the Open General License (OGL), the prices of pulses will crash for farmers, and not come down for consumers. The price of groundnut oil has doubled as a result of the edible oil crisis. However, the price farmers received for groundnut crashed from Rs.1500/q to Rs.400/q. This led to the shooting of six farmers in Sira, Karnataka. While consumers paid Rs.100/kg for onions, farmers in Karnataka did not recover their cost of production.

Under free-trade systems, farmers are crushed by the collapse of prices and consumers by rising prices. This is a structural inevitability under liberalised trade

regimes, especially in a country as large and poor as India. No country has the surpluses in the hundreds of crops we grow for cereals, pulses, oilseeds, vegetables and spices. Our scarcity will convert into a absolute scarcity that no free-trade regime can compensate for.

Free trade in goods causes a scarcity of the goods and high prices. Not a solution. Food entitlement and food rights are secured through public policy and public intervention, not through free markets. This is the most important message of Amratya Sen's work on welfare economics. We should heed his warning before the country is pushed into a situation like the 1942 Bengal famine.

(The writer is the founder director of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, New Delhi)

Courtesy: The Sunday Observer (29 Nov.-5 Dec. '98)

AMENDING THE PATENT ACT: *VOLTE-FACE* BY BJP

P K Ganguly

After a lot of fanfare of opposition, the BJP Government has decided to amend the Indian Patent Act of 1970, and also become a member of the Paris Convention on Patents.

When in opposition, the BJP leaders, both inside the Parliament and outside, made vociferous objection to India's signing the GATT agreement. They cautioned the then Governments, of both the Congress and the United Front, against amendment of the Indian Patents Act and becoming a member of the so-called Paris Convention.

True to their character, the BJP leaders may deny whatever they said in the yesteryears. But, it will be pertinent to quote the following excerpts from a written "Appeal for Preservation of Economic Sovereignty" made to the President of India, in January, 1992. Among the forty four eminent personalities of India, leaders of the BJP, viz., Dr Murli Manohar Joshi, Atal Behari Vajpaae, L K Advani, and Yashwant Sinha, had also signed. "We the signatories to this statement make a united appeal to the President, as the Head of the Republic, and to the Prime Minister to uphold the independence of India, the socio-economic values of the Constitution, the imperatives of self-reliant industrial progress and prosperous agriculture, and not to bend before external

pressure...Our law of Patents, carefully drawn and modelled on the best principles of national interests and international standards, is an expression of Parliamentary wisdom. Tampering with the laws of Patents to appease the American interest may be fatal to our agriculture and industry. Therefore, we stand for the "untouchability" of our law of Patents....Hands off our law of Patents should be our stance...."

This appeal was followed up by a "revolutionary" speech by Murli Manohar Joshi in a national seminar organised by the National Working Group on Patent Laws at Delhi in 1996, which he was presiding.

The sham character of the BJP leaders and the Party as a whole stand thoroughly exposed when they are in power today, appease the same American interests.

PARIS CONVENTION

The Paris Convention on Patents was held during the colonial period in 1883. A draft prepared by the USA for protection of industrial property was adopted, which turned the Intellectual Property Right to Industrial Property Right. The draft stated the countries to which the convention applies (member countries) constitute a union for the protection of industrial property. Six subsequent conventions were held thereafter till 1967 for amending the Paris

Convention, further strengthening it by providing greater Patent Rights to the Patent holders to the detriment of the third world countries.

The first Article of the Convention stated that the Industrial Property shall be understood in the broadest sense, and shall apply not only to industry and commerce proper, but likewise to agriculture and allied industries and to all manufactured or natural products. It means that if some one invents a herb, which gives materials for production of life saving drugs, and if it is patented, none will be allowed to cultivate that herb. The objective behind protecting the Industrial Property Right was to establish Product Patent Right out of Process Patent Right and not to allow any other country to produce the same product even through a different process.

The Paris Convention did not provide any social obligation to the Patentees for domestic production and on the contrary allowed import of patented products. The Convention further forbids compulsory licensing by any country, even on the ground of failure of work or insufficient work on patents in that country. One of the malpractices indulged in by the drug multinationals to exploit the third world countries was only to patent a particular product in a third world country without producing it there; then go on importing the product from

the parent country and sell it in the third world country at exorbitant prices - 5 to 6 times more than in the parent country. In this way while garnering huge profits they keep the country away from acquiring self-reliance and at the same time caused huge drainage of foreign exchange.

The other provisions of the Paris Convention include decontrol and observance of the principle of equal national treatment to foreign investors. It means that no special treatment can be given to the domestic sector for their growth. The process of self-reliance and indigenisation, development of public sector and even the small sector have to be grounded. And for successful application of the Paris Convention, domestic laws of the countries, notably the Patent Acts have to be amended, if needed.

It can be seen that the Dunkel proposals on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) were drafted from the pages of the Paris Convention. The GATT agreement to which India has succumbed, states that GATT members shall comply with the substantive Articles of the Paris Convention. The GATT proposal have further fortified the Paris Convention by demanding Exclusive Marketing Rights (EMR) and putting the burden of proof of violation of Patents on the accused. Further, the arena of patentability was expanded to include agriculture, horticulture and even atomic energy inventions.

INDIAN PATENTS ACT, 1970

The first Patent Act in India was

enacted in 1856 and amended several times by the British regime according to their needs. After independence, the Government appointed the Teckchand Committee (1948) and then the Ayyangar Committee (1957) to look into the question of Patents. Both the Committees made identical recommendations that patents should not be granted to enable patentees to enjoy monopoly to import the patented products to exploit the poor nation. Instead, Patents should protect development of Indian industries from aggression of foreign capital. Patents should be granted to encourage inventions, and that they should be worked in India on a commercial scale. For the survival of its own industries, India should not be a member of the Paris convention. These were their recommendations.

Based on the above, the Indian Patents Act was ultimately formulated in 1970. The Act, although not a panacea in itself, did have the following features:

- a) National interest was given priority over the interest of the Patentee
- b) Inventions relating to agriculture, horticulture and atomic energy were not patentable.
- c) Product patenting was not allowed in drugs, medicines, food, chemicals and substances produced by chemicals process, and included all medicines and substances used for diagnosis or treatment or prevention and control of epidemic diseases in human beings or animals or manufacture thereof, and all

insecticides, germicides, fungicides, weedicides, etc for the protection or preservation of plants.

d) Only process patenting was allowed permitting manufacture of the products through any different process. This gave a good scope for research and development and to develop alternative technologies to suit Indian conditions.

e) The Patentee was not allowed to import at his own price.

f) The Act provided for compulsory licensing, thereby empowering the Government to revoke the Patent if it was found that the patented substance has not met the requirement of the public or was not available at reasonable price. With such licensing, the Government forced the patentee to work the patent in the country.

g) Burden of proof of violation of Patents was on the Patentee. This means, if a Patent holder brings a complaint of violation of his patent right, then he has to prove it, and not the accused. This is in tune with the general law of the land that the prosecution has to prove the guilt and not the defendant.

CONSEQUENCES OF AMENDMENT

It is now easy to visualise the consequences of amendment of the Indian Patents Act. The foreign Patentee acts as a 'Dog in the Manger.' He will send the patented articles to this country, but will do nothing to have the patented articles manufactured here. Our industries under our own changed laws will starve in the interest of the foreigners.

Nothing can be more absurd or outrageous than this.

If Process Patent is changed to Product Patent, no new products can be introduced by the Indian sector as at present. The country will have to be entirely dependent on imports of not only patented raw materials, but also patented finished formulations.

Because of such undisputed monopoly by the multinationals prices of all essential and life saving drugs will become unimaginably exorbitant and scarcely available too. On the other hand, the Indian market will be flooded with banned, spurious irrational and hazardous drugs as was cautioned by the Hathi Committee. The health care programme in the country will be in jeopardy as these drugs will

have no relation with the disease pattern in the country. Further, India's export activities in the entire sector of drugs, chemicals and agriculture will face a serious jolt. With the inevitable rise in imports, India's balance of payment position will further worsen.

Since the Patent regime will be extended to the agricultural sector also, it will cause a devastating effect in our agriculture and food production. For thousands of years the farmers and peasants produced their own seeds, stored them, replanted them letting nature take its own course in the renewal and enrichment of life. The USA has developed a Termination Technology to produce a so-called Terminator Seed that cannot be stored. It will give flourishing

crop for one season and then die. Thus the farmers will have to purchase this patented seed from USA every year at exorbitant price. Plant breeding strategies of maintaining and enriching genetic diversity and self-renewability of crops will have to be substituted by new breeding strategies of non-renewability. The transnational profits will soar and they will control the genetic resources of the third world.

The end result of amendment of the Indian Patents Act and becoming member of the diabolical Paris Convention will be closure of our national laboratories and research institutions like the ICMR, CDRI, CSIR, National Chemical Laboratory, ICAR, etc. While the Government has been called upon to amend the Patent Act and permit EMR before April, 1999, the Product Patent may be allowed from 2005. But the USA and the transnationals cannot wait till 2005. The BJP Government has succumbed to their pressure for simultaneous amendments to the laws immediately and decided to bring both the Bills, in this winter session. Granting of EMR will be suicidal, because it provides for immediate and automatic marketing of products, without giving any opportunity to examine the Patent or contest it.

The working class and the patriotic forces will have to take up the cause of preservation of economic sovereignty".

The forthcoming countrywide strike on 11th December will be the first salvo against this government.

BTR MEMORIAL FUND RECEIPTS SINCE 23rd SEPTEMBER 1998

78.	AIF Foreign Airlines Emp. Union	2,000.00
79.	Sri B Singh, Patna	100.00
80.	Sri Lambodar Jha, Patna	100.00
81.	Sri Arun Chandra Sinha, Nalanda	500.00
82.	Sri S P Mukherjee, Advocate, Patna	5,000.00
83.	Umesh Misra, Patna	50.00
84.	Chakradharpur Rail Div. Mazdoor	1,200.00
85.	B D Prasad, Bihar	100.00
86.	Sukumar Chakraborty, DSP Unit, Durgapur	501.00
87.	U P Menon, CITU Centre	3,000.00
88.	BEFI, Kerala	850.00
89.	Hindustan Steel Emp. Union, Durgapur	50,000.00
90.	FCI Employees Association, Kochi	2,500.00
91.	Indian Workers Association, U K	50,000.00
92.	CITU Centre (Collections till 15.12.98)	
	Kerala State Committee	4,00,000.00
	Orissa State Committee	7,239.00
	TTK Prestige Emp. Union, Karnataka	1,466.00
		4,08,705.50
		5,24,606.50
	Receipts upto 23.9.98	1,06,91,853.00
	(Published in October'98 issue of The Working Class)	
		1,12,16,459.50
	Total Receipts	
	* Expedite your Contribution	

(On a call attention (in the Rajya Sabha on 10 Dec 1998) Dipankar Mukherji, Working Committee Member of the CITU, made a powerful plea for reviving the eight PSUs which the Government has decided to close. here are excerpts from his speech. Editor)

PSUs: REVIVAL AND NO WINDING UP, IS THE NEED

Sikander Bakht, the Industries Minister was widely quoted in the Press, announcing Rs 517 crore VRS package for 10000 odd workers to go. *The Statesman* on 9.12.98, said "Though he (Bakht) did not expect the workers to retaliate against the extremely positive package, there could be backlash from vested interests.

Vayalar Ravi, Jibon Roy, Dipankar Mukherjee, Gurudas Das Gupta, Bangaru Laxman, etc are all vested interests who are politically interested in keeping this issue alive! I would like to say, "Yes, we are those people who are interested in keeping the issue of reviving the public sector alive." We will do it, whether you want it or do not want it.

The Minister has assured that the Government would not stand in the way of eventual revival of any of these PSUs if a revival scheme is sanctioned by BIFR. What does it mean?

The BJP's agenda regarding labour is, "Our plan to reform the reform process through the Swadeshi approach includes a strong commitment to make labour both organised and unorganised, an equal and proud partner, in the nation's progress." If that is the case, is it the way you deal with your partner? The partner does not know it, and you announce about Rs 517 crores worth VRS package. Is it the way of dealing with the partner? You don't discuss with trade unions. Mostly in the company of Confederation of Indian Industry, FICCI, ASSOCHAM and all these partners, you say that the Government has no business to be in business. Now, who are your equal partners, and your proud partners? Your Ministry has got 23 units under the BIFR. You are going to go in for a joint venture for another 23 and 74 per cent will be disinvested. What remains with you? You don't want to be in business. If the Government does not want to run the industries, then why is it that the Hon'ble Minister should hold the charge of the Ministry of Industry?

The Ministry says that in case a unit is not viable, and if it has been declared unviable by the BIFR, then they are giving them an option for getting more retrenchment benefits. Here, I want to make it very clear even regarding BIFR. Would the Minister kindly clarify if that is the only agency which you have in mind for giving you recommendations about viability of a unit? If so, why is it that the 14-member BIFR bench has become defunct for the last three four months? Right now, there are only three members. How could you think of reviving these sick units based on the recommendations of BIFR? You have said that you want to revive them based on the recommendations of BIFR. BIFR itself has become unviable.

Even in capitalist countries, firstly they see if the product has a market and the cost of replacement, including the opportunity cost for creating that employment and whether these costs are more than the closure cost or less than the closure cost. Unless you have that in mind, you cannot just go on closing down the industries based on the balance-sheets.

If the government is prepared to give the money and if a viable scheme is there, all these units can very well be revived. I would like the Government to come out and tell us whether replacement cost vis-a-vis the closure cost has been calculated. The revival cost of these units is much more cheaper than the closure cost. If the Minister wants that all these units are revived, then we can have detailed discussion with the trade unions, with the management, with the Government and other concerned agencies. We will show you that the revival cost is less than Rs 517 crores.

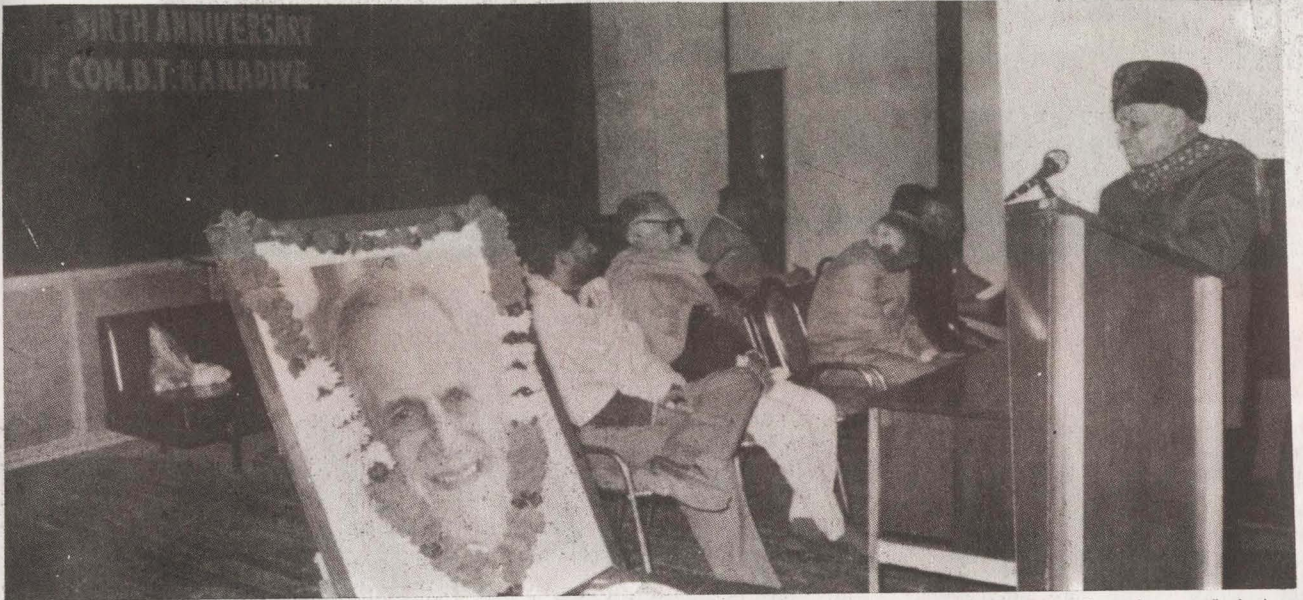
Even if you give this amount of Rs 517 crores in the next three years, then all these units can be made viable. But, if you have decided to close down the public sector, then come out openly and tell that **so that we face you on the road tomorrow.**

Consumer Price Index Numbers for Industrial Workers on base: 1982 = 100

Sr. No	Centre	Aug 98	Sep 98	Oct 98	Sr. No.	Centre	Aug 98	Sep 98	Oct 98
1	Gudur	427	444	441	45	Amritsar	384	386	406
2	Guntur	396	407	418	46	Ludhiana	388	393	432
3	Hyderabad	382	393	397	47	Ajmer	399	407	415
4	Visakhapatnam	393	414	415	48	Jaipur	400	404	412
5	Warangal	411	409	423	49	Chennai	430	437	440
6	D D Tinsukia	372	384	397	50	Coimbatore	379	386	394
7	Guwahati	413	431	438	51	Coonoor	399	404	406
8	Labac-Silchar	350	358	372	52	Madurai	403	406	412
9	Mariani Jorhat	397	408	429	53	Salem	398	406	415
10	Rangapara-Tezpur	399	411	439	54	Tiruchirapally	449	460	461
11	Jamshedpur	392	397	410	55	Agra	403	408	422
12	Jharia	359	371	386	56	Ghaziabad	427	437	456
13	Kodarma	370	368	401	57	Kanpur	426	434	457
14	Monghyr	387	392	416	58	Saharanpur	386	391	407
15	Noamundi	382	386	399	59	Varanasi	460	468	493
16	Ranchi-Hatia	414	424	435	60	Asansol	390	402	419
17	Ahmedabad	410	419	433	61	Calcutta	419	428	454
18	Bhavnagar	439	451	462	62	Darjeeling	364	383	396
19	Rajkot	399	404	436	63	Durgapur	433	441	461
20	Surat	434	433	458	64	Haldia	436	445	468
21	Vadodra	400	411	422	65	Howrah	452	465	489
22	Faridabad	443	446	459	66	Jalpaiguri	387	424	428
23	Yamunanagar	387	390	410	67	Raniganj	359	368	385
24	Srinagar	435	438	448	68	Chandigarh	425	430	441
25	Bangalore	393	397	400	69	Delhi	465	468	489
26	Belgaum	436	427	436	70	Pondicherry	459	463	464
27	Hubli-Dharwar	415	420	428					
28	Mercara	423	432	434		All India	413	420	433
29	Alwaye	399	407	413					
30	Mundakayam	419	418	424		Additional Series of Labour Bureau			
31	Quilon	387	397	401	1	Kothagudem	432	434	453
32	Thiruvananthapuram	444	453	450	2	Himachal Pradesh	395	401	413
33	Balaghat	384	388	396	3	Bhilwara	398	404	422
34	Bhilai	365	373	387	4	Chhindwara	413	417	429
35	Bhopal	446	453	470	5	Tripura	387	402	412
36	Indore	416	425	438	6	Goa	459	456	465
37	Jabalpur	415	424	436					
38	Mumbai	459	464	473					
39	Nagpur	444	445	451					
40	Nasik	431	437	450					
41	Pune	464	463	470					
42	Solapur	448	453	460					
43	Barbil	375	387	398					
44	Rourkela	396	401	418					

Government of India
Ministry of Labour
Labour Bureau
Shimla - 171 004

94TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF B T RANADIVE



The 94th Birth Anniversary of B T Ranadive was observed in New Delhi on 19th December 1998 with a seminar held at the IMA auditorium. The theme of the discussion this year was "Role of Mass Organisations in the Democratic Movement."

Kanai Banerjee, Secretary, CITU, welcomed the participants in the meeting.

E Balandan, President, CITU, pointed out in his introductory speech, that the teachings of BTR were very much relevant in the present day situation, when the IMF-World Bank dictates are ruling the country. He emphasised the need for strengthening the united movement of all mass organisations to fight the retrograde economic policies.

M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, explained how BTR was stressing the need for uniting the entire working class in the common struggle against capitalist exploitation. BTR was always calling upon the working class to join the political struggle to oppose the rule of capitalist-landlord society fight for social transformation.

Pandhe noted the success of 11th December strike and observed how the workers belonged to other affiliations joined the common action. Need for worker-peasant alliance and TUs championing the cause of other toiling masses was always stressed by BTR.

S R Pillai, General Secretary, All India Kisan Sabha, explained the attacks faced by the peasants since

independence and how the AIKS has been fighting for unification of the kisan movement against exploitation by the landlords.

Pillai welcomed the proposal for joint talks between CITU, AIKS and AIAWU for strengthening the worker-peasant alliance in India through joint struggles and solidarity actions.

The AIKS leader underlined the need for linking up the struggle for the immediate demands with the basic demands of the peasantry.

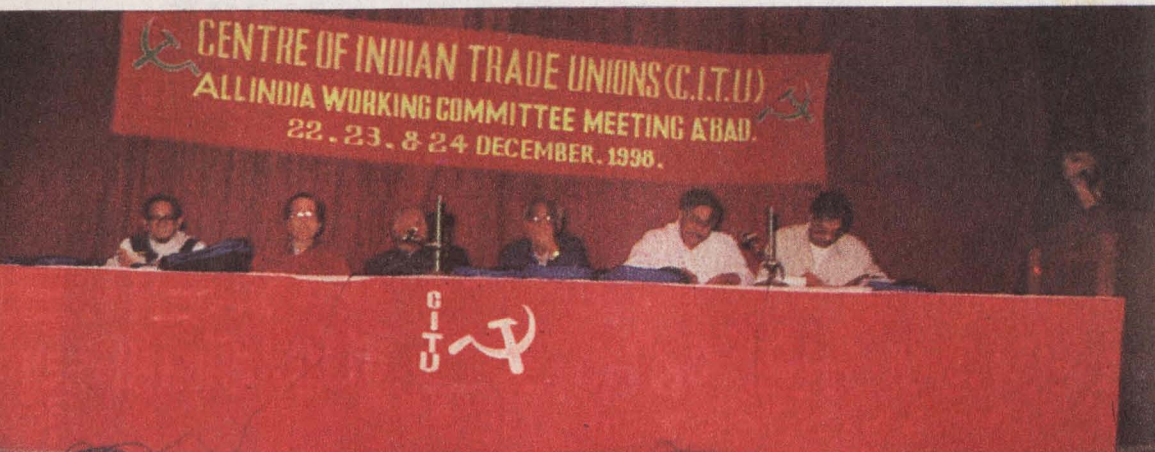
Suneet Chopra, Jt Secretary, All India Agricultural Workers Union, highlighted the problems faced by the rural workers and how they have been fighting hard even to get the Agricultural Workers' Bill enacted in the country.

He stressed the need for strengthening worker-peasant alliance to bring about the agrarian revolution in the country. He spoke about the Patents Bill which would seriously affect Indian agriculture and the urgent need for joint struggle.

Krishna Prasad of SFI explained how the BJP Government's education policy is subverting the entire education system and the democratic rights of students are being curtailed in the country. He emphasised the need for students' movement working in cooperation with other organisations.

He further advocated for the special effort to strengthen the movement in the weaker areas.

(Photo courtesy: J. Ballabh)



Cover Page

CITU
Working
Committee,
Ahmedabad
Mass Rally &
Flag Hoisting

Working
Committee
In Session

A View of
Participants

Homage to
Martyrs



Photos of BTR Birthday
& Working Committee

Courtesy : J. Ballabh