

THE VOICE

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Re 1



Women on the March in International Women's Decade

Women's Decade Ends at Nairobi

THE International Women's Decade proclaimed by U.N. comes to an end this month. It is reported in the press that thousands of women delegates are attending the non-Governmental Organisations Conference at Nairobi. Women's organisations, Independents, feminist groups, all over the world will discuss from the same platform women's issues and review the progress made in their own countries. The Governmental conference also meets at the same time to review the steps taken by their respective Governments with regard to progress in women's status on equality and equal remuneration, the implementation of the legislations concerning women, as well as progress in the field of education, health and so on.

Considering the nature of the conference, attendance of a large number of delegates belonging to different ideologies, lack of common understanding on the problems, conclusions and the solutions for the emancipation of women, the results of the NGO's conference may not be to one's expectations. Despite these weaknesses, seen at present, the presence of the World Democratic Federation of Women consisting of socialist countries, Latin American and African countries with the rich experience of women's movement, will contribute in the discussion. The delegates from these countries are likely to put up a fight for the cause of women, for raising the basic issues involved in the conference. The question also is likely to be raised as to why the tremendous progress is possible under Socialism while women in the capitalist countries are exploited in various fields. The achievements of women under socialism will be surely discussed on a wide scale.

The women delegates coming from developed and underdeveloped countries will place their views in the conference. They are constantly fighting for equal status, equal remuneration, against discrimination and employment. Most of the reviews of the conferences held during the decade reported that either

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there has been no improvement at all or the condition of women has deteriorated.

The social status of a woman under capitalism is bound to be unequal, even in an advanced
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Observe 6th August as Working Women's Day

A meeting of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women was held on 2.6.85 at Trivandrum. The following members from the states attended:

Tamilnadu: Mythily Shivraman, D. Saraswathi and Rudrani; Karnataka: Rajamma; Bihar: Rampukari Devi; Orissa: Indumati Nandi; Kerala: M. Sarada, Nazimunnisa and Susheela Gopalan and Vimal Ranadive from the centre. There were some invitees from Kerala who participated in the meeting. B.T. Ranadive, President, CITU attended the meeting and guided the deliberations.

Vimal Ranadive, Secretary of AICCW placed the report. During last one year conventions were held in Orissa and Durgapur which were well attended. There were conventions of teachers in Kerala and Tamilnadu. Tamilnadu State Committee of CITU met and chalked out programme of convention of women in the unorganised industries. The report pointed out that there were a number of promises by the Social Welfare Minister for the working women, but nothing concrete had yet come out. The State Advisory Committees appointed years back were not functioning, while retrenchment continued. The meeting called upon the State Co-ordination Committees to take up the matter.

Rajamma from Karnataka spoke about the working conditions of BEL where 4000 women were employed. Their conditions were bad, with no safety shoes while men had been provided with the same. Night shift duties were given to women which were not healthy for them. Com. Vimal Ranadive suggested that a subcommittee of women should be formed in BEL.

Rampukari Devi from Bihar stated that after the convention in Bihar, no meeting was called. She said Bihar was very much backward and feudal in mentality. 300 members of Gram Sevika took to struggle under the leadership of the union. Despite the fact that there were 8000 vacancies of Gramsevikas, they are not filled up.

Indumati Nandi from Orissa said that no

meeting was held after the convention in 1984. She expressed the opinion that without the help of the CITU, the Co-ordination Committee would not be able to proceed. The state CITU had taken some responsibility to function the co-ordination committee.

Mythily Shivraman from Tamilnadu reported that a prolonged struggle of 1000 women in Hosiery was launched in Tiruppur. Meetings were organised on the question of wages and on transfers. Women in State Govt. approached to take up this issue which was coming in a big way. She urged that the state CITU unions and the centre should take up the question. Teachers convention in Madurai was organised by MUTA, AUTC and Joint Committee of Teachers Organisations. To activate district committees, area wise committees are being organised in Tamilnadu. Conventions of women workers in the unorganised sectors in the month of August are being organised. They suggested that we should have an All India programme to activate the State Committees.

Susheela Gopalan, Nazimunnisa and Girija from Kerala reported that they had decided to have group meetings and activate the committee. While unions had separate women's wings, they urged that the unions should take up the specific problems of women also apart from the general issues of the unions.

The written report from Delhi by Ranjana was read by Vimal Ranadive. There were 9 days agitation by women and men in National Seeds Corporation and a settlement was arrived at. The women in Social Welfare Karmachari Union had won a 75 per cent rise in piece rates for stitching uniforms after a hungerstrike and dharna. Still the wages come only to Rs. 100/150 P.M. Again the women had to sit for dharna on 4th April 1985. Due to efforts by the union, facilities like electricity, sanitation have been improved and arrears of payment for work done 3-4 years ago have been paid. A new union, Institute for the Physically Handicapped has been affiliated to CITU. There were 34 women members of the union along with 92 men. Some contacts from nurses from J.P.N.

Hospital were made during their strike in April, 1985.

In Ghaziabad a new union, with 600 men and 100 women in Bharati Cutler Hammer has come up. The union had agreed to take up women on the committee. They also have taken up the question of creche. The Delhi Committee has suggested some issues for the future tasks, such as unemployment, creche, Bhopal Gas tragedy etc. to be taken up on an All India level.

After the discussions, B.T. Ranadive summed up the deliberations. He said that CITU had formed the AICCWW so that working women's problems could be specifically taken up by the unions and they could be mobilised in the trade union struggles. Serious attacks are being launched against the rights of women and the AICCWW and the CITU State Committees and Unions must take up the problems seriously.

The following decisions were taken in the meetings:

1. An All India Working Women's Day is to be observed on 6th August '85 with the following demands:

- (a) Protective legislation to be implemented.
- (b) Stop attacks on existing rights of women, such as curtailment of maternity benefit.
- (c) Stop attack on employment due to technical and other reasons.
- (d) Provision of creche facility.

2. Memoranda on the basis of the above demands to be submitted on the All India Day to the State Chief Ministers and to the Union Welfare Minister, Delhi.

3. Conventions to be held of the women in the unorganised sector wherever possible to activate the state committees.

A.G. Office Women's Meeting Held

A meeting of the Women working in the office of the Accountant General, Kerala was held on 1st June, 1985 during lunch recess, inside office premises under the auspices of Ladies Club, A.G's Office, Trivandrum.

Com. Vimal Ranadive, Secretary, All India Co-ordination Committee of the Working Women, addressed the meeting. Explaining the general problems of all the women in our country in the present social set-up, she dealt at length in particular the problems of women, working in various fields, public sectors, private sectors and Government offices. Com. Vimal Ranadive called upon the women to raise their voice unitedly and fight for the solution of their problems through massive organisational struggles.

About eighty women participated in this meeting. It was a rare opportunity for the women of the AG's office to have Com. Vimal Ranadive in their midst. Even though meeting was arranged under the auspices of Ladies Club, leaders and active cadres of AG's office N.C.C. Association have shown keen interest

and they were also present throughout the meeting. Their participation was about forty.

Com. Alice Ommen, President, Ladies Club presided over the meeting. Com. T. Radhamoni Welcomed the audience and Com. Endira Devi proposed vote of thanks, Leaders of State Committee of Working Women Co-ordination committee Coms. M. Saradha and Nazimunneza also attended the meeting.

Phone Operators Stage Dharna

A large number of short-duty telephone operators staged a dharna at Gole Methi Chowk on 1st May '85 to attract the Prime Minister's attention towards their grievances. The operators also presented a memorandum to the Prime Minister listing their demands. The short-duty operators are presently being paid at the rate of Rs. 2.75 per hour which is less than what the unskilled are paid.

Unequal Remuneration Continues in Construction

ACCORDING to the official statistics the number of women in construction, private and public sector increased from 2 lakhs in 1971 to 6 lakhs in 1981, the number must have increased during last 5 years. They will be seen working in the construction of buildings, Roads, canals, dams, barrage etc. The main work of women, is earth cutting, besides carrying loads of earth, brickkilns and so on. From the reports received from the union leaders, the majority of women workers in private construction contract labour etc. do not get Maternity Benefit and no creche is provided. Women working in public sector do get more or less all the statutory benefits, as per reports.

What about the Equal Remuneration Act? On enquiry it was reported that Equal Remuneration Act is not implemented in most of the states. The difference in wages between men and women is as follows. In Kerala for unskilled labour, men get Rs. 20/- to 25/- while women Rs. 12/- to 15/-; In Assam men get Rs. 12/- to 14/- while women get Rs. 7/- to 8/-; In West Bengal men get Rs. 12/- to 15/- (MTP Project) while women get Rs. 9/- only; In Orissa, women get only Rs. 5/- to 7/- for Interior project; In Maharashtra while men

get Rs. 14.40 women get only Rs. 8 to 9.

The wages are determined as per industrial unit level settlement according to the available reports.

What about the unionisation of women? There are so many unions in construction industry. In some politically advanced states like Bengal, most of the women are the members of the Union. But otherwise it is the same old story. Unions neglect the work among women, they do not have women on the executive bodies. The union leaders informed that except West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh, where there are 2-3 militant women on the executive bodies of the unions, in other states practically there are no women workers on the union bodies.

Women's Decade ends in July 1985. Unequal wages continue to prevail in construction, where more than 6 lakhs women workers are employed. Will the labour ministry look into the matter and inform us whether the reported matters are facts? And if they are true, will Mrs. Margarathan Chandrashekhara, Minister of Welfare do the needful?

West Bengal Government Supports Women Employees Demands

RECENTLY the State Conference of workers of the Integrated Central Development Scheme and the Anganwadi workers and employees, was held at Harit, Hooghly district where the principal speaker was the Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu.

The ICDS Association, established in 1982, has grown in stature over the years. Despite certain organisational set-backs, the Association has successfully managed to establish branches in most if not all—of the project centres, and by launching a sustained movement, successfully realised some of the important demands of the workers and employees. For example, the monthly stipend of the Anganwadi workers has been increased by Rs. 75 and that of the assistants by Rs. 40.

Nilima Moitra and Nirupama Chattopadhyay, Secretary and President respectively of

the Association, in their speeches underlined that in the Left Front Government, the Association has found a government that is ever ready to support the workers' and employees' rights. They issued a call to the members of the Association to utilise the State Conference as a springboard for launching bigger and wider movements for the realisation of their demands.

Com. Laxmi Saigal to Attend Nairobi Conference

Com. Laxmi Saigal, Vice President of AIDWA left for Nairobi on 9th of July 1985 to attend the NGO's Conference on behalf of AIDWA. Com. Tara Valanju, member of the executive committee of Bombay branch AIDWA will also attend the Conference.

Working Women Welfare Bill

THE Working Women Welfare Bill 1985 was introduced earlier in the last Lok Sabha by Susheela Gopalan which could not be discussed. Now after the re-election of Com. Bibha Ghosh, she has again introduced on 26th April, more or less on the same lines. The readers of the V.W.W. are requested to send their comments on the bill, before it comes for discussion. (Editor)

Welfare Facilities—Inadequate

The Welfare facilities which are at present being made available to the working women are wholly inadequate and unsatisfactory. In various factories and establishments, where they work, more attention has been paid to items like cleanliness, ventilation, first aid, canteen etc. But not much attention has been paid towards labour welfare. The existing laws do not provide for proper medical, educational, recreational facilities for the working women and their children.

The enactments mostly entrust the responsibility for providing these facilities on the employers. But the employers mostly deceive the workers and do not provide the required benefits to the working women, the working mothers, the pregnant workers and the children of the women workers. Therefore, we feel that some such system must be devised whereby the burden and responsibility for providing reasonable working conditions and other welfare facilities to the women workers and their children must fall on the Govt. that is the purpose of introducing this Bill.

Sir, this working women welfare Bill consists of three parts. In the first part—a provision has been made for the setting up of a working women welfare fund. In this Fund the Govt. shall contribute an amount equal to 10 per cent of the pay of the women workers. The employers shall contribute another 10 per cent of such pay to the Fund. The women workers will not have to contribute anything to this Fund themselves. This provision regarding constitution of the fund has been made in this Bill.

In the next part it has been provided how this fund is to be utilised. The very first item for application of the fund is to ensure the right to work for the women employees in any industry or establishment.

Woman replaced by Men

It has been our experience that at many places the employers appoint men workers even where women can be suitably appointed. The B.C.C.L. is also retrenching a large number of women workers. As a result of the Bareja Committee report it is found that in the BCCL about 50,000 women workers will fall surplus. Even in the open hearth mines, women are not being employed and only men are being appointed. Whenever one woman is coming out of employment, she is being replaced by a man. No woman is being appointed in her place.

Therefore, there is need for such an enactment whereby a woman only shall be appointed in place of another woman. No man shall be allowed to be appointed there. There is a function in the coal mines called 'shell picking'. This function performed with the hand ensures that no stones mix with the coal that is lifted out of the coal mines. This shell picking job is performed very efficiently by women. But this very function of shell picking is being given up in the mines. This Bill seeks to ensure employment to women at all those places where they can be suitably employed. This Fund shall be utilised for that purpose.

In this connection I have one submission to make. We have seen that in some sectors, where the Govt. fixes the wages, women get less than men. For example, in plantations where the Govt. themselves fix the wages, there too grave injustice is done to the women workers. Women are paid comparatively less wages for the same work as done by men. The Govt. should rectify this.

Then, it has been provided that this 'working-women welfare Fund' shall be utilised "to ensure steady and definite increase of the women employees in the total work force".

Employment of women on Decline

I have already stated how the number of women workers are declining over the years even in industries and sectors where they used to be employed traditionally. Take for instance the Jute Mills. In all the Jute Mills the women workers have practically been wiped out where once they used to work in large numbers. We have seen that at all places where the women work, the work is most tedious, the most back breaking items of work are given to them. They are mostly non-technical and untrained. Therefore, they are given the lowest type of work which carry the least remuneration and require the maximum patience and endurance. The men workers are given the more remunerative works which carry many associated benefits. The women have unfortunately very little opportunity of receiving training and thereby getting better and more remunerative jobs. They are, therefore, employed on the more monotonous, tedious and difficult jobs.

In the textile mills of Bombay there were at one time about 25 per cent women workers. In a discussion held in 1983, it was found that the percentage had come down to 5 per cent. Today, in 1985, I doubt that there are even 3 per cent women workers in the Textile mills of Bombay. Then, in the Tea plantations, upto 1971 the number of women workers was more than the men workers. In the total work force, the number of women was more than men. But in 1972 it was found that the men workers outnumbered women workers by 25,000. This gap is increasing continuously in favour of men. In tobacco, in Coir, the same situation prevails. In the mines, the number of women is dwindling steadily. In 1951 their number among the mine workers constituted 20 per cent. In 1971 it came down to 12 per cent and even less. In 1973 they numbered 30,000. In 1982 we found that the number of women workers in the mines have fallen to 12000 only. Their number has been falling steadily. It is a matter of regret that even our public sector undertaking viz. the B.C.C.L. is also resorting to retrenchment of women workers.

In our Constitution the women have equal rights with men. Here we want that the women should come forward in larger numbers for more and more socially productive labour.

This is what we want. Otherwise there can never be equal rights for women. Unless they can be self supporting economically, there cannot be equal rights. We all know that. So long as they are economically dependent on others, there cannot be any rise in their social or economic status. Therefore, we must all strive to ensure that the women may join the work force of our country in larger numbers as 'main workers'. Therefore, I want that through this Bill, the proposed fund shall be utilised towards that end. Efforts should be made to suitably amend the existing labour laws to provide adequate benefits to the women workers, keeping their needs in view. Provision has also been made in the Bill for providing child-care facilities to the women employees.

Residential Facilities

A special problem of the women employees is proper accommodation or residential facilities. The women workers in our country and all over the world need some extra residential facilities. They cannot reside at any and every place. They need some extra facilities. They should be provided with safe accommodation near their place of work and with proper transport facilities.

Sir, in this last year of the women's decade, the Govt. of India should come forward and declare that all the new born babies and their mothers, both are our national responsibility and the Govt. is accepting them as such. For every child and its mother in any part of our country, the Govt. of India will provide full child care and maternity facilities, such as paid maternity leave. The Govt. should declare that all the mothers all over the country and the pregnant ones also, be she in the factories or in the fields shall be provided with full maternity and childcare facilities. In this year it is necessary for the Govt. to make this declaration.

The Bill provides for construction of more hostels for the working women at suitable places near their place of work so that they may live in safety and may be able to join work in larger numbers. Provision has been kept in this Bill for protection of women against health hazards inherent in certain types of work.

Establish Advisory Committee with Women's Representatives

Therefore, in this Bill I have provided for the constitution of the working women welfare Fund in the first part and in the second part it has provided as to how this Fund is to be applied or utilised. Towards the end of the Bill, it has been provided how this legislation should be implemented. To enforce or implement this law, I have provided that in every area or in every industry or establishment an Advisory Committee should be set up which should have three types of representation. First, there should be Govt. representatives, second there should be representatives of the employers and third, there should be representatives of the trade unions. But here too, I have said that preference should be given to women. Because if there are female representatives, then they would be able to realise the problems of the women workers more intimately and will be able to consider them more sympathetically. This law is to be implemented through these advisory committees. This Bill also provides for constitution of a Central Advisory Committee by the Central Govt. This Central Advisory Committee should monitor and co-ordinate the work of the other area advisory committees all over the country and the State level Committees. The Central Govt. shall have to appoint many officers to ensure the enforcement and implementation of this legislation all over the country.

Register must be Maintained

Now, for implementing this Law effectively, it is very necessary to know correctly and accurately how many women are actually working at a particular establishment. For that it has been provided in this Bill that a register is to be maintained in each district wherein every employer shall enter the number and details of the women workers in his establishment. The District level advisory committee shall have the right and responsibility of collecting these details from the employers. At the end of each financial year, the District Advisory Committees should submit a report.

From this report it will be known what difficulties were faced by the women who are already in employment, what facilities were provided to them during the year etc. The

State Govt. as well as the Central Govt. shall have the powers to collect all the information regarding the employment of women in various organisations, facilities that have been provided to them and what problems were faced by them etc. All sort of statistics and other information shall have to be provided to the Govt, in any form they ask for it. The Govt. shall also have the power to enquire whether this law is being properly implemented or not in any establishment. In the end it has been provided that this enactment will be enforced, even if there are any prior agreements or conditions entered upon by any employer with any women employee. There may be any unfavourable agreement entered into for getting employment by a poor woman.

In our society we know that women do accept jobs under humiliating circumstances for economic reasons. They even sign bonds. This law shall have precedence over all such agreements. If at any place women are in receipt of some additional facilities or benefits not included in this Bill, they will continue to enjoy them in addition to the benefits of this Bill. It has been stated as usual how the Govt. of India shall issue notifications etc. for implementation of this Bill.

(Contd. from page 15)

duce a moratorium on any kind of nuclear weapons tests as from August 6, 1985, the 40th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima, or from an earlier date, as a step towards abolishing all nuclear armaments—the final goal women and all peace-loving people are struggling for.

The WIDF calls upon the national organizations affiliated to it, women and peace-loving people everywhere in the world:

Let us join forces in the struggle for the noblest cause of mankind, for the primordial human right—the right to live in peace.

Our action on 6 and 9 August 1985 must become another highlight of the worldwide campaign "For the Peoples' Right to Peace".

Berlin May 1985

Problems of Women Workers

Important question of organising Working Women, their unionisation and placement in important posts of trade union organisation was taken up through the First Convention held in April 1979. Now others have also realised this. Here we reproduce an article which was published in Indian Labour Journal— July 1984 issue.

—Editor

THE problem of integration of women workers into trade union movement poses insurmountable difficulties. In an advanced country like, United States more than half of adult women are wage earners. However, of the 44 million working women only 7 million are unionised and this represents only 27 per cent of total union members. Women there hold only 7 per cent of responsible posts in national trade unions.

In the peculiar social conditions obtaining in India, of the 25 lakhs women employed in the organised sector, only 12 per cent are unionised. A negligible number holds responsible positions in the union. The literacy rate amongst women in India during 1971 was 18 per cent.

What are the reasons for this poor representation of working women in the trade union movement?

Karl Marx has rightly pointed out that "social progress can be measured with precision by the social position of female sex". Basically the petty prejudices against women's participation in public activities persists inspite of tall talk of equality of sexes. The trade unions all over the world are male dominated and it is high time to make way for women to plunge themselves in trade union activities.

As Dr. Lalitha Devi observes that in India "Women's world by and large continues to centre around their duties as housewives and mothers. Other roles, if assumed are considered supplementary. Conditioned from childhood both by parents and environment, the women, themselves seldom question the path chartered for them in a male-dominated culture. A considerable disadvantage continues

to be at work for women in their modern roles. Social taboos and psychological conditioning continue to hamper their participation in activities outside home and prevent them from making the best use of their abilities."

Women's Image

Negative and derogatory images of women in our society are being created and enforced. Commercialization of women in the media has been sharpened and made ubiquitous by 20th century industrialism whose ethos is rapidly spreading in India.

As pointed out by the Study Group on the Status of Women in India, the distorted image of women as commodities and objects of pleasure should be corrected and set right. Women's increasing roles as workers in the fields, mines, plantations and factories as well as in white collar professions and their significant contributions to family survival and to the national economy have to be recognised and put in proper perspective. Women's legal and constitutional rights, sources of legal aid, their social emancipation etc. should be brought into greater focus to reassure the women workers of their equal status and safeguards and thereby encouraging them to take keen interest in trade union matters.

Special Needs of Women Workers

Women workers' special needs have to be taken care of by the trade unions. Women workers' needs will be best served if there is a proper integration of their concerns into the general policy framework of trade unions. This integration should mean: 1. ensuring equality with men as participants in trade union activities; 2. ensuring equality with men as beneficiaries of common endeavour; and 3. ensuring a realisation of their full potential as dignified human beings.

In trade union sphere increasing importance should be given to the women workers component approach. This means creating a special cell in the trade union organisation to cater to the special needs of the women

workers and employing women workers for manning a cell. Such a protective discrimination is necessary in the context of 'superior-inferior's distinction between men and women perpetrated by a male dominated world for too long a period of transition is needed to foster confidence and competence in women workers before they can be ready to compete with men

on equal footing. To-day working women are increasingly questioning the whole of trade union world that has been organised independently of them. How is the trade union world to be recast in such a way that working women can find a new and rightful place in it for themselves. This is a challenge posed to the genius of the union leadership of coming years.

Questions and Answers in Parliament in August 1985

Shri Amarsingh Rathawa: Will the Minister of Social Welfare be pleased to state:

(a) Whether it is a fact that a women delegation has submitted a memorandum to Government for the appointment of a *statutory commission* for the protection of women and for the solution of their problems and if so, when this memorandum was submitted to the Government and what are the details of the demands contained in the memorandum; and

(b) What action Government have taken in this regard?

Answer

*The Deputy Minister in the Ministries of Education and Culture and Social Welfare
(Shri P.K. Thungon)*

(a) Yes, Sir. The memorandum was submitted to the Government on 30th November, 1982. One of the demands made by the delegation was to establish a national commission on women with Statutory powers.

(b) There is already a national machinery for planning, monitoring and reviewing Women's Development Programmes which comprises a National Committee, a Steering Committee, Coordination Committees and a Women's Development Bureau. In the circumstances it is not found advisable to have another parallel organisational structure with similar functions.

(2) Unstarred question No. 4671 on 29.4.85

4671. *Shrimati Bibha Ghosh Goswami:* Will the Minister of Labour be pleased to State: (a) Whether the ESI (Amendment) Act, 1984 has increased the rates of contribution of the employees while reducing the corresponding benefits to them; (b) Whether women workers availing maternity leave will be particularly affected during subsequent benefit period; and (c) If so, whether government will review the amendment and refrain from its implementation pending review?

Answer: The Minister of Labour (Shri T. Anjaiah)

(a) The rate of employees contribution has been slightly increased. There has, however, been no reduction in the rates of benefits admissible under the ESI Act. (b) The qualifying condition for payment of maternity benefit has also been slightly modified. Previously, the qualifying condition was payment of contribution for at least 13 weeks. Now the condition is payment of contribution for at least half the number of days of the contribution for period of 6 months i.e. 91 days. This change should not, normally, affect the interest of the women workers adversely. (c) Does not arise.

Shrimati Bibha Ghosh Goswami: The employees State Insurance (Amendment) Act, 1984 has not been able to safeguard the interests of the employees. It has enhanced the rates of contribution of the employees while reducing the corresponding benefits to them. Employees' Unions have complained that the provisions of the Act as well as Rules of the General Regulations make it evident that the

ESI Corporation is using the institution more and more as a profitable business at the cost of the employees rather than as a guarantee of social security to them. It is also relevant to mention that before the amendments were made there had been no endeavour on the part of the Government to get the opinion of the Central Trade Unions on the matter. The Amendment has been particularly hard on women employees who will be deprived of their benefits during the pre period subsequent to maternity leave. The interests of substitute and casual workers have also been adversely hit.

Government should refrain from implementing the Amendment Act and review the provisions after discussion with the Central Trade Unions.

(3) Shri Basudev Acharya: There is a growing unemployment among the women and the job opportunities for them are also declining. There was a debate also in regard to this in this very session. In view of this, will the Government consider raising the age limit for entry in regard to Govt. jobs for female candidates?

The Prime Minister (Shri Rajiv Gandhi): There are some constitutional problems in raising the age limit for women in general under the clause which says that there shall be no discrimination on the ground of sex. But we are looking into it as to how we can do this and we will do something.

Dr Datta Samant: Sir, I have seen specifically in Gujarat and Maharashtra that the number of woman workers is dropping down. One of the reasons is that you cannot employ female workers after the sun set; for second and third shifts, the female workers are not available. In the Britannia Biscuits and pharmaceutical companies, they have given strict instructions that no lady worker should be recruited. The Government has given another facility to the lady workers, that is maternity benefits. All these benefits you have given to the lady workers. I appreciate that.

Prof Madhu Dandavate: That cannot be given to men.

Dr Datta Samant: But taking advantage of this facility, the employers have given strict instructions as far as textile industries are concerned, not to employ female workers. In Maharashtra and Gujarat, the number of female workers last year has gone down by seventy-five per cent. I have got detailed figures. There are

strict instruction not to employ female workers....

As I said, in the textile Mills, there are strict instructions that no female worker should be employed because of the shift difficulties, and because of the maternity benefits that they are supposed to extend to them. Employers are, therefore, wise enough not to employ female workers.

Victory of the Unisankyo Women Employees

The long standing struggle of the Unisankyo (Material Collection) Employees had come to an end after the judgement of the Authority Under Section 41 of A.P. Shops and Establishments Act 1966.

As reported earlier, the Unisankyo Ltd. is a Japan collaboration Industry, located at Hyderabad. It is a chemical and pharmaceutical industry. The women employees (Material Collectors) had to work in most humiliating conditions. They had to collect Urine from pregnant women which is used by this company for the purpose of manufacturing some costly medical products. They had to wander and get into many houses to collect the raw material for the product.

These employees pointed out their general grievances, and the low wages, service conditions etc., repeatedly to the management but in vain. All the 25 employees formed a Union to get redressed their grievances legally, a "Crime" for which all of them were terminated on oral instructions.

Soon after their termination the union raised dispute under I.D. Act at the Labour office to get reinstatement of all the employees. Though many joint meetings were called by the Labour office, the management did not attend the Labour office. In such case Union withdrew the case from I.D. Act and filed the individual appeals under Section 41 of A.P. Shops and Establishments Act, 1966, before the authority under Section 416 A.P. the Shops Act. Both the appellate authorities rejected the management's plea and the four appellants who are Address Collectors are awarded compensation of two years wages each at the rate of Rs. 186/- P.M. The 8 appellants who are Helpers are awarded compensation of two years wages each at the rate of Rs. 70 per month.

Even after this, the management preferred
(Contd. on page 18)

AIDWA Delegation to Bhopal

A five member delegation of the All India Democratic Women's Association headed by the Vice president Com. Lakshmi Saigal, returned from Bhopal today after extensive meetings with the gas affected victims. The delegation had met the Chief Minister Mr. Motilal Vora also.

The delegation was confronted by the shocking reality that only 10 per cent of the affected families have got the Rs. 1500 — ex-gration payment to be given by the Government. Secondly, the free ration supply of rice, wheat, sugar, rape seed oil and milk have been stopped in most colonies. This has added to the misery of the people who are mainly engaged in casual manual labour and now find their capacity reduced owing to the physical exhaustion caused by the gas. Besides no alternate employment is available to them. Also many of the people who had fled from Bhopal during the gas leakage have not been able to make new ration cards and therefore have not been receiving any ration supply. We also found that no specialised clinics have been set up for the gas affected people, very few have benefited from the self employment schemes since the forms for these have also been distributed by middle men out to make quick money. Instead of receiving utmost consideration, the gas victims are harassed from all quarters.

The AIDWA delegation met the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister on 8th of June and put forward the following demands.

1. Government offices be set up in the worst affected colonies to deal with registration, issue of cards and all other informations required. In their poor physical condition, the gas affected victims are unable to visit the various offices to get the necessary documents. Most of them have in fact given up all hope of receiving relief and are resigning themselves to a slow death by starvation and disease.

2. Special clinics to be set up for periodic examination of children and expectant mothers.

3. Anganavadis to be opened immediately

in the affected areas where children are given extra nourishment. Women from these areas should be provided with employment in these anganavadies.

4. Identity cards and cumulative health cards to be issued to all victims.

5. Registration of all victims regarding health, employment and rehabilitation.

6. A Life Insurance scheme to cover the victims and their dependants for the next ten years.

The delegation was shocked at the casual and condescending attitude of the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister towards the gas victims. He turned down the demand for Life Insurance be met by the Government and the Union Carbide authorities. The Chief Minister claimed that Rs. 2 crore was being spent by his Government on the gas affected people. A new hospital was being 'planned' and a scheme for the construction of 1500 houses 'was being taken up'. Besides a provision of Rs. 20 lakhs had been made for employment schemes and he had received 40,000 applications already. Then the delegation pointed out that the affected people in the colonies had not heard about these schemes, and that middle men were again taking advantage of the situation, the Chief Minister replied casually, "We will look into it." The Chief Minister himself admitted that the milk supplies had been stopped since they had found that it was being sold in the open market. The same problem existed in the case of the supply of the rations and 3000 ration cards had been cancelled. Shri Vora also stated that another comprehensive survey of the areas uncovered by the TISS would be taken up soon.

The AIDWA delegation led by Dr. Lakshmi Saigal, included Smt. Biba Ghosh Goswami MP, Dr. Rooma Gupta, a paediatrician from Calcutta and two members of the Janawadi Mahila Samithi Delhi, Ms. Meera Velayudhan and Smt. Mymoona Mullah.

Onward march to a greater success

The Left Front Government in West Bengal is the culmination of a long history of struggles and sacrifices on the part of the democratic masses. Its eighth anniversary is an occasion as much to remember the significance of those struggles as to assess objectively its record of performance.

No State Government can afford to overlook the shackles imposed on its acts and activities by the existing constitutional arrangements. The Left Front Government is fully aware of these constraints. It has none the less used the two successive mandates it has received to serve the cause of the people with the limited resources at its command. Even as it has struggled to reorient the relationship between the Centre and the States, it has made major strides in ushering in a structure of decentralised administration. Its experiment with panchayati raj institutions has been an eye-opener to the rest of the nation. Its endeavours in the sphere of land reforms and

primary education has unleashed the dreams and hopes of millions of the agrarian poor, who have learned that they can win their rights only if they learn to assert their rights.

Within the ambit of given resources, the State Government has tried to channel funds into agriculture and irrigation and into small and cottage crafts so that income and employment opportunities could multiply for the poor and the dispossessed. In the organised industrial sector, despite the negative attitude of the Union Government, it has in recent weeks created new openings which have thrown up possibilities of a major upsurge in output and employment. Installed power capacity has nearly been doubled since 1977, leading to a transformation in the climate for industrial growth. Similar advances have taken place in the transport sector too.

For the hitherto neglected sections belonging to the scheduled castes and tribes and those inhabiting the slopes of the Himalayas, the State Government's quiet efforts have released fresh hopes.

There are certainly some weaknesses which the Left Front Government has not been able to overcome in the eight years of its existence. Its endeavours will continue to correct the negative features. It however takes pride in one solid achievement. It has given back pride and dignity to the millions who constitute the majority of the State's population. It is this dignity which provides the capital stock on which the State will build its democratic destiny in the coming years.

Government of West Bengal



British Miner's Wives — Steadfast Struggle

SINCE the 12th of March 1984, British miners, numbering 1,65,000, were on strike following an appeal by their National Union of Mineworkers. The strike was withdrawn after an year. The strike was directed against the Thatcher Government and the National Coal Board against the closure of another 20 coal pits, whereby over 20,000 miners would lose their jobs. Neither the continuous attempts by the Government to intimidate the miners nor the growing hardships they themselves and their families faced, they had been able to induce the strikers to renounce their demands and resume work.

The Strike would be unimaginable without the active participation of the miner's wives, mothers and daughters. Since the beginning of the strike they had been playing an important role. They have joined forces, established contacts at regional level and founded regional committees in all the fourteen districts of Great Britain. They developed activities on mass basis, held a powerful demonstration of thousands of miner's wives which drew attention to the situation of the strikers and their families.

The women resisted courageously the police terror, the hunger and the cold did not break the strike. The "Voice of the Working Woman" had given its strong support to the miner's strike and wrote about the heroic fight, the wives and the mothers were giving in so many ways to the unprecedented strike of the British miners. The following article by Elsie Watson of the National Assembly of Women in Great Britain (NAW) gave an eyewitness account as to how the women helped the struggle of strikers, in a number of ways to make the strike successful. (Editor)

Throughout the history of miners in struggle their women have supported them but always in the background. In the early days of this strike the women decided to stand side by side with their men in their fight for jobs and for the future of their children and their communities. They formed a group at each pit and others joined to support them, collections of food were made, cash collections were organized, kitchens were opened in most

mining villages where meals were cooked for striking miners and their families.

After a few weeks the women decided to join the picket lines. Some miners were not happy at first, they were worried that their loved ones were putting themselves in danger. The women insisted and day after day you will find women joining their men and side by side with them, they face the hostility and brutality of the police. The police go into action in riot gear and with dogs and horses. Women have been injured but they are still standing in solidarity.

Most of the women have never taken part in any political action before, but now many of them travel all over the country speaking at rallies and they have discovered abilities they never knew they had.

The Sheffield branch of the National Assembly of Women received a phone call at the end of August from a trade union official asking if our group could help the women of the Selby coalfield. They live under a Tory authority and were not getting any help from the local councils.

- We were told of their extra hardships and we were particularly upset to learn that the children had no sweets or biscuits for months and no holidays during the summer months. In a few days we collected £93 and boxes of food and sweets and fresh fruit for the children, and at the beginning of September we took these collections and visited the women of the Selby coalfield.

They explained to us that they had not been able to get premises where they could set up a communal kitchen where they could cook meals for the miners and their families. During the school holidays the local authority refused to give free dinners to the miners children as it would cost £9,000.

The eleven year old children who were to start at senior school in September had been distressed they would not be able to have school uniforms to start their new schools, so the National Union of Mineworkers gave them

a special grant from their hardship fund. I saw some of the children receiving their new clothes and the pleasure and gratitude on their faces brought the tears to my eyes.

Some women were pregnant and had no clothes for the babies when they arrived. The money has to be spent on food and rent.

The women of Selby distributed food parcels weekly to the families of striking miners, and our NAW local branch in Sheffield is contributing to it.

Since that visit we have collected money and food every week for them. With two of the wives I visited Shardlows factory and spoke to the workers in their canteen and appealed for help and they immediately collected £ 150 for them in spite of the fact that since the

very beginning of the strike they have contributed £ 600 every week to the National Union of Mineworkers, and they also collected a van load of baby and children's clothing, also men's shoes as the men on the picket lines need weather proof footwear.

In all the groups that I have visited always gratitude is expressed for all the help that has come from all over Britain and the international help from all over the world has been shown to the men and women in struggle. Men and women from East and West have sent money and food and given hospitality to families and this will never be forgotten. Links have been forged between the peoples of the world and such links once forged must not be broken and will surely become links for peace and friendships between people all over the world.

Observe 6th and 9th August

**Demand : NO MORE HIROSHIMAS
NO MORE NAGASAKIS**

ON August 6 and 9, 1985 it will be forty years since the US dropped its atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

On these days millions upon millions of women throughout the world will mournfully remember the hundreds of thousands of victims, but they will also give powerful expression to their determination to do their utmost to ensure that nuclear weapons are never again used anywhere on our earth.

Today, as a result of the arms race kindled by aggressive imperialist forces, an estimated 50,000 to 60,000 nuclear warheads are stockpiled in the world's arsenals. Their combined explosive force is over a million times that of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs. They would suffice to destroy some 700,000 cities of comparable size. In its drive for world domination the USA is even toying with the possibility of nuclear war, setting at risk the very existence of mankind.

But it is not yet too late.

We know the forces of peace are powerful enough to prevent a nuclear catastrophe, provided they pool and redouble their efforts. This is what we consider to be our most important task today and this is what we are fighting for.

The WIDF supports every realistic proposal conducive to halting the arms race on Earth and preventing its spreading into space.

It supports the call for the immediate halting of every kind of nuclear weapons testing and for the conclusion of a treaty banning all nuclear weapons tests, as contained in the "Delhi Declaration" adopted on 28 January 1985 by the heads of state and government of India, Argentina, Sweden, Mexico, Greece and Tanzania. Only such a treaty could guarantee that nuclear arsenals do not continue to grow while the negotiations are under way in Geneva.

For this reason the WIDF welcomes the Soviet proposal that all nuclear powers intro-
(Contd. on page 8)

A Call from the Seminar on Dalit Women

“EVEN after 38 years of Independence and a constitution that guarantees the equality of women, the masses of our toiling women are caught in a vicious circle of exploitation, primitive technology, backward social customs, poverty and disease. There have been on an increasing scale, brutal onslaughts on our dalit and Adivasi women who constitute the majority of the poor, landless peasantry and agricultural workers”.

This is how the paper submitted by Mrs Kousalya Baisantry, General Secretary of Bharatiya Jagrati Parishad on 8th June 1985 at the Seminar held on behalf of the organisation, began describing the present situation among exploited women, especially the Dalit who are majority of Agricultural workers. The organisers of the seminar invited about 100 women's organisations and eminent personalities to attend the seminar on the prevailing conditions of Dalit women under the present Congress rule. To the astonishment of the organisers, only one representative, Vimal Ranadive, Secretary of All India Co-ordination Committee as well as Vice-President of AIDWA turned up to submit her paper. After waiting in vain for one hour for their arrival, the proceedings started requesting Vimal Ranadive to take chair.

There were a number of delegates, from Delhi, Bhandara and other places who submitted papers and also spoke. Five men speakers from “Samata Sainik Dal” from Asian Region for Human Rights Association, some from Punjab also participated highlighting the deteriorating situation of Dalit community with special reference to women.

Mrs Sujata Singh who submitted her paper on exploitation of women Devdasi was very much critical about the role of women's organisations while dealing with this particular section. She said “It was regrettable that no women's organisation has touched the most exploited sections of women while holding a number of seminars, conferences during the women's Decade. In their talks and speeches, these organisations will speak about the cooperation, but in actual practice, they do not

utter a word about us. Then she told the listeners why the tradition of Devdasi, who are mostly Dalit should continue? Landlord can keep women any number of days as bonded labourer giving only Roti and Dal. Unless the 10 per cent reservation is granted our women will remain backward in education, culture. Rajni Swarj too spoke about the horrible conditions of the Dalit women residing in the hutments with no minimum amenities for drinking water and sanitation.

Kousalya Devi, the General Secretary of Bharatiya Mahila Jagriti Parishad while submitting her paper attacked the present set up of the society based on the caste system. She retorted by saying “what is this system which compels the new bride in Dalit Society to spend her first night with the landlord!” While describing the conditions of wage labourers in Agriculture where most of the women are dalit, she said, wages are paid less, atrocities on them are on the increase, naked procession of women are taken out such as in Madhuani if they dared to antagonise the landlords and the vested interests in the villages. She cited the horrible incident in Kelvenani in Tamilnadu where women and children were burnt alive in a hut because they demanded increase in wages. Those caste anti-socials have been released but the agricultural workers were sentenced. Is it not strange, while the Safai Mazdoor who mainly constitute from Dalit Community, clean the drainages and latrines, themselves are deprived of these amenities, to the need of drinking water? She attacked the religion “which keep us in bondage, creates many illusions about, keeps away from struggles. ... We want a close unity with other sections of women. We are prepared to join in the common struggle which ultimately emancipate all of us. ...” Shri Bhagwandas, Editor of Samata Sainik pointed out as to how the religion makes the men and women blind to the reality. He said women must fight against the religion which keeps women in bondage under a variety of excuses. Unless we expose the hollowness of religion women will not be emancipated. He cited the present conditions of women under Islamic Pakistan or Iran. They are not allowed to go out

without veil. While speaking about the dowry deaths he criticised the role of the police who connive at these crimes. No implementation is done of any legislations, least of all concerning women. What is the situation of women in coal, construction? He appealed to women to try to understand their problems and get over the blind faith on any religion.

Among the others who spoke were Thansingh Josh, Mrs Uke, Mrs. Deshabrathan, and Rajni Swaraj.

At the outset in her presidential speech Vimal Ranadive said that it was unfortunate that the other democratic women's organisations who generally come together for the issues such as price rise, dowry deaths and atrocities on women should not be present for the seminar on Dalit women, the most exploited and neglected among all the sections. It is more significant because all over the world women are demanding equality, development and peace in the Women's Decade. While quoting figures of the progress made by Dalit women in the education, development and so on, despite the 'so called' efforts made by the government, various committees formed to improve their lot, the conditions of the Scheduled caste and Scheduled tribe communities remain the same. The recent happenings in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and elsewhere are our eye opener.

A large section of women are employed in agricultural field, their working conditions are beyond description. Besides the denial of minimum wages, equal remuneration and so on, the social oppression at the hands of landlords, anti-socials etc is so acute, that unless the present set up of bourgeois-landlord society is completely changed no further improvement was possible. The question of scheduled caste is related closely with the land reform since a number of atrocities on this group are committed due to land-disputes, on ownership of land. This was also noted by the findings of the 27th report published in 1979-81 of the Commission for SC and ST.

It said "various socio-economic maladies have been causing distress and unrest amongst SC and ST. Foremost amongst these happen to be lack of proper respect for SC, adoption of exploitative practices by vested interests to

deny SC and ST their normal rights and privileges, and resentment of tribal sections over curtailment of their forest rights and dis-possession of land. Resistance on their part leads to atrocities of varying magnitudes and lack of effective law and order machinery and inadequate legal protection, aggravate their problems."...

To a question raised in Parliament on 27th March 1985 by Mr Das with regard to the number of atrocities on SC/ST, the Minister of Home Affairs, Mrs Ram Dulari Sinha quoted figures. While in 1979, the number was 13973 it went up to 15054 in 1982, and 14948 in 1983 (figure not complete), the largest number of atrocities were committed in Bihar 3851, Madhya Pradesh 5292, Rajasthan 1604 and Uttar Pradesh 3151, all in 1983. Only West Bengal had 17, the smallest number of atrocities committed on Dalits. Again, the question of rape on women when raised by Com. Hanan Mullah, the number of rapes was given as follows: Andhra 12 Bihar 83, Haryana 26, M.P. 200, Maharashtra 39, Rajasthan 63, UP 176, etc. The total number of crimes against the SC were 15585 and the number of murders were 537 in the same year. The biggest number of atrocities are committed in Madhya Pradesh Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar.

The FIR are not registered, if registered and taken up in the court they continue for years. Accused are acquitted, in most of the cases. During 1979, the cases reported were 6292, out of this only 2982 cases were challenged, the number of people convicted were only 71, discharged 205, and trials were pending of 2706 cases, the rate of acquitted being 95.54.

The Untouchability Offences Act, 1955 and the Prohibition of Civil Rights Act, 1976 are not enough to deal with the increasing number of crimes against the community as per report.

After giving these statistics, Vimal Ranadive while summing up said, Dalit women is a part and parcel of the whole women's movement and as such one must look to the atrocities on this community as an attack over all the exploited sections of women. The Dalit women cannot keep away from the common struggle of the women for the equality and equal status. The present bourgeois-landlord system which

breeds the unequal status, regarding a section of women as Dalit as Muslims, etc, unless comes to an end, no woman worker or a housewife, Dalit or Muslim, will be emancipated. To root out the untouchability and get justice to these section, common class struggle of all classes are to be launched. The democratic consciousness of the people, anger against

injustice is to be roused. She cited examples from socialist countries, where women have gone far ahead, where there are no classes, equal status has been achieved. She appealed to fight jointly with all sections of women, especially Dalit, calling upon them to come forward to join in the mainstream of democratic movement.

Women March Ahead in West Bengal

SAGARDWIP, on the extreme tip of the coastal 24 Parganas district was the venue of the State Council meeting of the West Bengal Democratic Women's Association. Women delegates from all over the State attended the two-day meeting convened at the newly-constructed Youth Hostel in Sagardwip. In all, no fewer than 177 delegates took an active part in the proceedings.

In the meeting, the General Secretary, Syamali Gupta, placed her report, and delegates reviewed the movement and exchanged views on the future course of the women's movement, after hearing district-wise organisational reports. A 12-point programme of action was adopted which included organising mass padayatras demanding food, health, and education for all children; the padayatras would be held between June 2 and 7 to coincide with the International Children's Day, organised at the primary committee level of the Association. To mark the end of the International Women's Decade, a memorandum is to be drawn up and given to the Prime Minister. The Association expressed its support for the Left Front candidates in the coming Corporation polls, and decided to mobilise for them.

Open Session

The well-attended Open Session of the Council meeting was held in the Dudranagar-Maidan at Sagardwip. A large number of the local populace, mostly peasants, agricultural workers, and fisherfolk came in large numbers including an impressive number of women of all ages who appeared greatly enthused by the meeting. Addressing the gathering, Kanak Mukherjee, pointed out that the women's movement must never be viewed in

isolation, but as an integral part of the larger democratic movement. She noted that only in West Bengal and Tripura under the Left Front Government, were women accorded equal status with the men; and equal pay for equal work.

In her speech, Syamali Gupta, General Secretary of the Association, noted that while the Association embraces the entire women folk of the State in its multifarious spheres of activity and seeks to look after the all-round interests of the women, immense efforts were still needed to bring into the democratic fold the thousands of unorganised women in West Bengal as elsewhere. The Association has been carrying on a continuous struggle for the re-opening of industrial units, nationalisation of sick units, guarantee of year-round work under the Rural Employment Scheme, etc.

Manjari Gupta, President, All Indian Democratic Women's Federation also, addressed the meeting, along with Nirupama Chatterjee, Left Front Government's Minister of State for welfare who related Left Front Government's efforts for equality of opportunity for women in the State.

(Contd. from page 11)

an appeal before the labour court to get the order of the Authority reversed which is pending. Workers are prepared to face further mechanisations of the management boldly and unitedly. Simultaneously it is also decided to file a revision petition for full payments from the date of struggle to all the employees, and also for the reinstatement of the other 14 employees. The struggle was conducted by the City Committee of CITU who extended its greetings to the employees who put-up vehement struggle in this regard inspite of their poor economic situation.

The Left-Front Government is pledged to uphold the rights of the neglected and poor

LAND REFORMS MEASURES IN THE INTEREST OF FARMERS DURING THE TENURE OF THE LEFT-FRONT GOVERNMENT

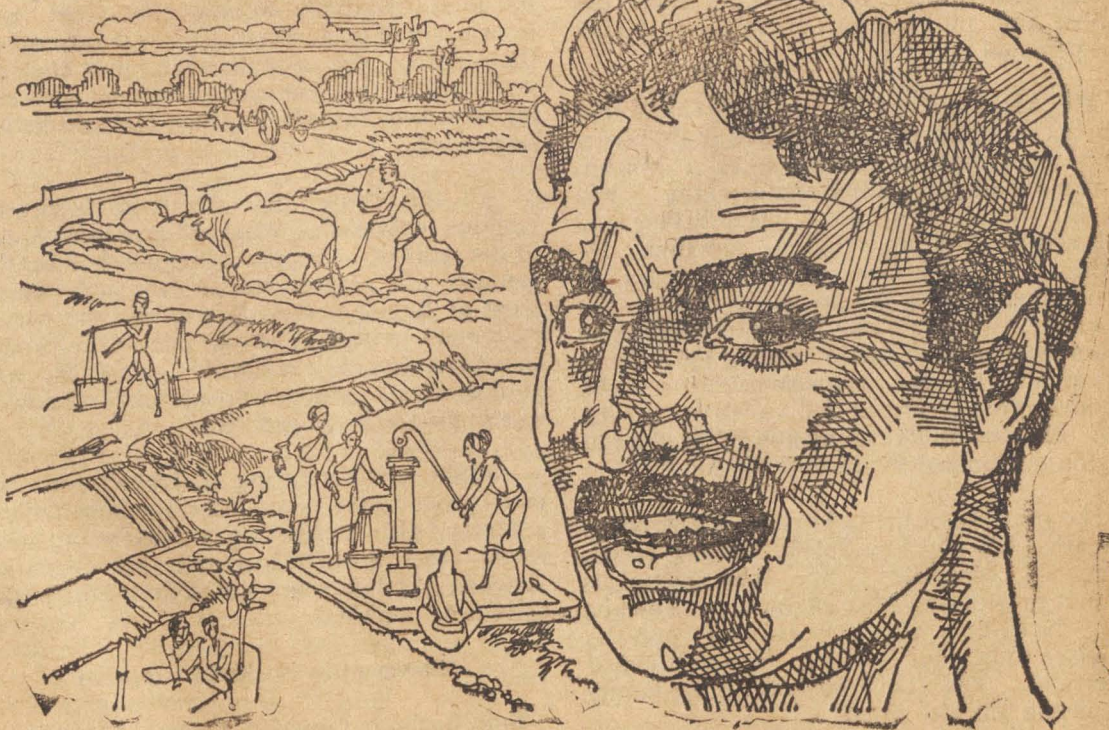
- Uprooting of sharecroppers from agricultural land has been stopped.
- Sharecroppers' rights have been legalised through Operation Barga. Upto March, 31st, 1985 13.17 lakh sharecroppers have been registered.
- 12.50 lakh acres of surplus land have been acquired by the Government.
- Out of this 8.03 lakh acres have been distributed among landless peasants.
- 1.95 lakh sharecroppers and agricultural labourers have received land for residential purposes.
- Agricultural inputs and bank loans have been organised for sharecroppers and 'pattadars'.

DECENTRALISATION OF DEMOCRACY THROUGH THE PANCHAYAT SYSTEM

- Spread consciousness of their democratic rights and right to participate in local administration, among rural folk.

- Bulk of finance for rural development is today channelised through Panchayats.
- 55,000 elected representatives of the Panchayat are active in rural areas.
- Irrigation facilities have been provided for 1 lakh hectares of land.
- Panchayats have created 15 lakh Man Days through the 'Food for work' programme.
- 57 Rural Distribution Centres have been opened under the Panchayat.
- 1.13 lakh houses have been built for landless peasants.
- 8700 adult education centres have been set-up.
- Rs. 1.36 crores have been disbursed as bank loan for house-building.

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL



Congratulations to Zulekha Bibi

OUR hearty congratulations to Zulekha Bibi of Beema Palli in Calicut district in Kerala for putting up a courageous fight against Jama-at, the strong religious body. She was sentenced to be flogged 101 lashes, to clipping her hair for committing adultery and pay a fine of Rs. 51/- for "consumption of liquor" and another fine of Rs. 301/- for not turning up for the adjudication of the case on April 17. Not only that, Jaffar who was the President of Jammatt went on announcing on the loud-speaker without licence to have a social boycott, "Ostracisation of Zulekha Bibi" and her family. Zulekha's pride was injured, she decided not to appear before the Jammatt and fight the case with the help of her lawyer. The press, the Public opinion in Kerala and elsewhere went against the Jammatt, the Muslim women in Calicut came out boldly in procession, Kerala women's Federation and other public organisations protested against the sentence, wrote editorials and their comments. But the Chief Minister of Kerala, Mr. Karunakaran when asked to express his opinion remained silent, while CPM leaders came out against this intervention of religious bodies into personal matters.

Mr. Abdulla Koya M.P. of IUMI said that "the action of Beemapalli Jammatt in decreeing punishment and ostracisation of a Muslim woman for alleged adultery and drinking — was a gross violation of law". He further said such actions had no religious sanction. He further demanded Government action against anyone found guilty "of assuming role of the judiciary". The state unit of All India Lawyers Union condemned the action stating that "conviction and sentence is an intervention in the administration of justice and authority of the state, also amounts to misuse of freedom of religion guaranteed by the constitution."

The pressure of the public, the tremendous sympathy for Zulekha for the 'alleged' crime, ultimately compelled the fundamentalists Jammatt to withdraw the charges on Zulekha Bibi. Not only that the Jammatt publicly apologised to her for making such unfounded allegations. The social boycott of the family of Zulekha was also lifted.

What is this institution of Jammatt of Beema Palli? This Jammatt has 51 members of the council, with an executive council of 10 members elected every year. Beema Palli Jammatt has assets roughly of 1.40 crores and has a strong hold over 12,000 or more people in Beema Palli. People are mostly uneducated and law abiding.

The Jammatt, can have powers to adjudicate civil and criminal cases and can award appropriate punishment to those found guilty. A special paragraph also is there to what punishment to be awarded to those who commit acts supposed to be "anti-religious". It is reported that the police officers have orally instructed Jammatt leaders not to apply such provisions but they feel that the orders should come from the court only, so that these religious leaders can be compelled to obey.

The Government of Kerala in fact should have come out to protect Zulekha Bibi, since the administration powers of the Govt. have been usurped by Jammatt. It was later reported that Jaffar was a policeman and also the secretary of the Jammatt. Criminal proceedings had been launched against him and he was suspended.

All this shows that the basic issue still remains unsettled. Who will give punishment to the guilty? Are the religious bodies like Jammatt are empowered to give such punishment of 'flogging' and so on in case the person is found guilty? The Kerala Government should have come out openly against the religious body of Jammatt who has taken all powers of administration, courts etc.

While congratulating Zulekha for her courageous fight against these fundamentalists, a demand also is raised by women's organisations that those responsible for degrading Zulekha like Jaffar and Ismail and others also should be punished.

Statement by Susheela Gopalan

Smt. Susheela Gopalan, General Secretary of

AIDWA issued the following statement to the press:

AIDWA extends its full support to the courageous struggle being fought by Zulekha, a Muslim woman, against the so-called sentence meted out to her by the Beemapalli, Jammatt in Kerala. She was to undergo 101 lashes at a public place for alleged adultery. We strongly condemn this attempt by fundamentalist forces who, in the name of religion, are trying to push women back into the medieval ages. This horrifying incident comes in the background of the strong opposition voiced by the same forces to the recent Supreme Court Judgement granting maintenance to a divorced Muslim Women under Section 125. At a time when democratic opinion, particularly women's organisations in countries like Pakistan and Iran are fighting against such

obscurantist practices and oppression of women in the name of religion, it is all the more necessary for democratic minded Muslim opinion in India to take a firm stand against such attacks on the rights of women.

Besides, the Beemapalli Jammatt's "sentence" is a clear violation of the constitutional guarantees and rights given to women and therefore it is unfortunate that for its narrow political consideration, the Government of Kerala and the ruling Congress party has not taken any measures against the sentence. Such an attitude on the part of the Government is hardly in consequence with Section 44 of the Indian Constitution which promises equal rights to all irrespective of caste and religion — a demand which is being unitedly raised by many women's organisations.

We Demand Justice to Maya Tyagi

MANY Women's Organisations demonstrated in thousands demanding justice for Maya Tyagi of Bagpat in 1980 who was stripped naked and raped by the police, and met the Late Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi at that time asking her to arrest the culprits. Her husband also was shot dead by the police. It was on 18th June 1980, five years passed! But still Maya has not got justice, her fate is still hanging in the air. Those culprits are still at large, the case has been transferred from Meerut to Bulandshahur. The hatred and anger of the public was so much at that time, that UP Government was compelled to appoint a commission of inquiry headed by Mr. Justice P.N. Roy. The report was submitted after an year which held ten police constables guilty of raping Maya and for killing her husband. The police took three years to file a charge sheet at the session court in Meerut. There were ten adjournments in Meerut Court within two years! It was shunted six times from one court to another and ultimately transferred to Bulandshahur. There were three adjournments here also within three month. The reason for transferring the case was obvious. Maya could not produce hundreds of witnesses which she could have easily done in Meerut.

This is how, the position of our women like Maya continue to degrade, police continue

to have their say. Police secured the transfer from Allahabad High Court on the plea that they belonged to Bullandshahar. Is it possible for Maya and the witnesses to travel everytime 150 Kilometers to Bullandshahar? And she rightly says that "and for what purpose? What can happen now after five years? For us the Government has become blind!" Her only hope is her son Deepak. She is sad he cannot go out. The women's decade is passed. Is it possible for Congress rulers to give justice to Maya Tyagi even now? The minimum need for women's organisations is to rise to the occasion to demand justice to Maya!

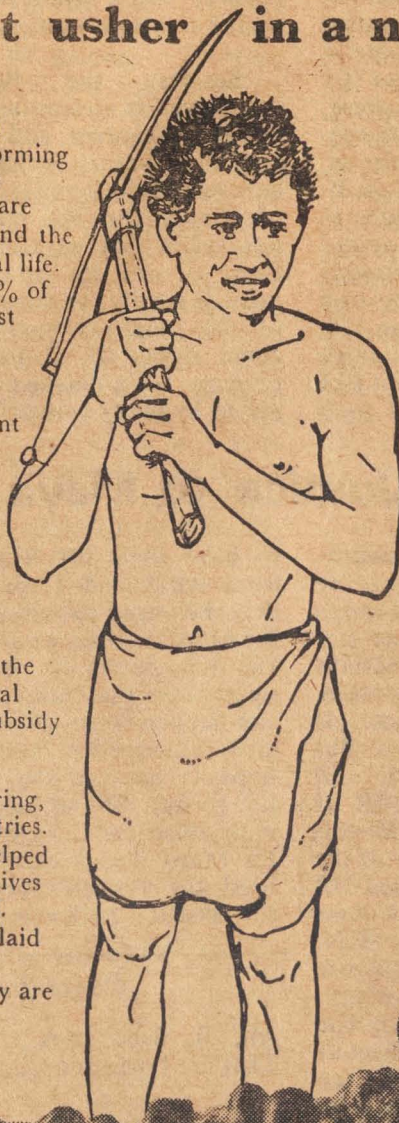
(Contd. from page 23)

Ali, Jt. Secretaries Urmila Srivastava, Vimla Thakur, Treasurer Gita Misra.

The new committee placed the following programme of immediate tasks before the conference. (1) Membership drive to be completed by 31st July and at least 3,500 members to be enrolled, (2) Area committees to be set up by July and (3) June, I, International Childrens' Day to be observed by a demonstration of women and children at the Waterworks Dept. and signature campaign to be started on the issue of water shortage.

From Social Backwardness to Enlightenment— Determined Efforts of the Left Front Government usher in a new era

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes people forming the bulk of backward class population of our society are economically lagging behind the mainstream of our national life. They constitute almost 28% of the total population of West Bengal and are divided in 38 tribal communities of which 50% are Santhals. The Left Front Government of West Bengal rightly feels that they deserve more assistance from the Government. Hence, for the last eight years, it has been persistently trying to uplift these classes through various programmes. As a part of the welfare programme, special financial assistance and subsidy are offered to them for promoting agriculture, pisciculture, livestock-rearing, forestry and cottage industries. Young people are being helped in small trades. Co-operatives are also being encouraged. Special emphasis is being laid on their education. Besides free schooling, they are



being provided with text books and exercise books, dresses and midday meal. And a scheme of maintenance grant has been introduced for the students belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The Santhali script 'Ol-Chiki' has been officially recognised and it is being encouraged for development of Santhali language and spread of education among the Santhali students in their mother tongue. Despite constraints, several projects are under progress to preserve tribal culture. Setting up of Sidhu-Kanu Cultural Centre at Suri, Jhargram Tribal Cultural Centre and opening of two more centres at Purulia and Alipurduar for development of tribal culture are but honest efforts of the Left Front Government in this direction. Measures have been taken to preserve 'Totos' of Jalpaiguri—the tiniest tribe numbering 600 from extinction. The Left Front Government is committed and determined to bring up the backward classes to their rightful position in society and lead them to a bright and proud future.

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL



First Conference of AIDWA at Kanpur

THE first Conference of the AIDWA, Kanpur was held amidst great enthusiasm. In spite of the terrific heat, over 500 women from each and every corner of the city arrived to attend the Conference at the Aryanagar Dharmshala. Preparations for the conference had been going on for over a month during which the membership drive was also under taken. Nearly 1500 members had been enrolled while the possibility of enrolling more members existed in every area.

At 12 noon, the conference started amidst the shouting of slogans. A presidium consisting of Dr. Lakshmi Saigal, Smt. Roopkumari Khetan and Smt. Bindabasini Trivedi was elected. A steering committee consisting of Devsena, Urmila Srivastava, Gita Misra and Subashini Ali was also elected.

The Vice-President of the Janvadi Lekhak Sangh, the renowned poet, Sheelji, recited some of his rousing poems in the Conference.

Smt. Roopkumari Kehtan then placed a condolence resolution before the conference on the heinous murder of Smt. Kalarani, wife of the CITU leader, Com. Indrapal who was murdered by goondas hired by the Modi management at Modinagar. The conference demanded that the Govt. take the sternest possible action against the culprits and conveyed its heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family.

After this, the General Secretary of the Punjab State Committee of the AIDWA formally inaugurated the Conference. She gave a detailed description of the condition of women in the country and then recounted the harsh conditions in Punjab in which her organisation had to work. Because of the activities of the extremists and terrorists an atmosphere of terror had been created and communal hatred fanned. The entire democratic movement had received a severe setback as a result and women organisers had to work in conditions that were dangerous as well as unfavourable. In spite of this they were continuing their propaganda against extremism and trying to restore normalcy in the Punjab. She assured

the Conference that they would consider no sacrifice too great in this cause.

The report of the Ad hoc Committee was placed after Com. Kaur's speech by Subhashini Ali. The report mentioned the activities of the imperialist nations which are fomenting separatist and communal agitations which are threatening the fabric of Indian unity and also said that a fertile ground had been created for their activities by the policies of the Govt. that had created such a deep economic crisis in the country. The new political situation created by the assassination of the Prime Minister, Smt. Gandhi, the subsequent victory of the Congress(I) in the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha election and the economic policies indicating a sharp rightward turn that were recently announced by the Govt. were all dealt with in the report. The worsening of the condition of women in all spheres like legal, educational, occupational and health in the Decade of Women which ends this year was highlighted. Organisational possibilities and techniques to be adopted in Kanpur were also discussed. Many speeches were made by the delegates in response to the placing of the report. Many of them also mentioned their local problems in their speeches. Asha Sharma and Urmila Srivastava spoke about the dowry problems and atrocities committed on women; Nisha Misra described the conditions of women teachers in private educational institutions; Kumari Parveen from Jajmau talked about the severe water shortage; the oldest delegate at the Conference, Ramarati from Darshanpurwa described the housing shortage; a contract worker from Victoria Mills, Kamla, highlighted the exploitation of women contract workers; women from the Kacchi bastis expressed their fear of demolition.

After these speeches, the report was unanimously passed. Separate resolutions on health, education, employment, and dowry legislation were also passed. In conclusion of the Conference the following office-bearers and executive committee were unanimously elected; President Dr. Laxmi Sahgal, Vice President Roopkumari Khetan, Shamim Begum. Secretary Subhashini

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Delhi Janawadi Mahila Samity Reviews Tasks in Women's Decade

THE Janwadi Mahila Samity, Delhi, observed a review week from June 10-14 of the International Women's Decade which is coming to an end this year at the call of the AIDWA. The decade was declared by the United Nations in 1975. Padyatras, a poster workshop and a dharna outside the newly created Women's Ministry were some of the prominent features of this week-long campaign.

The JMS carried on an intensive campaign to educate people about the real status of women in our society. Describing the International Women's Decade as a "Decade of Decline", the JMS distributed nearly 4,000 leaflets in the course of conducting padyatras from June 10-12 in the resettlement colonies of Delhi such as Mongolpuri, Sultanpuri, Azadpur, Ramesh Nagar, and Kewal Park, and the working class bustees of Faridabad. During the three-day padyatra campaign JMS leaders addressed more than 20 largely attended street-corner meetings accompanied by squads singing revolutionary songs.

On June 13, the JMS took the novel step of organising a Poster Workshop outside the Reserve Bank of India on Parliament Street.

A Dharna of about 200 women was held on 14th June near Shastri Bhawan from 12 P.M. to 3 P.M. when a delegation of leading comrades submitted a memorandum to the Welfare Ministry.

Memorandum

June 14, 1985

As you know, the Women's Decade declared by the United Nations in 1975 is coming to an end. In this connection, reviewing the status of women after the decade, our organisation submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister. We are also giving a copy of the memorandum to you as we feel that your Ministry has a major responsibility in Meeting the many unfulfilled demands of the women in the country. We hope that you will take the initiative in taking the fundamental steps so essential for women's development detailed in the memorandum.

We would also, in addition, like to draw your attention to certain issues concerning women in Delhi.

1. You are no doubt aware that in response to the repeated demands of women's organisations in Delhi, the Metropolitan Council, Delhi passed an anti-eye teasing bill over a year ago. However, the Bill has still not received the sanction of the Central Government. You will agree that this is most regrettable and reflects the indifference of the Government to this urgent problem.

2. The Government has claimed that much has been done for the upliftment of scheduled caste women such as giving sewing machines etc. and also for widows. Particularly as far as widows, the relief is meagre. However, the main point is that these measures are used more as instruments of patronage by the ruling party. There are innumerable cases where destitute widows or women belonging to scheduled castes have been denied aid as they did not have the right "connection". We strongly feel that it is imperative that women's organisations should also be involved in this and it should not be the monopoly of the ruling party.

3. Many working women have come from outside Delhi for employment. However, there are far too few hostels for to stay and the existing ones are too expensive. What is necessary is sufficient accommodation at more reasonable rates.

4. The Government had assured women's organisations that taking into account the fast increasing cases of harassment and torture of married women by their in-laws, the government would provide transit shelter homes for them. However no steps have been taken in this direction although we feel that this is an urgent necessity.

5. You will agree that talk of women's development is meaningless without providing women with opportunities of employment. We find in Delhi lakhs of women living in the resettlement colonies and working class bustees are desperate for employment but have no avenues open for them. It is therefore imperative that proper planning and allocation of resources should be made for providing employment. Training centres should also be set up with immediate effect. We hope you will take the necessary action.

Women in Action

Colombia

A Co-ordinating Committee of Women's Organisations including the Union of Democratic Women of Colombia held meetings in factories and residential areas, scheduled a film cycle and succeeded in having the city's electronic clocks promote the International Women's Day observance. In Bogota and some other cities political and trade union organisations joined in the activities. A public mobilization, spurred by talks and seminars, drew attention to the need to link the struggle for women's rights with the struggle for peace and democracy.

Pakistan

March 8 was commemorated widely by women in Pakistan with a strong demand for peace. In Lahore, Islamabad and some other cities the Democratic Women's Association (DWA) took part in joint celebration with other women's organisations. Women attending meetings, gatherings and cultural programmes demanded equality at all levels, better working conditions for all female labour, non-discrimination on the basis of marriage and maternity, equal wages for men and women in similar employment, training facilities for women, prevention of exploitation of children and elimination of child labour.

Women of Pakistan are more determined than ever before to be treated as equal citizens, said the DWA's general secretary, pointing out that the struggle for equality is a joint struggle for the basic rights of all people in Pakistan, for democracy, peace and progress. A resolve was made to make the promotion of world peace an integral part of the aims of all women's organisations in Pakistan.

USA

Women for Racial and Economic Equality (WREE) together with over one hundred peace, solidarity and civil rights organisations, trade unions and religious groups from all over the United States participated in those powerful events. On the same days demonstrations for

peace were held in big cities of California, Washington and Texas. All condemned the US plans for the militarization of outer space. Veterans of the Second World War spoke about Soviet-American unity in the Anti-Hitlerite Coalition to overcome fascism 40 years ago and stressed the importance of such unity of all peace-loving forces for the prevention of nuclear war and the safeguarding of peace.

USSR

Under the theme "Nobody is forgotten, nothing is forgotten" women from the Chernigov region of the Ukraine gathered together in March to commemorate the 40th anniversary of victory over Hitlerite fascism, the victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War. Each family in the region lost somebody in it, we were informed by the veterans of the war, peace activists, working women and mothers at the gathering, who expressed their determination to do everything possible to prevent a repetition of the tragedy of war.

It is especially sad for us, mothers, to hear 40 years after the 2nd World War — about the US policy of continuous arms build-up and international tension, about the tears of mothers in El Salvador, Lebanon, Nicaragua ... says the letter from the gathering which appeals, among others, for broad international actions by all democratic, peace-loving forces in the world, actions like the WIDF's world-wide campaign for the people's right to peace. The full support of the women at the Chernigov gathering for the campaign was confirmed by the signatures of all participants.

Japan

Under the slogan "Safeguard our children from the threat of nuclear war" a great campaign of the Federation of Japanese Women's Organisations (Fudaren) began in March 1985. The aim of the campaign is to collect 5 million signatures against nuclear weapons.

Fundamentalists in Egypt for Limit to Women Rights

THE Egyptian parliament will consider a new law that is expected to limit women's rights. It has been designed as a sop to Islamic Fundamentalists, who have confronted riot police in Cairo twice in the past 10 days.

Under the proposed legislation, which has not been published, divorced women are expected to lose their right to stay in the family home. The rules for the payment of alimony are likely to remain extremely mean: at present divorced husbands have to pay their ex-wives maintenance for only 2 year.

Measure Abolished

The law would replace a comparatively liberal one championed by Jihan Sadat before her husband, President Anwar Sadat, was assassinated by Muslim extremists in 1981. That measure was subsequently abolished by the Egyptian Supreme Court under pressure from the fundamentalists.

Report from Andhra Pradesh

The Andhra Pradesh Mahila Sangham is enthusiastically observing the programme for women's Decade at the call of AIDWA. A pamphlet has been published on the position of women in our country which is being sold all over Andhra. Signatures are being collected on the memorandum which was submitted to the Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. A separate memorandum also was prepared on the specific problems of women in Andhra which will be submitted to the Chief Minister. Public meetings are being held in villages to popularise the demands of women. Along with this, a drive to enrol members for AIDWA is being taken up vigorously. A mass deputation of 1000 women will reach Hyderabad in this month, probably on 24th or 25th to submit the Charter of Demands to the Chief Minister and a public meeting also would be held on that day.

Debate on the new legislation could last several months, but westernised women are already in an angry mood. When Mrs. Sadat returned to Egypt recently after five months in the United States, she told a journalist she was shocked by how the country had changed. "There are so many more young girls who are veiled, so many more young men with beards. The television is filled with religious programmes," she said, "if fundamentalism continues to spread at this pace it will be very dangerous in the near future".

Susan Mubarak, the half-Welsh wife of President Hosni Mubarak, has also spoken out against the erosion of women's rights. Although she normally stays out of the public eye, she recently gave an interview in which she said that, according to the Koran, women need not wear a veil.

(From Times of India dated 29.6.85)

Trade Unions in China Helped to Set up 120,000 Kindergartens

CHINESE factories and government institutions have more than 1,20,000 kindergartens to accommodate over 4 million children under 6 years "Workers' Daily" reports. In addition, there are numerous nurseries and kindergartens run by collectives, schools and even individuals across the country. This has greatly eased the burden on parents who both have to go out to work. There has been a baby boom in China in recent years, putting a strain on the existing kindergartens.

Trade Unions in various enterprises and factories then moved to set up more nurseries and kindergartens to cope with the situation. In Nanchang, capital of Jiangxi Province, 90.1 per cent of the workers' children are in nurseries, up from 56.1 per cent in 1979. The Beijing Material Supply Administration had only 6 nurseries for 170 children until 1982, and more than 1,000 children of its workers had to be left at home every day. The administration

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“in America I saw many vast educational institutions run by the state, where the pupils had to pay next to nothing in the way of fees. In Europe, also, there is no lack of cheap educational facilities for poor students. Is it then because of the greater poverty of our country that our education must be made more costly? And yet in India there was a time when education was not bought and sold.”

Rabindranath Tagore



In a poor developing country like ours, mass oriented educational policy of the Left Front Government opened up a new horizon for the teeming masses steeped into darkness of illiteracy.

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ed Capitalist country. The degradation of the position of an Indian woman is observed today in an increasing dowrydeaths and prostitution, while women in Pakistan, under military rule have been deprived of whatever little freedom for them was available. Muslim women have to go to the court to get the maintenance right after they get divorce, while her husband can marry and have four wives. Any woman in our country will feel enraged when they come to know the tragic death of Nadira with her three children in Mallapuram Dist: in Kerala who had to commit suicide with the three children on 1st July 1985 after hearing that her husband married a second woman despite the fact that she was married 14 years back. She pleaded with the leaders of the community to persuade her husband not to get married, and failed.

The women in most advanced capitalist countries like America have still to fight to pass an amendment in the bill for equal status, while in England, the legislation on equal remuneration was passed a few years back only. The rate of abortion of women employed in Japan had gone up due to long hours of work, modernisation in the industries and absence of any safety measures.

The basic question for women's emancipation therefore is raised here. Which system of Government frees women completely and gives every opportunity to develop themselves in every sphere of life. In which system, there will be no discrimination, and a woman is not bound only to home and kitchen and to look after the children is not solely her responsibility.

The women delegates from the Socialist countries attending the Conference are bound to reply to these questions by stating their experiences before and after the revolution, with facts and figures. The position of women under socialism is equal because the relations of production have changed, private property is abolished, women have a say in every decision taken by the Government.

Those women delegates in Nicaragua, Namibia, South Africa etc. will expose the conspiracies of the American Imperialism and how they are fighting against them. Most of the women delegates will raise their voice against Nuclear War and war preparations made by American imperialism. Women are the strongest opponents of war since the development and progress of women is closely interlinked with the war preparations.

The delegations of organisations from our countries too will raise their voice for peace. The political situation in our country is very serious with divisive forces inside, helped by American Imperialism, when Pakistan is armed with American weapons and a military base set up in Diego Garcia.

It is true that the women's Decade has taken the women's movement forward. It is also true that the struggle for emancipation is still very far from us. The experience of the struggles of the delegates against American Imperialism and against their own Governments will be exchanged among the delegates. It will enrich their understanding about the problems and issues of women's movement. It is hoped the Non-Governments Organisations conference will give a call to strengthen their fight against the exploitation of every kind which will lead them to fight for the social system where a woman will be free to enjoy the fruits of her labour, she will be equal in every respect.

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tration expanded and built 10 nurseries in that year to accommodate an additional 500 children. Now, 92 per cent of the children are in nurseries. At present, more than 70 per cent of the urban children under 6 years in Zhejiang, Anhui, Shandong, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Sichuan. Hunan, Hubei, Henan, Hebei and Guangdong Provinces and Shanghai are in nurseries.