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Presidential Speech of Com. B.T. Ranadive to the 4th Conference of the C I T U

Comrades, I greet you all-fraternal delegates and delegates to this Fourth Session of our All India C.I.T.U. Conference.

The interval between the last session of the C.I.T.U. in Bombay and the Present one has witnessed the passing away of many of our valuable comrades.

Com. A.K. Gopalan, that great fighter and leader of the CPI(M), the beloved President of the All-India Kisan Sabha, is no longer in our midst.

The intervening years have also seen the passing away of leaders of international prominence like Com. Mao-Tse-tung, Chou-En-lai and others. Comrades, these years have also seen a huge number of martyrs who died to defend freedom, democracy and socialism, who fought for the cause of world communism. Foremost among them stand the great fighters of Chile who have heroically faced death fighting the fascist junta. The same death-defying courage has been shown by the African fighters struggling against the white South African racial maniacs.

On behalf of all of you I offer my tribute to the departed leaders and homage to martyrs of the international movement.

Comrades, we all honour the memory of those who were tortured to death in our jails during the fateful days of Indira imposed emergency; and all those who fell victims to police firing during the trade union and other democratic struggles — workers, peasants, students, employees and others.

Comrades, you remember that in our last session in Bombay all of us joyfully celebrated the final victory of the immortal Vietnamese people against American imperialism; we also

recognised the valuable help by people's China to the people of Vietnam.

Today the same Vietnamese people, who singlehandedly fought American conspiracies against Asia, are attacked by the armies of the People's Republic of China. No words, however harsh and strong, can condemn this wanton aggression by a big nation against a small heroic people.

We all condemn this aggression which is being supported or justified by all the imperialist Governments. It certainly suits them. We all demand immediate withdrawal of Chinese troops from Vietnam. We offer our full support and sympathy to the people of Vietnam in their struggle against aggression and we have no doubt that those who defeated the American aggression will be able to come out triumphant through the present ordeal.

I convey my warm greetings to the working class and people of the socialist countries who in spite of many difficulties have been registering one success after another in enriching the life of their people. The socialist world today stands in striking contrast to the world of capitalism with its poverty, unemployment, economic crisis.

The economic crisis of 1973-74, from which the capitalist world has yet to recover, revealed the basic instability and weakness of capitalist society in spite of its advertised affluence and prosperity. The working class of the capitalist countries has to bear the burdens of the crisis—the burden of inflation, high prices, wage restrictions, high taxation and unemployment. In England and other countries—France, Italy, it has been carrying on prolonged strike struggles in defence of its standard of living and the effects of State monopoly capital domination. We wish them success in their struggle.

I offer my greetings to all the peoples and countries of Asia and Africa who were liberated a few years back and are waging a fight to maintain their political and economic independence and in certain parts waging liberation struggle against racial domination of the white imperialist minority. In all these struggles, the fighting people are making tremendous sacrifices. The African people who are waging a grim battle against South African racial domination have produced new

marvelous individual courage and sacrifices. It is a story of innumerable young and old men sacrificing everything for the cherished goal of liberty, freedom and equality.

IMPERIALISM

In the midst of the deep seated economic crisis of the capitalist world and the backward conditions in the underdeveloped world, the advanced imperialist countries are piling up more and more in preparation for a nuclear war. Nothing could be more heinous than the diversion of resources for the cause of human destruction. We, therefore, uphold and admire the socialist countries for their consistent battle against war and for the preservation of world peace. The military strength of the Soviet Union and the WARSAW countries constitutes a great support to the maintenance of world peace and one cannot but condemn those who equate the WARSAW Pact with NATO Alliance. While we stand for peace negotiations we do not believe that American imperialism is serious either about detente or world peace.

Comrades, American imperialism is very actively organising a military build up and neo-colonial conspiracies and fully exploiting the division in the socialist camp and the Sino-Soviet differences. It has succeeded in splitting Arab unity and has blatantly helped Israel in the name of peaceful settlement between Egypt and Israel. It supports the Rhodesian white minority rule and the racist fascists of South Africa. It intervenes blatantly in European elections. In Italy, it intervened to prevent the inclusion of the Communist Party in the country's cabinet. It hypocritically talks about protection of human rights while denying them to the Negro minority in America. It supports military dictatorships in a number of countries—Chile for instance—and gives financial and military help to dictatorial regimes in underdeveloped countries.

In India it exercises constant pressure on the government to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and accept its tutelege on nuclear development. Its refusal to supply uranium to the Tarapur plant, its prevarications and double-dealing on the question constitute its favourite blackmailing tactics.

However, it is not having everything its own way. The people are fighting its machinations and its support to reacti-

onary governments. In Iran, the people have thrown out its tool, the Shah. In Afghanistan also a progressive Democratic Government has taken power despite its machination. Everywhere, its efforts to dominate the economy of backward countries are meeting resistance.

Comrades, we welcome the emergence of the new revolutionary government of Kampuchea, a government representing the wishes of the people, protecting their democratic rights and defending the sovereignty and independence of the country.

PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH

Comrades, we must offer our deep solidarity and sympathy for the people of Pakistan and Bangladesh, now under the heels of military dictatorship. The barbarous regime of Pakistan has come down on the workers, banning strikes and introducing public flogging against those who dare fight for democracy. A Number of workers were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment for going on strike. Number of journalists were sentenced and flogged because they dared fight for democracy. Now the Government in the name of Islam is introducing medieval punishments for ordinary crimes. We know that the working class and people of Pakistan will courageously face this challenge and win back their democratic rights. We note that Pakistan's military dictator has openly called for USA intervention in the sub-continent.

In Bangladesh, though an election has taken place, we know, it is a farcical election to reinforce the rule of dictatorship. Our sympathies are with the people of Bangladesh who courageously fought the repression of the Yahya Khan regime and successfully faced atrocities of the Pakistani Army. Mujibur-Rehman was removed by the hand of the imperialists and it is again the same hand that is responsible for imposing dictatorship on the country.

FORCES OF DICTATORSHIP

It is no accident that all the three countries of the sub-continent were under dictatorship of one type or another between 1975 and 1977; while the emergency dictatorship has been lifted in India, the other two countries continue to be governed by it. Since their inception these countries have

hardly had a genuine parliamentary democratic Government. The working class of our country must deeply ponder over the situation and understand that deep economic forces are working in all the three countries to bring about or maintain a dictatorial rule; that the bourgeois-landlord classes of these countries are unable to maintain the parliamentary form of government for any length of time, especially when the economy is under crisis. Their class interests require growing suppression of the mass movement and therefore suppression of all democratic rights. With a stagnant economy and maintenance of pro-capitalist relations, relief through economic development and concessions following it, are very few and, therefore, main reliance has to be placed on containing of the mass movement which continually rises because of exploitation. Therefore, a battle must go on in these countries between the forces standing for dictatorship, as it has been going on in India for some time.

The forces vitally interested in preserving and expanding democracy are far more numerous than the minority interested in dictatorship. Granted unity in their ranks the democratic forces will prove overwhelmingly superior to the forces of authoritarianism. The forces of dictatorship have no chance when offered by a united democratic movement. The economically exploited masses are impelled to fight for the expansion of democratic rights and confronting the ruling classes. Dictatorship gets a chance only when the left and democratic forces are either too weak or divided. A successful fight against the forces of authoritarianism is a vital and integral part of the struggle for a people's democracy and socialism.

The emergency, has revealed to the working class and to the people to what length dictatorship can go in suppressing the rights of the common man. The rule of law totally disappeared and anybody could be arrested under the MISA. Tens of thousands filled the jails, many were tortured and killed secretly. The Government openly claimed the right to deprive the citizens, both of liberty and life without any questioning by any court. Strikes of working class were banned. Trade Unions' rights were virtually abolished. Right to organise disappeared and the Constitution was illegitimate.

ly amended to suit the needs of dictatorship. The entire country was enslaved to one party and the bureaucracy ruled the country, arbitrarily without any limitation of law.

The working class must be determined to prevent the recurrence of the emergency and the loss of liberty of the people. It must remember that under it every democratic, political and economic right was taken away and the employers were given a free hand to retrench or lock-out the workers or reduce their wages, bonus, dearness allowance, in fact, to complete the process of working class enslavement. Emergency meant loss of democratic rights and economic enslavement to the capitalist employers.

But the question is how is it that the working class was unable to prevent its imposition, how is it that it failed to give continuous running battle against the emergency rulers? It was because the working class was too much immersed in its economic battles, because it could not unite because of political division, because a strong section of the trade union movement was completely tied to economism and allied with the ruling party and let down the people. Reformist and the revisionists of all shades misled a section of the working class into believing that the emergency was directed only against the reactionaries and not against the people. It is they who were collaborating with the Congress Government and justified its nefarious dictatorial regime. The working class must not only forge its unity but also refuse to be victim to any collaborationist ideology. Historical experience shows that in the face of dictatorship and fascism, a country or a nation is able to defeat this menace only if the working class unites its resistance and enables other classes to join the battle. In the present situation in India when the forces led by Indira are again trying to regain ground, the working class must remember this lesson learnt from past mistakes and be fully prepared to offer united resistance to the aspirations of the dictatorial party.

Indian economy is afflicted by continuous stagnation and crisis; the major victims of which are the mass of peasants and agricultural workers, the industrial workers in organised and unorganised industries, and the employees.

The first four five year plans up to 1965-66 showed a

compound real income growth of 4.11 per cent while the decade up to 1976-77 show the rate at 3.74 per cent.

The economic survey 1978-79 says that G. N. P. in the current year increased by 3.5 per cent as compared to 7.2 per cent in 1977-78. It gives the following figures of annual growth rates.

<i>Annual growth rates</i>		<i>1970-71 prices per capita net national</i>	
1972-73	1.1	1972-73	3.6
1973-74	5.0	1973-74	2.9
1974-75	0.8	1974-75	1.0
1975-76	8.9	1975-76	6.8
1976-77	1.2	1976-77	0.6
1977-78	7.2	1977-78	5.2

This under-developed country which requires a massive rate of growth to come anywhere near eliminating poverty and unemployment is already suffering from increasing stagnation. The recently published results of the rural labour enquiry 1974-75 reveals the dire straits to which the mass of rural labourers have been reduced. The enquiry shows that the proportion of agricultural labourer house-holds with land increased from 9.57% to 12.43% i.e. rose from 67.33 lakhs to 102 lakhs. This is a result of the measures taken under the Congress Land Reform Act to ensure land to the tiller; it shows more and more small peasants are either losing their lands or are unable to eke out a living on their land and are forced to hire themselves out. With all the schemes of the earlier Congress Government to protect him, the small holder is being daily fleeced by the market, the price mechanism, the procurement authorities, the land-lord, and the money-lender. He is therefore forced to part with the greater part of his produce to all these agencies and hire himself out at the cheapest rate. The proportion of farm labour house-holds without land increased from 12.22 per cent to 12.88 per cent between 1964-65 and 1974-75.

How is this mass of workers placed in relation to jobs? The estimated number of full days worked by men of agricultural labour house-holds for wage employment in the

various agricultural operations declined from 208 in 1964-65 to 185 in 1974-75, that by women from 138 to 129 and that by children below 15 years from 167 to 145. Thus, for all categories, there is unemployment for the major part of the year. What is worse, unemployment is increasing and opportunities of employment are decreasing while the Government and the land-lords are advertising the magic effects of the green revolution. While bumper crops are being harvested and Government godowns are full of food grains, the agricultural labourer has neither work nor the wherewithal to purchase food grains produced by him. What is the wage of these partially employed agricultural workers? According to a document of the Planning Commission, "Money wage earnings of agricultural workers have risen from Rs. 1.76 per day in 1961-62 to Rs. 4.95 in 1976-77, perhaps a magnificent increase according to the Congress standards. The real wage earnings in 1976-77 were actually below 1961-62 level i.e. below Rs. 1.76 per day at 1961-62 prices." The following figures tell their own story.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Money Wages (in Rs.)</i>	<i>Real Wages (in Rs.)</i>
1961-62	1.76	1.66
1966-67	2.63	1.38
1971-72	3.10	1.55
1976-77	4.95	1.64

It should be noted that in 1976-77 when the 20 point programme was in full swing, a programme which was claimed to benefit the agricultural labourers and poor peasants—real wage of the agricultural workers was lower than 15 years back. The same Planning Commission's paper comments, "it may be mentioned that whereas average daily wage earnings in rural areas increased during ten years (64-65 to 74-75) from Rs. 1.43 in agricultural operations and Rs. 1.82 in non-agricultural operations, to Rs. 3.24 in agricultural and Rs. 4.09 in non-agricultural operations, the consumer price index of agricultural labourers increased from 143 in 1964-65 (1960-61 = 100) to 368 in 74-75. There is a 12% decline in the real wages of male workers in agricultural operations, 7% decline

in case of wages of female workers and 2% decline in case of children. The corresponding decline in real wages is higher in non-agricultural operations 15%, 23% and 12% respectively."

This means that during the ten year period, the entire mass of rural workers, agricultural and non-agricultural, have been experiencing a monstrous wage-cut and driven to the point of destitution—while at the same time their job opportunities were curtailed. This is how the crisis of agrarian relations is affecting the rural mass and driving them to desperation. The stories of monstrous atrocities against untouchables are not unconnected with this imposed destitution and massive wage-cut. The untouchables belonging mostly to the landless class have to bear the main burden of the agrarian crisis, apart from the burden of caste oppression. It is no wonder, therefore, that their resistance evokes the most inhuman offensive of landlords connived at by the authorities.

Is it any surprise therefore that the Government of India's economic survey last year bemoaned "the rural consumption of cloth does not seem to have increased adequately inspite of increases in rural income." Whose incomes increased during these years or during the year 76-77, not the income of the poor peasants and agricultural workers? The hope of the bourgeois land-lord class, that the green revolution and increased agricultural production would automatically expand the market in the rural areas, have been belied because the main beneficiaries of increased agricultural production are the landlords and the rich farmers.

GROWING DISPARITIES

In fact, there has been a growing disparity in incomes in the rural areas along with the progress of the green revolution. The Draft Five Year Plan 1978-83 quotes the findings of the Reserve Bank Enquiry as follows :

"According to the Reserve Bank data the concentration ratio of assets, mainly agricultural land owned by rural households, was 0.65 in 61-62 and increased to 0.66 in 71-72, the poorest 10% of rural house-holds own only 0.1% and the richest 10% own more than half of total assets in 1971-72 as well as in 1961-62. These data show that up to 60s. the land reform measures had no visible impact on the distribution of

the rural property." But the inflationary developments since 1971-72, have led to further appropriation of the rural mass and further concentration of assets and purchasing power in the hands of fewer people. The fact that the real wages of agricultural workers and non-agricultural workers have gone down by as much as 20% in some case shows to what monstrous level rural inequality has gone. What chance, therefore, is there for an expansion of market for industrial goods produced by the working class in the cities? The land relations and peasants' exploitation exercise a complete veto over the industrial development, consequently over the employment of industrial workers in factories. The trade union movement and the working class do not realise the fact that their fight against attacks on their standard of living will be ineffective if they do not fight against the inequities in rural areas.

These semifeudal land relations have already slowed down the industrial advance in India. Indian industries cannot develop their full capacities if the rural market gets increasingly contracted and this is precisely what is happening. In the absence of a mass market in the rural areas, industries are forced to cater to the needs of a small minority. To quote the Draft Plan again, "pattern of industrial development that is forged obviously reflects the structure of effective demand, which is determined by the distribution of incomes. An unduly large share of resources is, thus, absorbed in production which relates directly or indirectly to maintaining or improving the living standard of the higher income groups. This means that the further expansion of industry is limited by the narrowness of the market. As a result, further import substitution of consumer goods or capital goods cannot, at the current level of demand, effect any great impetus in continuing the industrial growth."

ATTACK ON WAGES

The stagnation in industry has now become chronic and must be regarded as an integral part of the economic crisis arising out of the capitalist path of development. It has already led to closures of thousands of small industrial concerns, the take-over of more than hundred textile mills by the Govern-

ment and closure and retrenchment in big industries like Cotton Textile and Jute. These years of crisis also show a concerted attack on the workers' living standard, an attack which was heroically resisted by the working class, nonetheless which was continuously pressed with the aid of repression and draconian anti-working class laws. The organised trade union movement, no doubt succeeded in compelling the employers and the Government to agree to bonus, dearness allowance and wage increases under pressures of strikes but nonetheless, the Government and the employers circumvented these concessions by manipulating the cost of living and inflicting an unprecedented inflationary price rise on the people. The result is that, by and large, the real wage of the worker has hardly risen though his monetary wage has gone up. At best, one can say that the working class has fought heroically against the attack on his standard of living and yet had to bear the burdens of the crisis. The emergency by tampering with the bonus and the dearness allowance, by further extension of compulsory deposit scheme and banning of strikes made a direct effort to impose the crisis burdens on the working class by employing dictatorial methods. The total wage condition of the working class can be gauged from the following.

According to the document of the Planning Commission earlier referred to, "the average annual wage earning" of the workers between 61-76 have fluctuated as follows :

Year	Wage earnings at current prices (in Rs.)	Wage earnings at price 1960-61 consumer price index (-100) (in Rs.)
1961	1413	1359
1966	2045	1354
1971	2761	1438
1976	4374	1453

The documents "the real wage earnings, taking into account the increase in consumer price index of industrial workers since 1961 have, however, risen only marginally by about 7%". This marginal rise however is calculated on the basis of the fraudulent cost of living index duly prepared by the

Central Labour Department which was exposed on a number of occasions by the CITU. Comrade Pandhe who was a member of the Index Committee throughly exposed the fraud committed on the workers in his minute of dissent. The document further says, "the real annual wage earnings rose marginally during the Third Plan by about 0.5% went down by 2% in the period of three Annual Plans rose by 1% in the Fourth Plan and by 2.66% on an average during 3 years ending 1976-77". To secure this increase, the working class had to fight bitterly and had to face banning of strikes under the emergency, prolonged starvation and lockouts and police firing costing the lives of innumerable workers. Yet there are many mercenaries of the capitalist class who denounce the workers and their movement as a movement which demands too much of the National cake.

Matters are still worse with regard to those whose earnings are less than Rs. 400 per month.

Year	Per Capita earning money (in Rs.)	Index No. of the Real earnings (1961-100)
1961	1540	100
1966	2112	95
1971	2852	101
1975	3171	66

The precipitous fall in 1975 is attributed by the document to the fact that the number of workers in this category declined from 31,61,000 in 1972 to 2,17,000 in 1975. It is suggested that this fall is apparent because of the exclusion of those from the category who became to earn more than Rupees 400. Nonetheless, it is quite clear, as the earlier trend also shows, that the real wages of those earning below 400 were going down and they hardly rose at any time. The document comments "both annual survey of the industries data and the Payment of Wages Act data, however, indicate that in spite of increase in money earnings of workers after 1971, there has been a considerable erosion in the real wage earnings of industrial workers, particularly between 73 and 75 because of sharp increase in the consumer price index of industrial workers

from 226 in 1973 to 321 in 1975". Obviously, partly at least these are the achievements of the emergency period which came in the wake of rising inflation. Mrs. Indira Gandhi advertises the gains of the emergency period for the country. The Labour Office figures show the gains the working class achieved during the emergency.

INCREASED POVERTY

The Draft Plan 1978-83 observes "attempts have been made to measure the existing expenditure on poverty in India and depending on the norms used 40.60% of the population far below the minimum acceptable standard. According to a recent estimate, using norms of the caloric consumption, the percentage of population below the poverty line in 1977-78 may be projected at 48% in rural areas and 41% in urban areas. The total number of poor so defined could be about 290 million, about 160 million of these fall below 75% of the poverty line."

These same years saw an enormous concentration of wealth and resources in the hands of a small minority namely the monopolists. The total assests of India's 20 large houses (Houses owning assests of more than 100 crores of rupees) rose from 3576 crores of rupees in 1972-73 to 4966 crores of rupees in 1975-76 (41.2%), their net worth to Rs. 2012 crores from Rs. 1431 crores in 1972-73 i. e. at a rate of 40.6%. Big landlords, speculators and foreign capitalits were the other partners of the loot forcing down 60% to the Indian people below the poverty line. This loot continued and increased during the emergency.

With an economy in crisis with a rural mass without purchasing power and with an enormous loot by the landlords capitalists and foreign multinationals what chances were there for the workers to improve their living conditions radically without a complete change in the ownership relations. The mass of workers must realize that without waging a struggle to end the land monopoly of the landlords and distributing land to the tiller there can be no scope for growth of industry and employment in industry. Without completely eliminating the exploitation carried on by foreign capital and nationalisation of all Indian monopoly concerns, we cannot have the basis for

eradicating unemployment in industries and poverty of the workers and the Indian people. These steps together with the real power in the hands of the people alone will open the way to socialism and abolition of all exploitation.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Comrades, the problem of unemployment in cities and villages alike is becoming the central point of the economic situation. The number of registered unemployment has reached the huge figure of 121 lakhs;—at the beginning of the decade it was just 51 lakhs. This galloping increase which shows no sign of abatement is the inevitable result in the capitalist path of development embarked upon by the ruling classes.

The slow growth of industry under the capitalist path impose a very slow growth rate in employment. According to the figures supplied by the Director General of Employment, Government of India, the total employment in the public and private sector increased from 1,78,33,000 to 2,10,86,000 in the period between 1971-77. The annual growth rate comes to just 2.7%. What is still more striking is that employment in the private sector has been completely stagnant. In large private sector undertakings, it was 60,18,000 in 1971 and 62,21,000 only in 1977.

The small industries about which the previous Government like the present Government talked so much, revealed the the same tale. In 1971 the number of employed was 7,16,000 in 1976 it was 7,21,000.

Between 1971-77, employment in the public sector increased by 30 lakhs but a major part of this increase i.e. more than 11 lakhs was under community, social and personnel services. This includes the administrative services of the Central and the State Governments, the ruling class apparatus to maintain their rule; compared with it manufacturing under public sector showed an increase of only 5½ lakhs..

But, it is not only slow growth rate of employment that is responsible for the monstrous rise in unemployment both in the rural and industrial areas. The slow growth of industry under the capitalist path displaces more persons it absorbs and only accelerates the process of separation of the producer from

the means of production depriving them of the source of livelihood and occupation. The Draft Plan 1978-83 observes, "less than full employment of rural labour force is attributable not only to seasonable employment of farm labour—but also to the progressive displacement of craftsmen and artisans by competitive modern industry. Urban unemployment likewise covers not only workers laid off by declining industries, new entrants to the labour forces and migrant workers of the surrounding areas, but the whole mass of the self-employed persons and casual workers in the "informal Sector" eking out a precarious livelihood."

The total failure of industry and present-day economy in relation to employment is admitted in the Planning Commission Report in the following words :

"Between 1971 and 1978 when the labour force increased by 35 million non-agricultural activities absorbed only 9 million, about half in the organised sector and half in the informal sector. The general pattern of man power deployment in the country is that only 10 to 11 per cent of the increased labour force finds employment in the organised sectors while the rest drifts into part-time employment in rural areas or the informal sectors of urban industry and trade or becomes chronically unemployed." In the last eight years alone, at least 20 million people have been added to the list of unemployed partial or chronic according to this calculation.

This is the bizarre truth about Indian economy now administered by the Janata policies; only 13 out of 100 new entrants have any chance of getting a job in the organised sector which includes besides factories, banks, insurance companies, commercial establishments and government services. The rest 87% must shift for themselves and grab whatever comes in their way.

The future of the children of the working class is absolutely bleak unless this situation is changed. No wonder with these realities, the authorities systematically under-estimate the extent of actual employment in the country. However, even the lowest estimates could not but reveal the gravity of the problem. The Bhagwati Committee estimated the number at 18 million in 1971. Since then, the number of registered unemployed in

the cities has doubled reaching 121 lakhs. Other estimates for the same year varied between 21 to 29 million, Dr. Amartyasen, the well-known economist, estimated the number at 42.4 millions. This is nearer the reality today.

What chance has a new worker from the urban or rural areas to get a job under these circumstances? The majority of them are destined to or on the border line of the destitution. Need we then wonder that crimes and antisocial activities are increasing, that cities are infested with goonda gangs and young working class children from the slums are used in trafficking in illicit activities, illicit liquor and drug traffic.

The further progress of our people, of the trade union movement, of our efforts to improve wage and living conditions is hard to achieve unless the working class takes this problem seriously and fights for its solution. Let every worker remember that from amongst their sons and young relatives only 13 out of 100 can get a job in the organised sector and 4 to 5 can get one in the factory.

That is why the trade union movement must unitedly raise the demand for right to work to be made a fundamental right under the Constitution. The Government should accept the constitutional responsibility to provide jobs for all and pending it, immediate relief for these willing to work. The 45th Amendment Bill moved by the Janata Government should have included an amendment to add the right to work to the list of fundamental rights. The fact that the Government failed to do it only revealed its class limitations and outlook. The right to work is being resisted because it will definitely mean greater social control and social ownership and put severe curbs on the big landlords, monopolists and big capitalists.

We must put up immediate concrete demands, suited to local conditions to give work to the unemployed and provide relief. Local authorities, municipalities, Corporations and panchayat committees should be drawn into the task of organising relief.

It has been a weakness of our trade union movement that it has failed to take up the question of the unemployed and make it an integral part of its struggle. This callous attitude towards a section of our class and towards the younger

generation has already, weakened the common struggle for better livelihood.

NEW DANGER

Now, a new danger has already arisen. The capitalists, the vested interests and their agents are endeavouring to pit the unemployed against the employed with a slogan not higher wages but more jobs are required.

The employed workers' demand for better wages is pitted against the creation of more jobs to mislead the unemployed. As I have already pointed out the cause of the growing unemployment is the present system with its slow industrial development and pre-capitalist land relations; the basic cause that imposes unemployment on the people also imposes low wages on the employed. If this common bond is not stressed in practice by the trade unions, the unemployed are likely to be misled by such slogans.

It has to be noted that violence against strikers has started in the name of the unemployed. Its organisers were the chambers of commerce and the industrialists. During the Bank Employees' protest during January, February this year in Ahmedabad processions were organised to intimidate the employees and terrorise them. The participants pretended to speak on behalf of the unemployed. This is a warning signal, which must be heeded.

It is a matter of utter disgrace that the Janata Government of Gujarat permitted this intimidation and did little to bring offenders to book.

Comrades, when the working class and its united trade union movement has yet to move concertedly in defence of the of the unemployed in the rural and urban areas, the ruling class, the Government, and the capitalists have already moved in to divide the workers, to undermine their unity and pit workers against workers. Instead of accepting the right to work which entitles all workers from all regions, of all castes and faith to get a job, their remedies seek to divide workers by regions and castes in the names of sons of the soil or local preferences, preference for weaker sections. They seek to make one section fight another and increase the competition for

restricted jobs and set the government as the arbiter of the fate of all. The Janata Government has not yet forsaken these odious policies of the previous Congress Government.

Rousing regional and provincial feelings, the ruling classes make it appear that the problem of unemployment in a State will be solved if only workers from other States are prevented from seeking jobs beyond the borders of their States. And these are the people who talk loudest about national unity, about India being one, about Bharat Mata and even want to impose one language on the people because you are completely one.

It is only the West Bengal Left Front ministry which is taking a correct Indian and also a class stand and directs that jobs should be given according to the order of registration at the employment exchanges. In almost all other States employment on the basis of registration is being opposed. In Tamil Nadu, one party tries to rouse chauvinism against workers in Kerala, in Bombay also the Shiv Sena rouses chauvinism against workers from Tamil Nadu and Kerala. In the State of Andhra, the mulki agitation rouses regional feelings among job-seekers, setting them against each other and diverting attention from the common fight. In a number of States the State Governments use various devices including pressures on the employers to pit the local workers against the workers from other States.

With the transfer of administration of employment exchanges to the States, the State Governments have imposed restrictions by orders against recruiting "outsiders" in order to give preference to the sons of the soil. The State Governments of Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Bihar and Himachal Pradesh have imposed various restrictions on recruitment through employment exchanges, presumably to keep out "outsiders." A number of these restrictions are considered to be in violation of the Constitution.

It is also noted that the central authorities also create problems leading to outburst of local feeling. Often there is discrimination against local people and talent by employers and the central authorities. This seems to have happened in

Assam in connection with the recruitment by Bongaingaon Refinery and Petro—Chemical Limited.

It was alleged that despite the central assurance that all posts in BRPL carrying a salary of upto Rs. 500 would be recruited in Assam, persons registered in the Delhi Employment Exchanges were taken in. The recruitment to BRPL jobs in New Delhi was strongly resented and recruitment at local centres was demanded. The thoughtless and discriminatory action of the Central authorities played into the hands of the local chauvinists.

The trade union movement has to take these realities into consideration, the local grievances as well as the general unemployment existing all over the country, has to work for unity among all job-seekers. The more it is able to convince employed and unemployed workers of the correctness of the demand for right to work, the more unity it will be able to achieve.

But the struggle against unemployment is not only impeded by regional considerations but it is also obstructed by caste differences. The old Hindu caste structure under which some castes are considered to be in the lower order and some in the upper order still persists. The tribals and the untouchables constitute the most ill-treated and worsely discriminated sections among the various castes. Besides these, there are what is called backward classes. There is discrimination in regard to jobs against muslims also. These various castes are also distinguished by different economic status, educational advance etc. Unable to solve the problem of unemployment in a genuine way, the Government and the authorities offer reservations of jobs and posts to exploited castes and sub-castes and create illusions that this will solve the problem of their proverty and unemployment. Such patronage is intended to mislead the most down-trodden sections and firmly tie them to the policies of the bourgeoisie landlord Government. Under Indian conditions, it will be, of course, wrong to totally oppose reservation and certain special concessions to the most down-trodden sections but at the same time the trade union movement will have to intervene and tell all sections to stand together more unitedly to fight the monstrosity of unemployment and poverty. It will have to convince the

mass of down-trodden sections that official concessions may offer some palliative but without a complete overhauling of the present economic social system, there can be no genuine radical solution. The problem, therefore, is two fold, one to bring about the unity of the employed and the unemployed and also to bring about the unity between various sections of the unemployed divided by region and caste. Unless trade union movement earnestly devote itself to this task, the ruling classes may divert the anger against unemployment into fratricidal channels.

SMALL INDUSTRIES

In this connection, I may state that the promise of the Janata Government to secure jobs for everybody on the basis of promotion of petty production and small industry, is misleading. The Janata party's promise of prosperity based on revival of small industry is an illusory dream and a prescription for low productivity and poverty. It is an attempt to escape the problem of nationalisation of means of production—nationalisation of the monopoly concerns and big industry and placing them under social control; it is at the same time an attempt to escape liquidation of the present land relations, the root-cause of peasants' poverty.

Only the socialist countries headed by the Soviet Union succeeded in solving the problem of unemployment. They did it, with political power in the hands of the working class and its allies, by socialising means of production, liquidating all pro-capitalist realations and then by rapid industrial progress whereby industry could absorb all those displaced from petty production. The ruling party which in this year's Presidential Address discovered that its government shared basic values with the USA, of course, is not prepared to learn from the experience of the socialist countries.

It is certainly correct and necessary to give protection to cottage end small scale industries and agriculture in the transitional period to ensure that they are not blasted out of existence by unthinking and unfair competition from big industry and to secure a smooth transition to modernisation; it is equally necessary to use the immanse labour resources of the country by using labour intensive methods to create resources.

The trade union movement should support all genuine measures to protect small scale production.

But, it is wrong and reactionary to assign and promise a permanent place to small and petty industry in future Indian society. It is equally reactionary to suggest that a society free from poverty and unemployment can be based on the primacy of cottage and small industry and reduction of the role of big industry.

The primacy of cottage industry is a prescription for the perpetual poverty of India for perpetual unemployment and other evils. The so-called decentralisation which presents advance of big industry as nothing but evil, which confuses evil effects flowing from the capitalist ownership of this industry to its bigness, which does not see in modern industry big human triumphs in science and production is a backward looking utopia. It only helps to sanctify the existing order based on freedom of big property.

It is known that the productivity of cottage and small industry is extremely low while socially-owned industry can use the latest achievement in science and technology in the interest of the people; that the former imposes day to day drudgery on the workers to qualify for a miserable pittance of earnings. The miserable production capacity of cottage, handloom and small industries makes it impossible for the producer to escape poverty. The endeavour of working class and all progressive forces should be to liberate these producers as quickly as possible from the present hell and set them on the high rate of modern technique. Transitional measures so essential today to save them only soften the rigours of the hell but afford no escape from it. India's future lies in socially-owned big modern industry.

Some leaders of the Janata Party off and on talk about taking over or nationalisation of big establishments owned by certain monopolists. It seems to be just pressure tactics for some purpose and not genuine concern for nationalisation. Recently one Minister talked about taking over of the TISCO owned by the Tatas. All these statements are again qualified in the Congress way by saying that the suggestion is based on pragmatism and not on ideological considerations which

shows that they need not be taken seriously.

The CITU stands for the nationalisation of all monopoly concerns and will support all genuine measures taken by the Janata Government in this direction. It, however, demands that nationalisation should not lead to bureaucratism but there should be real participation of workers in the management of the concerns. And secondly, nationalisation should not mean handing over or selling the concern to foreign multinationals as seems to be happening in relation to BHEL, notwithstanding the loud mouthed protests from the management and the apologia of the Industry minister.

Comrades, we all must congratulate the West Bengal Left Front Ministry headed by our esteemed Comrade Jyoti Basu on the introduction of a system of unemployment relief for industrial workers in West Bengal. Though the scheme is at present gives relief to a small section of unemployed, it announces the acceptance of a vital principle. There is no doubt that had the Centre had released adequate funds to the State Government, the Left Front Ministry would have produced a full-fledged scheme for unemployment relief. It has already widened the scope of the scheme this year.

Comrades, the problem of rural unemployment is such that it can no longer be ignored by the government. Some State Governments have come out with schemes of partial relief and employment. The Maharashtra Government scheme for guarantee of jobs is one such scheme and it is amazing that the Central Government took a long time to advise the President to give his consent to it.

There is no doubt that if the trade union movement unitedly takes the question, it will be in a position to secure substantial relief for the rural and industrial unemployed.

PRICES AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Comrades, Janata Government has been making false claims about declining prices, about success in controlling prices. It would appear as if the Government has succeeded in bringing down prices from the giddy heights reached during the inflationary years 1973-74 and 1974-75. The fact is that not only there has been no relief under the Janata Rule but

prices are higher than they were during the inflationary year preceding the emergency. Let me quote figures from the RBI Report on Currency and Finance 1977-78.

INDEX OF WHOLESALE PRICES

All Commo- dities	1972-73	1973-74	1974-75	1975-76	1976-77	1977-78
1970=100	116.2	139.7	174.9	173.0	176.6	185.6
Food						
Articles	111.3	136.6	172.1	163.6	155.3	173.4
Consumer Price Index						
All-India						
Industrial	207	250	317	313	301	324
Workers						
1960=100						

The week ending January 13, 1979, the wholesale index number was 185. By August 1978 the consumer price index for industrial worker was 331; in September it was 336 and in October it was 340.

The utterly untenable character of the claims made by the Janata Government stands exposed, they were made only to make the people believe that the working class did not need either higher D.A. or increased wages.

What the people were in need of was drastic reduction in the high prices of recent years. The Janata Government has totally failed in this respect. Under its two years' rule prices rose higher than before.

There was bound to be this failure because Janata Government also resorted to the discredited method of deficit financing following in the footsteps of the Congress Government. The previous budget showed deficit finance of not less than one thousand crore of rupees. What chance was there for the prices to decline under these circumstances.

As the RBI Report (1977-78) observes, "In the first place, the growth of money supply continues to be very high, 19.4% in the year under review and 16.6% in the previous year." "This is not required by the growth of production of national income. "This pace of increase has to be seen in

conjunction with an annual average increase of about 5% in the real national income."

In short, deficit financing and high prices are used as an instrument for robbing the poor transferring purchasing power from the havenots to the haves, as an instrument of robbery as in the Congress days. The Janata Government, at best, can claim that they have slowed down the pace of price increase as compared in hectic years 1973-74 and 1974-75 and for this also a big section of the peasantry producers of commercial crops had to face ruin.

STRIKES AND LOCK-OUTS

Comrades, may I also refer to another question of importance to us. Spokesmen of the capitalists vie with each other to oppose strikes and advertise the loss of production due to them while they remain silent over the loss of production deliberately caused by lock-outs. The strikes are weapons of defending the legitimate rights of the workers, weapons of their fight against attacks on their standard of living. Lock-outs are weapons of profiteers and exploiters to starve the workers into submission and are used regardless of the loss caused to production. But the former is condemned because it is resorted to by the workers; the lock-outs are passed over in silence because they are declared by the capitalists whose interests are sacrosanct. The following figures were recently given by the Government in the Parliament.

Year	By	No of workers involved	Man days lost
1976 Jan to June	Strike	164,576	14,45,684
	Lockouts	70,612	41,88,006
1977 Jan-June	Strike	567,961	44,87,185
	Lockouts	115,700	40,14,005
1978 Jan-June	Stririke	563,382	58,95,004
	Lockouts	131,684	68,37,814

The prolonged character of the lockouts is obvious. In 1976, the number of workers on strike was more than double those locked out and yet mandays lost due to lockout were nearly three-time the number of those lost in strikes. In 1977, the number of workers locked out was 1/5th of those on strike but the loss of mandays due to lock-out was almost the same

as due to strikes. In 1978, again the number of workers locked out was 1/4th of those on strike but the mandays lost due to lockout was 15 to 17 percent more than the loss due to strike. But, it would not be a class Government if it were to admit the severity of lockouts and denounce them as anti-social and obstructing national production. Do they not ban strikes under the Industrial Relations Bill while appearing to equate strikes with lockouts.

Comrades, the inception of Janata Party's rule has not brought in taxation relief to the common man. Like its predecessor Government, the Janata Government also uses taxation as a measure of deprivation of the common man, a measure to reduce his claim on consumption goods and even the well intentioned Dandavate has not escaped this partiality for additional taxation on the poor. His decision to increase the season ticket fares in Bombay, Calcutta and elsewhere is bound to hit lakhs and lakhs of ordinary people, workers and office employees who are daily passenger. He has imposed a burden of not less than 28 crores on these people. The preceding budget of the Janata Government also raised taxation on the common man while it granted certain reliefs to big business. The budget for 1979-80 also imposes further additions to these burdens. The monstrous character of this taxation can be best summed up in the words of Karl Marx : "Modern fiscality, whose pivot is formed by taxes on the most necessary means of subsistence (thereby increasing their prices), this contains within itself the germ of automatic progression. Over taxation is not an incident, but rather a principle. The destructive influence that is exercised on the condition of the wage labourers concerns us less however were than the forcible expropriation resulting from it of peasants, artisans and in a word, all elements of the lower middle class." Taxation and inflation together with the development of capitalist relations have accentuated the process of mass eviction of peasants, artisans, separation of small producers from the means of production. This is why the unemployment problem is becoming more and more menacing.

ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE

The Janata Party is continuing with the new vigour

policies which increase the dependence of our country on Western economies. The cry for self-reliance of economy is replaced by the cry for exports and more exports. The World Bank ever vigilant to integrate the Indian economy with the economies of the West, has been pressing Indian Government for more exports and the Indira Government readily accepted exports below cost, exports with huge subsidies costing the people hundreds of crores of rupees. The Janata Government today follows the same policy.

As early as October 1975, the World Bank demanded that India should re-shape its industrial development programme leaning away from capital goods and heavy industries and go in for massive export production during the rest of the decade. Exports and massive foreign aid should, it said, form major part of the savings to boost India's flagging industrial growth rate. The Janata Government follows in the footsteps of the Indira Government and only embellishes its conformism with voluble reference of Gandhian values, The demagogic talk about giving priority to petty production, rural orientation and attack on big industry is nothing but paraphrasing for the Indian audience, the terms laid down by the World Bank.

This has naturally led to greater freedom for private capital and great demands for concessions by multinationals. The World Bank has been demanding that India should give greater scope to foreign private capital and the Janata Government's recent steps clearly show that private capital both indigenous and foreign is being encouraged. This is leading to a new dangerous development with equally dangerous political consequences. The desperate effort to secure export foothold in the foreign markets is leading to efforts for joint concerns with foreign monopoly firms in the hope of sub-contracting in the Third World countries.

This is creating new economic interests. The content of the entire process of subsidised export promotion and import liberalisation of offering concessions at home and seeking them abroad is the striving for partnership with foreign capital in India and outside. Political dangers inherent in this development are easy to see.

Comrades, it is not properly realised by our working

class that the World Bank acts as an instrument for imperialist policies and uses its aid to keep the under developed countries dependent on imperialist finance. Our trade union movement is not conscious of this danger and is unable to put up a proper fight against it.

REPRESSION

Comrades, the General Secretary's Report deals at length with the labour policy of the Janata Government and the immediate demands of the working class. It gives a full picture of what the working class and our CITU had to pass through these two years notwithstanding the restoration of democratic liberties following the Janata victory in the Parliament elections. We all must denounce the Industrial Relations Bill which is unanimously rejected by the working class and which is nothing but legalising the illegalities of the emergency regime in respect of the trade union movement. Another bill proposes to ban strikes of teachers, nurses, etc., and goes beyond what Indira Government did. In U. P., M. P. etc. large number of strikes have been declared illegal and ordinances have been passed to suppress them. The Right C.P.-led Kerala ministry is also guilty of repressive measures against electricity workers and other sections.

Demands of workers are being resisted in the public sector; the Bureau of Public Enterprises continues its arbitrary intervention, stalling meaningful negotiations and compelling trade unions to accept whatever the Bureau thinks fit. I may remind you that the Labour Minister has gone back on his promise given in June last during negotiations concerning the demands of the public sector employees. He has also broken the agreement arrived at with the Kota atomic plant workers. No previous Labour Minister perhaps had put himself in this position of openly repudiating the word given to the workers.

So despite restoration of democratic rights the workers are faced with the same situation-struggle for D. A., need-based wage, bonus, against retrenchment, lay-off and violation of trade union rights.

Comrades, our CITU cadres and workers have to face

another ordeal—the growing attacks of the hired goondas of the employers—attacks which are connived at by the police. The use of anti-social element against the workers especially during strikes has been a common practice with the employers. Now the goonda elements are no longer occasional recruits; they form the standing army of the employers in many places, they are often called the watch and ward personnel and are licensed to carry arms which are used against the workers. In Ghaziabad in U. P. and other places arms were used against the workers. In Haryana, in Faridabad and other places these gangs have been fully used against the CITU.

Our comrades in Faridabad, Ghaziabad and Rajsthan are courageously facing this attack. Our attackers do not flinch from murders and several of our comrades have lost their lives fighting them. In Rajsthan our comrades have to face the attacks of hoodlums from rival organisations who claim that they are affiliated to some all-India organisations with whom we maintain fraternal relations. Our attackers in Rajsthan claim that they are followers of the INTUC; our attackers in Bhilai claim that they belong to the BMS. We earnestly appeal to these organisations to disown these organisations who do the work of the employers.

We congratulate our comrades in M.P., Bihar, U.P., Haryana Rajsthan who are carrying forward the banner of the CITU at great sacrifice and with extra-ordinary courage.

Comrades, the CITU and the entrie trade union movement should demand the disarming of the employers' gangs. It should demand that the licences for arms given to the employers' personnel should be immediately withdrawn. No one can be allowed to keep private force.

Comrades, this city of Madras where we are meeting is not unfamiliar with the use of hirelings and agents against the trade union movement. The Tamil Nadu Government led by Shri M. G. Ramachandran not only launched the severest repression during the Tamil Nadu bundh but also used its agents to attack the workers. During the Tamil Nadu bundh it arrested in a single swoop more than 3,000 of our workers and cadres. Since then it has taken an anti-strike attitude and while it has used its muscle power against the workers, it has

adopted a sycophantic attitude to the employers who defy its instructions.

T. U. RIVALRIES

Comrades, the Janata Labour Minister and his ministry have borrowed from the Congress arsenal all the weapons of slandering the working class and the trade union movement. It was the Congress regime that made the discovery that strikes in India were more due to trade union rivalry than anything else, and the Labour Minister also refers to trade union rivalries and multiplicity of trade unions whenever the workers are engaged in struggle or oppose government policies.

But the Congress government made the accusation when the trade union centres were sharply divided over immediate issues. The Labour Minister, however, makes the charge when the trade union centres are uniting more and more to oppose government policies. The unprecedented demonstration against the Industrial Relations Bill made clear to everybody except the Labour Minister the growing unity of the movement.

It is a fact that there is multiplicity of unions. These unions have different outlooks on many questions. And yet as the experience of the railway strike, the West Bengal jute strike shows, they overcome their differences and come together for common action.

The multiplicity of unions arose because most of the employers and the government recognised for collective bargaining only their docile favourites. These recognised unions entered into agreements behind the backs of the workers and lost their credentials. When the workers repudiated the adverse agreements signed by these unions, the Congress government described it as due to trade union rivalries. The capitalists picked up this argument and their press today makes the utmost use of it.

The CITU and several trade union centres have demanded that trade union recognition be decided on the basis of a secret ballot of all workers. We stand for one union in one industry democratically voted by the workers. Why should not the Janata Government which is supposed to defend demo-

cracy, have accepted this basic democratic proposal during its two years' Rule ? The Industrial Relations Bill also does not accept ballot as a compulsory principle to decide recognition. It gives the option to the government to decide recognition by verification or ballot-whichever method is suitable to instal a favourite will be adopted, by the bureaucrats. I may here mention that the P & T Minister recently granted recognition to a new organisation with hardly any following. The reason is that it was headed by men belonging to his party. The other organisations with mass following have protested against these divisive methods. And these are the people who, when it suits them, deplore multiplicity of unions and trade union rivalries.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE ?

Comrades, in this connection I may mention another scandalous propaganda. Recently, an employer in Bombay was the victim of an attack by hirelings. It was an attempt to murder him. Immediately the bourgeois press, the capitalists, the usual crowd of exploiters and their mercenaries denounced the trade unions and said that the murderous attack was due to trade union rivalries. We do hear of such occurrences occasionally. What are they due to ? In a large number of cases they are due to the fact that managements, employers and the ruling bourgeois parties often use unscrupulous individuals to fight established unions, grant special facilities to them, recognise their unions and patronise their gangs to terrorise organised workers. These unscrupulous individuals or anti-social elements are given the status of "leaders" by the management and their organisations are granted recognition. Interested only in feathering their nest they soon fall foul of the management and use the same methods that they were encouraged to use against the workers.

This is a new danger facing the movement. The entire trade union movement must combat it unitedly.

THE WORKING CLASS AND THE PEASANTRY

Comrades, the virtual delinking of the trade union movement from the peasantry and agricultural workers' movement, the failure to champion the demands of the rural masses as an

integral part of our struggle for democracy and socialism has not only weakened both the movements but is now creating new dangers for both. Economic facts clearly show that while the organised working class was able to fight and retain at least part of its living standard, the peasantry and the agricultural workers became the most atrocious victims of the crisis. The drastic lowering of the real wage of the agricultural workers and mass evictions of the peasants prove it.

Having driven the peasant and the agricultural workers to the lowest living standard, the landlords, the capitalists and their spokesmen are joining hands to incite the rural mass against the city poor—the workers and the employees. They quote figures of monetary wage to show that the city workers and the employees are living in affluence, concealing the fact that the real wage has gone down. Mercenary professors are hired to prove that the working class and the employees constitute a privileged class and exploit the peasants.

They unscrupulously conceal the fact that the degradation of the peasantry and the agricultural workers is the direct result of the exploitation of landlords, of land relations and exploitation of the capitalist path. Leaders of the Janata Party like Shri Charan Singh make it a question of urban versus rural people deliberately mixing the workers, the slum dwellers, the employees with the monopolists and the affluent. The monopolists also join the cry saying that the workers should not demand more wages as they are earning more compared with the rural mass.

The trade union movement must take this propaganda seriously as it is getting more and more strident and is intended to put the most exploited section against the working class movement.

The alliance of the two forces—vital forces for democracy and socialism—must be steadily built by championing the cause of the peasant and the agricultural labourers; by demanding an end to the land monopoly of the landlords, by demanding a fair price for the peasant, by taking active steps to organise the agricultural workers.

By winning over the solidarity and sympathy of the peasant masses for its daily struggles, the working class will be

in a much more favourable position to win its demands. This is especially true today when the ruling classes are intent on inciting the rural masses against the working class.

The break-up of the land monopoly of the landlords and distribution of land to the tiller—the solution of the land question—will ease the pressure on employment in cities, helping forward the trade union movement. The championing of this demand has a direct relevance to the security of jobs in the factories and cities.

Division on the basis of caste, religion is alien to working class movement. The trade unions must offer resistance to all revivalist trends like the RSS and communal and caste conflicts. This along with the championing of the agrarian demands will lay the basis for a close unity between the workers and rural masses.

The mounting struggles of the peasants and agricultural workers against the exploitation of the bourgeois-landlord state, of landlords and moneylenders creates solid ground for active cooperation between the two driving forces against the present social system. The active cooperation and alliance between the two acts as a lever for building the front of left and democratic forces. It is high time that the CITU and our trade unions developed closer cooperation with the All India Kisan Sabha—the leader of many a heroic mass battles of our peasantry and agricultural workers.

WORKING WOMEN

Comrades, the CITU at its Kota session decided to call a working women's conference. That conference finished its deliberations yesterday. All unions and all committees should see to it that its decisions are properly implemented.

The CITU had to take the decision to call a special conference because it was found that the grievances of working women were unattended; the government was indifferent; the employers were hostile; and even the trade unions were not very enthusiastic about their demands. In the so many strikes that the working class fought there were very few instances when the special demands of the working women were given prominence.

It was also found that women, even in industries and occupations where they formed a sizeable section were hardly represented in the leading bodies of the union.

This state of affairs was partly due to the disabilities which women suffer from in a society like the Indian society. The inferior status assigned to women in both Hindu & Muslim communities is known to all. That discrimination doggedly pursues the working women and it is the elementary duty of the trade unions to fight against it. We cannot say that our workers and some of our trade union leaders are free from this discriminatory outlook towards women.

It has been noted that the employers resort to retrenchment of women workers to avoid giving maternity benefit, and provision of other facilities prescribed by law. In many industries the number of women employees is decreasing. The axe of retrenchment falls first on the women workers.

The notorious Baveja Committee on coal industry has suggested retrenchment of 50,000 coal miners. The committee says, "A large number of those are female workers who cannot be sent underground. The redeployment in other projects in the vicinity is possible through a programme of training and *replacement of female workers*. "This means women will be daily retrenched. And the Janata Government's Energy Minister is intent on implementing this recommendation.

Under the Congress regime, women membership of trade unions went down. In 1961-62 it was 370,000; in 1968, it reached 421 thousands, by 1974, it had fallen to 262,000. Perhaps the indifference and neglect of trade unions has also contributed to this fall.

Regarding the question of equal wages for equal work also there is discrimination. The tea planters, the bidi employers find diverse means to cheat the women workers and the trade unions have not always shown the same zeal that they would have if men were affected. The plantation women, the bidi and coir women and the sweeper women have been the worst sufferers from this discrimination.

Nor is the condition easy for women employees in private and government services. Apart from sharing this denial of creches and other facilities with the women in factories, they

are discriminated on the matter of promotion and transfers under a male administration and are often the objects of lust of superior officers. The employers besides retrench women or refuse them employment to avoid giving them maternity benefit. The number of women employed in factories is decreasing. So far as the employees are concerned, they are often retrenched after marriage.

In all capitalist countries, there is discrimination against women. Even now women have to fight for equal pay for equal work in many of the advanced countries.

It is no wonder that India with one foot in the capitalist age and another in the preceding age should show discrimination against women at every stage. The trade union movement has to fight it as part of the working class struggle. Our leaders and cadres besides must see that the union leadership does not become a male preserve, that women are trained and quickly promoted to leading positions. The trade union movement cannot attain its full stature unless the women's contingent plays its role in organising and leading the unions. Thousands of women have participated in strike struggles, faced jail and repression, gone through privations along with men workers and employers. But they are far from occupying the position in the unions that is their due. The fight for working women's demands—for the demands of factory workers, teachers, employees, nurses, etc. should not be the exclusive concern of the trade unions. All women's organisations should lend their support and actively help the trade union movement in this struggle.

WEST BENGAL

Comrades, on behalf of all of you, I greet our Vice-President Jyoti Basu who is heading the Left Front Ministry of West Bengal. The left front ministries of West Bengal and Tripura constitute a source of great inspiration to all left and democratic forces engaged in a fight against the authoritarian forces.

I greet all our leaders and cadres of CITU in West Bengal who have brought fresh success to our movement. None can forget the historic role they played during the critical days of unprecedented floods affecting more than 10 million people.

They together with the state government employees saw to it that the people were saved, relief was organised and the game of the enemies of democracy to bring about a breakdown of the Government was frustrated.

The functioning of our West Bengal ministry stands in sharp contrast to the course followed by Janata and Congress (I) ministries elsewhere or to the methods adopted by the Tamil Nadu government or the Right C. P. Led government of Kerala. Standing by the peasant, initiating a scheme of unemployment relief, loyally serving the cause of the bargadars, raising the wages of agricultural workers, providing honest relief to the flood stricken people—the West Bengal ministry remained loyal to its basic electoral pledge that it will not use force, the police against the workers and peasants fighting for their legitimate demands. The Chief Minister openly declared his support for the demands of the striking jute workers. West Bengal is the only state where the right to strike has been fully recognised and allowed to be practised without interference from the State. During the prolonged strikes lasting over months there have been no arrests and prosecutions and no interference by the police. No where else was such scrupulous concern for democratic rights shown.

Supported by the ministry, the jute, engineering, Bata and otherworkers have succeeded in reaching a victorious settlement of their strikes and disputes. There is no doubt that this will further strengthen our CITU organisation in west Bengal.

It is because of this loyalty to the cause of the working class and the people that the West Bengal and Tripura ministries are becoming the rallying point for left and democratic forces in the country. And it is because of this that the forces of authoritarianism, Congress (I) and the reactionary and revivalist elements in the Janata Party have launched a campaign of villification and slander against the ministry. The press, the forum of parliament, the legislature all are utilised to defame the two governments. It is the task of the working class and democratic forces to expose and rebuff this attack and rally all the left and democratic forces behind the two ministries.

TRADE UNION UNITY

Comrades, the General Secretary's report deals in detail

with our struggle for trade union unity and the success achieved by us.

Recent months have witnessed a sharp rise in the activities of the trade union movement, representing the industrial workers and employees. What is more important they have seen increase in the united activities of trade unions, their common actions for demands and policies. The unprecedented demonstration in the capital on November 20 last year against the Industrial Relations Bill—that monstrous piece of anti-working class legislation engineered by the Morarji Cabinet—epitomised the mounting urge for unity. The demonstration was joined by all Central trade union organisations. The INTUC vacillated till the end but took a last minute decision to join to make it an all-on demonstration. It was joined by the powerful industrial federations like the AIRF, the Defence Workers' Federation, the P & T Federation of State Government employees, organisation of LIC employees, AIEA, Mercantile and Bank Employees' organisation, etc.

This growing urge for unity is the result both of a rising awakening as well as increased attacks against the workers and employees under the Janata Party's rule.

The wage-freeze policy of the Bureau of Public Enterprises, the Boothalingam Committee report, the Industrial Relations Bill and the innumerable firings on workers, the Essential Services Act, the proclamation of a monstrous anti-labour ordinance by M.P. Government, prescribing barbarous punishment all have called upon the workers and employees to take up the challenge.

The Janata government has been especially hard on the LIC employees. Declaring the employees as high wage islands in the manner of the Congress, they have been doing everything to attack the earnings of this section and deny them their due. It is known how they tried to baulk the LIC employees of their bonus till the Supreme Court defeated their attempts. Now again they have given notice to go back on a solemnly signed previous agreement all in pursuance of their policy to reduce the earnings to the employees.

They are following the same tactics in relation to the bank employees.

The united actions of central trade union organisations have created an unprecedented climate for unity. They have succeeded in drawing together organisations of employees, federations of workers not affiliated to any central organisation.

This brings us to the supreme importance of all-in trade union unity. Unless the labour movement exercises its full strength to shape the policy decisions of the government, it will not succeed in defending the interests of the workers. The CITU calls upon all central trade union organisations, all organisations of employees, of central and state government employees and also associations of teachers and professors to join together to press for a common labour policy and safeguard the interests of all sections. The mighty awakening in the trade union movement, the great strides made by the State and Central government employees' association, which now have the power to move lakhs; the strength shown by the associations of the teachers and professors all show that the trade union movement is a powerful force sufficiently strong to shape the policies of the government, to counter all anti-working class laws and defend common interest. It is our desire that all these organisations should immediately come together to take stock of the situation, present common front on the questions of demands and legislation and declare to the employers that the labour movement is one and indivisible. In this common task the only condition we lay down is loyalty to the working class and the agreed demands. We would, therefore, like to revive the UCTU on a much bigger scale and make it all embracing like the historic anti-wagefreeze convention of 1974.

Can we not come together in a loose kind of confederation or at least in the form of a labour coordination committee to take common counsel and unanimous decisions? Is it not time to give up the present ad hoc basis for unity, coming together only when attacked?

The CITU thinks that our movement now needs a more stable and wider base for unity. This reflects the growing maturity of our movement. The various organisations are no longer concerned with day to day issues but are involved in

deciding wide policy issues like the incomes and wages policies. The trade unions, if they are to protect the interests of the workers and the country, must have a proper common policy on issues like exports and imports policies of the government, its fiscal policy and various other matters. The battle for policies cannot be carried on without continuous concerted action on the part of the trade union movement.

STRUGGLE FOR POLICY

Comrades, when we call for unity, when we struggle for it, it is not just unity of numbers, but unity round an understanding, a policy. We have had occasions to sharply criticise and attack some of the central trade unions—the INTUC and the AITUC in the past. They openly supported the emergency, lent their support to the attacks on democracy, screened the repression on the people and the onslaught on the trade union rights. They joined apex body for negotiations from which other organisations like the CITU were deliberately excluded. We fought their wrong policies but even in those days—demanded unity to resist emergency—called on them to reject their erroneous collaborationist policies.

Today also when we call for unity we call it on the basis of definite policies—of struggle to defend the working class, struggle against official policies affecting the working class, struggle against the forces of dictatorship.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that central trade unions led by members of Janata Party have joined in our united efforts and have tried to correct the mistakes of their own government.

All our unions must remember that we unite not just for the sake of unity but to pursue a line of struggle and resistance to defend the workers' interests; that in the name of unity we do not compromise with collaborators. It is our desire that the workers of different organisations should come to a common line through joint struggles and experience.

PROFOUND IMPORTANCE

Comrades, the joint actions of the working class and the struggle for trade union unity has profound meaning extending beyond the trade unions. The trade union movement of

workers and employees is the most well-organised force fighting against the burdens of the economic crisis imposed by the bourgeois—landlord rule. Its resistance rouses other sections in defence of their interests. In the present situation when the economic discontent following from the policies of Janata party is likely to be exploited by Indira Gandhi and her cohorts, the united trade union resistance can become the basis for an independent rallying point for all left and democratic forces ranged against the return of authoritarian dictatorship. This is its profound importance in the context of the present situation with the rising challenge from Indira Gandhi.

POLITICAL SITUATION

Comrades, the CITU and the trade union movement cannot ignore the critical political situation in the country and remain blind to the arrogant challenge of Congress (I) to restore an authoritarian regime.

Though armed with a massive mandate the Janata Party pursuing the same class policies as the Congress, has failed to carry on an effective struggle against the forces of authoritarianism. No doubt it restored democratic rights. It restored the freedom of the press, and the judiciary, of meetings and organisations. But it has not gone beyond this restoration and has not refrained from attacking the rights of the people through MISA—like ordinance and goonda detention acts.

Its economic failures have eroded its image among the people and the Congress (I) forces have been able to register electoral advances on a number of occasions. These forces which were on the retreat have found new courage and adopted a challenging attitude in the parliament. They virtually scuttled the constitutional amendments intended to remove the dictatorial framework of the 42nd amendment act. The result is that the main mandate of the election—to withdraw the constitutional provisions of the emergency days remains unfulfilled. This is a big defeat for popular forces which is solely due to the inept and complacent attitude of the Janata Government. Now with a firm majority in two States and the Rajya Sabha, the challenging forces seek to utilise the mounting economic discontent to go on the offensive. The revivalist and communal forces inside the Janata Party—RSS—

bring further grist to the mill of Indira Gandhi.

The only force that can unite the people and stem the march of dictatorship is the unity of left and democratic forces in which the West Bengal and Tripura left front ministries play a vital role. It is only in these two states that the Congress (I) is on the retreat, its influence is on the wane.

That the Congress (I) leaders have not shed an iota of their dictatorial ambitions and practices is seen in Andhra Pradesh. Under the Chenna Reddy ministry attacks on harijans continue, but the police murders of naxalites are protected. The Bhargava Commission was scuttled to prevent the truth about shooting of naxalites coming before the people.

It is this force that has to be fought unitedly.

Comrades, the working class and trade union movement must realise that the danger of dictatorship is not over; that it is inherent in a situation in which the bourgeoislandlord classes are in possession of the state machine; that it represented today by the forces of Congress (I) who hark back to the days of the emergency.

To carry on an effective fight against it, the working class must unitedly demand the scuttling of the dictatorial framework introduced in the Constitution under the emergency— the rescinding of the emergency powers of the President, rescinding the provision for preventive detention in the Constitution, disbandment of the RAW, wider powers to the States, inclusion of the right to work in the list of fundamental rights, provision to put fundamental rights beyond the mischief of Parliament, by providing for referendum on constitutional changes, voting age to be reduced to 18 years and proportional representation and further expansion of people's rights.

The more these concrete demands are consciously and unitedly put forward and fought for by the trade unions movement, the more rebuff will be addressed to the authoritarian forces.

The working class protecting its unity and carrying on the fight against the forces of dictatorship has to bear the responsibility of maintaining the unity of the country which is being disrupted by reactionaries of all kinds.