



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

THE GULF WAR

Worldwide Anti-War Protests Against USA

True to its war mongering imperialist character, the USA ultimately unleashed the war against Iraq on January 17, 1991. Protest actions against the USA and its other imperialist allies like Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, etc started in several countries from the time they started amassing troops at Saudi Arabia. Japan however could not send its troops because it had to take public opinion as per constitutional obligation, and the public opinion was against sending of troops to Saudi Arabia. With the approach of 15th January, the last date given by the UN to Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, the agitations grew and spread to more countries.

Protest actions spread worldwide on January 17 with the American bombardment on Iraq. These protest actions are mounting up everywhere including in America and before White House itself. Mounting protests started in Washington and other places in America after the Congress approved Bush's policy of using force against Iraq. The US imperialists' thirst for the Gulf oil behind their crocodile tears for the sovereignty of Emir's Kuwait was laid bare. Pro-Iraq demonstrations are sweeping the Arab world including in the Emirate countries. We are publishing hereunder in brief some of the reports of the anti-war actions as appeared in the press:

USA

Thousands of peace activists shouting slogans, "No Blood for Oil" took to the streets in Washington, New York, San Francisco and other places in USA in the early hours of January 17 as the USA unleashed its attack on Iraq. The concern for peace among the people could be gauged when many people and women started crying when the news of the attack broke out. With every day the number of protesters grew. On the very first day over 3,000 protesters demonstrated in San Francisco. They shouted slogans, "Don't kill and maim our troops for oil". In front of the UN Head Quarters at New York the demonstrators poured petrol on the road and set fire to it. At Boston they blocked traffic and courted

arrest. At Washington they warned Bush that they had not ended their opposition to his policy to use force to expel Iraq from Kuwait. Over 25,000 agitators, the largest since the Vietnam war poured in the streets of Washington on January 20 blocking all traffic from the White House to the Capitol Hill throughout the day. A big effigy of Bush was set on fire in front of White House. At Capitol Hill, which houses the two chambers of the Congress, they demanded withdrawal of support to Bush's policy of using force against Iraq. Agitation spread to Denver, Houston and other places. The agitators included people from all walks of life—workers, students, parents, black and white Americans and others. The largest rally was again held at San Francisco on January 19, when over one lakh people gathered for demonstration. Over 2,000 were arrested. They shouted slogans, "Read our lips Bush, get the troops back", "People united will not be defeated" and "Jobs, not War". Some carried photos of Bush with a Hitler like moustache.

Britain

Anti-war rallies swept over London, Manchester, Glasgow, Liverpool, Bristol and other places. In London thousands of protesters marched in a procession to Parliament Square and in front of 10, Downing Street, the Prime Minister's residence shouting anti-war slogans.

Germany

Within hours of the beginning of the allied forces' attack on Iraq streams of people took to the streets of the towns and cities throughout Germany. Thousands of people demonstrated at Bonn. In Berlin the police fired water canons to disperse around 30,000 demonstrators.

France

Over 30,000 protesters demonstrated at Paris and set fire to some places and smashed windows of buildings. The riot police arrested a large number of

demonstrators.

Italy

Demonstrations took place at Rome and several other places. At Milan the agitators threw Molotov Cocktails as expression of their anger against the war.

Spain

Thousands of people demonstrated in Spain. Among the numerous demonstrations held in the country against the US led allied forces' war against Iraq, the biggest one was at Barcelona, where over 30,000 people gathered.

Algeria

Tens of thousands of people rallied in numerous towns in support of Iraq. The crowds attacked the French Consulate, the French Cultural Institute and Air France at Constantine.

Turkey

Members of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) urged upon the Govt not to involve in war. Other groups protested against the Government for allowing Ankara to be utilised for opening the second front of the allied attack against Iraq.

Iran

Thousands of students marched past the streets of Tehran shouting anti-US slogans, protesting against presence of US troops in the Persian Gulf and pledging support to the people of Iraq. A massive car rally was taken out at Tehran against the USA.

Iraq

Massive pro-Saddam and anti-USA demonstrations swept through Iraq denouncing the USA all the preceding months and days before the war expressing their support to Saddam Hussain and the Palestinian cause.

Beirut

Demonstrators in Beirut, Sidon and other places expressed their support for Iraq. More than 30,000 demonstrators staged protest march shouting pro-Iraq slogans. The pro-Iranian Shite Muslim Hezbollah Party organised similar march in Beirut.

Pakistan

Spate of rallies in Islamabad, Peshawar and other places stunned the Pakistan Government. Observers described the public outcry as the beginning of Pro-Saddam sympathy wave. The demonstrators condemned the US attack on Iraq and criticised the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad Government of Pakistan for sending troops to Saudi Arabia.

Bangladesh

Similar rallies swept across Bangladesh defying the ban imposed on rallies. Pro-Iraqi demonstrators

brandishing portraits of Saddam Hussein attacked the embassies of the USA, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. They burnt effigies of George Bush and attacked one American Club and a Saudi Arabian School.

Protest Action in India

Demonstrations and rallies were taken out at West Bengal and Kerala immediately at the news of the US attack on Iraq. Almost in all the places in these states, rallies were organised subsequently on 18th and 19th onwards by the left front and the LDF. At Delhi the CITU and CPI (M) organised a rally before the US embassy. On 18th the police teargassed the demonstrators. Another rally was jointly organised by the left parties and their mass organisations alongwith AIPSO. The LDF in Kerala organised a massive rally at Trivandrum on January 18. In West Bengal the SFI and other students' organisations observed total strike on January 18. The Left Front of West Bengal organised another massive rally at Saheed Minar, Calcutta on January 21 which was attended by lakhs of workers and people. Reports of demonstrations have come from Punjab, Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu also organised by the CITU and CPI (M) and other left forces.

The Secretariat of the CITU issued communiques forthwith to launch anti-war actions in all states by all unions.

The four left parties, viz CPI (M), CPI, R.S.P. and Forward Block issued a joint Statement on January 22 strongly condemning the US imperialism for unleashing the Gulf War and colling for protest actions all over the country on January 29, against the US imperialists.

Delhi has decided to organise a massive rally on February 5 again, mobilising 15-20 thousand workers. The decision was announced in a workers' meeting on January 25, addressed by Com. H. K. S. Surjeet.

Seventh Conference of CITU

Venue : Netaji Indoor Stadium, Calcutta

Dates : February 12 to 17, 1991

Detaild Programme :

February 13, 3 P.M. : Working women's Conference.

February 13, 9.30 A.M. to 1 P.M. : Working women's Conference (Continued)

February 13, 9.30 A.M. to 11 A.M. : Working Committee Meeting.

February 13, 11.30 P.M. to 1 P.M. : General Council Meeting.

February 13, 2 P.M. : Inaugural Session, Delegates Session.

February 14 to 17, 1 P.M. Delegates Session.

February 17, 3 P.M. Open Rally.

CITU Calls for Protest Actions against US Threat for War in the Gulf

Gulf Crisis

The Secretariat of the CITU in its meeting held on 12th and 13th January, 1991 under the presidency of Com. Samar Mukherjee expressed serious concern over the danger of war created by the USA on the Gulf issue. With just one day left for the UN deadline, the Bush administration has prepared to strike against Iraq looking into the interests of the multi national oil tycoons, quite oblivious of the fact that it may lead to a devastating war engulfing the whole world. Acting as the gendarme of the world in pursuit of their aim for global domination, the action of the US imperialists in amassing troops at the Gulf region made it impossible for a non-military resolution of the Gulf crisis as suggested by many Arab countries, which include the question of Palestinian home land alongwith the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait.

The Secretariat called upon all the State Committees and unions to launch protest actions against the U. S. drive for war demanding immediate withdrawal of U. S. and allied forces from the Gulf to facilitate resolution of the crisis by the Arab countries themselves.

Price Rise

The Secretariat extended full support to the decision of the National Campaign Committee to observe 13th March as the anti price rise day all over India and make court arrest at Delhi. The meeting called upon all the State Committees and unions to organise protest demonstrations, rallies, etc from 28th February itself when the budget will be placed culminating on 13th March coinciding with the NCC call.

Save Public Sector and Self Reliance Day

The Secretariat welcomed the decision of the Bangalore Convention of Public Sector Workers to observe 15th March as the Save Public Sector and Self-Reliance Day and called upon all its unions in public sector to organise demonstrations, demanding a leading role to the public sector and a halt to the path of privatisation being embarked upon by the Government so as to strengthen a self-reliant national economy.

Right to Work

The Secretariat called for stepping up the struggle against unemployment and for right to work to be incorporated as a fundamental right in the Constitution. It called upon all the State Committees to organise Statewise conventions on 28th March alongwith SFI, DYFI, and other mass organisations. The struggle should be built up to

prepare for a higher stage of struggle on an all India level.

The meeting was attended by Coms. Samar Mukherjee, Kanai Banerjee, Chandi Prasad, S. Suryanarayana Rao, K.N. Ravindranath, Shyamal Chakrabarty, Chittabrata Majumdar, Vimal Ranadive, Kamal Sarkar, Ranjit Basu, R. Umanath, E. Balanandan, M.K. Pandhe, Jibon Roy and P.K. Ganguly.

CITU Denounces US Attack on Bagdad : Calls For Anti-War Demonstrations

The following communique was issued by the Secretariat on January 17 :

The Secretariat of the Centre of India Trade Unions outrightly denounces the US administration for bombing Bagdad and launching war in the Gulf region. With the memory of its attack on Panama still fresh in the mind of the world democratic forces and its shameless support to Israel's continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strips and denial of the homeland for the Palestinians and ruthless repression on them, all the crocodile tears of the US imperialists for so-called peace and sovereignty of Kuwait have only exposed its war mongering character and pursuit for world domination. It was the interest for oil of the Gulf region and not the sovereignty of Kuwait that drove the USA to launch the war which will have a devastating worldwide effect.

The CITU Secretariat calls upon all the State Committees and the affiliated unions and appeals to all other trade unions to launch massive demonstration against the USA demanding immediate halt to the war and withdrawal of the allied forces from the Gulf.

The Secretariat further criticises the Prime Minister for making a most irresponsible statement that the withdrawal of the Iraqi troops from Kuwait cannot be clubbed with the Palestinian issue and calls upon the Govt. of India as a member of the Security Council, and the Non-Aligned Movement to make full efforts for the convening of a meeting of the Security Council to call an immediate halt to the war and discuss the entire Gulf problem including the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories and the homeland for the Palestinians.

Why Few Mourn the Al Sabah Family's Loss: Wealth & Poverty in the Arab World

(We are reproducing here under an article written by Norm Dixon, published in "Direct Action", Australia on September 4, 1990. Although the article was published about five months ago, yet it is relevant in the present context of the Gulf War and throws interesting light on the Arab countries, which is now the focal point of sharp attention—Ed.).

The massive US invasion of Saudi Arabia and the evident itchiness in President George Bush's trigger finger highlight just how important the regimes of the Arab-Persian Gulf region are to US and Western European capitalism. This network of pliant regimes guarantees control of the region's oil reserves.

The invasion of Kuwait by Iraq and the removal of the feudal al Sabah dynasty, regardless of the motives of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, have served to rekindle in millions of impoverished Arabs resentment against imperialist domination of their most valuable resource and against the wealthy vassals who masquerade as "leaders" in the Gulf sheikhdoms.

Over half of the world's hydrocarbon resources are dominated by Saudi Arabia and the collection of tiny former British protectorates on the western shore of the gulf—Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman and Qatar. These 'countries' are under-populated quirks of history, where tin-pot aristocrats in partnership with imperialism monopolise the fabulous wealth generated by these reserves.

And while the ruling families of the gulf states wallow in excess petro dollars, most Arab countries are sinking deeper into debt and poverty.

Building Hotels, not States

Tariq Masarwa, a Jordanian political commentator, expressed a common Arab view when he told the British Guardian, "We see five million Egyptians scattered around the Arab world and Europe, like slaves of old, children dying in the Sudan...a bankrupt Jordan, a bankrupt Syria, a bankrupt Lebanon, while these ruling Gulf families put their money into Europe. They are building hotels, not states."

Kamel Abu Jaber, a Jordanian political scientist, pointed out that "This crisis has awakened feelings that had been dead on the official, intellectual and popular levels for half a generation. Saddam's entry into Kuwait is seen as a step toward Arab unity and the US troops as a tremendous reminder that Western colonialism has not left the region."

Ibrahim Bakr, a Palestinian lawyer, told the same newspaper that, while it was a "sorrowful thing" to have to back the despotic Iraqi leader, ending the farcial existence of the gulf kingdoms and putting their resources at the disposal of the Arab masses has to be supported.

Declining GDP

Despite the massive wealth of the gulf states and their elites, in the Middle East as a whole, gross domestic product per capita ceased growing in 1977 and declined thereafter. By 1985, per capita GDP had declined by 10 per cent and was back to its level of 1971.

By World Bank definitions, in 1985 one in five of the population of the Middle East was extremely poor (having an income below US\$ 275 a year) and one in three poor (below US\$ 370). The bank expects the number living in poverty to rise from 60 million in 1985 to around 85 million by the end of this decade.

The differences in living standards between the poorest and richest Arab countries is stark. In 1988, South Yemen (since merged with North Yemen) was the poorest, with a per capita gross national product of only US\$ 430; it was followed by Mauritania, with \$ 480; Sudan, \$ 480; North Yemen, \$640; and Egypt (with over 50 million people, the most populous Arab country), \$660.

The Gulf states, by contrast, have per capita GNPs of US\$ 5000 for Oman, \$6200 for Saudi Arabia, \$6340 for Bahrain, \$9930 for Qatar, \$13,400 for Kuwait and \$ 15,770 for the United Arab Emirates. The only non-gulf state in this league is Libya, with a per capita GNP of \$5420.

No figures are available for Iraq, but the World Bank estimates it to be similar to Oman and Libya. By way of comparison Greece has a per capita GNP of \$4800, Australia \$12,340, Italy \$13,330 and Austria \$15,470.

Massive Debt

Most non-gulf Arab countries are also weighed down with foreign debt. Egypt leads the Arab world's foreign debt tally at \$50 billion (representing 142.5 percent of its GNP), followed by Algeria with \$24.9 billion (47.6 per cent), Morocco, \$19.9 billion (105.9 per cent) and the Sudan, \$11.9 billion (134.3 per cent). Jordan's debt jumped from \$5.5 billion at the end of 1988 (111 per cent of its GNP) to \$8.1 billion at the end of 1989.

Iraq accumulated a debt of up to \$70 billion during the Iran Iraq war. Much of this is owed to the gulf states, and getting rid of it was one of the motives for invading Kuwait on August 2.

The World Bank classifies Sudan, Morocco and Mauritania as "severely indebted." Egypt would also fall into this category if recent data were taken into account, as will Algeria and Yemen if their debt increases by less than 10 per cent.

Until recently, poorer Arab countries were able to rely on some aid from the wealthier Arab states. However, bilateral and multilateral aid to the five main recipients—Syria, Jordan, Sudan, Morocco and North Yemen—fell dramatically in the 1980s. It totalled \$475 million in 1988 compared with \$.1.8 billion three years earlier. The worst hit by this decline were Syria and Jordan.

These disparities are reflected in social indicators. In 1985, life expectancy in North Yemen was 47 years, in South Yemen 50 years, in the Sudan 51 years. Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Syria, Algeria, Oman, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Jordan ranged between 61 and 66 years. In Bahrain it was 68 years, Qatar 70 years, UAE 71 years and Kuwait 73 years.

The population per physician ranges from 15,580 in Morocco to 640 in Kuwait. Most other Arab countries range between 2340 (Algeria) and 1140 (Jordan), although Egypt has one physician for every 770 people.

In Kuwait, 99 percent of births are attended by health workers, while in South Yemen it is only 10 percent. Infant mortality ranges from 15 per thousand lives births in Kuwait to 128 in North Yemen, with Egypt at 83.

Migrant Workers

Industrial and infrastructure development of the gulf sheikhdoms greatly depends on migrant workers forced to leave their homes by unemployment and poverty. The gulf oil states were expected to employ 4.5 million non-nationals in their economies in 1990, against only 2 million nationals.

In the UAE and Qatar, migrant workers make up almost all the industrial work force, 97 percent and 69 percent respectively. In Kuwait, the figure is 87 percent.

Many of these expatriate workers come from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the Philippines, but large numbers are Egyptians, Jordanians, Yemenis, Lebanese, Palestinians and Syrians.

The export of labour to the Gulf states has become a crucial source of foreign exchange for the non-oil Arab countries. Private transfers to Egypt in 1988, mainly workers remittances, totalled 3.8 billion, compared with a total income from merchan-

dise exports of 2.6 billion. In Jordan in 1988, worker's remittances were worth 88 percent of the value of merchandies exports.

In the recent period, the gulf states have begun cutting back the number of migrant workers, aggravating further the economic crisis in the region.

In order to prevent internal political instability that might threaten their hold on power, the ruling elites (with the endorsement of the oil companies and the US government) have diverted some of their oil wealth to create an impressive welfare state for their citizens, including free health and hospital care and education up to university level.

However, the benefits do not extend to the migrant workers, who form a massive, underpaid class of helots. If these workers were included, the gulf states social welfare statistics would be less impressive. In Kuwait, this deprived proletariat is almost two-thirds of residents, and in Saudi Arabia it exceeds 25 percent.

Investment

What galls the poorer Arabs most about the massive funds at the emirs is their conspicuous and wasteful consumption, and their refusal to invest for the good of the people of the whole region.

Kuwait's al Sabah dynasty has an investment portfolio estimated at 100 billion. Investment income matches or exceeds income from oil. Kuwait has invested relatively little of these billions in developing a non-oil productive sector in Kuwait itself, let alone the rest of the Arab world.

Instead, Kuwait has holdings in 500 US companies and investments in scores of other countries, including a 10.2 percent stake in Britain's Midland, a 9.8 percent share in British Petroleum, 14 percent of Daimler-Benz, 20 percent of the chemical giant Hoechst and 20 percent of Metallgesellschaft. The Kuwait Petroleum Corporation owns three European refineries and a chain of petrol stations across Europe. The Kuwaiti elite control billions of dollars worth of real estate and hotel development in Britain and the US.

The al Sabah clan announced on August 22 that it was about to launch a spending spree in West Germany. Finance Minister Sheikh Ali al Khalifa al Sabah, noting that about 40 percent of Kuwaiti assets were in Europe, said that Kuwait would increase its holding in West German companies.

Sheikh Ali also revealed that only 25 percent of Kuwait's massive gold reserves were in Kuwait at the time of the Iraqi invasion. Most of it was stowed away in Europe, Kuwait possesses 3 million ounces of gold worth about 1.2 billion. A similar pattern occurs in the other gulf states. Bahrain, a tiny island with only 420,000 citizens, has an investment portfolio of 23-30 billion in Europe and the US.

(Cont'd on page 10)

Trade Unions Oppose Retirement of Air Hostesses at 45 yrs.

All the eight National Trade Union Centres viz INTUC, CITU, AITUC, BMS, HMS, UTUC, UTUC (Lenin Sarani) and TUCC, have sent a joint memorandum to the Prime Minister, in support of the Air Hostesses of Air India. They have denounced the action taken by the Air India management in spite of the Govt directive issued on 16th Oct. 1989, removing the discrimination between male and female cabin crew.

They have also brought to the notice of the P.M. the fact that Air India does not abide by its own commitments made even in foreign courts as they have done in the case of their Japanese hostess Ms Mochizuki, nor do they respect an international forum like the I. L. O., where in last year's conference, the attitude of the Air India management was condemned.

The trade union movement will not stand by as silent spectators whilst Air India continues its discriminatory policies, and will continue to support the struggle of the Air Hostesses till they achieve parity with the male cabin crew and are permitted to continue with their flying duties till the age of 58 years as directed by the Govt. of India.

Memorandum to the Prime Minister

January 9, 1991

Shri Chandra Shekhar
Prime Minister
Govt. of India
New Delhi

Dear Shri Chandra Shekhar,

We are surprised to note that the management of Air India is continuing their highly discriminatory attitude towards the Air Hostesses despite a directive from the Govt of India that discrimination between the male and female cabin crew will be removed.

The Govt of India by its order No. AV. 18022/23/88-ACIA dated 16th October, 1989 clearly stated "that like the male cabin crew, air hostesses in Air India and Indian Airlines should also be allowed to serve till the age of 58 years". However, the Air India management has not complied with the directive so far

But in the name of issuing a clarification, the ministry of Civil Aviation has completely reversed the directive of the Govt of India which has ultimately restored the discriminatory treatment given to the Air Hostesses.

In a D.O. letter to the previous CMD of even number dated 29th December, 1989 the Ministry has stated, "The matter has been reviewed and it is clarified that the increase in age of retirement to 58 years does not specify the job functions after the age of 35. Air Hostesses may be given suitable alternate jobs till they attain 58 years of age."

The Govt of India's directive has not provided for alternate jobs and emphasised introduction of uniform conditions like the male cabin crew. We consider this redeployment as an unfair labour practice by the Air India management and strongly express our resentment towards this.

We feel that it is ridiculous for Air India management to continue this discrimination against Air Hostesses.

We are constrained to note that the Air India management has grounded Ms Michiko Mochizuki, Tokyo based Air Hostess, after allowing her to fly above the age of 45 despite a commitment given in the Tokyo court that she would be allowed to fly beyond the age of 45 as per the Govt directive. The inconsistent stand taken by the Air India management has brought down the image of our country in the foreign court. We would request you to note that the worker delegate from India in last year's I.L.O. conference had to condemn the Air India management for the discriminatory treatment to women employees. However, we are extremely sorry to note that the Air India management did not take serious note of their denunciation in such an international forum.

We, therefore, earnestly urge upon you to examine the whole question and to implement the Govt directive and get withdrawn the circulars No. IR/23/632 dated March 23, 1990 and No. HQ/65-6/5319 dated November 2, 1990 offering Air Hostesses junior most clerical jobs after the age of 45. It is necessary to withdraw this humiliation of the Air Hostesses as proposed by the Air India management.

We wish you to note that the Trade Union movement in India will not stand by like a silent spectator when this gross discrimination against women employees is being blatantly carried forward by a premier public sector undertaking in our country.

Convention of Public Sector Unions

Declaration Adopted by the Convention

[Report of the Convention was published in the January issue. We are now publishing hereunder the Declaration adopted in the convention—Ed.]

The Second All India Convention of Public Sector Unions held at Bangalore on 20th and 21st December, 1990 expresses its grave concern at large scale drive towards privatisation of the public sector undertakings launched by Govt. of India at the behest of vested interests in India and abroad. As a result of their machinations the very existence of public sector is at stake to-day.

2. Despite the total investments in 232 central public sector undertakings crossing Rs. 85,000 crores with 22 lakh workers employed in it, the Govt. of India is refusing to provide adequate fund for the advancement of public sector undertakings. The Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 is blatantly being violated by allowing penetration of multinational companies and Indian big business houses into the core sector of economy such as steel and metals, Coal and other mining, energy and heavy engineering, production, refining and distribution of oil, pharmaceutical. The conditionalities imposed by the World Bank and the IMF have been pressuring the Government of India to resort to more and more privatisation.

3. As a result of callous bungling by the Government of India and the top heavy managements of public sector undertakings the performance of public sector is extremely poor. High unutilised capacities and consequent low profitability, large inventories, wasteful expenditure, lack of involvement of workers in improving production and performance, funnelling out large funds of public undertakings through off loading of jobs to private parties and contractors, rampant corruption and gross mismanagement have resulted in big drain of public sector funds. Huge resources of public sector have been secretly diverted to swell the funds of ruling party. The appointments of Chairmen of public sector generally have become political appointments, whose performance is not judged by the performance of undertaking but by their capacity to secretly donate funds to the ruling party.

4. When the public sector is thus bled white, the private sector is given free reign to evade taxes to garner black money. Moreover, the private sector is in a position to bribe the Government officials to snatch illegal concessions for them. The private sector is generally favoured by multinationals corporations which further gives them edge over the public sector undertakings. All these are being wrongly considered as a sign of efficiency of private sector undertakings.

5. An extremely powerful campaign is being launched in the country in favour of privatisation. In several strategic areas private sector is being permitted to indulge in unfair competition with the public sector. By denying sufficient funds to revive the sick units, the Government of India makes them further sick and then talks about handing the public sector to private capitalists. The entire trade union and democratic movement of India must fight against the serious drift towards privatisation which alone will save the public sector and create conditions for it to play a vital role in building a self-reliant economy in the country.

6. The Government of India's refusal to give orders to BHEL and attempt to sell Talaja unit of BEL to multinationals, attempted sell out of Scooter India, Hotel Corporation of India and other undertakings to private sectors; permission to start private airlines to compete with Indian Airlines, threat of closure to large number of sick units particularly in West Bengal, refusal of the Government of India to stop budgetary support to Vayudut, NAAT and other undertakings, permission to private sector to have a steel plant of one million ton capacity, privatisation of power generation and electronic industry, import liberalisation are just some examples of Government of India's measures to privatise the public sector undertakings. If this drift is allowed it would only open the floodgates of privatisation as step towards gradual liquidation of the public sector undertakings. The drive towards privatisation is in fact making the country more dependent on multinational companies and create serious difficulties in India's march towards self-reliance. As a result of induction of new technology and modernisation of public sector undertakings a large scale drive for reduction of manpower is being launched in all the public sector undertakings. The refusal of the Government to withdraw the ban on recruitment in public sector undertakings has further aggravated the employment situation.

7. The workers of public sector are always blamed for the bad performance of the units and wage rise they have achieved. The public sector employees under the banner of CPSTU organised series of struggles against the BPE guidelines and ultimately succeeded in defeating them squarely. The concessions they have snatched from the unwilling hands of the managements have led to protection of their standard of life. Yet the wage cost as percentage of the total cost of production in public sector has been declining.

8. The working class is committed to protection and strengthening of the public sector undertakings. They are prepared to take positive measures in improving the performance of the public sector and

generate more resources for further economic development of the country. However the management has been resisting any genuine participation of workers in public sector undertakings. Their issue such as full neutralisation in rise in cost of living is still pending despite formation of tripartite. D.A. Committee as early in November 1988 while the assurance given to the central trade unions have not been implemented. This has caused strong resentment among the workers. The issue of pension as a third retirement benefit have made some progress in steel and coal industry but others are still in the preliminary stage of discussion. The removal of ceilings in the Bonus Act is still to be achieved, which is depriving several thousand of workers their right of bonus.

9. With the forthcoming negotiations likely to commence soon the trade unions will have to submit charter of demands. However, the Government of India has already fired the first salvo by referring the wage question for Indian Airlines and Air India to be decided by the National Tribunal. If this offensive is allowed to succeed it is likely to be repeated in other public sector undertakings. The trade union movement of public sector unions will have to resist this offensive with all its might.

10. The pernicious system of contract labour is growing at a faster rate in most of the undertakings. Even in the permanent and perennial nature of job large numbers of contract workers are working and being mercilessly exploited. The women workers are not given proper opportunity in the public sector who accounts for only 6 percent of the regular employees in public sector and they are being discriminated against mercilessly. The trade union movement of public sector undertakings should pay special attention to these problems earnestly so that these neglected sections would be given deserved justice.

The emergence of the officers organisation and their closer co-operation with the movement of public sector unions and the CPSTU is a welcome development. It is of paramount importance to strengthen this unity in coming struggle so that the threat to the public sector undertakings is counteracted effectively. It therefore calls for a countrywide movement on the following issues.

1. Stop all drive towards privatisation of public sector undertakings.

2. Put an end to inroads by all multinational companies and Indian big business houses in the sphere of activities of public sector undertakings.

3. Immediate steps to improve the working of the public sector undertaking through genuine scheme of workers participation in management through secret ballot.

4. Generation of more and more jobs on public sector through necessary economic measure to provide jobs to all unemployed.

5. Deletion of all anti-working class clauses in the standing order which hits at the trade union and democratic rights of the workers.

6. Immediate settlement of DA question for the public sector workers and officers ensuring full neutralisation in rise in cost of living.

7. Pension for all the public sector workers as a third retirement benefit based on management's and workers contribution.

8. Removal of ceiling on bonus for all the workers.

9. Abolition of contract labour system in permanent and perennial nature of jobs and the regularisation in regular establishments.

10. Put an end to all forms of discriminations against working women in public sector undertakings relating to LTC, housing allotment, medical facilities, age of retirement, employment Opportunities and training.

11. Immediate measures to revive all the sick public sector units through necessary financial assistance by the central government.

12. Take over of sick units by the central government and run them as public sector units.

13. Stringent action against corrupt top managements, stop pilferage of public sector funds.

14. Enhance income tax exemption limit substantially.

15. The convention further decides to take up the following programme to strengthen the cause of public sector employees.

1. To organise regional conventions in all leading centres against privatisation culminating in All India Convention against privatisation;

2. To organise a special convention on sick public sector undertakings and chalkout programme of action for revival of these public sector undertakings;

3. To organise a National Workshop on 'T.U. organisation in Public Sector' to strengthen the organisation of workers in public sector undertakings.

4. To organise regional level T.U. Schools of cadres in public sector to impart training on the T.U. movement in present period;

5. Special attention to be paid by all the unions in public sector to development of organisation of the unorganised in and around public sector townships.

6. Ensure increasing participation of public sector employees in the struggle for secularism and national unity and against communal and divisive forces.

The Convention calls upon all the workers in public sector undertakings to observe 15th march 1991 "Defend the Public Sector and self reliance Day" all over India by holding rallies and demonstrations.

The Convention appeals to all the 22 lakh workers and officers in public sector to build a powerful unity so that countrywide struggle can be launched to save the public sector. It is only in this way that public sector can play an important role on building a self-reliant economy in the country.

Significant Victory For Seven Lakh Coal Miners

M. K. Pandhe Secretary, Centre of Indian Trade Unions and President, All India Coal Workers Federation has issued the following statement to the press on January 2 :

The representatives of the CITU, AITUC, HMS and BMS have decided to call off the All India strike of seven lakh coal workers scheduled for 7th January 1991 in view of the settlement reached in Delhi on 28th December 1990.

The four Federations in Coal Industry decided to give the call of strike in view of the retrograde settlement signed by the CIL management with the INTUC unions granting less bonus to the coal workers. As per terms of settlement every coal miner will be paid Rs. 250 more than the INTUC settlement.

The question of enhancement of Provident Fund contribution from 8 to 10 percent was pending since long and this was one of the major demands of the coal workers. The management as per settlement has agreed to increase the contribution to 10 percent from 1st March 1991.

The demand for implementation of the Retirement Benefit/Pension was also under discussion for a long time but no concrete steps were taken so far. The deduction of 2 percent of workers contributions had commenced from 1st April 1989 but no accounts were prepared and the workers and managements contribution was not transferred to a trust so far. It is estimated that the total amount of workers and managements contribution and interest thereon would work out to over Rs. 140/-crores. The management wanted to wait till the announcement of the Govt. of India Pension Scheme but trade unions refused to accept the proposal. As per settlement the management agreed to constitute a trust by 15th February 1991 and details of accounts would be prepared by end of March 1991. The management will inform the date when the entire money including management's contributions with interest would be handed over to the trust.

Regarding the other demands it was decided to resolve the issues through bipartite discussions.

The understanding was signed by the INTUC leaders which clearly showed that the previous agreement signed between the management and the INTUC was thrown into dustbin. The CITU and All India Coal Workers Federation hope that in future the CIL management would not indulge in signing such settlement with INTUC bypassing well established bipartite machinery prevalent in the coal industry since long.

The CITU and All India Coal Workers Federation congratulate the coal miners for this victory. Without massive support given by the coal miners all over India to the strike call by the four Federations this achievement would not have been possible.

The present shortage of coal in the country is a matter of concern to the coal workers. If the coal India management take positive measures to boost production in consultation with trade unions the coal workers would give every co-operation to fulfil the target of coal production.

The CITU and the AICWF appeals to the coal miners to strengthen the unity achieved so that all the problems of coal miners as well as of the question of improvement in the performance of the coal industry are sorted out amicably.

Government Overhangs DA Issue for Public Sector Workers

Ostensibly having concerned with the press reports about strike move by the National Trade Union Centres, the Janata(S) Govt woke up overnight to intervene into the DA impasse and the Finance Ministry had convened a meeting of the Central trade unions on 17th of January.

Earlier a joint meeting of the trade unions had been convened in the INTUC office on 6th January. The meeting had been convened to finalise the date for strike and this was the first occasion when the INTUC also showed the interest to join the strike. However, the logic of giving some time and also acquaintance about the issue by the Govt which had just come to power, found sufficient ground in the meeting and accordingly the meeting decided to wait till the trade unions' meeting with the Finance Minister was held on 17th January, 1990.

But during the meeting on 17th January, the Finance Minister informed the trade union leaders that the matter had to be discussed with the Prime Minister at 8.30PM the same night.

But the trade union representatives had to return without seeing the Prime Minister, as he was held up in another meeting just preceding to the meeting with the trade union representatives. Though the Finance Minister expressed his regret for the default and assured to fix another date with the Prime Minister, no communication has reached the trade unions till 26th January.

48 Hours Joint Strike in Delhi and Ghaziabad

In the year 1988, CITU called for a 7 days industrial strike while other central trade unions opposed it jointly by forming an anti-CITU front in Delhi. In spite of the tremendous and historic success in 7 days strike, it was felt seriously to break the anti-CITU front and organise a joint struggle for minimum wages this time. The Delhi State Committee of CITU, decided to form a joint front of six central trade unions viz CITU, AITUC, BMS, HMS, INTUC and UTUC. Though the task to form a united front was very difficult yet consistent efforts to do the needful were successful.

At first a joint meeting of the above trade unions was held on 16th July, 1990. But the other trade unions repeatedly insisted to invite UTUC (LS), IFTU and IPF to which the CITU did not agree. As the CITU added more to its reputation and made prestigious position in the last 7 days industrial strike, it could manage to form a joint front of above six trade unions without UTUC (LS), IFTU and IPF. The unions finalised joint charter of demands. The representatives of the respective front unions met the Lt. Governor on 3.9.90. There after, a joint Convention was held on 9.10.90. During the wide spread communalism in the country owing to the Ram Janam Bhoomi/Babri Masjid issue it was thought fit to raise the slogan of unity among the workers of Delhi and Ghaziabad. So the CITU put forth the resolution for 7 days strike before the constituent trade unions during the last week of October, 1990. But owing to the negative attitude of BMS and vacillating attitude of other constituent trade unions, the struggle was slightly delayed. But the CITU State Committee was firm about the movement. It therefore, decided to start the campaign among the workers leaving the doors open for other trade unions to join if they deem it fit. The CITU held dharnas on factory gates all over Delhi and Ghaziabad on 6-12-90. It also held demonstrations at different labour offices in Delhi and Ghaziabad on 14.12.90. In this way the CITU could succeed in creating atmosphere in favour of the struggle. In the circumstances, the other trade unions had no option but to accept the CITU's appeal to form a joint front for the struggle for minimum wages and other demands of the workers. So it was jointly decided to observe 48 hours strike on 22nd and 23rd January, 1991. The INTUC and HMS separated themselves from the proposed strike. A demonstration was held before the office of the Lt. Governor of Delhi on 2.1.91 and at the rally the decision of the front to go on strike on 22nd and 23rd January, 1991 was announced, if the demands of the agitating workers were not met before the proposed strike.

The joint action of workers was widely supported by unions of different section of workers and employees who played an important role in its success. The

strike was supported by the unorganised workers in the Capital and was a great success. There was great enthusiasm among the mass of workers in all the industrial centres of Delhi and Ghaziabad.

In Industrial areas like Wazirpur, G. T. Karna Road, Naraina, Kirtinagar, G. T. Road, Site 4, Sahibabad and Noida, the strike was cent-percent successful. In Rajasthan Udyog Nagar, Burari, Nangloi, No. 4, Shahdra, Jhilmil, Okhla Phase I & II, Rama Road, Lawrence Road, Mayapur, Parpar Ganj, Meerut Road, Buland Shahr Road, Ghaziabad, the strike was near 75% to 80%. It is significant that Birla Textile workers also observed 24 hours complete strike against the repressive policies of the management and in solidarity of the striking workers of Delhi and Ghaziabad. In other mills and institutions including the offices of MCD, dharnas and demonstrations were organised in support of the striking workers.

Hotels and restaurants in Fatepuri, Cannaught Place and Pandara Road were closed owing to the strike. In the walled city areas, the entire book binding work came to stand still. In these areas thousands of workers holding the flags and banners of their respective unions marched in processions and held public meetings which was addressed by the leaders.

The joint action committee of trade unions, after the successful 48 hours strike, through its press release has warned the Delhi Administration to concede the legitimate and genuine demands of the workers expeditiously or else the workers would be constrained to resort to bigger and militant struggle.

(from page 5)

The UAE awash with petrodollars, has built more airports, deep water ports, hotels, super-markets and apartment buildings than the population can use, resulting in many elaborate projects lying idle.

That millions of impoverished Arabs will not mourn the passing of these regimes be explained simply by recounting an event that took place in 1981.

Sheikh Zayid, ruler of the emirate of Abu Dhabi (a component of the UAE) threw a 40 million party to celebrate the marriage of his eldest son. The bride's dowry included an entire town with three apartment buildings, a luxury hotel and 55 shops. The festivities included 2 million fireworks, Arab and African dance troupes, a caravan of camels laden with trunks of diamonds, emeralds and rubies, and enough food to feed 20,000 guests for seven nights running.

Trade Unions Caution Finance Minister against Price Rise

In the Pre-Budget meeting called by the Finance Minister on January 22, the trade unions cautioned him against any price rise or further impost on the workers and the common people.

The meeting was attended by P. K. Ganguly (CITU), Homi Daji, (AITUC), P. N. Sharma (INTUC), Thampan Thomas (HMS), Prabhakar Ghate (BMS), D. D. Shastri (TUCC), Gyan Singh (UTUC-LS), Naren Sen (NFITU) and M. N. Barot (NLO).

Initiating the discussions, the Finance Minister referred to the Gulf War and said that the war had put a telling burden on the economy, trades have been affected and rate of inflation has gone up. Under such circumstances, he said every body has to "discipline" himself and prepared to face the situation. He sought cooperation from the trade unions.

M. N. Barot of NLO pointed to the price rise and industrial sickness and called for putting a curb on them. Homi Daji of AITUC pointed to deficit budget, black money, import liberalisation, etc in addition and called upon the Government to put a check on them. Thampan Thomas of HMS wanted right to work to be incorporated as a fundamental right in the Constitution. D. D. Shastri of TUCC criticised the anti-people economic policy of the Government. He stressed on employment generation and strengthening of the public distribution system. P.N. Sharma of INTUC wanted raising of income tax ceiling to Rs. 50,000/-. Gyan Singh of UTUC (LS) and Naren Sen of NFITU also pin pointed on price rise, industrial sickness and unemployment. M.N. Barot of NLO pointed to the growing closures of the textile mills and urged for a new textile policy to revamp the textile industry. He also urged for fixation of minimum wage for the unorganised workers not below the poverty line.

P. K. Ganguly, Secretary CITU drew the attention of the Finance Minister on the recent IMF loan that the Government is going for, on which the Finance Minister had maintained silence in his introductory speech. He recalled that when the Indira Gandhi Government had taken the IMF loan, Shri Chandrasekhar had severely criticised her. Now his Government has gone for IMF loan and extending the same argument as Indira Gandhi did that it was only to tide over the critical balance of payment position. He pointed out that foreign debt was already around Rs. 1,25,000 crores and debt servicing ratio over 30 percent. The trade balance was precarious. The foreign exchange reserve was only around Rs. 2,500 crores, which can meet the import Bill for

only about two weeks. In this condition the IMF loan conditionalities will force India to further liberalisation and go nearer to the debt trap.

On the Gulf war he pointed out that both the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister himself were repeatedly hammering that there was sufficient stock of all essential items. So there was no reason for any price rise. Even before the Gulf war the Finance Minister had assured in December that any untoward effect would be met by expansion of the public distribution system to cover the essential items. But so far nothing has been done. In November itself the inflation rate was 11.4 percent. He warned against any further impost on the common people in the forthcoming budget and informed him that the trade unions have already decided to launch action programmes against price rise. He further assailed the industrial policy which had further opened the door to the multinationals and posed a danger to the small scale industries. He reminded the Finance Minister that Shri Chandrasekhar himself had severely criticised the industrial policy and asked whether that is going to be changed now.

He urged that the forthcoming budget should reflect a reversal of the economic policy to free the economy from the dictates of the World Bank and IMF. Among the measures to be taken he suggested for reversal of the present liberalisation and privatisation drive and strengthen the public sector and indigenous technology to build a self-reliant economy; restrict capital goods import to essentials; radical restructure of the taxation policy by reducing indirect taxation and increasing direct taxation; raise additional resources from the monopoly houses; expansion of the public distribution system and supply of all essential items through it; and above all, genuine land reforms to better the conditions of the rural mass and employment generation. He also suggested allotment of funds for housing for the slum dwellers, and demanded formulation of a national wage policy in consultation with the trade unions.

The Finance Minister assured the trade unions that he had taken note of the caution and consider their suggestions.

Editorial Board

M.K. Pandhe (*Chairman*)

P.K. Ganguly (*Working Editor*)

Manoranjan Roy, Niren Ghosh,

M.M. Lawrence, Vimal Ranadive, Ranjit Basu

State CITU Conferences

W. Bengal

The Fifth West Bengal State CITU Conference was held at B.T. Ranadive Nagar, Belur from December 26 to 30, 1990. About 2,300 delegates and observers attended the conference. About 800 volunteers worked round the clock to make the conference successful. Preparations for the conference went on for several months before with various campaigns. A torchlight procession which started from Bauria Jute Mills on 24th December reached the place in time for the flag hoisting ceremony on 26th December and handed over the red flag to Com. Samar Mukherjee, General Secretary of the CITU.

The Conference was conducted by a presidium consisting of Niren Ghosh, Rabin Mukherjee, Biren Roy, Haridas Malakar and Subhas Chakrabarty. From the presidium condolence resolutions were placed on Com. B.T. Ranadive, Com. Saroj Mukherjee, Com. Md. Ismail and others. Com. Samar Mukherjee inaugurated the conference. He called upon the workers to unitedly fight against the divisive forces to safeguard the unity and integrity of the country. He further called for united trade union action against the economic policy of the Central Government and struggle to safeguard the left front Government of West Bengal. The Conference was greeted by fraternal delegates from Kisan Sabha, AIDWA and various other organisations and by Santi Ghatak, the Labour Minister of West Bengal.

Com. Manoranjan Roy, General Secretary placed the organisational report. The report pointed to the growth of the organisation, its membership from about 7 lakhs to about 12 lakhs since the last conference and the various struggles launched by the State CITU on all India programmes as well as on State level and consolidating the left front Government. Forty five delegates participated in the discussions. The conference adopted 21 resolutions on various subjects facing the working class and the country.

Com. Jyoti Basu, the Chief Minister and Vice President of the CITU addressed the Conference. He called upon the workers to expand their struggles beyond the economic demands and intervene in all political issues facing the people and the country. The conference was also greeted by Com. Sailen Das gupta, the State Secretary of the CPI (M). After reply by Com. Manoranjan Roy, the report was adopted.

An open rally was held on 30th December at Bali Jute Mill Ground, which was attended by thousands of workers from various parts of the State. The rally was presided over by Com. Hari-sadhan Mitra and addressed by Com. Jyoti Basu,

Com. Chittabrata Majumdar, Com. Md. Amin and Com. Dipak Das gupta. Earlier the conference elected Com. Manoranjan Roy as the President and Com. Chittabrata Majumdar as the General Secretary.

Tripura

The Seventh Tripura State Conference was held at Com. B. T. Ranadive Nagar, Agartala from January 17 to 19, 1991. Com. Baidynath Majumdar, the State President hoisted the red flag. The conference began with the open rally attended by over five thousands of workers from all parts of the State. The rally was addressed among others by Com. Samar Mukherjee and Com. Dasarath Deb.

The conference was inaugurated by Com. Nripen Chakrabarty. He called for further stepping up the united struggles against the Cong (I) TUJS regime.

The conference was attended by over 300 delegates and observers, including 15 women delegates. Com. Sudarshan Das placed the report on behalf of the State Committee. The report brought to the focus the serious situation in the State due to the semi-fascist attacks unleashed by the Cong(I)—TUJS regime. The report highlighted the life or death struggle waged by the cadres to hold high the banner of CITU and contributing to the growth of membership. 37 delegates participated in the discussions. The conference adopted a number of resolutions which included a call for struggle against war. It also adopted a 25-point charter of demands to be placed to the Congress(I)—TUJS Government.

As the Chief Guest, Com. Samar Mukherjee addressed the conference. He called upon the CITU unions to launch protest actions against the US led war on Iraq. He congratulated the workers for their gallant struggle against the semi-fascist gangsters and called for further consolidation of unity against the communal and divisive forces to safeguard the unity and integrity of the country.

The Conference elected a 61-member State Committee with Com. Baidyanath Majumdar as the President and Com. Sudarshan Das as the General Secretary.

Gujarat

The Seventh State Conference of Gujarat was held at Com. B. T. Ranadive Nagar, Baroda on January 5 and 6, 1991. The Conference was held under a tense communal situation. Despite this, 128 delegates attended the Conference.

The red flag was hoisted by Com. P.'K. Ganguly, Secretary CITU, who inaugurated the conference.

after placing of wreaths at the martyrs' memorial. In his inaugural address, Com. P. K. Ganguly called upon the workers to actively intervene in the communal situation and come forward to protect the minorities from the communal hordes. He further called for stepping up of united struggles against price rise, unemployment and all other issues faced by the working class.

The Conference was presided over by Com. Subodh Mehta, the State President. Com. Nagin Bhai Patel placed the General Secretary's report, which dealt with the struggles launched by the unions, and various other organisational matters pinpointing to the necessity of the growth of the organisation. 29 delegates participated in the discussions, after which the report was adopted. The Conference adopted a number of resolutions. After reply by Com. Nagin Bhai Patel, the report was adopted. Com. P. K. Ganguly summed up the discussions. The conference elected Com. Subodh Mehta and Com. Nagin Bhai Patel as the President and General Secretary respectively. Permission for open rally was not received. The public meeting in a Hall which was arranged as the open session also had to be cancelled ultimately due to communal tension.

Andaman and Nicobar Islands

The second state conference of the Andaman and Nicobar islands was held on 19th and 20th January at BTR Nagar, Port Blair.

55 delegates and 20 observers attended the conference representing 2,200 members.

A presidium was elected which included among others comrade Vasudevan, Com. Md. Amin, Secretary of the CITU was the chief guest who inaugurated the conference.

The conference paid tributes to comrade BTR, Md. Ismail, P. Ramamurty, Nrisnha Chakrabarty and many other CITU leaders who passed away during the period in between 1987 and now.

Comrade Md. Amin stressed on the question of increase of membership and trade union unity. He also dealt at length on the prevailing socio-economic conditions and political developments in the country.

Explaining the grave situation created out of the American aggression on Iraq he appealed to the working class to come out vigorously and protest against the aggression.

Resolutions on all important issues including gulf war and repealing of the ESMA and abolition of contract labour and other demands were passed.

Comrades Vasudevan and Chandrachudan were unanimously elected President and General Secretary respectively. About 15 delegates participated in the report of the General Secretary which was adopted.

At 5.30 on 20.1.91 a public meeting was held at the Port Blair municipal park in which more than one thousand people attended.

The meeting was addressed by Comrades Vasudevan, K.C. Das, Chandrachudan and Md. Amin.

Com. Amin explained how the communal situation has assumed a dangerous proportion because of the opportunist policy of the Congress(I) Govt. since 1986 and the poisonous role played by the VHP and BJP.

Regarding the gulf war he said why the United Nations did not implement the resolutions to vacate the Arab areas by Israel during the last 34 years? As they are doing now against Isaq? He stressed on trade union unity and class struggle to face the communal challenge.

After the public meeting a cultural programme was held in Telegu.

CITU Condemns Government for Allowing Refuelling of US Air Force Transport Planes for the Gulf War

The Secretariat of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions has issued the following statement on January 28.

The CITU condemns the Chandrasekhar Government at the Centre for granting refuelling facilities to the US Air Force transport planes at the Sahar international airport at Bombay.

According to press reports, 38 transport planes shuttling between Philipines and the Gulf and carrying materials for the "Operation Desert Storm" have refuelled at Sahar airport since January 9, i.e. even before the war started. At the instance of the US Embassy at New Delhi, the Civil Aviation Ministry asked the Bombay airport officials to render "all possible aid" to the US Air Force transport air crafts. The press report further states that they were even exempted from the 25 percent fuel cut which has been imposed in the country, and the entire operation is being kept "a closely guarded secret."

It is most reprehensible that the Government has on one hand put a ban on the anti-war demonstrations in the Embassy areas and on the other hand is indirectly helping the US imperialists to carry on their devastating war against Iraq. It did not speak a word against the war drive by the USA and refused to connect the issue with the question of Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. The stand taken by Chandrasekhar Government is a deviation from the long established non-aligned foreign policy of India.

The CITU demands immediate withdrawal of the refuelling facilities given to the US Air Force transport planes and calls upon all State Committees and unions to launch protest actions in pursuance of this demand.

Call to Unite And Struggle

The First All-India Conference of Anganwadi workers and helpers was held in Udaypur on January 5 & 6, 1991 at the Town Hall.

The conference was attended by 148 delegates from eight States. The State of Punjab, despite all its agony, sent a delegation of 27 which reached Udaypur on the 5th morning, after undergoing a lot of travail, including the murder of two persons by the extremists in the bus they were travelling in.

Preparatory Committee Meet

The Preparatory Committee met under the chairmanship of Bhabatosh Roy, where Vimal Ranadive and Ranjit Basu from the centre, placed the programmes discussed in the CITU Secretariat. After paying homage at the martyrs column, the open session began in the venue named Comrade B. T. Ranadive Nagar, with Arati Dasgupta, West Bengal, Surender Kaur (Punjab), Vallikutti (Kerala), Pushpa Sharma (Rajasthan) and Nirupama Chatterjee, in the presidium. A condolence resolution on Comrade B.T. Ranadive, an all time defender of the exploited women, was passed. Another resolution on martyrs was also adopted.

Com. Lakshmi Sehgal inaugurated the conference. She said, the first-ever idea of taking up the cause of the Anganwadi women was of Comrade BTR, who constantly urged to form a militant and strong federation so that these exploited women could get some relief.

Welfare Measures in Left-Ruled States

Chayya Bera, Minister of State in the West Bengal's Left Front Government was the chief guest of the conference, and delivered an inspiring speech stating many instances of the benefits the Left Front Government was able to give to the Anganwadi women. Many legislations were passed to protect the women. In India, she said, out of 33.10 crore women, 25 crore are living below the poverty line.

What about the conditions in the Anganwadis? According to available information, there are now, 4,688 projects under the ICDS. Their role is an important one provided they work properly. Chayya Bera then turned to the question of the neglect of the trade unions in general in taking up the problems of working women. She mentioned, in this connection, the guidance given by Com. BTR to the trade union and appealed to all to give up the feudal tendencies and come forward to bring women into the mainstream of the democratic struggles.

Solidarity from Others

Ashok Paliwal of the Coordination Committee, while greeting the conference, conveyed that his organisation, the SFI, had been giving all possible help in the formation of unions, and supported the struggles. Sumitra Chopra (AIDWA) assured

all support to Anganwadi workers while appealing them to join the JMS. Bijendra Kaushik spoke on behalf of the Janwadi Lekhak Sangh, welcoming the formation of the federation.

Representatives of two other federations working among the Anganwadi workers also greeted the delegates. B. K. Prasad (President Akhil Bharatiya Kamgar Union) explained for how many years they had struggled for their demands. He said they were going to have a dharna at the Boat Club in New Delhi along with other organisations on February 1. Later on, one lakh women will demonstrate before Parliament in March to press their demands, particularly the demand of equal wages for equal work. Mentioning the contribution of Com. BTR, he said we have to pay more attention to the work of women, which however, is not being done in the Anganwadis. He appealed for united actions among all the trade unions working in the Anganwadis. Pradeep Kumar spoke on behalf of the Akhil Bharatiya Anganwadi Karmachari Sangh promising all solidarity in action. Ranjit Basu, Secretary greeted the conference on behalf of the CITU.

Vimal Ranadive, Convenor of the Preparatory Committee, then read out the names for the steering and credential committees.

The first session was then followed by a huge procession and rally. Sarala Maheswari MP, released a book on this occasion while Satya Narayan, the author presented a song on the working women.

Report on Work

The second session began with the placing of the report by Vimal Ranadive. Turning towards the national situation, Vimal Ranadive explained the serious crisis created by the forces of communalism and extremism on the question of the Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhoomi. Many workers, women and children at different places were killed.

She next took up the plight of the Anganwadi women. The ICDS scheme is a centrally-sponsored scheme, finalised by the UNICEF, USAID, CARE and other foreign agencies. But these women are called "social workers" and only paid "honouria". More than six lakh workers are employed in this scheme. The supervisors and CDPOs are getting the benefits as Government employees, but not the women workers who are mostly from rural areas and weaker sections. Then she explained their sexual harassment by the CDPOs, threats and wage cuts because of attending the conferences, etc. The utility items supposed to be for pregnant women and children are stolen; corruption is rampant. But if the workers make any demand, the reply is their dismissal.

Why an All India Federation

Those conditions must be changed, and hence the

necessity of forming an all-India federation. Vimal Ranadive then dealt with the necessity and scope of joint action along with other federations. Unless the women launch big struggles, independently as well as jointly with others, no demand will be met.

Another point she mentioned was the role of the left-led Governments of West Bengal and Kerala. The women get better benefits there because of the struggles and the sympathetic attitude of these Governments. While concluding, Vimal Ranadive appealed to the women workers to take up militant programmes to achieve their demands.

The conference then took up the discussion on the constitution which was already circulated and discussed in the Preparatory Committee. Bhabatosh Roy placed the constitution clause by clause along with the amendments received, and explained the specific character of the federation which will have a flag of its own, but other unions belonging to other trade union organisations can also join the federation. Later it was decided the flag will be of red colour background with the name of the federation inscribed in white letters. The constitution was unanimously passed.

Lively Discussion

There was a lively discussion by the delegates from different states. Vallikutty (Kerala) spoke on the activities of the women workers. She said the Cong (I)-led regime did not pay them the maternity benefits, while the LDF Government had sanctioned maternity leave for two children. The workers also fought for and got leave for 42 days for miscarriage which was earlier denied to them. Earlier they got festival leave and allowance of Rs 45, but they now get Rs. 100/-. The Government has also sanctioned Rs. 50,000 for Anganwadi buildings. Now workers and helpers are getting TA and DA, and they are fighting for other demands.

Preet Kumar (Punjab) spoke on the situation in the state, where despite the extremist threats, the workers are fighting. They demanded from the supervisors that no Anganwadi workers must be dismissed. Now the organisation has become so strong that the CDPOS and supervisors are in panic. The ration distributed earlier was less than the quota; but now workers have taken the task of distribution in their hands, 32 women were promoted to supervisor posts after fighting. Earlier they got two maternity leaves, now they are fighting for six months maternity leave like Government employees.

Others to join the discussion included Monika Chakraborty (West Bengal), Mangla and Shubha (Maharashtra), Jaspal Kaur and Rajir (Rajasthan), Mary (Pondicherry), and J. Ross (Kerala). The delegates also expressed concern over and determination to fight the communal menace.

Programme of Action

Vimal Ranadive then replied to the question raised by the delegates and the report was unanimously adopted. Then she placed the programme of action for the federation and joint actions with others

which was discussed and finalised in the conference. She announced the funds received from different states for the federation conference as below: Punjab Rs. 2000/-; Pondicherry Rs. 500/-; UP AIDWA Rs. 100/-; Rajasthan Rs. 1500/-; West Bengal Rs. 3000/-; and so on. In all, Rs. 7,500/- were received in the fund.

The resolutions on price rise, communal harmony, Tripura, the Left-led Governments and a charter of demands were also adopted. Vimal Ranadive declared that Rs. 1000/- will be donated to the Tripura Fund; the declaration was approved with applause.

Nilima Moitra placed the charter of demands which was supported by S. Rose from Kerala.

The action programme which was adopted, proposed deputations in every state, reporting of the conference, formation of state committees after the respective state conferences, one-day strike at all India level, demands day, etc. There will be joint programmes with other organisations too.

Lakshmi Sehgal then moved the resolution on the new committee, as per the constitution. Vimal Ranadive was elected as the President and Nilima Moitra the General Secretary.

The rally on the 5th was a magnificent one with Punjab leading the procession. It was a colourful one with enthusiastic slogans. The public meeting was held under the chairmanship of K. Verma (Vice President of State CITU) and addressed by Ravindra Shukla (General Secretary), B.L. Singhvi (Chairman of the Reception Committee), Lakshmi Sehgal, Vimal Ranadive, Surender Kaur, Chayya Bera, the Minister from West Bengal, and Ranjit Basu Secretary, CITU. The speeches of Sheopat Singh and Sarala Maheshwari, both Members of Parliament, were well received.

In the morning, an educative exhibition on the extreme exploitation of women and children, organised by the Rajasthan State Committee of the CITU, had been inaugurated by Vimal Ranadive.

READ

The Organs of CITU

WORKING CLASS

(English Monthly)

CITU MAZDOOR

(Hindi Monthly)

VOICE OF THE WORKING WOMEN

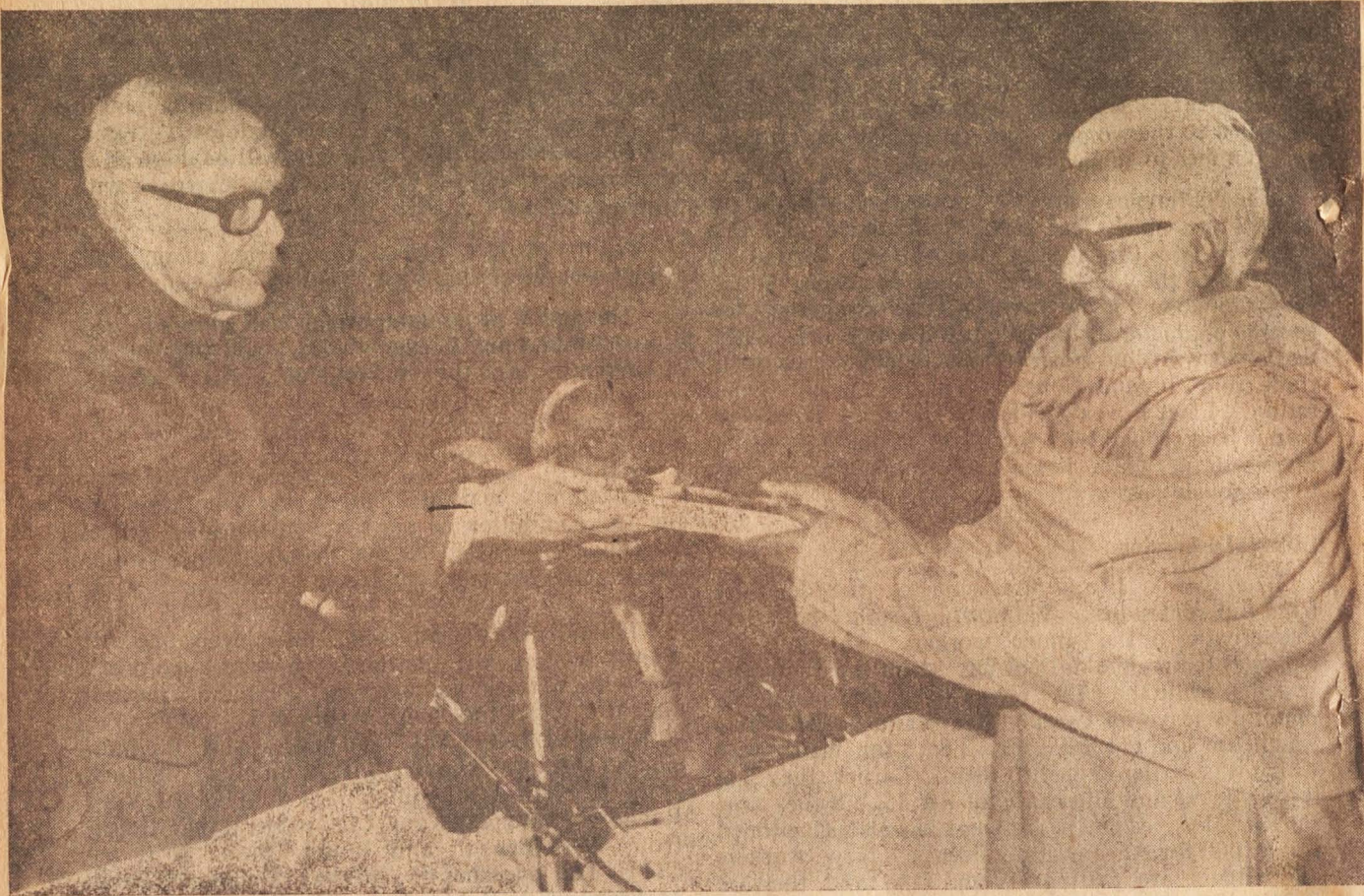
(English bi-Monthly)

KAMKAJI MAHILA

(Hindi bi-Monthly)

Order your copies from :-

Centre of Indian Trade Unions
6, Talkatora Road, New Delhi-110001



Com. Samar Mukherjee handing over the BTR Volume to Dr. Mahadev Saha

Com. BTR's Volume Released

The first volume of Com. BTR's writings was released on 14th January, 1991 in a meeting held at Pyerilal Bhawan, New Delhi. The volume titled as "BT Ranadive on Trade Union Movement" contains his writings from 1970 to 1980.

The book was released by Com. Samar Mukherjee, General Secretary of CITU. The first copy was purchased by Dr. Mahadev Saha. Releasing the book, Com. Samar Mukherjee paid glowing tributes

to Com. BTR as the foremost leader and teacher of the Indian trade union movement and called upon the workers to utilise his writings as guidelines for the future trade union movement in the country. Among those who spoke were M.K. Pandhe, Ranjit Basu (CITU), T.N. Siddharta (AITUC), PK Tandon (Kisan Sabha) and S.B. Bharadwaj (Delhi State CITU).

The Second volume will be published by 6th April, his death anniversary.