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International Women's Day March 8



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Looking Back

When the idea of observing one day as a day of international solidarity between the women of the world, an International Women's Day, was first thought of, it was not just a question of holding a meeting or openly calling for a demonstration. They had to find different ways and means to elude the police, befool the censor, to oppose the suffocating and authoritarian rules and ultimately, for some, face arrest and exile. One such country was the vast and sprawling Empire of the Russian Czars. We give below a small extract from the account of the first International Women's Day observed there.

The time—February 1913 ;—

Throughout February, large illegal women's meetings were held throughout Russia. In St. Petersburg, (now Leningrad) under the guise of holding a discussion entitled "A Scientific Morning on The Women Question", tickets were distributed at the factory gates for the Women's Day meeting. Under pressure from the Socialists in Parliament, the day had been recognised as a holiday.

As the morning of March 8 dawned mounted police surrounded the hall where the meeting was to be held and other police promptly occupied the front rows inside.

Every woman, however poor, was wearing her best clothes, and the hall was as bright as a spring morning, by the time the first speakers nervously stepped on to the platform. Many were unable to communicate their intimate thoughts beyond the thick impromptu accounts of their lives. "Our masters oppress us and make us sleep with them on pain of losing our jobs- how dare society ladies tell us about 'equality' and accuse us of 'immorality'".

Among the speakers was one Alexendra Alexayeva, who wrote in her reminiscences:

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Women Joining Mainstream of Struggle

November 23 Rally

THE participation of working women in the January 19 strike was as notable as in the grand 'March to Parliament' on the November 23, 1982. On that March, came working women, housewives and girls from different States, in their different dresses, from the factories and mills, offices and hospitals, as well as agricultural women from the fields, walking in lines, shouting slogans in their own languages, flags and festoons in their hands. High up and prominently displayed were the banners of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women and the All India Democratic Women's Association. Also prominent was the "Piao" under the banner of AIDWA, the arrangement made for drinking water for the marchers, organised by the Delhi Janwadi Mahila Samiti. Women workers came in buses from Gaziabad, Faridabad, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi to participate in the March. All these women, old as well as young walked the long distance from the Red Fort to Boat Club, along with the different contingents from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra, Bihar, Haryana, Andhra; Punjab and elsewhere.

Convention Participants

These working women delegates had actively participated in the November 22 Convention held a day earlier to the March. The Convention supported enthusiastically the January 19 strike. A joint appeal by the All-India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) and the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) and an appeal by Susheela Gopalan, the General Secretary of AIDWA went out to the working women to come out on strike.

The enthusiasm generated by their participation in the March strengthened their keen

desire to make the January 19 strike-call, given by the National Campaign Committee and the Federations, a successful one, in spite of the 50,000 arrests, the firing and killing of 12 people, the attacks by Congress(I) goondas, the irresponsible "shoot at sight order", the secret circular to the States by the Central Government to crush the strike and all such other measures taken to try and cow down the workers.

January 19 Strike

In Delhi, one could see the women in Banks, Insurance, Reserve Bank, in groups discussing agitatedly outside the gates, the police force standing nearby. Women leaders sat in the offices helping the strikers. In Tamilnadu, lathi charges were made by the police near Simco Meters Factory, at Tiruchi, where more than 80 per cent of the workers, mostly women, joined the strike. At Surat in Gujarat thousands of Municipal workers including 600 women sanitary staff joined the strike. In Kerala, West Bengal, Tripura, women and men brought out processions. In Assam 100 plantation gardens joined the strike, most of the workers again being women.

This participation of working women is an indication that working women in future also will join in increasing numbers, the mainstream of struggles unleashed by the November 23 March and in January 19 strike, on an all-India level, against the authoritarian steps of the Congress rulers, in particular against ESMA and NSA, against 'price-rise', and suppression of the democratic rights of the working people. This is a welcome feature, and the trade union movement as a whole must take particular note of it, so that the movement can be further strengthened.

VIMAL RANADIVE

Women Teachers Come Into Struggle

In many parts of the country today, especially in the smaller towns and centres, women teachers at school and college level are becoming increasingly conscious of the need to organise themselves and join the main body of their fellow men and women teachers to defend and protect their deteriorating living standards and conditions of service. This is particularly so in many women's colleges and in schools, which are dominated by highly autocratic managements, who not only impose totally arbitrary and harsh regimes on the teachers, but also run these colleges on commercial lines, to extract the maximum profits from these institutions. As a result exorbitant fees are charged from the students, low wages are paid to the non-teaching staff who are forced to do many extra jobs, and many attempts at organisation by teachers is dealt with a heavy hand. This is the experience of two colleges in Tamil Nadu—both women's colleges—in both of which the women teachers are entering into the field of struggle for the first time.

Avinashi Lingam College Coimbatore

The teachers of Avinashilingam Home Science College, Coimbatore have been fighting for security of tenure and academic rights for a long period of time, in the face of a management which behaves in a purely arbitrary and authoritarian manner.

This college is an autonomous institution and on the pretext of re-structuring of courses, the college management has imposed a 50 per cent reduction in the language teaching hours. If this scheme is successful in the Avinashilingam Home Science College, it will be imposed on all the colleges in the State. This will result in 50 per cent of the teachers in the language departments in all colleges being rendered jobless. They will not be just surplus, but actually jobless, since all the colleges in the State will have excess teachers and redeployment will be impossible.

Already a retrenched teacher in this college has been refused reinstatement. This is a management which has not implemented the recommendations of the University Grants Commission Report.

Deliberate Intimidation

Several teachers have been served with termination notices. Kumari Sivakamasundari

lost her chances of promotion. Several others—Miss Shanti, Merey Paul, Kupputhai, Shiva Bhawani—were either transferred to other colleges, or to different departments. Children of the victimised staff were refused admission in the nursery. Several lecturers were asked to vacate the college hostel.

The college has introduced the Triple Major System of Study in the Under-graduate Courses, which is not recognised by the University nor by other colleges. This course does not enable the students to achieve specialisation in any subject. The course thus adversely affects the future of the student community. Despite this the teachers who dared to criticise the course were victimised.

The college does not have a well equipped library or laboratory. But the authoritarian management insists on the young lecturers signing the attendance register twice a day without fail. Even for applying for casual leave the teachers are expected to produce a medical certificate. Not satisfied with all the above methods of repression, the management has even resorted to cutting the salary of the staff members, refusing permission for higher studies and other such means of victimisation.

Strike and Arrests

Unable any longer to bear the repression

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of the college management, the teachers and students went on strike in August 1981. The strike spread to other institutions in Coimbatore. Several teachers, including 13 women teachers were arrested and were remanded to custody.

The strike was later called off, on the assurance of the Education Minister of Tamilnadu to look into the grievances of the teachers. But unless the democratic rights of the students and teachers are guaranteed, both the teachers and students are resolute that the struggle will continue. □

Sarada College, Salem

IN Sarada College, Salem, the teaching as well non-teaching staff have been on strike since September 1981.

The college is run by the Ramakrishna Mission, with Swami Chithbavananda as the Chairman of the Managing Committee, and Smt. Chellam as the Principal of the college. The college has also the post of what is known as the Correspondent. The present correspondent is a Smt. Yatheeswari Sharada Priya. Much of the harassment and victimisation which led up to the strike, unfortunately came from this lady.

Teachers' Association

Last year the teachers of the college decided to start a unit of the Association of University Teachers in their college and elected Ms. Mandodari Ganesh as its Secretary. A very welcome and democratic step to join the mainstream of the teachers' movement, a step taken by thousands of their colleagues all over the country. But this apparently, was not to the liking of the Correspondent, she immediately started harassing the members as a result of which several teachers withdrew from the Union. The President of the Teachers' Union wrote to the Chairman of the Managing Committee apprising him of the situation. Although the Chairman promised to meet the members

of the AUT to discuss the matter, the proposed meeting did not take place.

In the meanwhile the Correspondent charged the Secretary of the AUT, Smt. Mandodari, of creating misunderstanding between the Correspondent and the Chairman of the Managing Committee and subsequently served memo on Smt. Mandodari. A staff meeting was convened and the teachers were questioned as to when the unit was formed, how long it had been functioning, etc. The Correspondent further questioned whether the letter sent by the Secretary to the Chairman had the approval of all the members. The AUT sent suitable replies to the memo as well as to the enquires of the Correspondent.

Threats and Victimisation

In spite of the replies of AUT the victimisation continued. In a meeting organised on "Teachers Day", the Correspondent indulged in a personal attack on Smt. Mandodari Ganesh. She further stated that she would finish off the teachers' association in the college.

Following such threats the teachers and the students submitted a petition to the Collector. The efforts of the General Secretary of AUT and the Divisional Collector to bring about a solution to the problems were unsuccessful. The Correspondent refused to participate in any talks with the teachers or the students.

Miss Mandodari was suspended from her post. Immediately the teachers and students went on strike protesting against the action of the management. The college was closed indefinitely.

United Struggle

✓ The teachers are determined to put up a stiff fight for their democratic rights. For the teachers were victimised for the sole reason of forming the AUT unit in the college.

The students also have decided to fight the authoritarianism of the management and their

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Delhi Action Forces Return of Dowry

THIS is the story of Rita Chaddha, a 22-year old woman at present struggling for her life in Ward No. 9 of the Capital's Safdarjung Hospital.

Rita married in May last year to Satish Chandra Chaddha and moved to her in-laws' residence in Kirti Nagar. Right from the start Rita was harassed by her husband and mother-in-law for not bringing enough dowry. In fact her family had spent all its savings and got into debt to provide her dowry-gifts worth about one lakh rupees. When she used to complain to her own family members the in-laws imposed a virtual ban on her meeting them.

On December 21, her brother was suddenly informed by his cousin who lived in the same locality as Rita that she has been badly burnt and was lying in a private hospital of the area. He rushed there to find his once beautiful sister with her face and also the upper part of her body almost completely obliterated with burns. The doctor told him that she was suffering from 60 per cent burns and her chances of survival were dim. She was six months pregnant at the time. She was rushed to Safdarjung Hospital. There before a Magistrate she made a declaration that on that fateful morning her husband Satish Chandra and mother-in-law Raj Dulari had poured kerosene on her and set her alight. She was taken to the private hospital in an open autorickshaw with not even a sheet to cover her. The husband and mother-in-law were arrested under Sec.307 (attempt to murder) of the Cr.P.C. but were released in a day on bail. A few days later Rita, struggling for life aborted a still born child.

Intervention by JMS.

The Janwadi Mahila Samity came to know of the case only two days later. Delhi Committee members immediately went to the hospital. At that time the girl was in a serious

crisis and required an immediate blood transfusion. Manjuri, a committee member, donated the required amount of blood. After this gesture the family gained some confidence in the JMS and started discussing what should be done against the criminals. A demonstration was planned outside the in-laws' residence on January 9. In spite of the cold and rain that day a hundred women including Rita's mother, sister and neighbours marched to the residence angrily shouting slogans against the dowry system, against the in-laws, for amendments to make the anti-dowry law more stringent, etc. A large police force was present to guard the residence of the criminals.

Samity leaders and Rita's brother made impassioned speeches calling on the neighbours to come out and show their solidarity and boycott the criminals. The reaction of the neighbours was at first hesitant and then one by one mothers, daughters, children came out until the entire area outside the residence was

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Members of JMS demonstrating outside the house of the inlaws

Dowry—A Killer Disease ?

THE issue of dowry is really a burning one today. Wives all over the country are burnt to death and harassed to the extent of being denied all conjugal rights if they do not fulfill the demands of the insatiable husbands and parents-in-laws. An official report of the Central Government published in 1980, found that the number of reported cases of dowry deaths in various states in 1979 was, 368 in Maharashtra; 249 in Andhra Pradesh; 148 in Delhi; 98 in Rajasthan; 48 in West Bengal; 744 in Uttar Pradesh; 23 in Punjab; 2 each in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka and none in Kerala. It is believed that the figures for the later years have increased considerably. Further, replies from the states showed that only in one case was prosecution launched in the entire country, and very often the parties involved are unwilling to invoke the protection of the Dowry Prohibition Act, passed in 1961.

Of course the long-term solution lies essentially in a change in social awareness, based on the economic uplift of women. In the meantime the present situation is fast deteriorating and the mental depravity of the men and women responsible for the gruesome incidents daily taking place is taking the form of a killer disease. The problem therefore is an urgent one, and legislative protection and a reform in the law are very necessary to help in the struggle to stop these killings.

The Dowry Prohibition Act is now before Parliament for amendment. The Act as it stands today, merely defines dowry as any property or valuable security given, or agreed to be given, by either party to the marriage, or their parents, either directly or indirectly. Presents made at the time of marriage are excluded unless they are as consideration for the marriage. Under the Act, both the giver and taker of dowry are punishable with six months imprisonment or fine, which may

extend to five thousand rupees, or both. There is also a provision that dowry must be returned if the marriage breaks down within the first year—and punishment if it is not returned.

The new amendments suggested include (a) that there should be a ban on ostentatious celebration of marriages, (b) marriage expenses, gifts and present which exceed ten per cent of the income or property of the bride or her parents, should be considered as dowry, (c) Dowry Prohibition Officers should be appointed, advised by a non-official advisory body consisting of representatives of women's and other social voluntary organisations, with powers for investigation and prosecution, (d) prosecution must be completed within three months, (e) compulsory registration of marriages with a declaration by both parties to the marriage, and their parents, that the Dowry Prohibition Act has been complied with, (f) abolition of the Mitakshara law of coparcenary, and equal property rights to women, and (g) that demand for dowry should be made a ground for divorce. **R. VAIGAI**

Dowry Action

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jampacked with people and the plan resounded with militant slogans.

With the support of the entire neighbourhood, Janavadi Mahila Samity leaders informed the police that the demonstrators would disperse only after every single item given as dowry was returned to the family. At first the police were adamant and refused, threatening that they would arrest everyone. But ultimately they had to agree to let a deputation of the JMS accompanied by a family member, go in and identify the dowry items. The list was unbelievable—a full bedroom set of a double bed, a single bed, an ornate dressing table, fans, a full drawing room set, a Television set, a cooler, a scooter—it was endless—and as each item was carried out and loaded into the hastily hired van, the entire neighbourhood resounded with jeers, cat-calls, boos and curses against a family whose greed was savage and limitless.

RITA KARAT

Mechanisation Continues

THE multinational ILTD Company has changed its method of operation by erecting a giant green leaf threshing plant worth Rs. five crores in Anaparthi. This plan not only throws 1500 women stemmers out of work in Anaparthi, but also displaces 10,000 more women workers in the Chirala factory, in Rajahmundry, Guntur, Parchoor, Ongole and Tangutur where stemming operations were being conducted for the last many decades.

To resist this mechanisation at the cost of the workers, all the trade unions in the industry had met Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and the concerned Central Ministers as far back as December 1980 and again in June 1981. A hundred-strong women's delegation had also met the then Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister T. Anjaiah and Labour Minister G. Venkataswamy.

Huge Profits

The ITC Ltd., is a worldwide tobacco manufacturing organisation. The company earned a gross profit of Rs. 17 crore in 1981 and Rs. 16 crore in the year 1980.

While the production of all kinds of cigarettes manufactured by the ITC during the last ten years, and also tobacco exports, marked tremendous progress the number of employees has gone down from 40,000 to 30,000 including in leaf and cigarette manufacturing.

The company is making fabulous payments to the officers and directors, the gross remunerations ranging from Rs. one lakh to Rs. 285,000 per annum. Rupees 57 lakh are paid to just 44 officers and directors.

On the other hand, the company has refused to raise D. A., increased the workload and reduced the work force. Against this 2,000 workmen in the Bangalore cigarette

factory went on a 90-day strike in 1980, and 10,000 staff and workwomen and men in the leaf section went on a ten-day strike in Andhra Pradesh in February 1981. The Peral Cigarettee Factory employees have been on total strike from September 8, 1981.

Important Industry

The leaf tobacco industry in Andhra Pradesh occupies an important place in the economy of the country. The Government of India derives about Rs. 6000 crore by way of excise duty annually. Export of tobacco will account for a foreign exchange earning to the tune of Rs. 120 crore a year.

Nearly 400 big and small companies are operating in this industry in which 125,000 workers are employed, of whom 90 per cent are women.

The ITC, ILTD as well as BAT, NTC and Golden companies have begun closing down their units even though their business turn-over is increasing and they are seeking other methods to get their requirements through middle-men traders. By such closures, already 45,000 workers have been rendered unemployed.

On the top of this the employers are now resorting to mechanised processing of tobacco by installing green leaf threshing plants. Seventy per cent of the workers who will lose their jobs are Harijans and Girijans.

Protecting Monopolies

Despite all their promises, the employers are uninterruptedly going ahead with their anti-labour measures. The workers in the industry are realising that the Government at the Centre and in Andhra Pradesh is interested only in protecting the monopolists at the cost of thousands of workers.

Rajasthan Newsletter

AN Anti-Dowry Convention was held at Ganganagar on December 21, 1981, attended by 200 women from Ganganagar District. Large numbers of women, were working women, teachers, nurses, government employees and also students. Great enthusiasm was shown at the Convention with slogans raised when the speakers raised points on the question of dowry. The women expressed the feeling that the Convention was the beginning of a new chapter in the women's struggles for equality, and emancipation of the toiling millions of the country.

Durga Swami who convened the convention explained the aims and objectives of the AIDWA and also gave a brief report of the growth of the movement in Ganganagar district since last year. Madhu Tandon reported on the first Conference at Madras of the AIDWA. The delegates discussed the social oppression suffered in connection with the dowry system, and the part women have to play in fighting this social evil. A number of educated women presented songs and poems on women's problems.

The Convention passed a number of resolutions on dowry, price-rise, ESMA and also support to the various demands of working women.

Organisation To Be Set Up

Following on the Convention, on January 3rd, 1982, about 40 women activists assembled and discussed the problems facing women and the need to have regular and organised functioning. The meeting decided to form an Ad-hoc Committee of nine members consisting of house-wives, nurses, school teachers and other working women. It was decided to run a campaign for enrolment of membership and convene a broad convention of women to discuss their problems.

It was felt that similar efforts should be initiated to build up a women's movement in Udaipur also.

The enthusiasm shown by women in Jaipur, Ganganagar and other places to fight against social injustice, gives greater hopes of being able to spread our work in other districts.

— MADHU TANDON

Gwalior—Madhya Pradesh New Committee Formed

After two preliminary meetings of working women of different sections, a small committee was formed on December 20, 1981, consisting of working women from Central and State Government offices, private offices and schools, the Food Corporation of India, Electric Supply Corporation and so on.

The meeting discussed various problems of Working women and prepared a charter of demands, including separate transport facilities exclusively for women, provision of rest rooms and toilets, four months maternity leave with full pay, provision of creches and hostels for working women, and security for women working in rural areas.

With the acute shortage of water in the city, women demanded immediate attention by the authorities to this problem so as to ensure 24 hours water supply. In another resolution the meeting condemned the misbehaviour against a Harijan woman chowkidar posted at Janakganj Higher Secondary School, and demanded that women should not be employed for the night shift in any establishment. Immediate action and punishment was demanded against the culprit.

Eleven-Member Committee Formed :

An eleven member Co-ordination Committee was formed consisting of Prabha Asthana, Usha Garg, Santha Unni, Madhuri Shukla, Shreekumari Pillai, Sheila Shukla Chandramma Khasagiwade and Radhamani Nair, to take up day-to-day work.

Sri V. Siddiqui, the leader of the teachers' movement in Gwalior asked the women to pursue their demands, not only from the platform of the Co-ordination Committee but also from within their respective unions.

The meeting and the demands of working women, aroused a lot of interest in the city and received wide coverage in the press. □

MARCH 8—INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

WOMEN in India will have observed International Women's Day all over the country, under the joint auspices of different women's organisations, as a day of both solidarity with their sisters throughout the world, and a day of solemn pledge to carry forward the struggle for equality with greater determination.

The conditions in which March 8 is observed this year is far grimmer than in the recent past. Not only are prices rising, wages going down and unemployment going up, not only is there acute shortage of housing, schools, medical facilities, but all over the world, the people are faced with another far graver danger—the danger of nuclear war.

The Threat on our Border:

This is no longer a matter for Europe or other continents alone. This threat of war has been brought right to our doorstep with



the U. S. arming of Pakistan and establishing a missile and naval base in that country. Three times before in the course of the last 35 years we, as the people of Pakistan, have suffered war and its consequences, the anguish of losing family members, in which both peoples have gained nothing. Once again a mad arming of Pakistan is beginning, saddling its people with huge military burdens, depriving them of the ordinary amenities of life. It is forcing a rising defence expenditure in India. Thus both our peoples, and particularly the children and youth are denied their right to a bright, happy and secure future.

Dollars Only for War

Not only war itself, but the drive to war in which the United States and their war-crazy President, play the leading role, the arms build-up, is costing the world's people dear. Every minute sees one million dollars spent on armaments, while millions of women and children suffer, starve and die as a direct result of this diversion of resources. Fifty to sixty million highly qualified workers, and full twentyfive per cent of the world's scientists, are involved in arms production, robbing human beings of large amounts of material and intellectual resources. Such resources could be used for creating more jobs for the unemployed, schools and kindergartens for children, hospitals and houses for the poor, creches and child-care centres to help working women.

For World Domination

The main responsibility for this situation must rest with the Government of the United States, currently headed by a war-crazy President Reagan. Their dream is to dominate the world and dictate to all other nations. Since they cannot achieve this aim peacefully, they are prepared to use force if necessary, to

go too any length to force all other peoples to submit, to threaten the use of nuclear bombs, a 'limited' nuclear war, even chemical and biological weapons, all in other peoples' countries, of course leaving America safe. They care: not if this means greater suffering for people, even higher prices, greater unemployment, starvation, ending with the maimed and the killed.

The world has already suffered two world wars in which one crore died in the first, and five and a half crores in the second, roughly equal to the entire population of West Bengal for instance. But with nuclear weapons, the toll in any future world war would be infinitely greater. And this time it is not only a question of counting the number of dead. Two Asian countries have already had a taste of what happens, for weeks, months and years after the nuclear bombs and other weapons have been used, where the living envy the dead. Let us recall Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Vietnam.

Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Vietnam

On August 6, 1945, the American Government (once again), dropped the first and only Atom bombs—toys in relation to destructive power compared to the neutron bombs possessed by the U.S. Government today—on an unsuspecting Japanese people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, preparing their Sunday break-fast. Apart from the dead numbering

270,000 in the two cities on that day, even thirty-six years later, the atom bomb survivors are still dying horrible, agonising deaths at a very high rate. There were over 100,000 up till August 1981. Maimed, disfigured,



abnormal it is difficult even now to gaze upon some of them. None of them can lead a normal life, be an active member of a family and a community. For the 3,75,000 known survivors suffered irreparable damage to their bodies. Children, then in normal, their mothers' wombs, now grown to adulthood, are crippled and retarded.

And exactly thirtysix years later, to the day, August 6, 1981, a brazen President announced his directive—to mass produce the neutron bomb.

"Walking around the back gate of Shukkeien Garden of Hakushima-Cho I saw an infant boy leaning against the gate and heard him crying. When I approached and touched him, I found that he was dead. To think that he might have been my son made my heart ache"

(Poem by an unknown survivor of Hiroshima)

In its more than 20 years' war against the Vietnamese people, the U.S. imperialists dropped fifteen million tonnes of bombs and 100,000 tons of toxic chemicals on this tiny

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Discrimination In Tea Industry

Contrary to popular belief, the vast majority of the workers in the registered Tea Factories in India, in fact 90 per cent, whether in the North-East, South or other parts of India, are men.

Women account for about eight per cent of the total employment; the rest, two per cent, being made up of children. The women are largely concentrated in the occupation 'Tea Sorter' where they make up just over forty per cent of the workers in that category.

Wage Discrimination

On the whole the women earn much less than the men. For example, more than 80 per cent of the women but less than 40 per cent of the men employed earn up to Rs. 4 per day. The contrast is even more glaring when it comes to the higher wages: nearly 30 per cent of the men but only 0.5 per cent of all the women employed earn more than Rs. 7 per day. These were the figures before the Equal Remuneration Act came into force, but the Act is not likely to have brought about any major changes.

It is officially argued that in the categories where both men and women are employed, the wage differential in most of these categories is on an average not more than Rs. 1.20. However this glosses over two facts. Firstly, it is precisely in non-skilled categories such as 'Sweepers' that the wage differences, for no acceptable reasons, range from Rs. 8.10 to Rs. 6.22. That is to say, while a male sweeper in the north-eastern factories draws a pay of Rs. 11.16 per day, a woman sweeper will earn only Rs. 3.06 per day—for the same kind of work.

Job Discrimination

Secondly, certain occupations are exclusively reserved for men, e.g., carpenters,

drivers, electricians, mazdoors, mechanics. Not one of these jobs, it may be noted, could not be performed by women workers if they were given the same training. One has only to look at the number of successful women engineers, doctors, architects and women who drive their own cars even in this country, and buses and trains in some of Socialist countries, to know that sex is no bar to women acquiring skill in any trade. Again precisely in these male-reserved occupations, the average daily earnings are quite high, and always much higher than wages in occupations run by both men and women. [For example, the average daily earnings of drivers ranges from Rs. 6.09 in North-Eastern factories to Rs. 27 in South India, of carpenters from Rs. 3.63 to Rs. 31, of electricians from Rs. 6.85 to Rs. 25, of mechanics from Rs. 8.84 to Rs. 23.80 and of Mazdoors from Rs. 10.19 to Rs. 21.65.] By contrast, the highest daily wage in the occupations run by both men and women is Rs. 10.98 for a male sorter and Rs. 6.25 for the woman sorter. Women are employed mainly as Helpers, Sweepers, Balance-Sifters, Picker Coolies, Tea Blenders, Tea Cutting Machine Attendants, Withering Loft Attendants, Tea Sorters and Tea Mixers.

This experience in the Tea factories again shows that women are paid less only because they are women, not because they are less efficient; and that they are kept away from the better-skilled and higher paid jobs, in order to retain them as cheap labour, so that the employer can profit more. But it should also be clear that this hurts not only the woman worker but male workers as well, because where men and women work side by side, the general wage level is lower. The answer is not to get rid of women workers altogether, but to put up a united fight to raise wage-rates for both men and women, together with opportunities for increasing their skills. □

The 'Touching' Case Of The IAS Trainee

It was perhaps accidental that the news of the Government of India's leniency towards the IAS trainee who had shamelessly tried to molest his lady-trainee colleague, and its harshness towards its senior civil servant who wished to punish him, broke in the newspapers and Parliament just a few days before International Women's Day. What is clearly not accidental, however, is the Government of India and its Prime Minister's attitude towards the incident.

The incident it should be noted, actually took place some months ago and would have remained unknown, and the depraved individual would have eventually become an officer in the Civil Service, but for the intervention of the Press.

The Charges

The facts as reported in the Press are as follows :

— V. K. Singh, a man allegedly highly connected, was selected for training for the IAS at the Mussoorie Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy for Administration.

— About ten years ago this man was sent out of the National Defence Academy—the training institute for future officers in the armed forces—on “disciplinary grounds”, which means he was considered unfit to be an officer. The mystery of how after such a ‘qualification’, he was able to get selected for the IAS, is simply that the authorities check on only the previous five years of an applicant's life.

— This particular trainee batch was sent on an excursion to Badrinath and other places. Whilst there this trainee, one evening, drunk, tried to molest a girl cadre trainee, even brandishing a weapon to try to force her to surrender to him. He was foiled only because her shouts and resistance brought the other male trainees to the spot, who then over-

powered him.

— On proper investigation by the competent authorities the guilt of the man was proved. And the Director of the Institute, Sri P. S. Appu, very justifiably recommended his dismissal from the Institute.

— While the Secretary and Minister of State for Home reportedly endorsed this decision, the Home Minister turned down the recommendation. The man was to be only warned, not punished.

— Upon this, the Director, to his credit, promptly asked to be relieved and requested over a year's leave prior to his retirement in 1983. To its shame the Ministry accepted the request and relieved him.

Touching Solicitude

Are these the standards and the ethics the women of India can expect from the Central Minister in charge of ‘law and order’? The Minister wanted, he stated in Parliament, to adopt a “reformative” and not a “deterrent” approach. So that no doubt the poor trainee could be treated gently, not hurt, and above all, not deterred from repeating his action? Such care and solicitude for a Government trainee is very touching. We only wish it could have extended to the lady probationers also. And what does ‘reformative’ mean? Are we to understand that saving such a man and his career is everything? Is the crime nothing, the woman and her honour nothing? We have not heard a word of condemnation from the Minister.

Only the furore caused in Parliament, after exposure of the matter in the Press, caused a very reluctant Government to finally dismiss the trainee—who had been camping in Delhi ever since the incident with telling effect. Again shamelessly and ungraciously, it has said the case of the Director, Sri Appu, will be

→

taken up "only when he rejoined service on expiry of his leave".

No word came from the Prime Minister all this time condemning the incident, insisting this man be thrown out of the service, asking how he was selected in the first place, reiterating her commitment to see that in Government service at least, women need not fear for their honour, could find their protector in the Government—all the things that as a Prime Minister she could demand, that as a woman Prime Minister all Indian women could have expected her to demand. But no word came until the shame was made public, until the Government was flayed in the Press and by the Opposition in Parliament, and refused to accept a 'warning' as good enough. Only then our Madam Prime Minister intervened. But she has yet to take steps against the guilty Ministers who attempted to screen the criminal.

What a splendid assurance to the women of India on the occasion of International Women's Day ! ☐

Looking Back

From Page Two

"I saw the bright buttons of the gendarmes (police), and beyond them a sea of faces watching me.....I put my notebook aside and began to talk of the life of women textile workers, a life I knew from my own experienceI ended my speech with a call to all working women to rally closer together and fight for a better life, shoulder to shoulder with men. I was applauded for a long time.....that night I was arrested."

That night, many women were arrested. And the next day police broke up the women's rally in Moscow, and rounded up women in Kiev, and right across the country, as far as Samara and Tiflis, in the Far-Eastern provinces of the Empire. Despite this the women managed to smuggle a message out of the country of greeting to the Socialist International secretariat of Working Women.

It is in such a spirit and with such determination and self sacrifice that we must carry on our struggle.

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Campaign Against Cut In Rations

IN Delhi on March 5 women participated in a big way in a demonstration and court-arrest programme organised outside the Ministry of Civil Supplies, to protest the cut in rations and refusal of the authorities to issue new ration cards.

Seven hundred people participated in the demonstration, of whom over 500 courted arrest—of these one hundred were women. For four days before the demonstration scores of street-corner meetings, signature campaigns and leafleteering was carried on. Altogether some 20,000 handbills and 3000 posters were distributed. This was followed by demonstrations and dharnas before the local food and supply offices with memoranda submitted to the authorities.

In Faridabad, the very large industrial complex just outside the Capital a torchlight procession of 400 was taken out in Old Faridabad and a day-long dharna held on March 5.

In all over two thousand persons participated in the local demonstrations and dharnas. An important feature here was the enthusiastic participation of women. For instance in one area—a resettlement colony, Mongolpuri, which houses the poorest of labourers, particularly casual labour, the number of women participating in the dharna, was double that of men. Mongolpuri has also seen two militant actions in the past year—one for better transport facilities for women; the other a very effective protest against molestation of a woman in the local police station.

Non-Supply of Rations

The non-supply of rations has become particularly acute in the past few months, particularly of course, amongst the poorer sections of citizens. People are finding it increasingly difficult to get their rations through the fair-price shops. Waiting in long queues for hours, returning empty-handed—no wheat,

no sugar, no edible oils—has become a common sight in the resettlement colonies—the far-away areas on the outskirts of Delhi where the poor people of central Delhi were 'removed' during the Emergency days—and in the workers' bastis. For a number of weeks vanaspati and edible oils disappeared from the shops—wheat supplies were cut by a half, and sugar by about 15 per cent. Now vanaspati and oils have reappeared at higher prices.

Withdrawal of Ration Cards

As if this were not enough, Delhi Administration recently issued orders to deny ration cards to those living in the 'unauthorised' colonies and jhuggi-jhompdis. These are the places where ten lakh of the neediest sections of the population live. It is to these people that rationing offices were instructed to refuse fresh cards or renew their temporary cards. All in the name of unearthing bogus ration cards. While the actual bogus registration done by traders in order to be able to sell supplies on the blackmarket went unchecked, thousands of genuine working people living in hutments, whose survival depends on these rations, were being denied their crads.

It is heartening to know that because of the pressure of the campaign, in some areas the local food and supply officers have accepted the demand to issue fresh cards and renew the temporary cards of the genuinely needy perons.

Letter From Ahmedabad

The work here is increasing among working women and house-wives, specially in Baroda, Bhavnagar and Ahmedabad. There is a necessity for guidance to help the Co-ordination Committee.

—Damayantiben Parikh

March 8—International Women's Day

From Centre Pages

country, in their wild attempt to bring this heroic people to their knees. From 1962-1971 alone, approximately 19 million gallons of herbicide compounds were dumped in Vietnam to strip away jungle growth, destroy paddy fields and other food crops, and contaminate the water supplies in the countryside. The toxic chemical—Agent Orange—so named because the barrels in which it was shipped to Vietnam were painted with orange stripes, was the deadliest. As proof of its long-term effects, Vietnam today is experiencing an alarming increase in the rate of still-births, miscarriages, spontaneous abortions, birth abnormalities and various cancers. It particularly attacks the liver, and liver cancer, **virtually unknown before the use of the Agent Orange**, is now the second leading form of cancer in Vietnam today. The American soldiers who handled these barrels without being aware of what they contained have also been affected—they, their wives and their children.

The American imperialists failed in their wild and savage aggression in face of the mighty unity and strength, the enormous sacrifices of the men and women of Vietnam, aided and supported by all the democratic peoples of the world.

Today when we face the threat of world-wide nuclear war, we not only recall Hiroshima and Vietnam—we must never forget them. And we must act to prevent their repetition. Already, all over the world a mighty peace movement is growing; already in some countries men and women and children are striking out, arms in hand to resist American domination, and achieve peace, freedom and democracy for themselves. In many cases it is women who are taking the initiative, not waiting to be called.

Women in the Battlefield :

Women from Nicaragua, El-Salvador, South Africa, Namibia, Europe and many other countries, are entering the peace movement all over the world. Shocked by Reagan's announcement on the neutron bomb and the madness with which it was declared, thousands and lakhs of people, among whom women are in overwhelming numbers, from Europe, Latin America, Africa, West Asia, South East Asia, have begun pouring into the streets in demonstrations and marches, vehemently protesting these preparations for war, for turning their countries into nuclear cemeteries. They are demanding nuclear-free zones, negotiations and detente, an end to stockpiling of nuclear and other arms.

An appeal to the U.N. Secretary General on 'peace', was signed by 500,000 women in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland and Greenland and the Federal Republic of Germany. A number of women's delegations met the U.N. Secretary General to impress upon him the urgency of considering the peace proposals.

Two hundred thousand people demonstrated in Brussels on October 16, 1981, in the largest action to date on behalf of 60 different organisations, including trade unions, women's organisations, churches, and political parties, with the slogans, "Give peace A Chance", "We want to live". In Canada, Nicosia, Cyprus, huge mass meetings were held in October. In the Federal Republic of Germany, 3,00,000 people held a rally on October 10. The people in West Germany are naturally alarmed at the plan to deploy fresh U.S. missiles on their soil, already having the largest concentration of nuclear weapons in the world. France mobilised more than 11 lakh people in Paris. In Britain 2,50,000

people gathered in Hyde Park on October 24 in protest against Reagan's war policies. In Italy, Greece, Portugal, Spain—everywhere people have demonstrated and joined the movement.

Women in West Asia, Latin America, South Africa Taking Up Arms

The women of Lebanon, Palestine, in Latin America, Nicaragua, Chile, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala have taken up arms to defeat the imperialist manoeuvres or occupation of their countries. The women in South Africa have laid down their lives while fighting against the racist Government of Apartheid, supported with arms and money by American and British imperialists.

The threat of war has now come to us, and women in India must be made aware of its significance, must come out like their sisters in other countries to roll back this danger and defeat the imperialist war plans. More particularly when relations are again strained between India and Pakistan, we particularly hold out our hand to our sisters in Pakistan, who are particularly dear to us. We salute their courageous resistance under conditions of a savage repression by a ruthless dictatorial rule, which is trying to hurl women back into the dark ages and keep them in physical and mental seclusion and darkness. Still they continue to fight for freedom and democracy in their country, as well as for themselves. Every blow they strike against dictatorship and oppression is a blow for the freedom and equality of all women. On International Women's Day we send our warm fraternal greetings to them and pledge full solidarity in their struggle and in our common fight for a better life. Let us stand firmly together against any further hostilities between our two countries, and assert the commonness of interests that bind our two peoples.

On this day of International Women's Solidarity we greet the women of the world,

and express our firm solidarity with all those heroic women fighting with arms in hands, or fighting in whatever way they can. The women of India stand by and with them, and will struggle to rouse all men and women to fight unitedly against today's common enemy of all mankind, American imperialism, against the threat of nuclear catastrophe, for a world of peace. For peace is the indispensable condition for the fulfilment of our aim of complete equality.

—VIMAL RANADIVE

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I, Vimal Ranadive, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief

Sd/- Vimal Ranadive
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Extracts from letter the General Secretary, Women's International Democratic Federation to the Secretary, All India Coordination Committee of Working Women.

"...The document ("Participation of Women in Trade Unions in India") gives valuable information on the ratio of men to women in the workforce in different fields of the Indian economy, and emphasises the trade union activity of working women. All these problems were discussed at the Prague World Congress of Women 1981 in the commission on "Women and Work including Rural Women".

"The WIDF is now planning and undertaking further activities to implement the recommendations of the various commissions of the Prague Congress. One of our aims is to attain the ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against women.

"We think varied joint and mass actions of working women are necessary to eradicate all forms of discrimination against them prevalent in certain societies.

"We wish you every success in your noble task of mobilising and organising working women for Equality, National Independence and Peace..." □

USA— A Grievous Blow To Women's Rights

A FEDERAL JUDGE in Boise (Idaho) delivered two crushing blows to the Equal Rights Amendment guaranteeing equal rights for women, ruling that Congress lacked authority to extend the deadline for ratification and that five States acted within their rights when they rescinded their approval.

The long-awaited ruling by Judge Marion Callister came on a suit that had been filed by Idaho and Arizona two years ago. Ms Eleanor Smeal, the President of the National Organisation for Women had said in advance of the ruling that it was a "political case on the life or death of the Amendment".

The proposed amendment to the American Constitution, which would ban discrimination based on sex, requires approval by 38 States.

Judge Callister said Congress exceeded its authority in voting in 1978 to move back

the deadline for ratification from March 29, 1979, to June 30, 1982.

The judge also ruled that Idaho, Tennessee, Kentucky, South Dakota and Nebraska effectively nullified their prior ratification of the proposed constitutional amendment and may not be counted as ratifying States. He added that the same would be true for any other State that properly certified its action of rescinding.

The proposed Twenty-Seventh Constitutional Amendment passed by Congress in 1972, reads in full: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied to or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex. Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article. This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification." □

WOMEN WORKERS & TRANSNATIONALS IN THE PHILIPPINES

SINCE Martial Law was declared in 1972 in the Philippines, Transnational Corporations have been increasing in numbers. There are now 267 TNCs, of which 168 are American. What has attracted the TNCs to this country besides the guaranteed repatriation of profits? Undoubtedly, the cheap labour, particularly of women workers. The sectors they dominate are electronics, garments, fruit canneries precisely the industries where the detailed work requires the deft fingers of women.

There are over one million women workers making up five per cent of the labour force. They are mainly employed in agriculture, 21 per cent as farm labour and 36 per cent as hired labour. As unemployment rates for women are high and women are less in demand, the TNCs can offer less pay. When more workers are needed, a reserve of women labour is available.

Lowest paid workers

Filippino workers have the lowest wage rates in the Asia-Pacific region. According to one estimate, women do over seven hours unpaid labour at the workplace, besides the hours of housework. They get lower wages than men for the same work. Only 35 per cent of every peso paid to a Filipino worker goes to a woman worker. Female workers get an average of 160 pesos a week, while men get 296 a week.

Degraded for the Tourist Industry

As a consequence of this extreme poverty and desperation, a considerable number of women are engaged in prostitution and are officially considered 'Professionals', as part of the Marcos government's 'Tourist Investment Programme.' This tourism industry has made rapid strides in recent years, very largely on

the basis of the organised 'sex tours', in particular from Japan.

Filippino Women Fight Back

To fight against such exploitation and oppression, women's groups have been emerging, particularly in the rural areas. Women in Palanan, for example, supported their striking logger husbands for three months in 1978, with the strike ending in success.

Militant tribal women among the Kalinga Appayao tribes confronted surveyors from the National Power Corporation, to oppose the Chico River Dam Project which was being funded by foreign loans and designed to provide TNCs with hydro-electric power. The women did not move, even when the military fired on them. Instead they dismantled the NPC camps. More and more women are also joining trade union struggles. □

IT'S A SIN

WOMEN in Saudi Arabian towns and cities are absolutely forbidden to drive cars. In the countryside, however, some of them do it. This has been sharply criticised by Sheikh Bin Baz, a prominent religious leader. Interviewed by the newspaper Al-Djazirah, he said permission to women to drive cars was fraught with the danger of their committing numerous sins. For instance, they would have to uncover their faces. □

Sarada College

From Page 5

practice of collecting exorbitant amounts of money as fees, and on other pretexts.

The non-teaching staff have also added their voice against the management's practice of extracting work mercilessly from them and making them do all kinds of non-college work.

Though there is a temporary respite in the struggle of the teachers, students and the non-teaching staff of the college, they are hopeful that their efforts would soon meet with success. □

ALL INDIA CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE OF WORKING WOMEN

