

## Presidential Address

General Council Meeting

Hind Motors, January 21—23, 1983

Comrades, at the outset, it is with great sense of sorrow and grief that we mourn the loss of Com. Promode Das Gupta, member of the Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) and Secretary of the West Bengal State Committee of the Party. For years Promode was at the head of the CPI(M) and had the vital task of leading the West Bengal Unit of CPI(M) and the great mass movement of the State. He was one of the main architects of the successive defeats of the Congress(I) in West Bengal and guided the Left-front in that State. Devoted to the cause of rearing a genuine working class party based on Marxism Leninism, Comrade Promode spent all his energies in organising such a party and training young cadres to build it. It was under his stewardship of the West Bengal CPI(M) that the trade union movement led by CITU continued to develop and can now be considered as the strongest and well organised section of the CITU. The consciousness created in the struggles has enabled the working class of West Bengal to inflict repeated electoral defeats on the Congress(I) while scoring great successes in their immediate struggles. Com. Promode's passing away is an irreparable loss to the working class movement and it will take a long time to fill the void created by his departure.

I deeply mourn the passing away of Com. Brezhnev who occupied the most important position in the International Communist movement as Secretary of the CPSU. He was also the President of the USSR, the great socialist country which has done so much to

change the face of the world. During his tenure of Office as Secretary of the CPSU, Brezhnev played a great role in bringing new successes to Socialist planning and ensuring widespread prosperity and well being for the Soviet People. His contribution to the development of the other socialist countries was also great and during his stewardship a large number of socialist countries were knit together in common mutually beneficial economic activities. Indo-Soviet friendship also developed further when he was at the helm of affairs of the Soviet Union. It is embodied in many economic agreements between the two countries and finally in the Indo-Soviet treaty of friendship which strengthens our country against imperialist manoeuvres. Com. Brezhnev will also be remembered as a great fighter for the World Peace, a Statesman who used all his power to save the world from a devastating Nuclear War and tried to safeguard the safety and peace of millions of people. His passing away is a great loss to the world communist movement.

### **Victory of Tripura Left Front**

Comrades, in the midst of a worsened economic situation, the attack of divisive forces in Assam, in Punjab and communal and other forces in the rest of the country, the mass of people though often victims of diversionary politics continue to press forward in the struggle against the anti-people policies of the Congress(I) Government. An outstanding event is the decisive defeat of Congress(I) party in the States of Tripura, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. On behalf of CITU I warmly greet the victory of Tripura Left-Front headed by the CPI(M) against the Congress(I) and its secessionist ally. The Congress(I) allied not only with the secessionist tribal wing but also with the reactionary organisations like Anand Margies and Amra Bangalies. But the electorate inflicted a decisive defeat on it. The Left-front in Tripura has shown how to protect the unity of the country, advance the democratic rights of the people and keep the different constituents of our people together on a democratic and secular basis. The Left-front is given a decisive mandate despite the campaign of murder by the secessionists and unleashing of goonda gangs by the Congress(I) Party. This is the second time in the last year that the Congress(I) Party has been defeated decisively in an open electoral battle by the left-forces headed by CPI(M).

### Defeat of Congress(I)

The people's discontent against the corrupt rule of Congress(I), against its anti-people policies and against the distress caused by the economic exploitation reached such a stage that it resulted in an unprecedented and humiliating defeat of the ruling party at the hands of a new party Telugu Desam. The people of Andhra, the rural masses have expressed their strong disapproval of the Congress(I) rule and they expect that the new administration will remain watchful of their interests. While we welcome this rejection of the Congress(I) at the hands of the people of Andhra we cannot but express our concern at the way the working class centres of Andhra have voted. Despite the many united campaigns and the joint strikes and demonstrations on several issues the working class failed to elect trade union leaders with left and democratic outlook and was carried away by the general wave of Telugu Desam. The trade union movement, therefore, must continue its vigilance and while offering its readiness to help the new administration to solve the problems of the people, it will continue to move unitedly wherever the interests of the people are not protected.

Equally startling have been the developments in the Karnataka elections where the Congress(I) has lost its majority and a new Ministry headed by the Janata Party has taken over the administration. Once more the people of Karnataka who had experienced corruption, repression, attacks on democratic rights and economic distress under the Congress(I) regime have repudiated that party.

In Karnataka a number of trade union leaders have been elected with the support of the Janata Party. They will no doubt continue to exercise vigilance on behalf of the working class and the people while supporting the ministry to overcome the evil-effects of the previous administration. Both in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh in distinction from Tripura the working class and the trade union movement have governments which are not left and which have no distinct class programme like the left-front governments of West Bengal and Tripura. This may create difficulties in the future but the working class should remember that these new ministries embody the mass discontents against Cong(I) mis-rule.

These election results are of great political importance for our country and they are likely to set in motion a chain of events leading to further erosion of Cong(I) influence among the people and the disintegration of that party, because it is quite clear that the

illusions about the Cong(I) which brought it back to power in 1980 have worn out. Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka which for 30 years stood by the Congress Party have now repudiated it. The bastion in the south has collapsed—Kerala Ministry living only on the mercy of the communal and casteist organisations. It is significant that the south which stood firmly by Mrs. Indira Gandhi during the post-emergency electoral upheaval has now deserted her banner. It is also very significant that with her growing isolation from the people Indira Gandhi stoops to ally herself with any reactionary secessionist force as in Tripura or Kerala.

This is the time for the trade union movement to take common counsel and pull its full weight against the Cong(I) and help the Left & Democratic forces to advance further and consolidate themselves. The experience of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka shows that if the Trade Union movement and the working class is not active and conscious in the democratic struggle the discontent of people centres round parties other than left parties. The initiative of the United Trade Union movement is necessary to ensure that in the coming critical days when the masses will be leaving the Cong(I) and searching for a new leadership, their discontent should be channelised towards the Left. Without this the masses will be oscillating between parties whose class outlook is not different.

#### **Further Attack on TU Movement**

Comrades, the year that has passed shows growing attacks on the workers and the trade union movement. While the Govt. spokesman denied the existence of the recession, closures lock-outs, shut-downs, lay-offs and prolonged strikes all leading to starvation and unemployment dominated the situation.

The callous attitude of the Govt. was seen in its vindictive policies towards the Bombay textile strikers, two lakhs in number who have been holding heroically for twelve months in defence of their organisation and minimum demands.

This year that is beginning offers no respite. Both internal and external situation portends further attacks on the trade union movement which it is not yet fully prepared to meet.

#### **World Capitalist Crisis**

India's economic plight is worsening further under the impact of world situation, the world economic recession which shows no sign of abating.

The continuing economic recession has imperilled the econo-

mies of a number of countries who are dependent or like India closely tied to the economies of the advanced capitalist countries. Some of these countries are threatened with bankruptcy, with the masses saddled with the burden of foreign debts. India herself is in similar position with the well being of the working class and the masses threatened with new erosion.

The world capitalist economy which entered a period of crisis 7 years back shows no signs of getting out of it. The latest report of the ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT which embraces 24 advanced capitalist countries including USA, Japan, Australia and the European Countries, presents a dismal picture of the Economic situation. It gives quitous to the forecast of the capitalist economy turning the corner and predicts further prolongation of the crisis.

According to earlier expectations 1982 was to be a bridge year to normalcy. But the expectations got aborted as by the middle of 1982 the economy of the capitalist countries continued to be sluggish, recording a fall in GNP and a continued fall in the world trade.

It is estimated that at best Japan's GNP may rise by 3-4 per cent by the middle of 1984. By mid-83 USA's total output of goods and services will be only slightly above what it was at the beginning of 1980—3.5 per cent growth over two years. In 1982 production of USA declined by nearly 2 per cent while the West-European economy lay flat with the slowest growth rate.

The Governments of these countries acting in the interests of monopolies proclaimed that they would fight the crisis by counter-acting inflation. Inflation was declared to be the main-enemy and anti-inflation measures were declared as the remedy to curb the crisis and restore normalcy. Interest rates were raised, money supply and credit curtailed. In effect these measures were steps to pass on the burdens of the crisis to the working class and the people.

In the USA inflation rate dropped from 12.4 per cent per annum two years back to about 6 per cent in 1982. It was 8.9 per cent in 1981.

But it brought no relief to the working class and the people. The anti-inflationary measures led to a tremendous rise in unemployment. In the USA by September 1982 unemployment rose to 10.1 per cent of the labour force with 11.8 million Americans out of jobs. This was the highest unemployed rate since may 1941 when joblessness rate reached 10.9 per cent of the labour force and the

number without jobs was 5.7 million. The September unemployment figure is the highest since the great depression of 1930 which the capitalists try to forget and which gave way to World War-II. But the last word is not yet said. Unemployment continues to mount. Lay-offs continue at 200 thousands in a month. By December the unemployment rate had already mounted to 10.8 per cent and it is expected to rise further with at least 12 million people out of work.

The younger generation of whites and coloured people has to bear the main burden of this unemployment. According to the economic report of the US President submitted to the Congress in the early months of 1982, in the early 1980, the number of unemployed amongst coloured population almost doubled and among young people aged 16-19 it increased 150 to 170 per cent.

In Britain during the years of Conservative rule unemployment doubled by the beginning of 1982 reaching the figure of 3 million. The unemployed formed 20.7 per cent of the gainfully employed population. West Germany, France, Italy, Belgium and all the countries of Europe now boast of lakhs of unemployed. The total unemployment in Europe now reaches 18 million. Nearly 30 million people in the world of advanced capitalism are without jobs.

The anti-social and predatory character of state monopoly capitalism is seen by its wasteful expenditure on war-preparations, on forging of genocidal weapons of destruction to launch an aggressive war against the Socialist community. The US where the unemployment is highest leads this aggressive campaign instead of using its financial resources to fight unemployment and restore the economy.

The crisis is pervading the entire capitalist world and all developing countries pursuing the capitalist path have been drawn into its vortex. The process of exploitation of these countries by the Western Powers, their dependence on loans has now reached a stage at which these countries as well as their creditors are threatened with bankruptcy. The total debt of the third world countries is estimated at 500 billion dollars. Unable to pay it back because of the crisis and foreign exports many of these countries demand further loans from their bankers. The latter no longer feel safe to advance new loans. At the same time they are afraid to stop all loans lest the debtors might fail to pay, leading to their own bankruptcy.

The crisis has put a number of developing countries at the mercy

of the imperialist creditors who are now in a position to impose enslaving conditions on them. It enables a country like USA to pass on the burdens of its crisis to the debtor countries. Even in this perilous situation the USA is intent on forcing the sale of its goods on these people, for about 40 per cent of America's exports go to developing countries and one out of 8 US jobs depends on exports. The plight of the developing countries is due to their dependence on the capitalist countries. With advent of the recession exports have fallen and the developing countries are unable to pay their debts or maintain internal development and employment.

Even the prosperous oil-producing countries are in a tight corner. Fall in oil prices and exports have wiped out the earlier enormous surplus: The heavy prices charged for imports has eroded the surplus further.

#### **Impact of IMF Conditionalities**

India is in the same plight as these developing countries, unable to maintain its economy without heavy loans from the foreign banks. India is therefore not in a position to manoeuvre against its internal crisis. The conditions imposed by the IMF transfer the burden of Western crisis to the Indian people. They work havoc with Indian employment, industry and income at the disposal of the people. They are directed at securing Indian exports at cheap prices and flooding Indian market with unwanted foreign goods and machinery curtailing Indian production in the name of curtailing inflation. The story of the last two years is one of attack after attacks against Indian jobs and of lowering the return of the peasants labour.

How many workers know that the policies imposed by the IMF to help the landing countries have meant the export of unemployment to our country and loss of jobs for thousands. The liberalised import policies following the IMF loan has led to dumping of foreign goods affecting the functioning of some Indian Industries. There have been justified complaints from some industries, that they experienced recessionary conditions following foreign dumping. This liberal import was justified with raw materials with the ultimate objectives of increasing production, reducing inventory and strengthening the base of export promotion. All that it did however, was to cut Indian jobs or creat difficulties in the way of normal functioning of the industries. The Government could not escape seeing the consequences of liberal imports and had to

constitute a high powered committee to formulate a new export-import policy for the year. The dumping became so blatant that the Govt. of India passed a bill in October, 82 empowering it to take anti-dumping action.

### **Dumping Obsolete Technology**

It should also be noted that there is dumping not only of goods also but obsolete technology unwanted in the advanced countries. And certain selfish capitalists are importing this technology to make a fast buck accepting humiliating conditions of collaboration. Let me quote the following from The Times of India: "The new policy has rightly stressed the need to import technology on a selective basis. As things are, it is being literally bought by private and public sector companies enmass. On an average 400 to 500 agreements are signed by them each year. Far to many of these fetch the country outdated technology which the exporters discarded years ago. Indian companies that adopt them are not perturbed in the least because in the sellers' market that they operate, they are sure making a kill with whatever they produce. As depressing is the humiliating conditions that the exporting firms impost on the Indian companies by which they make sure that the latter continue to depend on them. They would not be able to get away with it where the Indian companies in a position to develop upon the technology they import.... The tregedy is that the Govt. seems to be conspiring with them to maintain the existing state of affairs".

### **Demand Management Policy**

The so-called demand management policies insisted on by the IMF and followed by the Govt. of India have again contributed to a further worsening of the economic situation, characterised by slow down and recession. What does the policy amount to. The restriction of credit and money supply, high interest rates and increased rates of taxation. Initiated in the name of fighting the speculative demand the measures were really directed to curb the demands of the denuded people already reduced to semi-starvation by the rising prices. In the name of curtailing the money supply and demand the wages of workers were sought to be frozen or the workers were offered marginal improvement—the 10 per cent all inclusive increase offered by the Bureau of Public Enterprises. So far as the un-organised workers were concerned they were to be sent to the starvation —hell in the name of demand management.

The credit restriction and high rate of interest could not so much affect the big capitalists. Their main blow fell on the smaller producers whose workers were also ill organised and were unable to protect their jobs.

#### Reduction of Food Subsidies

The IMF demanded lowering of food subsidies and making food grains more costly to the common people. How it was achieved during the year that have passed can be seen from the following figures of retail prices of essential commodities in Bombay compiled by the Research Bureau of the Commerce.

Item	Quality	Rs. per Kg.		Percentage valuation December 16, 1982 over a year
		December 16, 1982	December 18, 1981	
Rice	Average	6.00	3.80	57.9
Wheat	Average	4.60	3.90	17.9
Jowar	Average	3.00	2.30	30.4
Gram Dal	Average	5.50	6.00	-8.3
Tur Dal	Average	8.00	6.00	33.3
Milk per Litre	Buffale	6.00	5.40	11.1
Tea	Average	26.00	23.00	13.0
Coffee	Average	20.00	17.50	14.3
Kerosene per Litre	Average	1.70	1.66	2.4
Sugar	Average	4.50	6.00	-25.0
Groundnut Oil	Average	15.60	14.50	7.6
Vanaspati	Average	17.00	15.00	13.3

This is demand management and fighting inflation as per the directive of the IMF.

The terrific burden of this demand curbing fell on the rural poors and workers in unorganised industries. It is no surprise that inspite of the one year textile strike in the major textile centre of Bombay, it has not created any shortage of cloth in the market or appreciably reduced the stocks with the mills. The rural poors had absolutely

no purchasing power left to buy the cloth in the market. It is no surprise either that merely 500 people have already died of cold in Northern India. The agricultural worker is left completely defenceless in spite of the minimum wages Act. If he dares protest his houses are burnt as in Bihar and elsewhere.

### **Collapse of Labour Laws**

In the cities also the workers in unorganised industries are not protected under the Minimum Wages Act and they have to bear the full burden of the demand-management policies. These workers to whom the minimum wage Act applies are virtually treated as bonded labourers in the cities including the capital. Recently in Delhi a petition was filed before the Supreme Court against the violation of the Minimum Wages Act by certain contractors who were given work by the Government in connection with the Asiad. It is interesting to note that in the affidavit filed by the Government they showed that they had filed prosecutions against the employers for not providing certain amenities like latrines etc., but not for failure to pay the minimum wage. It was also found that the violation of the important Labour Laws was treated as a joke by the Magistrate and the Supreme Court had to make the following observations:

“It is apparent from the particulars given in this Annexure that the prosecutions launched against the contractors were primarily for offences such as non-maintenance of relevant register, non-provision of welfare and health facilities as first-aid box, latrines, urinals etc. and non-issue of wage-slips. We do not propose to go into the details of these prosecutions launched against the contractors but we are shocked to find that in cases of violation of Labour Laws enacted for the benefit of workmen, the Magistrates have been imposing only small fines of 200 rupees there about. The Magistrates seem to view the violations of Labour Laws with great indifference and unconcern as if they are trifling offences undeserving of Judicial severity. They seem to overlook the fact that Labour Laws are enacted of improving the conditions of workers and the employers can not be allowed to buy off immunity against violations of labour laws by paying a paltry fine which they would not mind paying, because by violating the labour laws they would be making profits which would far exceed the amount of the fines’.

This speaks of the collapse of labour legislations and its farcical implementation leaving the unorganised worker completely de-

fenceless against the Govt. and the employers.

### **Grim Economic Situation**

Comrades, let me now turn to present a picture of the grim economic situation facing the country and the working class. 1982 was declared to be the productivity year by the Prime Minister but it turned into opposite. It seems that things that the Prime Minister says and does turns to its contrary. When she talks about Secularism, she visits one temple after another making a show of her piety. When she talks about National Unity and Integration she sanctions alliance with secessionist and communal forces as in Tripura and Kerala. And now when she talks of Productivity Year, it turns out to be a year of prolonged strikes, lockouts, closures and slowing down of rate of economic growth. Today the country is faced with widespread famine conditions in several states with the rural poor being starved to slow death. Alongwith this there is a general break down of electricity production. There is a 100 per cent power cut in Tamil Nadu which has brought down the entire industrial machinery to a stop. Power cuts in Gujarat, Bihar, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab and Tamil Nadu and West Bengal have been so frequent during the last year that jobs and productions have been substantially affected. The Govt. through its publicity agencies proclaimed that power generation has increased by 7.5 per cent in 1982. But instead of more power there was shortage leading to chaos in production. The responsibility for this break down has to be borne by the Central and Cong(I) Governments. The breakdown in energy supply reveals the poor quality of Cong(I) planning and does not hold out hope for the recovery of economy.

The working class has had to bear the main burden of these energy break-down because it had to put up with lay-offs and closures.

The situation in the rural areas is already grim and it is not likely to be relieved much by the Rubi harvest. The Kharif production is low and that means, the tens of millions of the rural poors will have no purchasing power to sustain the production in cities. This together with the industrial conditions obtaining in 1982 show that the working class has a grim year to face and unless it wakes up in time it will be unable to meet a ruthless offensive against job and wage standards which is imminent.

### **The Recession**

According to a recent survey the Engineering Industry is losing Rs. 1000 Crores a month. It is able to utilise less and less capacity. It was able to utilise 70 per cent of its capacity in April, by September 1982, it could utilise only 60 per cent of its capacity.

In a number of industries the recessionary conditions have affected production. Textile machinery, Textiles, Fertilisers, Tractors, Caustic Soda and papers and Steels are Industries where stocks are accumulating and production is falling. The tractor manufacturers had to bear a 37 per cent fall in their sales.

By July the Fertilizer Industry had accumulated stocks running to 7.7 lakh tonnes.

The Textile Industry production fell by 3.9 per cent in yarn and 20.4 per cent in cloth during January-June, 1982, compared with the last year. Special steel products started declining from October, 1981. By June, 1982 stocks increased to 50 thousand tonnes.

Production of cotton yarns in 1982 was 11 per cent lower and cotton fabrics declined by 29 per cent.

Despite the prolonged Bombay Textile Strike the sold and unsold stocks of all varieties of cloth held by the textile mills at the end of 1982 were 0.65 lakhs bales and 0.91 lakhs bales respectively compared with 0.62 lakhs bales sold and 0.87 lakhs bales of unsold cloth at the end of October 1981.

The production of Jute Textile at 10.63 lakhs tonnes in 1982 was 7.9 per cent lower than that of 11.45 lakhs tonnes in 1981.

In certain other industries the production figures show certain rise but they are below the targetted figures and in these industries also stocks are rising.

The recessionary conditions in India not only manifest in declining the production in many industries but also in a failure to utilise more than 50-60 per cent of the full capacity.

### **Restriction on jobs**

The year that had passed was a year of closures and lock-outs, and therefore, of less productivity. The growth rate of industrial production has come down to 4 per cent. The current year does not offer any relief from this situation as neither the policies of the Govt. nor the employers promise to offer any relief to the workers and the people. The Govt. is bent upon raising the taxation on the common man and often resorts to various subterfuges. It has now become a part of its policy to impose taxation on the people when the Parliament is not in session. Instead of security of jobs it is

embarking upon a policy of more and more restriction on jobs. In L.I.C. the employees are faced with a introduction of Micro-Computers. Similar measures are being introduced in the Nationalised and Private Banks. Many industrial concerns have been encouraged to get part of their work done through computers. Pressed to export cheap, the Govt. is encouraging modernising processes in textile and other industries which threaten to deprive tens of thousands of workers of their jobs.

This is being done with vengeance in the Bombay Cotton Textile mills which now threaten to keep tens of thousands of workers permanently unemployed. The same attack is bound to be introduced in other exporting industries because Indian exports will not maintain their market unless they are offered at internationally competitive prices i.e. by cutting labour costs.

#### **Offensive against Wage**

Besides this there is a general offensive against wages, the Govt. and Public Sector leading the resistance to increase in wages and salaries. The public sector authorities are dragging on negotiations for new agreements in Steel, Coal and other Sectors with a view to impose the directives of the Bureau of Public Enterprises on the Unions. The Central Govt. continues to increase the work-load on their departmental employees and has virtually stopped new recruitment in various sectors. Punitive measures like transfers, diese non and out-right termination of service are resorted to by the Heads of some Departments to curtail the activities of employees. The private employers encouraged by the policies of the Govt. resist every demand of the workers and whenever strikes take place police repression is unleashed and goonda gangs are used to terrorise the workers.

#### **Patronisation of INTUC**

The Government itself continues to create further unrest in industry by patronising the INTUC even where it has no backing of the workers thus denying the right of the workers to have an organisation of their own choice. The Govt. has refused to accept the demand for recognition of unions through ballot because it goes against the interests of the INTUC. Its anti-labour legislations like the ESMA has invoked comments from the ILO but it has no intention of changing its attitude. On the other hand in complicity with the INTUC and a number of paper organisations it intends to impose on the workers a new Industrial Disputes Act. with a view

to curtail the right to organise, the right to strike and the right to form an organisation of the worker's choice. Continued repression, strengthening of anti-working class legislation and concerted offensive against jobs in the name of modernisation and export drive—these constitute the basic elements of official policy towards labour. In passing it may be noted that the Labour Deptt. of Govt. of India and its Labour Ministry have absolutely no *locus standi* in determining either the labour policy of the Govt. or its attitude and stand on current disputes. These are the monopoly of the employing departments and the Labour Ministry has the same position in the Govt. as Labour has in society.

### **Fight Unitedly**

It is these policies that the united working class has to fight in the coming months if it is to maintain its living standards. It is a battle against the effects of the crisis and the policies of the Govt. which pass the burden of the crisis on the working class. In protecting its interests the working class and the T.U. movement will have to give up the self-centered character of their struggle, defend the people and the peasants and give a much broader shape to their movement. The time has come to realise that without supporting and drawing the rural mass in the common movement the Trade Unions have very little chance of succeeding in their objectives.

The economic levers being in the hands of the Central Government, the people and working class of West Bengal could not escape the consequences of recession. Yet the West Bengal Ministry stood by the workers and people and did everything to protect the workers interests. It refused to use any repressive machinery against working class protests, stood by the fighting workers and threw its weight on the side of the working class to frustrate many a design of the money barons.

The forth-coming struggle requires much wider unity of the T.U. movement. We are happy that the N.C.C. is in a position to strengthen this unity. The unity it has brought about in Public Sector industries like Steel, Coal and other has to be strengthened and should be a precursor of much broader unity embracing all sections of workers and employees. Only with this unity we will be successful in meeting the looming offensive.

### **The Glorious Struggles**

We congratulate the Textile Workers of Bombay on their prolonged resistance which has drawn admiration from all sections of

workers. They have made history by their strike prolonging over a year. There has been no instance in recent years of 2 lakh workers maintaining their solidarity for more than a year in face of starvation, repression and police intimidation. Here is a mass of workers, Harijans, non-Harijans, Hindus, Muslims, Christians—all holding together with a unique sense of unity. This is what is called class solidarity.

We congratulate our Forward Seamen Union for its successful organisation of the Seamen's strike. This should be considered to be an important event for the militant trade union movement and CITU should do everything possible to help the fighting seamen to win their demands. We strongly condemn the high-handed attitude of the Shipping companies and the attitude taken by the Govt. The Coal-Mine workers recently organised a successful one day strike facing severe repression. They are again going on strike for three days in support of their demands. The emergence of Coal workers as a fighting contingent of the T.U. movement is again an event of great importance to the advance of their movement. We also warmly welcome the fighting spirit and growing unity developing among the public sector workers. The CITU expresses solidarity and sympathy with the RMS employees who are being subjected to new hardships by the P & T Deptt. The changes that the department seeks to introduce are highly objectionable, will lead to delay of postal mail and impose work-load on the employees. But this is exactly how the official policies now move in the direction of attacking the living conditions of the employees.

#### **The Authoritarian Drive**

Comrades, while we are busy to meet the immediate offensive against our living conditions we cannot forget our duty towards the democratic forces in the country, The Congress(I) Govt. while talking of democracy, is introducing by stages, dictatorial measures. The people in three states have given it a rebuff from which it is not likely to recover. At the same time it continues to pursue some such measures as the Bihar Press Act which is nothing but a negation of the freedom of press. We join our voice with all those who have denounced this blatant attack on freedom of press and we congratulate the CITU Unions in Bihar for lending their full support to the agitation for the withdrawal of the measure. The entire CITU must throw its weight on the side of the democratic forces who are opposing the Act.

### **Fight the Divisive Forces**

Comrades, our CITU meetings and conferences have repeatedly warned the people against the danger of divisive forces who seek to undermine the unity of the country. Of late these forces are more in evidence with secessionist slogans, with slogans like Khalistan. These forces play upon certain democratic demands and at the same time try to divert the discontent into either separatist, secessionist or communal channels. It is the basic duty of the CITU and its trade unions to fight these forces, maintain the class unity of the working class and strengthen the sense of all India unity.

Our comrades in Tripura deserve special congratulations because they have precisely frustrated the game of the divisive forces to divide the people of Tripura in the Bengalis vs. Tribals. Their victory is all the more important because Congress(I) had entered into an alliance with secessionist and other divisive forces.

Our comrades in Assam now are entering into an electoral battle where they will be waging a struggle for unity of the country and the unity of our class. In the last three years our trade unions there have fought heroically against the divisive and secessionist forces. They together with other Trade Union organisation and left parties have upheld the banner of National Unity. Many of our comrades have suffered, some have been murdered and beaten, others have lost their lives but we know that their sufferings and martyrdom will not be in vain. The CITU must give them all possible help in the present electoral struggle so that the forces of Indian and Class Unity come out successful.

### **Struggle Against War and for Peace**

Comrades, the international situation continues to be grim and the war clouds continue to gather. US imperialism continues its aggressive war preparations and constitutes the main source of nuclear war to the world. It is in no mood to accept the genuine offers for peace made by the USSR though all peace loving people have welcomed it. The months that have passed have also shown that the forces of peace are strong and if they maintain their pressure the US imperialists can be curbed in their aggressive designs. It is therefore necessary for the workers of India, the CITU unions and the people as a whole to strengthen the voice in defence of peace and against the US designs for war. The widespread dem-

onstrations that our unions have organised at the call of CITU on 1st September did constitute a good beginning in our struggle for peace but only a beginning. We were very much strengthened by the massive March for Peace organised by the CPI(M) and CPI in Delhi in which our unions also participated. We must continue this struggle further and draw ever increasing number of people in the struggle for peace to frustrate the US designs of war against the USSR.

### **The Fifth Conference**

Comrades, the main business of this session of General Council is to take decisions regarding the preparations of our conference in Kanpur which is meeting in the middle of April this year. We have to decide the question of representation of unions so that we are in position to restrict the attendance of number of delegates to 2,500 and not more. This is to be done because experience shows that it is very difficult to organise a larger conference and meet the demands for accomadation etc. That means too heavy a burden on the local organisers and too big a strain on the economic resources of one state. The General Council must also consider the grim economic situation and its recommendtion to the conferences on how to tackle it. The conference, besides, will have to decide questions regarding T.U. unity and how to broaden it. It will have to study our experience in the recent months and united front agitations and develop appropriate policies for the future. I am confident that in our discussions you will give as much thought as possible to these questions, so that our conference session is able to give guidance on immediate problems facing our common trade union movement.