

SYLLABUS AND LECTURE
NOTES FOR T. U. CLASSES
(DRAFT)

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ON THE HISTORY OF INDIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

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Origin and Development

Social history shows that the strife between the Capitalist and wage-labourer dates back to the very origin of capital. Industrial revolution which continued for about 100 years, from 17th Century onwards, consolidated the capitalist system of economy. As Britain was the first land witnessing the industrial revolution, the Britain also first saw the birth of working class movement.

Karl Marx showed that the capitalists exploit the working class by extracting the surplus value. But that the workers are exploited by the Capitalists and the Capitalists are the main enemy to the working class was a matter which came to be known to the working class only through experience.

Since the introduction of machinery, the machine - the instrument of labour, appeared to the workman as the material embodiment of capital. It was, therefore, hardly surprising that the worker's immediate reaction was to destroy the machine. So these machine-breaking revolt of workers continued for a considerable period after which only the workers came to know that machine is not their enemy. Their enemy is the owner of the machine or the Capitalist.

From the very beginning, the British Government, by enacting Anti-Combination Acts, tried to suppress the workers' movement and the Parliament was used as an instrument to subjugate and oppress the workers.

In the 1830s the British workers started to collect signatures on a petition for submitting to Parliament. These people's charter containing a programme of six demands for political reform signed by thousands of thousands workers, were submitted to the Parliament for consideration. This movement is called Char-

tist Movement. The Chartists' mass petition being rejected by the reactionary Parliament, the agitation burst forth in the form of mass strike and insurrection. This Chartist Movement first laid the foundation of the modern working class movement.

Later on, Karl Marx gave a new direction to the working class movement. Under his guidance International Workingmen's Association was formed in London in 1864. Marx gave the direction that the emancipation of the working class was neither a local nor a provincial but a social problem, embracing all countries in which modern society exists and the working class movement should be aimed at the abolition of all class rule. This is the international aspect of working class movement.

Genesis of working class movement in India

When the working class movement was raging in Great Britain and other parts of Europe in the 19th century, in India the progress was stagnating under the colonial rule. In India the colonial rule kept the feudal economy intact and in a scattered way, here and there, some industries were set up. Coal, Tea, Railways were the first industries, where the modern working class of India were born. The Railways started functioning in India in the 1850s, particularly after the great rebellion of 1857. Introducing railway system in India objectively helped India's industrialisation.

Thereafter, some jute mills and textile mills came up in Bengal and in the Maharashtra-Gujarat areas in the middle of the last century. And by the end of the century, the Railways were also fairly spread in different parts of the country, plantation and tea industries also developed and not only jute and textile mills, a number of other industries too grew up in different centres like Bombay, Calcutta, Howrah, Kanpur, Lahore, Madras, Nagpur, etc. Thus, the first generation of Indian working class was born and took shape in these industries. Thus, the basis were laid for the formation of modern Indian working class.

Problems relating to formation of a modern Indian working class

The problems attending the Indian workers in its establishment

as a new class are born out of the basic processes relating to brutal colonial exploitation. The protracted and tortuous disintegration of feudal system and the retarded growth of capitalism, the wide gap, between the decline of the old types of production and the rise of the new, gave birth to a number of problems affecting the formative process of the Indian working class. Then the diversity of religion, race, caste, creed, languages etc also created problems for the Indian working class to establish as modern and homogenous working class. Caste feelings, religious feelings and language divisions stood as an obstacle in the way of unified working class. Caste and racial loyalty was more predominant among the workers.

The first generation of Indian workers hailed from the expropriated and impoverished peasantry. Grinded by feudal exploitation, the hungry landless rural labour and the poor peasantry were tempted by these new industries in the Urban Centre and joined as industrial workers. While joining the industries, they carried with them all the characteristics of backward outlook born out of the feudal rural economy and society. Many of them held a piece of land in their villages also. Thus, this first generation of Indian working class remained well influenced by the peasant outlook and peculiarities.

First symptom of working class struggle

Like in England and other Western countries, in India also the main demand of the workers at initial stage was reduction of working hours. As sun-rise to sun-set was working hours in the West and so it was also in India. The working hour was elongated with the use of electricity. So workers raised demand for reduction of working hours. In 1862, the first strike in India took place when some railway workers at the Howrah Railway Station started a strike action demanding reduction of working hours to 8 hours a day. Thereafter, at Nagpur in Empress Mill, in 1877, another strike took place by the workers. Thereafter, a number of strikes took place in different industrial sectors like Bombay, Calcutta, Kanpur, madras, Lahore etc. But full-fledged trade

union movement was yet to be born at that time. These were initial form of protests. Only on the basis of some immediate necessities some struggle took place and Strike Committees, etc were formed and as soon as the strike was over, those committees also died off and there was no protest action for a long time. There was no permanent body of the workers for organising and leading their struggle in a systematic way.

In the initial battles of the working class, the Railway workers played a significant role. In the first decade of the present century, the series of strikes in the Railways gave new impetus to the growth of trade union movement in India.

With the formation of Indian National Congress in 1885, some national leaders took interest in organising the labour but they came with a philanthropist attitude not from a class point of view. Moreover, they were interested in organising the labour in the British owned factories and not in the factories owned by the Indian capitalists. Their outlook was to organise the labour for using them in anti-British struggle. They did not realise the class necessities of organising the labour as they had no realisation of the class-conflict of the capitalist society. Moreover as it was their intention to use the labour only for anti-British struggle, they did not like the idea of organising labour in industries owned by the Indian capitalists. They thought that any workers' struggle in the India-owned industries would harm Indian interest. So they discouraged any labour struggle in Indian-owned industries. Even then out of necessity and pushed by class conflict and exploitation by the capitalists - whether British or Indians, struggle started developing both in British-owned and India-owned industries.

Swadeshi movement widens labour struggle

The Swadeshi movement which started as a protest against partition of Bengal by the British imperialists saw some advancement of growth of indigenous industries in India and at the same time a fillip to the growth of working class struggle also. Inspired by call of Swadeshi and actively helped by a section of

the nationalist leaders the labour struggle, particularly in Bengal, attained a new sweep.

The other provinces also did not lag behind. In Madras, Bombay and Ahmedabad a number of strikes broke out during this period.

First political strike by the Indian workers and their militant participation in freedom struggle

Lokmanya Tilak was a respected leader of the working class also, since he took interest in organising labour in Bombay area particularly. When he was arrested and sent to six years imprisonment in 1908, the workers were not yet organised on a State or city basis, yet they organised the general strike against six years imprisonment of Tilak. Street battles ensued between the striking workers and police and many workers laid down their lives.

Similar history of working class uprising for national freedom was witnessed in 1930 also when Mahatma Gandhi was arrested. Workers of Sholapur, a textile centre of Maharashtra, rose up in armed revolt against the British, along with the other toiling people in the city, they kept the British Army and administration out of the centre for seven days and declared Sholapur free of British subjugation. Ultimately, Sholapur was recaptured by the re-enforcement of British Army and many workers were killed in the clashes and many were executed later.

In 1946 also when the Indian Ratings in the Royal Indian Navy revolted in the seas of Bombay, the workers of Bombay rose up actively in support of the naval strike. Bloody battles ensued with the British Army, as a result of which a huge number of workers were killed. These are inspiring episodes where workers fought valiantly and laid down their lives for the freedom of the country and not just for their economic demands.

Formation of the All India Trade Union Congress

After the end of the First World War, there was a resurgence of working class movement all over the world mainly against retrenchment. In India too a number of struggles broke out in dif-

ferent labour centres and trade unions came into being. In 1918 the Madras Labour Union was formed which bore all the characteristics of a modern trade union. Gandhiji also took initiative in forming labour unions of the Ahmedabad textile labour union as Majur Mahajan with Gandhian philosophy of Trusteeship. In 1919 International Labour Organisation was formed as a part of the League of Nations to recommend labour welfare measures to the member-countries in order to mitigate the labour unrest throughout the world.

It is in this background that in 1920 All India Trade Union Congress was formed in Bombay. Lokmanya Tilak who took interest in organising the labour, first contemplated the idea of forming an All India platform of the Indian Trade Union. But by the time AITUC was formed, Tilak died. Lala Lajpat Rai who was also the Congress President at that time became the first President of AITUC and Dewan Chaman Lal was the first General Secretary. But by 1924 influence of the young communists started increasing in the leadership of the AITUC and a bitter ideological struggle ensued between the reformists and the revolutionary trade unionists who believed in class struggle. The reformists wanted the workers to remain content with the economic demands only, they did not want the workers to take part in the freedom movement. The revolutionary unionists wanted the workers to widen their periphery of struggle and take part in freedom movement and move with the goal of establishing a new social order where there would be no exploitation of man by man. This ideological conflict within AITUC began with its formation and continued.

First Trade Union Law

In India the trade union movement was always considered as a law and order problem by the colonial government. They refused to recognise the trade unions and movement as lawful activities. It is only in 1926, under pressure of the movement, that the first Act on Indian Trade Union - The Indian Trade Union Act was passed. Thereafter a series of acts were passed in

this regard. The Bombay Trade Dispute Act passed in 1939 sought to suppress the workers' right to strike and the workers fought against it.

Split in All India Trade Union Congress

The ideological struggle ultimately led to a split in AITUC in its Nagpur session in 1929, which was presided over by the Pt Jawaharlal Nehru. Veteran leaders like V V Giri, N M Joshi, etc walked out of the Conference when younger radical and leftist delegates wanted to get the resolution linking the AITUC with anti-imperialist struggle passed. They walked out and formed a new trade union—Indian Trade Union Federation. Pt Nehru was then with the left and the radical and he condemned this walk-out of the veterans.

Another split took place in 1931 in the Calcutta Session of AITUC, presided over by Subhash Chander Bose. The split at that time occurred between the communists and other radical nationalists. This was very unfortunate at that time. Later in 1935 the communists came back to the AITUC. In 1938 there was a patchup agreement between the AITUC and Indian Trade Union Federation also to unite together.

General strike of jute workers and textile workers

In 1928-29 two general strikes of the workers broke out in Bengal and Maharashtra. In Bengal the jute workers started a general strike and in Maharashtra the textile workers came in for general strike. Since the Jute Mills were owned by the British capitalists; Indian National Congress came in for supporting jute workers but they did not support the textile workers' strike, since the textile mills in Bombay were owned by the Indian capitalists. The British Government tried to brutally suppress both the general strikes. These two general strikes laid a foundation of militant trade union struggles in India and the young communists who were deeply involved in organising these strikes got training in organising trade union struggles. Two great unions - Guani Kamgar Union in Maharashtra of the textile workers and Bengal Chatkal Majdoor Union of the jute workers came into

being as a result of these struggles.

In 1937-38 also similar general strikes took place in various labour centres of Bengal and Maharashtra which further consolidated the trade union movement in India.

Kanpur Conspiracy Case and Meerut Conspiracy Case

In 1924, and in 1929 the British Government started two cases against the rising communists, and other radicals and arrested a number of communists and other radical leaders. Among them were many leaders of the AITUC but these trials instead of dampening the modern trade union struggle inspired it further. In fact, through these trials communism came to be known in the country and the arrested communists presented an alternative path of national struggle.

Anti-Imperialist rebellion

In 1930 anti-imperialist rebellion burst forth in Chittagon (now in Bangladesh) and Peshwar (now in Pakistan). Against Gandhiji's arrest when people all over the country came out in strong protest movement and courted arrests, the workers of Sholapur, an industrial centre of Maharashtra also rose in armed rebellion against the British administration and the army.

During the Second World War

During the Second World War (1939-45), the AITUC activities were mostly hampered because of ideological rift between the communists and nationalists in respect of labour movement. Till the middle of 1941, attack on the Soviet Union by the Nazi Germany, all were united in opposing the British war efforts, and after Nazi attack on Soviet Union there were difference of perception and the AITUC could not act unitedly.

After the Second World when the imperialism was weakened by the victory of the Soviet forces, the liberation struggle of the colonies intensified. In India also the freedom movement was very much intensified. At that time workers' struggle also spread all over the country. In 1946 when the Post and Telegraph employees went on for a general strike as a result of which the First Pay Commission was appointed, the entire working class came

in their support and with the call of AITUC general strike took place in several provinces. The Royal Indian Navy's mutiny and the Indian workers' active support to it came just at that time. Defying communal ...the unity and cohesion of the entire working class and their inspired participation in the political struggles and the uncompromising resolution of the peasantry, the students and the middle class elements raised the tempo of the anti-imperialist struggle to a challenging height.

Formation of Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC)

When attainment of freedom was imminent, Indian National Congress decided to set up its own organisation and INTUC was formed in February 1947. This was formed as a reformist trade union to carry forward the reformist and class collaborationist ideology of Indian National Congress. And this reformist and class collaborationist trade union has succeeded in keeping a very large section of the working class under its influence. The Government's help and favour to the trade union is contributing a lot to its influence over the workers. After the attainment of freedom a number of other trade unions like HMS, UTUC, BMS etc were also formed by different political parties on their respective political lines. This badly divided the Indian trade union movement and the working class unity suffered in the process.

Formation of CITU

But the ideological struggle within the AITUC continued. After independence the National Congress got the seat of power. They followed a path of building capitalism without completely eliminating feudalism. This was the class policy of the Bourgeois-landlord Govt. Naturally, this policy came against the working class interests. Wherever the working class tried to rise up, the Government sought to suppress the same with Iron hand.

To consolidate the capitalist base the government laid the foundation of building some basic industries in public sector. This led a section of the AITUC leadership to consider the Nehru

government a progressive one and wanted to collaborate with them. But another section strongly opposed it because this line went against workers' interests. Then after 1956 when the International Communist movement was gripped with ideological rift between revisionism and revolutionary Marxism, this also affected the functioning of the AITUC. The AITUC leadership also muzzled democratic functioning of the organisation and there was hardly any possibilities to change the leadership in a democratic method. It is in this situation that the revolutionary section of the AITUC came out to form a separate organisation to unite and organise the workers on the basis of class struggle at a conference in Calcutta in May, 1970 and thus the Centre of Indian Trade Unions was formed.

Women workers' role

The advent of capitalism dragged out the women from their homes and they are made to work in the factories. This was done not to benefit the women folk but to increase their own profit by utilising the cheaper labour of women workers. as in India also when the first contingent of working class was formed in the railways, in the Jute and Textile Mills in the Coal and Tea industries, women, too in a good number joined the ranks of the working class. But they were discriminated against on pay and other benefits. Against the discrimination the Trade Union movement had to fight. Moreover, in the male dominated society the women workers were discriminated also in regard to trade union leadership. This was another area where a battle is fought for equal right of the women workers. But this discrimination against women is an outcome of the capitalist class rule. It exploited the women workers both at home and at the work place. Women were subjugated in all areas of social activities. A unified working class movement of both women and men against the capitalist system of exploitation can only ensure women's equal right with men and working women's emancipation.

Condition of the Working Class After Formation of CITU (1971-1977)

The working class movement during the period 1971-77 was

faced with severe repression from the State. Moreover, the trade union faced further political deviations during the period. But at the same time, attempts were made to unite the trade unions to face the oppression.

Militant struggles of the working class in every part of the country was a common feature of the period. In West Bengal particularly, the trade union had to work in a situation of semi-fascist terror since 1971.

The most important working class action of the period was the strike of railway workers. All India Loco running staff began sick leave movement since 2nd August 1973 demanding 8 hours duty and settlement of other demands which paralysed the entire railway network. It has to be noted that a number of category wise unions of the railway workers were born during this time because of the burning problems of different category of workers and the refusal of the recognised federations — All India Railwaymen's Federation and National Federation of Indian Railwaymen to take up their issues.

Meanwhile, there were some changes in the leadership of the AIRF. George Fernandes became the President of AIRF which convened a joint convention of the railway workers on 27th January 1974. The convention set up a National Coordination committee of railwaymen's struggle. CITU and other trade unions were also included in this NCCRs. It has to be particularly noted here that this NCCRs came into being much because of the untiring effort for unity by the CITU leadership. All India Railway Employees Confederation at its convention at Madras on 14-15 April 1974 raised the demand of need based minimum wages and other issues and decided for struggle. Therefore under the leadership of NCCRS indefinite strike of the railway workers began from 8th May 1974.

The government came down heavily against the strike. 50,000 were arrested. 3000 were dismissed under rule 14(2). Police raided the workers' colonies. The central government employees also joined the strike on 8th May but that strike was called

off after two days. 5000 central employees were detained. In the background of severe repression the railway workers strike was called off on 29th May 1974. The strike actually led to a removal from service of 50,000 railway workers including 30,000 casual workers under different methods. However, the militant strike of the railway workers and central government employees was the biggest and most notable trade union action of the time.

Meanwhile, around July 1974, Dr. Sukhomoy Chakravarty's report on wage freeze created a serious situation for the working class. In July 1974 a Presidential ordinance imposed compulsory deposit and impounding of 50 percent of DA of the employees and workers. This wage freeze efforts of the government saw a spate of united resistance by the employees particularly in the government and service sector.

Dr. Chakravarty's report opposed wage increase on the strange pretext that in public sector workers were getting higher salaries and moreover, the workers in the organised sectors were above the poverty line. Poverty line was fixed by the Planning Commission as working income of Rs 20.00 per head corresponding to price index of 1960. This was an ideological attack by the capitalist-landlord government on the working class.

On 28th August 1974, a National Campaign Committee was formed against wage freeze. CITU, H.M.K.P, UTUC (LS), BMS, Progressive Labour Federation (DMK-led), central and state government employees organisations were part of this National Campaign Committee. It may be mentioned here that on the basis of ideological affinity, INTUC, AITUC or HMS already formed in 1972 a joint platform National Council of Trade Unions. In fact after formation of CPI(M) in 1964, the CPI started coming closer to Congress ideologically and so in trade union front also they were nearer to the INTUC and HMS.

In 1971, after Indo-Pak war external emergency was declared in the country against which CITU and the National Campaign Committee unleashed countrywide protest movement.

But political situation started fast changing since 1975. The Congress suffered an internal split. Meanwhile under Jayprakash Narayan a big mass movement developed against corruption. In the background of this intensifying class struggle and split within the structure of the ruling party, prime minister Indira Gandhi declared internal emergency on the entire country on 26th June, 1975 and arrested all opposition political and trade union leaders. Fundamental rights guaranteed under the constitution were kept suspended. Press was gagged. Many leaders of the centre and state employees movement were dismissed under Article 311(2)C of the constitution. Many of them were arrested under MISA.

The industrialists naturally supported the draconian emergency measures. Naturally, because of ideological affinity, AITUC could not oppose its internal emergency measures. On the contrary alongwith INTUC and HMS they cooperated with the government in matters of labour policy.

The government in this situation tried to control the labour relations by setting up National Apex body. AITUC, INTUC & HMS representatives were nominated in the Apex Body. Quite naturally, the government led apex body failed to protect the interests of the labour to stop retrenchment or closure. Government also announced an ineffective scheme for 'participation of labour in management'. CITU placed a set of suggestions to modify the scheme so that it could really be of any value.

The repression on the working class was so severe during the emergency that in many important centres even May Day could not be observed. CITU called for limited action against internal emergency. But nothing could be done in this respect except in some places.

In January 1977, Indira Gandhi declared elections to the Lok Sabha. All political leaders were released. Faced with the elections, the centrist political parties combined with the rightist and communal parties and formed the Janata Party. Anti-emergency forces came together. CPI(M) and other Left parties supported

this new political formation in order to defeat authoritarian forces. Indira Gandhi herself and her son were defeated and Janata Party formed the central government in March 1977. Unprecedented repression and most anti-democratic measures led to the defeat of Indira government and a new political chapter began.

New Political Situation And New Horizon of Working Class Movement — 1977-84

The new government under Morarji Desai's Prime Ministership promised to dismantle the authoritarian emergency structure and restore democracy and trade union rights. In West Bengal, in June 1977 state elections, Left Front government came into existence under Jyoti Basu's chief ministership. The political scenario at the centre and the states changed.

In the new situation a national trade union convention was held at Delhi (Vigyan Bhavan) on 18th September 1977. CITU, AITUC, HMS, two UTUC's, TUCC and central and state government employees' federations and other revived regional federations joined the convention. This convention demanded withdrawal of all victimisation and repressive measures imposed during emergency, to stop retrenchment, lay-off etc. acceptance of bonus as deferred payment, refund of compulsory deposit scheme and restoration of full trade union rights. The convention also decided a programme of action.

The convention also demanded deletion of article 310 & 311(2) B & C from the constitution (arbitrary powers to dismiss government employees) and reinstatement of all victimised railway employees. The Janata Party government decided to withdraw all repressive measures against the railway employees and reinstate those dismissed.

But the class character of the Janata Party government led it also to anti-working class measures. The Bhoothalingam committee's report was reflection of its class character. Bhoothalingam committee's anti-working class report, Industrial Relations Bill, Hospital and Other Educational Institutions Bill etc all embodied measures against the trade union rights of the workers. As a

result, the working class had to develop united resistance against the anti-working class measures.

Meanwhile, the Janata Party was crippled with internal conflicts. The communal elements came to the fore in the government. On 15th July 1979 Morarji Desai government resigned, Charan Singh formed a government, but that government also collapsed only after 24 days. However, that government before it collapsed announced productivity-linked bonus for railway, postal and defence employees.

During the Lok Sabha elections in January 1980, Indira Gandhi and her Congress again came to power. The period of Janata Party's rule disappointed the working people. This was taken advantage of by Indira Gandhi in coming to power.

It is in the new situation, 'National Convention of the Working People' was held at Bombay on 4th June 1981. This was a TU convention of highly representative character — CITU, AITUC, HMS, UTUC, UTUC(LS), TUCC, INTUC (Dara Group) and centre and state employees federations and various industrial federations joined the convention. A National Campaign Committee was formed in the convention for organising united struggle of the working class at national level. A programme of action including march to Parliament and one day's strike was taken.

But soon the government came down with Essential Services Maintenance Act directed against working class strikes with provision for severe punishment for joining or abetting a strike. National Campaign Committee called upon the working class organised protest action against the ordinance. The entire country saw protest movements with large participation.

On 23rd November 1981, a big March to Parliament programme was organised and on 19th January 1982 nation wide strike was observed. It was really a historic action of the Indian working class.

Among the notable industrial strikes of the period was indefinite strike of 3 lakh jute workers commencing from 16th Janu-

ary 1984. In fact there was forceful demand for nationalisation of the jute and cotton textile industry of the time.

Second national Convention of Trade Unions was organised at Delhi on 4th August 1983. This convention called upon the working class to fight against black laws, retrenchment, lock outs, rising unemployment etc.

This period also witnessed strike struggles in government public sector — particularly in the coal industry against the official decision of deducting 8 days wages for one day's strike.

The trade unions were also engaged in this period in fighting for a correct price index series and also for recognition of trade unions on the basis of secret ballot. CITU naturally was in the forefront of the struggle.

In the wake of separatist militancy in Punjab, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated on 31st October 1984 and after December 1984 elections Rajiv Gandhi formed new Congress government.

Economic Crisis & Working Class Resistance (1985-90)

In the meantime, capitalist economy all over the world had been gripped into a severe crisis. The World economic crisis of capitalism that set in the 1980s was much more severe and longish than that of the 1930s. The effects of the crisis in the form of recession and attack on the working class was felt in India also. This world crisis of capitalism also gave rise to the idea of globalisation of economy. IMF and World Bank started intervening in the national economy, particularly of the 3rd world countries through their prescription of serving capitalism, particularly to maintain the economic domination of the West.

Rajiv Gandhi's government too fell in line with IMF and World Bank prescriptions and new economic policies was ushered in. Privatisation, wide entry of multinationals, closure of sick units, bank on recruitment etc were main features of the new policy of the economy. Rajiv Gandhi boasted of a policy of preparing the country for 21st century. But his policy brought more disaster to

the economy and India became one of the worst debtor countries of the world. In industrial field, sickness and closure of the industries with consequent retrenchment severely affected the working class. As a result during the period the working class had to build up a countrywide movement against privatisation of the PSUs, closure, lock out, retrenchment and formidably rising unemployment. Communal and separatist forces also came into the fore at this time and the working class had to fight against communalism and separatism also along with their own class demands.

Faced with intensifying struggles of the working class, the government again tried to pass anti-working class bills and to amend the existing labour laws so as to severely curtail the rights of the working class. As result all trade unions barring INTUC strongly opposed Hospital and Educational Institutions Bill and the proposed industrial Relations Bill. On 14th July 1988 a national convention of trade unions was organised for the purpose.

Meanwhile, countrywide political movement developed for resignation of Rajiv Gandhi government for its anti-working class economic policies and besides corruption. Barring INTUC the trade unions also raised this demand.

On 22nd March 1989 9th Lok Sabha elections was held and Rajiv Gandhi was defeated. National Front with the support of the Left parties and the BJP came to power. This was a critical balance of forces in the parliament and it was very difficult for the new V.P. Singh government to follow a systematic policy.

This government announced their commitment on certain pro-working class measures like participation of labour in management and constitutional guarantee for right to work. A bill on workers participation in management was prepared and introduced in the parliament also. A number of trade union seminars were organised by the government to decide its policy towards the workers. Seminar on agricultural workers and construction workers were prominent among them.

CITU particularly developed a countrywide struggle for imple-

menting the constitutional guarantee of right to work. A national convention on Right to work was organised at Durgapur on 2-4 April, 1990 to build up a movement for this purpose. Many national federations joined this convention. An approach paper on Right to Work was prepared.

Similarly, CITU suggested measures for labour participation in management in an effective way.

V.P. Singh government announced 27 percent reservation in government and PSU services for the OBCs. This raised a storm in the society. The upper caste forces tried to resist the move; caste conflict was started over this issue. CITU supported the reservation in principle with certain modifications as a medium of social justice. However, severe debate ensued on Mandal Commission's report on the basis of which 27 percent reservation was ordered by the government. But the main question was creating more jobs so that growing unemployment problems could be really fought. Unfortunately, V.P. Singh government could not spell out any measure in that direction.

Anyway, the communal forces became very active during the period particularly on the issue of Babri Masjid. L.K. Advani was arrested. BJP voted against the V.P. Singh government. The government collapsed in 7th November 1990. A minority puppet government led by Chandrashekar and supported by Congress(I) took over. But that government had to go within a few months. Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated during election tour. Congress(I) again came to power in June 1991 under the prime ministership of Narasimha Rao.

New Economic Policy In Full Swing: Historic Working Class Resistance (1990-95)

With Narasimha Rao as Prime Minister, the new economic policy came into full swing. Huge amount of money was borrowed from the IMF. The country's economy came under full control of IMF-World Bank.

Certain serious development in the international scenario also to be noted. The socialist governments of Eastern Europe col-

lapsed in 1989 and Soviet government collapsed in 1991. This was a serious set back for world struggle for socialism. It had its impact on India also.

However, because of severe economic crisis and onslaught on the working class, the trade union movement forged ahead during the period despite its international setback in the struggle for socialism.

Against all round privatisation, full scale entry of multinationals, liberalisation and globalisation of economy, retrenchment, closure etc the trade unions except the INTUC and BMS (which supported the new economic policy) developed Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions in 1991. Thereafter with the intensification of the attack after GATT agreement, National Platform of Mass Organisations which included trade unions, peasant organisations, student-youth and women's organisations also came into being. It has to be again noted here the tireless extensive efforts made by the CITU in building up these united platform of mass resistance. At the initiative of these joint platforms four nation wide strikes were organised on 29th November 1991, 16th June 1992, 9th September 1993 and 29th September 1994. The working class of India created a new history.

Biggest working class rally was held at Delhi on 25 November 1992. Despite severe restrictions, a huge rally of the workers, employees, peasants, students, youth was organised on 5th April 1994 which faced severe tear gas and lathi charge from the police. The latest all India programme at the call of platform of mass organisations was the demonstration before parliament on 15th December 1995 along with countrywide rallies.

The struggle against the new economic policy at national level and industry level is still continuing in different forms. It has added a new dimension to the Indian working class movement. The working class is creating a new history.

CITU's Attempt For Unity of The Working Class

The last twenty five years of trade union struggle has witnessed repeated attempts to form joint platforms to resist the onslaught

of the ruling class. In the name of Rashtriya Sangram Samity, National Campaign Committee, Sponsoring Committee — three united platforms were created. And more and more workers and employees came closer for the united struggles.

It is in this situation Com. B.T. Ranadive, founder president of CITU raised the question of a trade union unity of permanent nature in 1979 as a form of confederation or labour coordination committee. In 1987 in Bombay session of CITU, the question of Confederation was again raised and since then the CITU is consistently working for such a confederation. In this connection, the seminar organised by CITU on 19th December 1994 on the birth anniversary of BTR was a milestone in the effort for trade union unity. In this seminar different trade unions were involved and exchange of opinion took place in regard to trade union unity of a permanent nature. CITU presented a well written paper in the seminar detailing out the nature and character of this proposed confederation and the steps to be taken for the purpose. Presently in developing united movement against the new economic policy, CITU is relentlessly making efforts for formation of such a confederation of the trade unions.