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STRIKING WORKERS ALL OVER THE WORLD



STRIKES WORLDWIDE AGAINST ONSLAUGHTS

Strikes and demonstrations are returning to the streets and the headlines

On June 3rd, France was virtually closed by yet another nationwide strike. The government's plan to reform the country's pension system is being opposed by massed ranks of workers on the streets. Their colourful banners and loud slogans have dominated the local media for over a month, rising to a crescendo this week in advance of the parliamentary debate on the plan, scheduled to begin on June 10th. The last time organised labour took on the government over this issue (in 1995) and the government backed down. This time it appears to have more resolve.....

It is not just in France..... demonstrations of organised labour on the move have been widespread.

✎ In Germany, the unions have been battling against their government's efforts to raise pensioners' contributions to their health-care schemes. Thousands marched in a series of rallies on May 24th to protest. This week, workers in eastern Germany were on the march again, to protest at the length of their working week.

✎ Even normally placid Austria was gripped by widespread strikes on June 3rd, following equally crippling stoppages on May 6th. This week's were said to be the largest industrial protest in the country since the second world war. Co-ordinated by the national federation of Austrian unions, they drew more than a million people on to the streets to protest (as in France) against planned pension reforms. Wolfgang Schüssel, Austria's chancellor, attacked the unions for launching a "disproportionate" strike and said that parliament would not be swayed.

✎ On May 21st, India suffered a general strike as workers protested against plans to privatise state-owned assets and reform labour laws. Earlier a huge march brought Calcutta to a standstill.

✎ In Britain, firemen have been on partial strike for months, demanding a pay increase while bitterly resisting changes to their working conditions. Tony Blair's Labour government has

watched with some alarm as a series of elections has put militant leaders into the top jobs at some of the biggest unions. In April, Kevin Curran, a former welder, succeeded the more moderate John Edmonds as leader of the GMB, Britain's fourth-largest union, and in May, Tony Woodley, a left-winger, defeated a candidate favoured by the Labour Party for the leadership of the powerful T&G union.

✎ In America, powerful unions have been holding back so called restructure of ailing industries. In April, American Airlines narrowly avoided bankruptcy after it reached last-minute deals with unions representing pilots, flight attendants and ground staff.

(The Economist, London/Paris), 5th June 2003)

Strikes push France to brink of crisis

The French government struggled to avoid a political crisis yesterday, as teachers stopped work for the sixth time in recent weeks and unions threatened an indefinite shut-down of railways and the Paris Metro.

The situation has been enflamed by the fact that the most militant actions are "pre-emptive strikes" by teachers and transport workers who are not directly threatened by the government's reforms. Increasingly, the movement is turning into a revolt against the entire concept of reform and the long-term plans to reduce the size, and cost, of the state.

The militancy of the teachers, in particular, has jolted the government, which had hoped to push through a series of state reforms, starting with an overhaul of the tottering pensions system and the transfer of some auxiliary school jobs from central government to regional control.

There were signs yesterday that the government might be prepared to shelve its innocuous-seeming plans to calm the teaching unions. Such a step would anger many of the government's own supporters in parliament and the press.

The most militant of all are the union sections in the Railways (the SNCF), the Paris Metro and bus service (the RATP), even though their special

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THE WORKING CLASS

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BUSINESS AS USUAL

by UNNY



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EDITORIAL

OMINOUS THINKING, FLAWED ACTIONS

The fact that the motley coalition crafted by the BJP had completed five years of rule at the Centre under the Prime Ministership of Vajpayee has gone too much into the heads of those in the '*sangh parivar*', particularly the President of the BJP, Venkaiah Naidu.

He has been giving vent to the feelings in certain sections of the '*parivar*', which is toying with the idea of advancing the polls to the Lok Sabha due in the second half 2004. The catchy description of '*vikas purush*' and '*loh purush*', whom Naidu predicted as the duo who would lead the BJP to secure an absolute majority - an ambitious target of 300 seats - in the next Lok Sabha, was in fact meant to signal that move.

Naidu also came out with the statement that the BJP was in favour of simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and the State legislatures.

These were followed by the '*chinthan baithak*' at Uthaaan in Maharashtra, where the bigwigs of the BJP sat in a conclave under the watchful eyes of the RSS leadership to deliberate upon the strategy for elections 2004. The exercise apparently remained inconclusive. Possibly those in the BJP, who expected the anti-incumbency factor to sail them through in the elections to the four assemblies in the States of Chattisgarh, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, did not want the same factor operating against the incumbent Prime Minister to spoil their perceived chances.

But, what is ominous for the people is not so much the timing of the next parliamentary election but the strategy sought to be adopted to win it, whenever it is held. The renewed vigour with which the Ayodhya issue is sought to be brought back to the centre-stage, with the seer of the Kanchi Muth indulging in a murky deal is most worrisome to say the least.

On the other hand, the NDA Government is all out to carry on their kinship with the US administration against the will of the people of this country. The debate over sending Indian troops to serve as errand boys of the illegal occupation regime of the US reveals this divergence between the people and the NDA. As a prelude, the NDA regime has extended berthing facilities to the US warships in the Kochi port area, with scant respect to the overwhelming sentiment expressed by the people against the US operations in Iraq and its continued occupation there.

These are actions, which are definitely flawed.

The intention is to sidetrack the most pressing problems of the people and the utter failure of the NDA governance on the economic front with a high pitched rhetoric on non-issues in the run up to the impending polls in some States and the general elections in 2004. The working class must remain vigilant and raise the consciousness of the people to frustrate the attempts by the BJP and the '*sangh parivar*'.

91st INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE

Tapan Sen

The 91st Conference of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) held on 3-19 June 2003 at Geneva revealed glaring reflection of the rising discontent against and louder disapproval to the ongoing process of neo-liberal imperialist globalisation. Not only most of the workers delegates attending the conference from both developing and developed countries, but even the Government representatives from many of the developing countries, particularly from Asia, Africa and Latin America had made strong observation against the neo-liberal globalisation process perpetrated by the international monetary agencies at the behest of few rich nations and their multinational companies.

No doubt, the increasing tempo of anti-globalisation protest-actions even in the western world from the very onset of the new millennium, against an economic order which generated filthy inequality and deeper poverty even in the highly industrialized countries has provided the backdrop. In particular, the French workers' mighty countrywide strike action on 13th May, 2003 against the French Govt's move to drastically slash down the pension rates while increasing the contribution by the workers, followed by chain of sectoral actions by the workers from different segments of the economy from 3rd June onwards, i.e., during the ILO conference itself, had been a matter of wide discourse between the delegates during the conference. The workers group at the ILO conference has conveyed their warm solidarity to the French workers' ongoing struggle. That is why, even the Director General's speech while placing the Report before the conference could not but comment on the so called shortcomings of globalisation policies reflected in aggravation of poverty and unemployment and marginalisation of developing countries.

DISCUSSION ON DIRECTOR GENERAL'S REPORT

GLOBALISATION DENOUNCED

In the 90th Conference of ILO held on 2002, the Director General, Juan Somavia had to mention in his speech before the full assembly that the

globalisation is facing a crisis of legitimacy. In the 91st Conference, the Director General's report titled "Working out of poverty" had to observe, "While for some globalisation has generated wealth and welfare, many see it as a source of persistent inequality and social exclusion...Inequality within many countries and between the richest and poorest has grown exponentially over the last few decades.(page-6).... Yet the dominant policy message has been: Grow fast, distribute later. It has not really worked. (page-6,7)." While reflecting on the impact of the present brand of globalisation on the mass of the world populace, leading to phenomenal growth of poverty and income disparity, the Director General's Report commented, "In 1960, income gap between the wealthiest fifth of the world's population and the poorest fifth was 30 to 1. By 1999, it was 74 to 1....Would growth have been impaired, if wealth creation had been more evenly distributed these last forty years? If we had at least maintained the ratio of 1960? Certainly not. On the contrary there would be fewer people living in poverty...there would be more consumers, greater demand and a more dynamic global economy. We need growth and equity- a globalisation that leaves no one behind. (page-7)." While placing the report before the plenary session, the Director General also commented, "The nightmare of poverty condemns about 3 billion souls, virtually half of the world, to a daily struggle for survival on less than US\$ 2 per day. ...The poor does not cause poverty. Poverty is the result of failures and ineffective economic and social systems...of inequitable national and international income distribution pattern. Of governance problems...and of a model of globalisation incapable of preventing the growth of unemployment and the informal economy.....If the direction of things does not change, the worldwide goal of halving poverty by 2015 will not be met..." But as usual, and may be due to systemic compulsion, despite admitting the inefficacy of the present model of globalisation in providing a better humane living for all, the Director General still

sought to find a solution within the frame work of free market-globalisation itself. He suggested for making the globalisation more inclusive, open economies to be more responsive to social concerns. He did not mention anything about neocolonial ploy of the economic super-powers to deindustrialise the developing economies and to thrive at their cost. He remained silent about the imperialist game plan to establish hegemony over the rest of the world and combine both their military and economic policy designs in that direction. DG admitted about the conflicting interests of the labour and the capital and the design of the capital owners to promote informalisation of the economy for the growth of their business, talked quite loudly on 'race to the bottom' by the governments in respect of labour standards in their madness to woo foreign capital, but still prescribes a reconciliatory approach without any caveat. He did not bother to mention even in his introductory-speech in the plenary session about the rising waves of strikes and struggles by the working class all over the world including in the developed countries and preferred not to assert the truth that the united resistance struggle by the working class can create grounds and condition for such "social dialogues" as per ILO vocabulary.

SOME IMPORTANT INTERVENTIONS

Many speakers on the DG's report were forthright in denouncing the present globalisation process at the root of widespread poverty. Mr Thombo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa in his address to the conference said that the consequence of globalisation is one of marginalisation of the majority of the poor countries sinking them more and more into poverty. He also firmly maintained citing concrete examples that problems of underdevelopment cannot be addressed by policies driven by profit maximization. The workers' delegate from Russian Federation stated that poverty has been a pressing issue in Russia for over ten years; about 30 percent Russian workers are working poor since their salary level is below subsistence wages. The entire social security system is being severely threatened and accumulation of unpaid wage arrears remains a cancerous problem. The representative of International Textile,

Garment and Leather Workers' Federation stated that unregulated and unprotected work by millions of workers in the developing countries in the textile, garments and clothing and leather industries owing to policies of the respective Govts to compete with each other at workers' cost in the globalised economy, has become a passport to permanent poverty for all the workers. The Workers delegate from Paraguay said that the neoliberalism has imposed the anarchy of market on the workers. Crisis continues without any growth under globalised economy, leading to widespread closures, joblosses and unemployment and attack on labour rights. Paraguayan workers are already in the path of long drawn struggle braving murderous attack of the state administration. Srilankan worker's delegate also stated that globalisation and competitiveness meet at the apex of *Laissez faire* and the inevitable downsizing leading to more and more workers being pushed into a process of casualisation and contract labour etc. The workers' delegate from Venezuela stressed upon the urgent need for "reform of the international economic systems which currently help to make the rich countries richer and the poor countries poorer".

Sukomal Sen, while speaking at the plenary on behalf of the Trade Union International of Public and Allied Employees criticized the DG's report for not referring to the resistance struggles by the workers at different part of the globe against neoliberal globalization. These struggles should be considered central to the peoples' drive to fight out poverty and inequality and ILO must come out with all support to such struggles as a part of its strategy for creating conditions for eradication of poverty, Sen asserted. Sen also urged that governing body of ILO should be made truly representative, representing all trends and opinions.

John Sutton of TUI of Workers of the Building, Wood and the Building Material Industries stated that while high sounding concepts like social dialogue and social partnership have an important place, the key to liberating working people from poverty and exploitation lies in teaching workers to unite and struggle together and the real task involves exposing the class based nature of

society and facilitating militant struggles to challenge for power in the workplace and power in the society.

SPECIAL SESSION ON SITUATION OF WORKERS IN OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

This time a special session was held in the ILO Conference on the situation of workers in the Occupied Arab Territories. DG submitted a separate report on the basis of the reports collected by a high level mission sent by ILO last year to go into details of the situation of workers in the occupied Arab Territories by Israeli settlers affecting the Palestinian and Arab workers and the whole of Palestinian economy, besides heightening the tension in the entire region. The Report mentioned about serious deterioration in the situation affecting the Arab and the Palestinians most. The session witnessed serious deliberations on the matter and overwhelming majority of the opinions denounced the Israeli Govt backed by USA and opined for stepping up initiative for a political solution through vacating of the occupied territories by Israel and forthwith stoppage of arsons by the Israeli Army. Speakers after speakers stated that though ILO's assistance for technical cooperation for development of Palestinian economy and institutions in the occupied territories is of crucial importance and a welcome initiative, solution lies in heightening simultaneous political initiative by the world community to bring to an end of the occupation of Arab territories. Otherwise, continuance of destruction along with the constructive initiative by ILO will frustrate all reconstructive efforts. H Mahadevan (AITUC) spoke in the special session on behalf of Indian Workers' delegation, while the Govt and the employers' delegates from India did not take part in the deliberation.

ON IRAQ

The entire workers group in the ILO has also passed an unanimous resolution on the situation in Iraq and demanded end of foreign occupation of Iraq and reconstruction of the country under UN supervision. In the tripartite Plenary session also delegates from many countries, particularly from the workers side demanded forthright position to be taken by ILO to denounce US aggression on Iraq and insist for immediate end of US occupation there.

DELIBERATION IN COMMITTEES

As per usual practice, the conference deliberated on five issues in four different committees. The issues were 1) on Scope of Employment relationship, 2) On Human Resource Development and Training, 3) On revising the convention on Seafarers Identity 4) On Occupational Health and Safety, 5) On Application of Standards. Tapan Sen (CITU) represented the workers delegation from India in the Committee on the Scope of Employment Relationship along with Ashok Singh (INTUC), Human Resource Development Committee was represented by Ravi Raman(BMS), Occupational Safety and Health by H Mahadevan (AITUC) and Hiralal Sharma (INTUC), Application of Standards Committee by K J Thakkar (BMS) and Shankar Saha (UTUC-LS) and the Committee on Seafarers by Abdul Gani Serang of HMS.

The Committee on Employment Relationship dealt on the situation arising out gradual informalisation of various economies following globalization leading proliferation of various type of employment relationship like that of employees under contractors and subcontractors labour and many other type of disguised and ambiguous relationship under the garb of false self-employment, independent and individual civil and commercial contracts, all aimed at depriving the concerned workers from their rights and other protection measures including social securities. The deliberation was aimed at devising an ILO instrument on the subject matter to identify various facets of disguised, ambiguous and triangular employment relationship emerging increasingly at various sectors and devise suitable measures for extending protection to all such employment relationship both through proper legislations also strengthening enforcement machineries and related institutions. The Employers group in particular opposed the initiative and tried to block effort up to the last point. But ultimately following an intense debate in the committee and subsequent voting on some of the issues, they had to come round to agree for devising an appropriate ILO instrument in the form of recommendation to address the issue of disguised employment relationship, promote collective bargaining and social dialogue to find solution to the problems.

The Committee on Human Resource Development and Training worked on the need for revising and improving upon the existing ILO standards vide Convention no 142 and Recommendation no 150. This was necessitated by the changes in the business and economic scenario following globalization on the one hand and fast changes in the technologies on the other. The discussion was aimed at going deep on all the aspects of issue with an integrated approach in preparation of devising new standards in 2004 ILO Conference. The Committee after prolonged deliberation has drawn unanimous conclusions on various aspects of human resource development and training for further deliberation in the ILO Conference of 2004 to finalise revised standard in the form of recommendation or convention or both.

Similarly the Committee on Occupational Safety

and Health has drawn up a document on plan of actions and strategy on ILO standards related activities on the vital issue of occupational safety and health.

The Committee on improved security of Seafarers identification discussed various aspects of security concerns raised by various Governments in the matter of identification of the seafarers to finalise the text of a new ILO Convention on Seafarers Identity Documents in place of the old Convention(1958) on the subject.

The Committee on Application of Standards reviewed the situation relating to implementation of various conventions and recommendations of ILO in various countries and also scrutinized the cases of complaints of violation of ratified conventions received and examined by Committee of Experts on application of ILO standards.

TRADE UNIONS DENOUNCE CUT IN PF INTEREST RATE

The Trade Unions denounced cut in the interest rate on workers provident fund by the Govt of India. In a joint statement issued on 29TH May 2003, CITU, AITUC, UTUC and AICCTU strongly criticized the decision of the Central Board of Trustees (CBT) to reduce the interest rate on workers provident fund to 9 per cent from the existing 9.5%. The bonus of 0.5% in interest rate to be given on the occasion of Golden Jubilee year of Employees Provident Fund Organisation is being sought to be used to pretend 'no decline' in PF interest, which is nothing but a substandard trickery, the trade unions expressed. That bonus of 0.5% was also granted in the silver jubilee year 25 years back.

On being asked by the press, the CITU spokesperson stated that the reduction in the interest rate on PF will put the mass of workers in huge loss. An obsession for low interest rate regime and reduction in the interest rate announced by the Finance Minister in the successive budgets on the special deposit scheme (SDS) in which around eighty per cent of the provident fund money is being parked has paved the way for such drastic reduction in interest rate on workers life time savings in PF. The reduction in PF interest rate nor in the interest rate in SDS has got no economic justification as the Provident Fund deposits cannot and should not be treated at par with other bank or term deposits having provisions of withdrawals any time or on periodic terms. Provident fund deposits are a long term deposits spread over the entire working life of a worker for 30 years on the average to return to them only after their separation/retirement. This deposits, thus warrants a differential treatment vis-à-vis other term deposits or saving instruments. Reduction in interest rate on PF thus exposes patently anti-worker policy of the Govt and must be opposed by all concerned.

CITU also pointed out that all the trade unions in the country have jointly demanded restoration of 12% interest rate on PF and it was one of the demands for 21st May countrywide general strike. The decision of reducing the interest rate on PF was taken by a truncated CBT where CITU and AITUC nominees are deliberately kept out. Other TU representatives in the sub-committee constituted by CBT for the purpose were expected to stand firmly by the demand also voiced by them before the common workers for restoration of 12% rate on PF and not to be party to such anti-worker decision, which has not happened, most unfortunately.

CITU called upon the working class to raise voice of protest against such unjust reduction in the interest rate on PF.

THE UNORGANISED SECTOR WORKERS BILL

The unorganised sector in our country employs around 37 Crores workers and is fast expanding as a result of the liberalisation policies. A vast majority of them- 23.7 Crores- is engaged in agriculture. According to the NSSO data, out of the rest, 4.1 Crores work in manufacturing, 3.7 Crores each in services and trade, and around 1.7 Crores work in construction. Though several legislations like the Minimum Wages Act, Maternity Benefit Act, Equal Remuneration Act, Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, Building and Other Construction Workers (RE&CS) Act, Workmen's Compensation Act, and Contract Labour Act etc are fully or partially applicable to the workers in the unorganised sector, none of these is being properly implemented. They do not have any job protection or social welfare benefits. Most of the workers in the unorganised sector, like home based workers, domestic workers, vendors etc are not covered by any protective legislation.

One of the terms of reference to the Second National Commission on Labour was to suggest Umbrella legislation for ensuring a minimum level of protection to the workers in the unorganised sector. In fact, suggesting umbrella legislation was publicised as the most important task of the SNCL and was used to counter the criticism against Commissions' moves to

dismantle the labour laws meant to protect the interests of the so called well placed workers in the organised sector. But the draft bill proposed by the SNCL contained nothing more than an elaborate structure of Boards from the Central to the Panchayat level, registration of the unorganised sector workers and issue of identity cards. It contained nothing concrete to ensure job protection, minimum wages and social security. No responsibility was fixed on the Government to contribute for their social security.

In the 38th Indian Labour Conference held in September 2002, the Labour Ministry assured that a bill would be drafted and consultations would be held among the social partners. But the first draft prepared by the Ministry of Labour was mostly confined to providing contributory social security and welfare measures without any provision for employment protection, minimum wages etc. for the workers. In addition, the first draft enabled the Government to assume absolute authority to decide about the application, modification and alteration to the existing statutes, which are in force. There was also no provision for action against the employers who fail to contribute to the welfare fund. All the Central Trade Unions - CITU, AITUC, HMS, INTUC and BMS- discussed the bill and came to the common understanding that

the bill required lot more modifications. On 22nd January 2003, they sent a joint letter to the Labour Ministry demanding redrafting of the bill by involving the trade unions in the process. On 5th March 2003, CITU, AITUC, HMS, UTUC, UTUC (LS) and BMS jointly reiterated their demand raised in the 38th ILC that the bill should be taken up as an agenda in the 39th Standing Labour Committee and the 39th Indian Labour Conference.

The Labour Ministry called a meeting of the Central Trade Unions on the 24th of May 2003 to discuss the redrafted bill on unorganised sector workers and asked the Trade Unions to give suggestions within 15 days. The second draft bill was more retrograde than the first one. Though the second bill dropped the proposed section 54 authorising the Government to decide on the application, modification and alteration of the existing acts like the Minimum Wages Act, Payment of Wages Act, Payment of Bonus Act, Equal Remuneration Act, Contract Labour Act, Maternity Benefit Act, Child Labour Prohibition Act, Workmen's Compensation Act etc, it has avoided defining several terms, including 'dispute', 'self employed worker', 'contractor', 'principal employer' etc, making it vague and prone to different interpretations, to the detriment of the unorganised sector workers. Even the Lok Shramik

Panchayats or Labour Courts mentioned in the previous bill do not find any mention in the new bill. The entire section on Inspection, Penalties, and Procedures is omitted. There is no provision for ensuring that the provisions in the bill are complied with. Neither is there any provision for the resolution of any dispute regarding the application of the Schemes or the social security or welfare benefits applicable as per this bill. Most importantly, this bill too contains no provision whereby the employer employee relationship can be established, which is one of the most serious problems faced by the workers in the unorganised sector. There is no provision to protect the job security of the unorganised sector workers.

The draft bill has not incorporated many of the unanimous suggestions of the tripartite workshop held subsequent to the meeting of the ILC. Though a brief chapter on employment related issues had been added in the new draft, the provisions therein do not contain anything concrete. For instance, there is a cursory mention of minimum wages. But neither in the present draft nor in the original Minimum Wages Act, there is any provision to give effect to the norms laid down by the 15th Indian Labour Conference and the Supreme Court judgement in the Raptakos Brett case for prescribing the minimum wages. CITU, AITUC, AICCTU, TUCC, UTUC, UTUC (LS), HMS, BMS, and INTUC discussed the bill and

sent section wise amendments to the bill in a joint letter to the Labour Ministry. They have also reiterated the demand that the bill be discussed in the ensuing SLC and ILC. The Trade Unions made the following general observations and suggestions to be taken into consideration before finalising the bill:

1. There should be a separate bill for the agriculture workers. The separate bills on employment conditions, welfare, and social security aspects should be moved simultaneously with the bill on the unorganised sector workers.

2. All these bills including the unorganised sector workers' bill should provide for initial funds and regular defined contributions from the Centre and the States.

3. The entire cost of administration of the Act (s) should be borne by the Government at least for the first five years and the position can be reviewed and revised commitment worked out after this specified period.

4. The minimum basic welfare and pensionary benefits to be included in the Schemes should be incorporated in the bill.

5. Wherever the employer is not identifiable and/ or the worker is compelled to change employment frequently, the contribution of the employer should be paid by the Government /Board.

6. The Board (s) constituted under this Act should be a body having statutory powers to administer the various functions and Schemes under this Act.

7. The Board should have equal representatives of the Government, workers and employers.

8. The Government should allocate funds for social security at an annual rate of 3% of GDP and it should progressively increase till a satisfactory level of social safety net is in place.

9. Area of coverage and time frame for commencement of the Act and authorities for implementation and enforcement should be specified.

The CITU Committees and the Unions, particularly those of the unorganised sector workers should campaign widely to bring pressure on the Government to incorporate the suggestions of the Trade Unions in the proposed bill for Unorganised Sector Workers.

The Government of India and the present Minister of Labour are reportedly very keen to introduce the Bill just to claim that they have showered mercies on the unorganised sector workers, who do not have any legal protection. But, the legislation, as contained in the draft, will only be on paper without any scope for implementation.

NEW PHASE OF MOVEMENT BY OIL WORKERS

Swadesh Dev Roye

The all India convention of the public sector oil workers was held in Kolkata on 1 June, 2003. Trade unions affiliated to AITUC, CITU, INTUC, Hind Kisan Kamgar Sena, Maharashtra General Kamgar Union and several independent recognized trade unions functioning in ONGC, IOC, BPCL, HPCL, Oil India, BRPL, Kochi Refinery, Numaligarh Refinery etc particip[ated]. A very significant highlight of the convention was the participation of delegates representing the major central trade unions, all the public sector Oil Companies and all the regions of the country. This was an unprecedented united exercise of the oil industry workers and that too with the sole agenda of fighting out the anti-national oil policy of the Government.

The on going anti-privatisation struggle of the oil workers was launched mainly by unions in BPCL and HPCL, the two PSUs being the immediate target of privatisation onslaught. The first phase of this movement culminated in a massive countrywide strike on 25-27 March'03 by the HPC, BPCL and KRL workers, who were organised under the National United Platform Against Privatisation of Oil PSUs.

NEW PHASE

The Kolkata convention has signaled a new higher phase of the united movement of the public sector oil workers against privatisation, expanding the horizon of the United Forum representing the trade unions functioning in all the public sector oil companies in the country.

Given the horrifying track record of the NDA Government at the Centre intent on completely wiping out the public sector from the industrial map of the country, it will be sheer self-deception to believe the statement of Disinvestment Minister, Arun Shourie, that ONGC, IOC and GAIL will not be privatised. Interestingly the 102nd Working Committee meeting of the BMS held on 6-8 April, 2003 in Maharashtra has demanded: "to scrap the present disinvestments ministry of the Government and debundle the group of secretaries and group of ministers; to announce in unequivocal and clear terms that no profit

making PSUs would be disinvested."

In this connection it will be worthwhile to recall the speech of the then Minister of Petroleum & Chemicals while introducing the Bill - The ESSO (Acquisition of Undertakings in India) Bill, 1974 in Parliament. The Minister said: "It is our declared policy that the oil industry must be brought under Government's effective control. The oil industry is far too important for the economic development of the country and for national security to be left in the hands of foreign companies. We, therefore, feel that it will be politically wrong and economically incorrect to leave its control in the hands of private companies, much less in the hands of foreign companies..."

From the foregoing it is clear that the Government have taken a 'U' turn from the assurance given to Parliament. Therefore, the statement of the Government on ONGC, IOC GAIL etc. cannot be relied upon at all. Actually the NDA Government has been privatising the oil PSUs through direct and indirect mechanism and routes. The fight to stop privatisation cannot, therefore, be limited within the confines of any one company or a segment of the sector. It is imperative for the trade unions in all the oil PSUs in the country to forge powerful unity and launch vigorous struggles. From this perspective, the Kolkata convention is an encouraging start.

PRIVATE GRABBING

The danger of privatisation of the oil must be comprehended in the light of the naked pro-private sector hydrocarbon policy and practice of the Government. We must also take lesson from the international experience as to how the MNCs are grabbing the oil sector, particularly in the developing countries. The entire world has in single voice condemned the US real intent behind the aggression of Iraq - to grab oil wealth of that country

With successive rounds of New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) the Indian monopoly houses and foreign MNCs have grabbed many highly prospective oil blocks discovered. On the other hand, the public sector ONGC is compelled

to compete with the private oil companies confronting many odds and disadvantages. It is an irony that the ONGC is required to bid for the oil fields discovered by itself. Take for example, in the last round of NELP, ONGC was successful in 14 blocks out of 27 blocks on offer. If the time-tested oil and petroleum policy had not been changed, then all the blocks would have come to ONGC instead of being grabbed by the Indian big business and foreign MNCs.

Yet another vital damage is caused with the decision to keep the PSUs away from bidding for HPCL and BPCL. In the absence of any public sector bidders, the private bidders will go for cartelisation. Once the notorious cartel mechanism is put in place, the PSUs would be grabbed by the private business for a song. In reply to question by the Parliamentary Standing Committee, the Secretary of the Ministry stated: "Last time it was experienced when IOC bid for IBP that Reliance and Shell had made good offers. We had realisation that official valuers had valued the price around Rs.300 - 400 crore against this both these companies had made offer of Rs.700 - 800 crore. IOCL offered Rs.1200 crore and acquired it. So, more the competition, more the bid..."

The trade union movement must take serious note of such anti-public sector stand of the Government. The BJP-led NDA Government is showering out of way favour to the Reliance Industries to become a vertically integrated giant monopoly with a dominating presence in production, refining and marketing of oil and petroleum products. On the other hand, the excellently run highest profit making oil PSU - ONGC - is steadily turned by the Government into a weak or sick company

The spectre of privatisation is haunting the public sector refinery giant IOC too both directly and indirectly. IOC's own installed refining capacity is 38.150 MMPTA, spread over seven refineries. Like the upstream leader - ONGC, the down-stream leader - IOC is also facing serious threat of commercial viability from the hostile policy regime. With the dismantling of the APM, but continuing politically motivated pressure from the Government, IOC is facing serious problem. If corrective steps are not taken, as told by the

Chairman of IOC, "... the bottom line of the company might take a hit."

RECORD OF OIL PSUs

ONGC has retained the top spot in the overall ET 500 rankings. The company has registered an 84% jump in the net profit to Rs.2,593 crore on a 35% rise in turnover to Rs.7,588 crore for the third quarter ended December,02. It declared an interim dividend of 170% leading to total payment of Rs.2,424 crore. Cumulatively, over April-December'02 ONGC's revenue increased 34% to Rs.23,798 crore while net profit rose 50% to Rs.6,851 crore.

In the matter of disinvestments proceeds, it is again the oil companies who have contributed the maximum to the Government. The Standing Committee on Petroleum and Chemicals, Thirteenth Lok Sabha in their forty-second report have noted, "The total receipts from disinvestments of PSUs between 1991-2000 were to the tune of Rs.26,148 crore. Out of this amount 49% i.e., Rs.12,867 crore were realised from oil sector. During 1998-2000 only, the oil sector contributed Rs.7,217 crore as against the total of Rs.9070 crore which amounts to 80% of the total receipts from disinvestment."

The two oil majors - BPCL and HPCL under the dark cloud of privatization are credited with an excellent financial performance. The turn over of BPCL over the past few years had been Rs.42,294 crore and the excise duty paid was Rs.10,513 crore. The turn over of HPCL had been Rs.45,286 crore, and the excise duty paid was Rs.11,246 crore. Thus the total turn over of and total excise duty paid by both the oil PSUs are Rs.87,580 crore and 21,759 crore respectively. As against this take an example from the private sector. The total turn over of Reliance, Grasim, Bajaj Auto, Tata Steel, Sterlite, Colgate, Pamolive, L&T, Raymand and Glaxo for the corresponding period was Rs.88,157 crore and the total amount of excise duty paid by these companies against this amount of turn over was only Rs.6,840 crore. These figures clearly show the serious impact of privatisation of the profit making oil PSUs on the national exchequer.

The net profit of BPCL last year was Rs.850 crore and fixed assets worth Rs. 9,722.00 crore and

(cont. on page 23)

(P.K. Ganguly, Secretary, CITU attended an international seminar on Ship Breaking in Asia and the Liability Regime at Amsterdam, Netherlands on June 2. The Seminar was organised by the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in cooperation with Greenpeace International. Here is a report by him. - Editor)

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON SHIP BREAKING

Greenpeace is an international environmentalist organisation, based at Amsterdam, having offices in all countries including in India. It focuses particularly on the extreme hazards of ship breaking in the Asian countries, most particularly at Alang, Gujarat, which is the largest ship-breaking yard in the world. The seminar was chaired by Paul Bailey from ILO, Switzerland and participated by about 30 persons and stakeholders including ship owners, ship breakers, the Ministry of Environment, Netherlands and Greenpeace, Toxic Campaigners from Belgium, Greece, Switzerland and Luxembourg.

Besides P.K. Ganguly, who placed a paper in the Seminar, the other trade union functionaries invited were: Ms Astrid Kaag, Policy Advisor of Netherlands Trade Union Confederation (FNV) and Ms Jantien Meijer of the India Committee of the Netherlands. The other environmentalist institutions invited were represented by Sunita Dubey of the Environmental Justice Initiative from India; Rupa Abdi from Bhavanagar University; Ravi Agarwal, Director of Toxics Link, India; Bernard Veldhoven, Environmental Lawyer from the Netherlands and Shahriar

Shakir of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association. Tom Peter Blankestijn a ship owner from Netherlands and PS. Nager Seth, President of the Ship Breakers' Association from India were also present.

After general introduction by Josine Stremmelaar of IIAS and Gerd Leipold of Greenpeace the above 9 persons made presentations.

HAZARDS OF SHIP BREAKING

It is to be noted that ship breaking has become a mega private industry in various parts of the world giving large profits to the owners. The main purpose is to recover steel from the ships, which after their average life of 25-30 years in the sea are sent by the advanced capitalist countries to the ship breaking yards, mostly in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, China, etc. After breaking, the steel and other materials recovered are sold in local markets, garnering huge profits. Alang near Bhavanagar, Gujarat is the largest ship-breaking yard in the world accounting for about 70 per cent of the ship-breaking in the world. In India, it contributes to over 10 per cent of the country's annual steel production, recovering about 2.5 million tonnes. But the entire process is notorious for extreme hazards. In the name of

international trade on ships for scrap, ships laden with highly toxic and hazardous substances like Asbestos in all its forms, Poly-Chlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs), Zinc, Lead, inflammable oil products, explosives, etc. are sent to Alang and other countries for breaking. This is in contravention of the Basel Convention on Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous wastes, held in 1989 under the auspices of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). This convention was participated by the OECD countries and several non-OECD countries including India. It identified all the above substances found in an in-built manner in the ships as highly toxic and hazardous. It unanimously prohibited their Transboundary movements from the OECD countries to the non-OECD countries. It further called upon the OECD countries to decontaminate the ships at the port of origin before sending then to the non-OECD countries for breaking. The convention also noted that technologies for decontamination were available with the OECD countries. However, the unanimous decision of the convention is being violated by the all OECD countries including USA, the Netherlands, Greece, Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, UK, etc.

Recently the Greenpeace successfully fought a case in the Supreme Court of the Netherlands, to stop a Dutch ship "Sandrein" to sail to Alang for breaking. Even in India the Supreme Court gave a verdict not to import the hazardous substances as per the Basel Convention as contaminated in the ships. P.K.Ganguly's paper further focused at the harrowing conditions at the Alang ship-breaking yard.

It employs about 40,000 workers, all casual and mostly migrant from Orissa, Bihar and UP. Fatal accidents vary between 40 annually as acknowledged by Gujarat Maritime Board and 400 as reported by the workers at different work places. Most accidents occur due to gas explosion, cylinder bursts during dismantling of the engine, cutting top most parts of the ship, during torch cutting process, etc. Asbestos dust in all its toxic forms viz white, blue and brown is omnipresent everywhere. They even go inside the workers' make-shift accommodation places through their garments. They cause Asbestosis, cancer of the lung pleura and the peritoneum. There is constant inhalation of fumes containing Arsenic, Lead, Tributyl Tin Oxide, Mercury, Zinc, Strontium, PCBs, Hydrocarbons, Carbon Monoxide and so on. Reports from Red Cross and other hospitals point to irreparable damage to the human immuno system, reproductive system etc. Apart from such damages caused to the life and health of

the workers and the people around, the ship breaking operations cause enormous pollution to the environment and the sea. The scene is that of "everything burns". Waste oil is burned at the shore in Alang. In Mumbai it is pumped into the sea. Everything and all unusable parts of the ship, which cannot be sold, are thrown into the fire causing a number of pollutants.

CONDITIONS OF WORKERS

Although ship breaking in India is caused under various statutes like the Factory Act (1948), Explosives Act (1984), Petroleum Storage Act (1976), Explosive Substances Act (1908) etc, the workers here work mostly without any protective equipments. The huge workforce is totally contractual. There is no minimum wage, no social security measures, no job security, no health scheme, no medical facilities, no accident compensation, no housing facilities, no maternity benefit, no safe drinking water, etc. In short, there is a jungle rule prevailing in this sphere for the forty thousand workers.

There was a big debate generating heat while drawing the conclusions. While there was a consensus that the Basel Convention decisions should be implemented the only one isolated was the President of the Ship Breakers Association from India. However, the following conclusions could be arrived at unanimously: 1) Basel Convention/IMO/ILO to close loopholes through a mandatory effective regime for ship

breaking. 2) Liability chain needs to be set up to include stakeholders such as owners/breakers/brokers, ports, etc. 3) Joint positions should be developed by ship breaking countries to create a level playing field. 4) Working conditions at ship breaking yards as well as environmental protection should be improved with the cooperation of competent authorities. 5) New ships need to be designed which are safe for recycling.

The seminar also urged for building up trade union activities in the ship breaking yards.

MEETINGS BY DELEGATIONS

One day after the seminar, a six member delegation comprising of two Toxic Campaigners of Greenpeace International their Indian counterpart, two representatives from Bangladesh and P.K. Ganguly from India met the Ministers of Environment and Transport of the Netherlands and three prominent ship owners of the country at the Hague and conveyed the message of the seminar.

The six number team then visited Greece for three days and met the Greek Maritime Minister and some Greece ship owners to convey the message. The battle will be taken up again in the meeting of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) to be held in London on July 14. In India it is necessary to carry forward the struggle through trade union activities.

STRUGGLE AGAINST GLOBALISATION OF POVERTY

M K Pandhe

The imperialist driven globalisation has generated growing inequality in the most ferocious manner. The top 20 per cent of the world population today enjoying over 85 per cent of the global income while the bottom 20 per cent has to be satisfied with only 1.3 per cent of the global income. The World Development Report 2003 published by the World Bank has admitted, "The average income of the richest 20 countries is now 37 times that in the poorest 20. This ratio has doubled in the past 40 years mainly because of lack of growth in the poorest countries".

As a direct result of these policies people below the poverty line have been increasing year by year in the capitalist world. The World Bank data regarding the people below poverty line has however shown a decline. The World Bank Report notes, "The decrease was primarily due to the number of very poor people in China as a result of its strong growth from 1980 onwards." The statistics in India has also shown decline in poverty mainly due to changing the definition of poverty while in practice the number of very poor in India have increased rapidly since the advent of globalisation. "The sub-saharan Africa" the World Bank admits, "has seen its number of very poor increase steadily".

Out of world population of 600 crores nearly half the population are 'poor' people. Two thirds of the worlds very poor people live in East and South Asia while one forth live in Sub-Saharan Africa. The estimated very poor people in world are above 120 crores. The policies adopted by the World Bank and the IMF are only swelling the ranks of very poor people in the World.

There is direct link with growing affluence of the advanced capitalist countries and the increasing poverty levels of the people in the developing countries. As the Human Development Report of the UNDP has noted, the top 256 richest families in the world have an income equal to the 40 per cent of the poor people in the world. The experience of the last 13 years have belied the claim of the World Bank that its objective is to eliminate poverty in the world.

SUBSIDY REDUCTION ADDS TO POVERTY

One of the key objective of the World Bank is to eliminate, subsidies in the developing countries which are helping the poor people in getting some protection from curtailment in their living standards. In India the curtailment of subsidy on foodgrains, fertilizer, power etc. has put additional burden on the poor people. The World Bank is imposing conditionalities that public utilities must run on commercial lines and earn profits. The rise in power tariff price of rationed articles and public transport are indications of the reduced standard of life of the poor people. Only 30 per cent of the people in India have access to electricity. The policy of the Government of India to stop subsidizing coal production has resulted in pushing up its prices and increased that cost of power generation. The World Bank pressure to reduce drastically custom duty on coal has practically introduced subsidy for the imported coal in the country.

While developing countries are forced to stop subsidies the advanced capitalist countries are giving huge subsidies in the same section. In OECD countries the total energy subsidies are about 71 billion and coal subsidies are 8 billion a year. World Bank forced Russia to reduce subsidies on coal which resulted in large scale lay-off, downsizing of manpower and closure of several mines.

The GATT was highly favourable to advanced capitalist countries which permitted several concealed subsidies which are being given for export promotion. This enabled these countries to dump their products on developing countries resulting closure of large number of undertakings in developing countries. This has been partly responsible for slowdown in economic growth of the developing countries which has further resulted in growing poverty in these countries.

EXTERNAL DEBT AND GLOBAL POVERTY

The swelling external debt of the developing countries is putting hurdled in search for further economic growth. The World Bank and the IMF are recovering more money than what they give

as loans to the developing countries. Some of these countries have almost been entering the debt trap. The total external debt of the low and middle income countries has now exceeded 2,356 billion U.S. dollars. The amortization of these loans are causing crushing burden on the developing countries. Brazil, for example the largest indebted country with a burden of \$238 billion has experienced the worst economic crisis and expressed the resentment in most powerful terms by electing a new President Lula over 60 per cent votes. This is a clear case of revolt against imposition of poverty by the process of globalisation. Recent developments in Argentina, with a burden of external debt of \$ 146 billion which ruined national economy and imposed poverty conditions on the people, have shown a strong popular upsurge against the World Bank - IMF package of "economic reforms!" Other countries which experienced turmoil were having excessive external debt. For instance Indonesia (\$142 billion) South Korea (\$134 billion), Mexico (\$150 billion), Russian Federation (\$160 billion), Turkey (\$116 billion). India with burden of \$ 100 billion is also facing problem of resources for development due to high cost of repayment of loans.

The demand for moratorium of external debt repayment is now emerging all over the world. This is being covered up by the World Bank by falsely claiming that global poverty is declining. However, reality is clearly percolating through the data available with the World Bank which clearly goes to show that this policy framework imposed by the World Bank itself is responsible for increasing global poverty.

BLOOD TRANSFUSION IN REVERSE

The share of the developing countries in the world trade is declining while that of advanced capitalist countries is increasing every year. 75 per cent of the World Trade is controlled by the advanced capitalist countries. Moreover, the terms of trade are becoming more and more unfavourable to the developing countries due to WTO regime. Due to formation of trade blocks the advanced capitalist countries are in a position to take advantage of the situation and get a better price for their products while the developing countries are competing with each other to sell their products cheaper to the advanced capitalist countries.

This process results in transferring of values from the developing countries to the developed countries. One African delegate in UNCTAD meeting rightly characterized this process as blood transfusion in reverse i.e. instead of giving blood from a healthy person to a sick patient, blood is extracted from a sick person and given to a healthy person. This process continues endlessly in a capitalist system. Hence it is futile to expect elimination of poverty within a capitalist system.

The unity of the developing countries is not emerging in the world to-day since some of the leading developing countries like India are toeing the dictates of the World Bank and the IMF. The non-aligned movement has been so much weakened that it has lost its capacity to assert itself. This only results in imposing poverty conditions on the vast masses of poor people in the developing countries while the net beneficiaries become the worldwide cartels who appropriate the maximum profits.

DESTRUCTION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The policies of globalisation have resulted in destruction of natural resources further contributing to aggravation of poverty. One fifth of all tropical forests have been cleared since 1960. According to FAO deforestation has been concentrated in the developing world, which lost nearly 200 million hectares between 1980 and 1995. However, the forest cover in advanced capitalist countries have remained stable or have improved to some extent. Thus, the exploitation of forest wealth in developing countries by the MNCs have created bottlenecks in their development itself.

The World Development Report noted, "The aquatic environment and its productivity are on the decline. About 58 per cent of the World's coral reefs 34 per cent of all fish species are at the risk of human activities. Seventy per cent of the World's commercial fisheries are fully exploited or over exploited and experiencing declining results".

Nearly 2 million hectares of land worldwide (23 per cent of all cropland, pastures, forests and woodland) have been degraded since 1950. Some areas are likely to experience loss in productivity. In the year 1995 the studies have shown that more

than 100 crore of people in low and middle income countries while 5 crore people in high income countries do not have access to safe water for drinking, personal hygiene and domestic use. Hundreds of developing country cities have unhealthy levels of air pollution. High emission of carbon dioxide is altering temperature in the atmosphere. The Kyoto declaration made an attempt to check the level of air pollution but the unilateral withdrawal of the U.S. Government from the declaration has posed serious threat to ecology in the world since U.S. is responsible for 40 per cent of the world's pollution. "In the past 50 years excess nitrogen - mainly from fertilizers, human sewage and combination of fossil fuels - has began to overwhelm the global nitrogen cycle, giving rise to variety of ill effects ranging from reduced soil fertility to excess nutrients in lakes, rivers and coastal waters" the World Bank observes.

All these efforts to tampering of nature by the profit hungry financial sharks will have dangerous long term effects on the developing countries, the situation is deteriorating day by day posing serious challenges to the developing world. The challenges cannot be met by merely talking about scientific and technological innovation and income growth. Since these are utilized by capitalism today merely for augmenting their profits instead of improving the situation it would only add to the poverty in the third world.

GROWING PAUPERISATION OF THE MASSES

Despite gross underestimation in calculation of poverty by the official statisticians the poverty levels in some of the developing countries have gone up to alarming levels. Some glaring examples of percent of population below poverty line will highlight the serious nature of the phenomenon. Azerbaijan (68%), Chad (64%), Eritrea (53%), Guate-mala (58%), Honduras (53%), Madagascar (70%), Malawi (54%), Mauritania (57%), Niger (63%), Rwanda (51%), Sierra Leone (68%), Uganda (55%), Zambia (86%).

According the data in India 35 percent of the people are below the poverty line. However the actual incidence of poverty is much more than shown in the official figures. The data thus clearly indicate how would Bank has globalised poverty

in a massive scale to ensure profitability of the worlds monopoly capital.

INSTIGATION TO SOCIAL CONFLICTS

Imperialist countries particularly USA and its agency CIA have played a dubious role in engineering social conflicts with a view to establish political control over them. The CIA has been systematically involving itself in instigating several social groups to fight among themselves which has been adversely affecting the economic development of these countries. Religious fundamentalism, ethnic differences, traditional conflicts and every form of tension is being utilized by imperialist agencies to suit the global design of imperialism. During 1990s 46 countries were involved in civil conflicts behind which hidden hand of agencies like CIA played a prominent role. 17 out of 33 poorest countries were involved in such conflicts which paid heavy price in them immensely damaging their economic development. The net result had been the growth of poverty in these countries. The World Development Report 2003 had to accept that these conflicts have very high costs, destroying past development gains and leaving a legacy of damaged assets and mistrust that impedes future gains.

In India too the foreign funding agencies have been liberally financing religious obscurantists groups and sow seeds of conflicts. This process of destabilization has thwarted economic advance and added to the poverty in India. However, many such instigations by foreign agencies are not seen by the people at large who at time become victims of imperialist designs. This practically results in sabotaging the struggle results in the developing countries to eliminate poverty from the country.

CHINA'S STRUGGLE AGAINST POVERTY

When the entire capitalist world is regulated in all round stagnation in economic development and the overall rate of growth in the capitalist world during 1990s stood at only 2.6 percent, while China showed a sustained growth in economic development unprecedented in the entire capitalist world.

During 1980 and 2000 the per capita income in China increased 4 times in real terms. The plan projections prepare by the Communist Party of China once again visualized growth of per capita

income 4 times in real terms between 2001 and 2020. Thus during 1980 to 2020 the per capita income in China in real terms would show an increase 16 times.

In 2000 per capita income in China was estimated at \$ 850 (Rs. 32,800) per annum. However, by 2020 the per capita income of China at 2000 prices would be increased to \$ 3400 (Rs. 1,63,200). The Chinese economists have further projected their rate of economic growth and before 2050 the annual per capita income of China will exceed \$ 10,000 (Rs. 4,80,000) in 2000 prices. Thus a programme of elimination of poverty has been clearly spelt out.

However, the economy is facing problems. The western China is still backward and the development is concentrated in eastern coastal region. About 3 Crore people are facing unemployment and living on official doles. The need to improve the standard of living is still very important. The uneven development is accompanied by growing inequality and Government has to take steps to reduce the unequal levels of living by proper planning and development.

The economic planners in China are expecting to overcome these problems with further modernization and continued faster rate of economic growth. The success in Chinese economy will determine the future of Socialist advance in China. As Beijing Review noted, "If China can achieve its modernization objectives by 2050, its ranking in the world economy will scale new heights, to complete the transformations from a large developing economic entity to an economic power."

In 2000 Chinese economy was sixth largest in the world. The biggest capitalist countries above China were United States, Japan, Germany, France and Britain. According to Chinese projection by 2010 China will surpass France and Britain and become fourth largest economy in the world. By 2020 it will further advance to surpass Germany and become the third largest economy in the world with the same reckoning China will surpass Japan by 2040 and by 2050 China may be in a position to surpass United States economy if it can maintain a higher rate of economic growth. Some western economists have estimated that

Chinese may achieve this objective even earlier if U.S. economy will register a lower rate of growth in future.

All this clearly goes to show the superiority of the socialist system over capitalism in fulfilling the task of elimination of poverty and achieving a higher standard of life for the broad mass of people.

RIISING CURVE OF POPULAR MOVEMENTS

The working class and the toiling masses all over the world are rising against the onslaught of capital. Due to growing unemployment, curtailment of earnings and social security benefits and attack on trade union rights, the working class all over the world is protesting in the most forceful ways. Millions of workers have come out against the policies of globalisation on streets in most of the advanced capitalist countries. Unprecedented anti war demonstrations all over the world in which working class participated in sizable strength reflects the growing level of consciousness among the ranks.

"Another world is possible" has become a popular slogan in all the continents. A large participation of trade unions of various affiliations in world social forum is underlined a new urge for unity among the working class. Massive demonstrations before World Bank, IMF and WTO gatherings have now become a routine affair and organizers of these gatherings had to postpone their meetings or to hold in places like Doha where dictatorial regimes exist.

"Another world is possible" - a slogan reflects the disillusionment of the toiling masses about the efficacy of the capitalist system. Though one can not say that the protesters have come to the conclusion that socialism is the answer.

Under these circumstances the advanced section of the working class have to play an important role in ideological campaign among the workers. Without a clear cut socialist direction these powerful movements may fritter away during the course of time. It is therefore a paramount importance that on this May Day conscious section of the working class must assert for the need to fight against imperialist machination, aggressive war against developing countries and for a determined struggle to popularize the ideology of socialism among the working class.

SOCIAL CLAUSE: BACK HERE, SECRETLY

Ardhendu Dakshi

Social Clauses in the WTO agreement, signed in December, 1994 and effected from 1st January 1995, have become contentious issues since the beginning and the divide, in this case particularly, is between the developed and developing countries with labour taking respective positions. The entire course of events since 1995 are worrisome having dangerous portents that are going to have adverse effects on trade, affecting mainly the developing countries.

In the wake of globalisation and expansion of free market economy a fear was expressed by labour in the developed world that capital and production facilities would shift to third world countries where labour was down-to-earth and cheap, environmental and safety regulations were either non-existent or lax in most of the developing countries. It was apprehended that such flight would severely affect jobs in western world and also their income in the bargain. As a response to such an eventuality the trade unions led by ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) demanded that wages and social security benefits to workers in third world countries to be brought up to a desired level so that the employers do not enjoy some undue benefits and profits. These have come to be known as 'Labour Standards' in common parlance nowadays

though what is the desired level remains undefined so far.

The World Social Summit held during 1995 committed itself "to promoting the goal of full employment and to attain secure and sustainable livelihoods".

The Ministerial Conference of WTO in December 1996 iterated that there must be some internationally accepted "Core Labour Standards and observed that ILO (International Labour Organisation) was the competent authority to determine these core labour standards and promote them for observance.

ILO also had responded to this call and in June 1998 it declared a Core Labour Standard which are, briefly, a) freedom of association and right to collective bargaining; b) no forced or compulsory labour; c) abolition of child labour and d) no discrimination in respect of employment.

ILO is a tripartite body having representations from Government, Employers and Workers. The above declaration was unanimous and was supposed to be "Ratified" by all member governments by suitable laws and otherwise. But the fact is that, India has ratified only two (b,d) and United States, has ratified only one (b). So Labour Standard issues have come to fore again and again in international forums.

Labour and trade unions in developing countries had

nothing to object about labour standards but the conflict started when WTO, led by USA wanted to link trade with labour standards. Which means that they would punish some countries or some producers in those countries who would not follow labour standards as set by them, by refusing to buy their products. Govts. And trade unions in developing countries believe that such threats are not out of love for the labour but are in effect, a wall of protection against imports. Such steps are against the tall talks of liberalization and free trade. At the end of the day, many a traditional industries in developing countries will be shut down because of such trade barriers in the name of 'Social Clause' and Labour Standards". In WTO Ministerial conference in Seattle in 1999, the issues came to a head and the two warring camps mobilised in full strength and finally the Seattle conference flopped. After that it was expected that without affecting the advantage of trade because of lower level of wage, the labour's rights and standards will be taken care by govt. initiative in respective countries. But that did not happen.

TRADE AND BREAD - BOTH IN PERIL

Developed countries have, through private initiative, actually given effect to social clause. There are several measures taken by private

corporate houses in US and other developed countries through what is known as "voluntary Instruments" to punish exporters of other countries on the plea of alleged failure to maintain labour rights and standards. There are OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development - mainly developed countries) guidelines, International Standard by Social Accountability 8000 (New York), Corporate Codes of Conduct by ILO and also Basic Code of Labour Practice by ICFTU. The inspectors from such organizations are here in India. They are inspecting the premises, checking the pay-sheets, studying environmental conditions and certifying the factory complying with their standards. Only such certified companies are getting orders from abroad, others are boycotted. Today only a few companies in India have such certification. In China there are hundreds. So gradually India is losing out to producers abroad. The role of Govt. of India has been disastrous in the whole issue of Labour rights and standards.

DISMAL SITUATION IN INDIA
NDA Govt. opposed linking trade with social clause. Simultaneously the imperative necessity to raise the standard of living of workers and ensuring their rights was not contested by them. But they did just the opposit. Factory inspectors have been debarred from inspection, guarantee of minimum wage is gone, appointment letters are matters of the past, social security benefits are non-existent or vanishing fast. NDA Govt and also the Congress Party have accepted this model as the model of growth for India. The result is disastrous on two counts. Firstly poverty is increasing, market is shrinking, domestic demand is falling, our industries are closing down. Secondly big multinational importers are either avoiding Indian producers or further bargaining and paying less for our products on the plea of poor labour standards. The cascading effect is again on labour, on the country's economy. Now we have neither decent wage and living conditions nor greater advantage for export and trade.

India's share is barely 0.7% of world trade, whereas China's share is growing from 3.5% to nearly 4% now.

WHAT IS IN FUTURE

Today's students are tomorrow's youth in job markets. During NDA's regime Maharashtra's 18000 industrial units out of 33,000 have closed down. Kanpur, once a vibrating hub is now almost a desert, industrially. States after states, the same picture unfolds. Future is grim because 2005 is going to be a crucial year. All restrictions on imports will go, import duty will be cut down. We wonder how many industries will survive after 2005. The country is going to sink into a vicious cycle of more unemployment, more poverty, less demand for goods, resulting in more closure of factories and so on. Changing these policies is the bounden duty for all Indians. Vested interests are claiming aloud that this globalisation and liberalisation is 'good' for us. Reality says otherwise. It is needless to say, in the given circumstances, where the struggles should start and when, and why.

Comrade Adinarayana

The CITU Secretariat expressed its deep shock at the passing away of Com Adinarayana, a veteran leader of the Central Government employees and the trade union movement of our country. Com Adi, as he was fondly called, played an important role in building a strong organisation of the Central Government, particularly of the Postal employees and in bringing them into the mainstream trade union movement. He was instrumental in the formation of the National Campaign Committee, and played very active role in the Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions and in the NPMO. His death is an irreversible loss to the Postal and Central Government employees' movement in particular and to the Trade Union movement in general. The CITU pays its respectful homage to the memory of Com. Adinarayana and conveys its heartfelt sympathies to the bereaved family.

(Jibon Roy, Secretary, represented the CITU at the 8th. ordinary annual conference of the Brazilian Confederation of Trade Unions., popularly known as CUT , held at Sao Paulo, June 3 - 7, 2003. CITU was the only trade union from India and among the two from Asia, along with the South Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), represented at the Conference. Here is a report by him. - Editor)

BRAZILIAN WORKERS & INTERNATIONAL FRATERNITY

The 8th Ordinary Annual Conference of CUT turned into an international event both in its content and the level of mobilisation. In its twenty years of journey CUT has emerged as the breathing bit of working class movement in Brazil. With a membership of 20 millions, CUT represents 60% of the working population in the country. The Conference was inaugurated on 2nd June with a cultural programme, followed by a public meeting addressed by leaders representing constituents of CUT, ruling Workers Party leaders and fraternal political parties.

Recent socio-political developments in Brazil have shaken the legitimacy of US domination in the world and raised big question mark about sustainability of global economy under imperialism. the eighth ordinary annual meet of CUT had assumed immense importance. The republic which has been staggering economically, socially and politically is saved by the working class, ably rallied by the Workers Party (PT). Now the task of rebuilding the economy, bringing it out of the strangle hold of US, is faced by that country, which has, at the same time, to live with Latin American aspirations. All these issues obviously dominated the proceedings.

LATIN AMERICAN FRATERNITY

The Conference converged into an international meet. Around 70 delegates from 40 countries represented the international fraternity. Most of the major trade unions and groups from Latin American countries, from Mexico and Panama to Argentinia, besides a good number of representatives from African Trade Unions and also from Europe participated. The delegates from Cuba was greeted with huge ovation.

The huge Latin American presence signalled the new wave sweeping these countries. People are in search of a common identity and striving for

mutual fraternity. Anti-imperialism, especially increasing sense of anger and abhorrence against U.S. economic aggression is pervasive in Latin America. Latin American people have always been against the US imperialism, which had subjugated them for centuries, exploiting their rich mineral resources and infringing their socio-cultura fabric. People have understood from their own experience how NAFTA has long been used by USA as an instrument to make the North American nations as satellites for its own interest. Now the so called Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is imposed on all the Latin American counties, without even a dialogue, forcing them to sign on dotted lines. Consequences are disastrous. USA, Canada along with three - four other countries have cornered 94% of the total trade of Americas i.e North and South America. A sense of betrayal and deprivation has given rise to a new sense of cultural identity amongst Latin American countries. The Latin American Memorial, built up in the centre of Sao Paulo attracts thousands of visitors galvanising that identity.

INTERNATIONAL FRATERNITY

The CUT leadership had been striving for consolidation of Afro-Latin American trade union movement. This is considered important for advancing foreign policy. CUT tried acidulously to bring together different contingents of international trade union movement. President Lula hosted a lunch in honour of the foreign delegates. Speaking on the occasion, he expressed his keenness to maintain friendly relations with international trade union movement. The desire to strengthen ties with African Trade unions is also aimed towards furtherance of internal consolidation. The new Government leadership has explained that Brazil will re-look its policy towards the population of African origin. Unlike the USA, which had never adopted a policy

conductive to integrate the people of African origin, Brazil recognised their origin, helped develop their culture and at the same time offered them equal status. State Leadership has further announced that the Government will develop a special relationship with African nations.

Political leadership in the Government has explained that the new Government will leave no stone unturned to maintain good relations with USA. But at the same time it will strive to develop a new era in foreign policy by developing relations with other developed countries in Europe and Asia, of course with Latin American and African nations. We are informed in course of last four months, after the new Government taken charge, China has become second largest trading partner after USA. Trade with India too is improving.

UNITED PLATFORM

CUT is basically a Confederation of Trade Unions representing various trade union centres organised by the left. It is the major united trade union platform of workers. But so far international affiliation is concerned, CUT is formally with the ICFTU. But this did not stand in the way of maintaining relations with non-ICFTU unions. Many trade unions and NGOs with independent status were present in the meet. Amongst them CGT was notable. ICFTU's international leadership was given important status in the meet. ICFTU representatives formally inaugurated the meet and chaired both the seminars opened for international delegates.

The Conference plenary lasting 5 full days was marked with intense debate on policy questions. Inaugural session was addressed by all the leadership segments representing in CUT and issues were opened up. Points and counter points were placed fearlessly. Matters relating to guiding principle of governance, newly formulated social security package, WTO and its ramifications and also the role of new leadership came in for wider debate. Though debate was intense, matters were resolved amicably. Some issues remained open for debate in the future too. Speech of President Lulla in the Plenary was significant.

While he expressed its unflinching commitment to his basic constituency i.e. labour, he appealed to the labour to rise to the occasion. Sometime some difference may arise, which can be ironed out through discussion, he said, but mutual faith should not be lost at any moment of time. But significantly he called that under no circumstance the labour should give up its basic rights.

WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

It is noticed that there is considerable interest is generated amongst the trade unions and the NGOs in Brazil over the holding of World Social Forum 2004 in India during January next. This interest is obvious owing to increasing urge for international consolidation of working class movement. It is felt that only this consolidation can face the onslaught of globalisation. Working class of most of European, Latin American and Asian countries are facing the brunt of globalisation and free trade, may be in different degrees and magnitude. That is why there is an increasing urge for international unity. Anti-imperialism is looking forward for an united platform in trade union movement. The common feeling is that the World Social Forum could meet this desire.

Sense of emotion and commitment of delegates attending the conference have impressed foreign delegates immensely. The entire delegation was involved in the proceedings. Number of speakers were very large and they were articulate too.

Out of a total delegation of 2500, around 40% were women. This signifies the magnitude of women workers presence in the workforce and also trade union movement. In Brazil, women are employed beyond traditional areas like hospital, school etc. They are employed in all other service sector and also in manufacturing. Their participation in the trade union is not nominal. They are active and ideologically oriented. Women delegates chaired several commissions, many of them made substantive speeches. Their responses from the audience were moments of remembrance. On many occasions they were raising points or counter points, with men following their lead.

WILL THE GOVT. OF INDIA LOOK BACK?

Ardhendu Dakshi

Margaret Thatcher will be remembered, with wrong reasons, for two of her more 'famous' statements which are: "It is not the business of the Government to be in business" and the other one, TINA ("There is no alternative" to her extreme right economic policies). She did not stop at making such 'not so revolutionary' statements. She and her follower John Major went on a spree of privatization or sell-off of major PSU's in UK namely British Telecom, British Gas, British Steel and most significantly British Railways among many others.

Such a move was trumpeted as a great step to revive the economy and free the Govt from running the so called loss making, inefficient public sector units to concentrate more on public welfare and infrastructure development and, of course, on armaments.

Almost twenty years later Tony Blair had publicly decried that "if one wants to visit hell, one should travel by the British Rail". He had to re-nationalise the Railway system to avoid further degradation and more importantly, to end the permanent feud between different parties blaming each other for the failures and also to stop the drain of Govt. money to make the privatization look like a success. Nobody today cares to know how much money the British Govt. pumps into British Airways to keep it flying. That must be a very big amount of public money to make BA look efficient!

As usual, whatever is uttered under the arches of Westminster is normally echoed in our Parliament. Diminutives like Yeswant Sinha proudly declared, during one of his budget speeches, that "Govt. has no business to be in business" and reiterated that privatization drive would be intensified because the pace was not fast enough and he had his "dil mange more". His penchant for Hindi films was the only originality in his speech than Maggi's.

Let us study what is the result of the Thatcherism after 20 years. John Kay, a British specialist has carried out a study on the British experience of privatisation. He says, "In terms of efficiency every

privatised company, except one, under performed the general British share market (FTSE Index). The data casts doubt on the notion of private sector efficiency. On labour markets, employment in formerly nationalized industries fell drastically. The inflows into treasury coffers were about 110 billion pounds but this was barely 2 per cent of total Govt. expenditure. Regarding consumer benefits there is no evidence either way"

"The main yardsticks were benefits to labour market, improvement in the capital markets and gains to the consumer" Writes Jay Bhattacharjee (Times of India, 23rd June '03). The maniac privatisation drive failed in all three counts. The British are more candid to admit that, but we are not.

Our experience in India is the same, if not worse. Major production lines in BALCO have been shut down. The new owners want to sub-contract the whole units to contractors. This is privatization of the privatized units, to be run by contract workers with less than notified minimum wage. Modern Food had to close down number of its production units post privatisation and rampant outsourcing is taking place. The performance of electricity transmission companies in different States is miserable. Railway catering services have been almost totally privatised. Nobody can deny that the taste and cost both have been so "popular" that there are fewer takers except those who can risk a stomach disorder.

Thanks to the trade union movement in India that has thwarted privatization drive to some extent, along with the people at large, otherwise India's condition would have been far worse than that in UK.

Jay Bhattacharjee observes, "Margaret Thatcher wanted to cut the trade unions to size. The British PSU's were in a mess, unlike their Indian counterparts now. Wider public ownership of companies, expansion of equity cult, increase in efficiency of public services were hardly projected when the campaign started."

In India nobody cared to articulate the objectives

of privatization at the Govt. level other than blindly following Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. Narasimha Rao-Manmohan Singh combine or Vajpayee - two Yashwants plus Arun Shouri combine have reposed their blind faith in privatisation so that by establishing their anti-PSU and pro-private enterprise credentials the atmosphere would be "congenial" to larger private investment. The Left parties and Trade Unions contested and opposed these moves. We claimed that by such a drive for privatisation we lose our economic sovereignty but gain nothing. We have been proved right. Foreign investment for our economic development did not come to India. Employment and quality of employment is going down and down. Investment is at a miserably low level, there is no business confidence left. The stock market has failed in such a manner that nobody takes note of it, be it BSE or NSE. Barely 20-30 scrips are traded; that too, on the basis of "sentiments" an euphemism for the behind the scene manoeuvres by big agents. And services? Electricity, Water, Roads, Transport, Medical, Civic amenities, Housing - take anything, India looks

pathetically primitive even among our backward neighbours.

In such a miserable state of affairs only one ministry is working overtime - that is the Ministry for disinvestment. "Reforms and privatisation will go on" is their clarion call off and on to please their foreign masters.

After the British experience will our policy makers wake up and look back to see the developments in UK or in US or in Japan, the three largest economies in the world?

They are in a desperate situation. Japan's bank lending rate of interest is only 1%, in US it is 1.5% may come down further soon. British economy is in tatters. In spite of tax cuts, rebates, lowest possible interest regime, economic slow down is continuing, going from bad to worse.

Not privatization or sell-off, India should strengthen PSU's instead. Public Sector Enterprises have remained the back-stays of Indian economy so far, they will continue to be our bulwark against a possible slump in near future.

Such a danger is imminent.

(OIL WORKERS - Cont. from page 11)

that of HPCL's fixed assets was worth Rs.10,224 crore. The cash reserves of BPCL were Rs.3,700 crore and that of HPCL were Rs.5,946.00 crore.

In 1991-92 the net profit of BPCL was Rs.148.46 crore and contribution to the Government on account of taxes was Rs.1,876.00 crore. In 2001-02 the company increased its profit to Rs.835.00 crore and contribution to Government towards taxes Rs.10,513 crore. (Source: Speech by Somnath Chatterjee, MP in Lok Sabha on 08.05.03).

RESOLUTIONS

In this backdrop, the convention has resolved to undertake massive signature campaign all over the country by organizing 'Dharna', Street Corner meetings, Door to Door campaign etc to collect crores of signatures throughout the month of June and upto the 3rd week of July,03. The signatures so collected shall be submitted to the Speaker of Lok Sabha during the next session of Parliament. Further regional level anti-privatisation campaigns shall be carried out by holding regional conventions, bringing out posters, leaflets etc.

The convention condemned the ploy of the Government to entrap the employees of the BPCL and HPCL in the privatization game by offering 5% share of these oil PSUs to the employees. The convention appealed to the employees not to fall prey to the Government ploy and refuse to buy shares.

The convention further resolved that, in the meantime, if any private buyer comes to visit and inspect the Refineries and other installations of HPCL and BPCL for due diligence, the workers shall prevent such move by staging peaceful physical resistance.

With the aim to further expand and strengthen the unity of the oil sector trade unions irrespective of affiliations the next broad-based meeting of the Forum shall be convened in New Delhi during the 3rd week of July, 2003.

NALCO:

ANTI-PRIVATISATION STRUGGLE STEPPED UP

The resistance struggle against privatization of the blue-chip, highly profit making public sector company National Aluminum (NALCO) has been stepped up by the workers and the officers of the company with the active support of the common people and the entire trade union movement. The fresh initiative for heightening the pitch of resistance has been taken in the face of fresh move by the Govt to expedite the sell-off process.

From the very beginning, the NALCO collective, the workers and the officers together have been resisting the Govt's move for sell-off of NALCO. Number of strikes had taken place and popular support to anti-privatisation struggle was reflected through a massive Bandh in Orissa last year. On January 8, the NALCO workers has again demonstrated their firm resolve through paralyzing the highways in all the three places where the NALCO plants are situated and on 21st May 2003 NALCO was on hundred percent strike. The NALCO workers also did successfully send back the prospective customers who went there for inspection from the entry point itself last year. In such a situation the Govt had to shelve their privatization move for the time being. In the recent period the

disinvestments ministry again started their effort to re-initiate the sell-off process with a time frame of completing the sell-off by 29th September this year. The fresh drive for privatization of NALCO came at a time when the international price of Alumina has gone up to US\$300 per tonne from US\$ 150 last year and the price of Aluminium jumped to US\$ 1400 signifying an increase in 200 dollars. As a result pressure is mounted from the MNC lobby on the Govt for quick sell-off of NALCO and the hence there has been a restart of the move for sell-off. That is how the Govt of India is operating to serve the interest of MNCs and not the national interest in the least.

The NALCO collective, the workers and the officers together immediately responded to the challenge and the entire trade union movement of Orissa and most of the political forces in the State except BJP extended their support. The programme scheduled by the Govt for a joint visit by the Ministry officials and the Consultants appointed by the Govt on 16th June had to be cancelled following a massive demonstration by the workers and the common people at the Bhubaneswar Airport. The visiting team had to go back from the Airport itself and subsequent

programmes had to be cancelled. Following that a massive dharna participated by several thousands of workers and people from other walks of life was held before Nalco corporate office at Bhubaneswar on 17th June declaring their firm resolve not to allow the sell-off of NALCO. The leaders of CITU, AITUC, HMS, AICCTU, UTUC-LS, most of the political parties in the state except BJP and various independent industrial federations addressed the dharna and conveyed their support. General Secretary of CITU M K Pandhe rushed to Bhubaneswar on 19th June to meet the Nalco leaders and held a well attended press conference in support of the NALCO struggle.

Massive conventions were also held at Damonjori and Angul, the locations of the NALCO plants to chalk out plan for local level resistance. The NALCO coordination Committee comprising of all the unions and officers Associations at Nalco and the trade union movement in the State alongwith other mass organisations has also been planning for a massive action on 18th July 2003, the date scheduled by the Govt to conclude the MoU for the sell-off.

(Report from Shivaji Patnaik)

REPORTS & EVENTS

CITU LEADER KILLED IN PARVATI HYDEL PROJECT MASSIVE STRIKE IN ALL THE HYDEL PROJECTS IN THE STATE

On 22nd June 2003, Ashok Kumar, President of the Workers Union at Parvati Hydel Project of NHPC in Himachal Pradesh has been brutally killed by the hoodlums engaged by the employer/contractor there.

The CITU union at Parvati Project has long been agitating on the demands of the workers under Gamon India Ltd, a major contractor in the construction of the Parvati Project. On 22nd June early hours, Ashoke Kumar was called by the management of Gamon India for a discussion. When Ashok Kumar was returning after meeting the manager of Gamon India Ltd at Sainj in Parvati project area, on the way he was attacked by a gang of hoodlums armed with lethal weapons. He was brutally beaten up by them and received serious head injury. In the afternoon he died at the PGI hospital at Chandigarh. The workers of Parvati Project went on spontaneous strike in protest of the incident. Rakesh Singha, President of HP state CITU rushed at the spot after hearing the incident. Subsequently, CITU has given a call for strike in all the Hydel projects in the state at Nathpa-Jhakri, Largi, Coal-dam and ULH on 23rd June in protest of the brutal killing of the CITU leader and demanding action against the assailants and the conniving management. On 23rd June, more than 7000 workers in all the hydel projects in the state have gone on complete strike.

CITU secretariat, in a statement released on 23rd June denounced the brutal killing of the TU leader by the employer-gangster-contractor nexus and demanded upon the HP Govt to immediately arrest the assailants and also their hirers.

Trade Union Class held in Chattisgarh

Chattisgarh State Committee of CITU held a 3-day TU class in Bhilai on 13-15 June 2003. Kanai Banerjee, Kali Ghosh and Ardhendu Dakshi, all Secretaries of CITU took the classes. The subjects were "History of the Trade Union Movement" "The

significance of the birth of CITU and its developments", "Labour Laws and the present attack on labour rights" "Organizational tasks and improvements" and "Present situation and our tasks" 59 Comrades from different areas and industries attended the class.

It was well attended and well organized class where Bhilai Comrades did a commendable job. It was decided to hold such classes at district level also. All the senior State level leaders were present. Com. Ajit Lal president over the sessions.

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CONSUMER PRICE INDEX NUMBERS FOR INDUSTRIAL WORKERS ON BASE 1982=100

State	Sr. Centre		Month		State	Sr. Centre		Month	
	No.		Mar.' 03	Apr.' 03		No.		Mar.' 03	Apr.' 03
Andhra Pradesh	1	Gudur	466	464	Maharashtra	38	Mumbai	578	585
	2	Guntur	499	507		39	Nagpur	495	496
	3	Hyderabad	487	492		40	Nasik	524	531
	4	Visakhapatnam	475	478		41	Pune	541	553
	5	Warangal	525	530		42	Solapur	494	491
Assam	6	D.D.Tinsukia	410	412	Orissa	43	Barbil	420	426
	7	Guwahati	485	492		44	Rourkela	421	425
	8	Labac-Silchar	376	377	Punjab	45	Amritsar	425	429
	9	Mariani-Jorhat	427	425		46	Ludhiana	437	437
	10	Rangapara-Tezpur	417	419	Rajasthan	47	Ajmer	483	491
Bihar	11	Monghyr	455	454		48	Jaipur	450	451
Chhattisgarh	12	Bhillai	428	433	Tamil Nadu	49	Chennai	525	536
Gujarat	13	Ahmedabad	485	490		50	Coimbatore	491	500
	14	Bhavnagar	497	503		51	Coonoor	492	501
	15	Rajkot	444	459		52	Madurai	472	481
	16	Surat	488	495		53	Salem	469	484
	17	Vadodra	463	470		54	Tiruchirapally	541	559
Haryana	18	Faridabad	493	494	Uttar Pradesh	55	Agra	451	449
J & K	19	Yamunanagar	454	457		56	Ghaziabad	488	490
Jharkhand	20	Srinagar	567	574		57	Kanpur	464	465
	21	Jamshedpur	447	452		58	Saharanpur	446	450
	22	Jharia	373	379		59	Varanasi	502	498
	23	Kodarma	392	395	West Bengal	60	Asansol	455	467
	24	Noamundi	433	434		61	Darjeeling	404	420
	25	Ranchi-Hatia	428	431		62	Durgapur	561	566
Karnataka	26	Bangalore	469	475		63	Haldia	581	584
	27	Belgaum	524	527		64	Howrah	541	557
	28	Hubli-Dharwar	486	491		65	Jalpaiguri	410	411
	29	Mercara	460	470		66	Kolkata	533	545
Kerala	30	Alwaye	479	488		67	Raniganj	410	419
	31	Mundakayam	476	486	Chandigarh	68	Chandigarh	516	516
	32	Quilon	518	513	Delhi	69	Delhi	564	568
	33	Thiruvananthapuram	553	563	Pondicherry	70	Pondicherry	533	544
Madhya Pradesh	34	Balaghat	428	433					
	35	Bhopal	515	520					
	36	Indore	506	513					
	37	Jabalpur	473	475					
						ALL-INDIA		487	493

Additional Series of Labour Bureau

State	Centre	March 2003	April 2003
Andhra Pradesh	1 Kethgudem	507	
Himachal Pradesh	2 Himachal Pradesh	457	
Rajasthan	3 Bhilwara	488	
Madhya Pradesh	4 Chhindwara	433	
Tripura	5 Tripura	420	
Goa	6 Goa	589	

(**STRIKES** - cont. from page 2)

pensions arrangements would not be touched by the government's reforms. They are planning indefinite strikes.

(The Independent, By John Lichfield in Paris, 23 May 2003)

Strikes hit European travellers

Industrial action in France, Italy and Austria is causing massive disruption to commuters and airline passengers. Four out of five flights in and out of France have been grounded. Public transport in France and Austria has ground almost to a halt. And Italy's national airline, Alitalia, has cancelled 200 flights. The disruption in France and Austria is caused by the latest in a series of strikes over reforms that will force many employees to work longer for their pension. Alitalia staff are striking in protest at plans to reduce cabin-crew staffing.

In France the action is bringing back memories of 1995 protests that helped to oust the last conservative government.....

(BBC-June 3, 2003)

East German Workers' Blockades braving prohibitions

BERLIN - East German factory workers were

ordered on Thursday to stop blockading factories to prevent strike breakers as the impact of their walkouts for shorter working hours threatened to spread to western Germany.

Workers were taken by bus to a plant run by U.S. auto parts maker Federal Mogul in the southeastern city of Dresden after courts ruled the blockades illegal and fined the head of IG Metall, Germany's largest industrial union. The firm used helicopters to fly in staff earlier in the week.

The union, IG Metall has targeted auto companies such as Volkswagen and DaimlerChrysler in a strike now in its third week, seeking to force a reduction in the average work week in the once-communist east from 38 hours to 35 hours - the same as in the wealthier west. Some 11,400 employees followed the strike call at 16 companies on Thursday, it said.

The union argues that productivity gains in the east mean it is time to iron out differences in working conditions nearly 13 years after German reunification.

(STEPHEN GRAHAM, Associated Press)

(**LABOUR LAW** - cont. from back page)

of the view that 'outside leadership should be considered in the unorganised sector' only. It may be recalled that except the INTUC, all the Trade Unions in the country opposed the anti working class recommendations of the Second National Commission on Labour. Even the representative of the BMS in the SNCL had submitted a note of dissent to some of its recommendations. That the BMS leadership only confined itself to issuing high sounding statements and wriggled out of action when it really mattered is another matter. But because of this opposition from the working class the Government of India had to agree to go through the motions of consultations with the social partners on the recommendations of the SNCL.

But, these options of the Government of India as expressed by the senior officials is nothing but clear evidence of its intention to push ahead with the labour law changes to usher in a 'hire and fire' regime at the State level, even while the dialogue process is professedly on. It is not clear whether the Government of India had given similar options to other States as well, as several other States under political parties other than the Left Parties are known to be in favour of such amendments to labour laws and 'hire and fire' policies.

The working class of not only Andhra Pradesh, but the entire country should be vigilant against such moves and intensify united struggles to defeat such back-door measures to bring in the labour law changes, in the light of the 'options' expressed by the Government of India. The unity and determination of the working class demonstrated in the 21st May Strike should be carried further forwards to protect the rights of the workers and the toiling masses.

LABOUR LAW CHANGES: A SURREPTITIOUS MOVE

Ever since the so-called reforms process was initiated, the employers have intensified their pressure on the Government to 'liberalise' the labour laws and give them a free hand to 'hire and fire'. Willing though the Government was to oblige them, it could not fulfil all their wish lists because of the stiff resistance from the working class of India. Opposition to the anti worker amendments to the labour laws was demonstrated by the unprecedented magnificent All India General Strike on the 21st of May this year in which all sections of the working class, organised and unorganised participated. But the present BJP led NDA Government is determined to find out some back door methods, in its zeal to satisfy their masters in the employer class. One such manifestation of their over enthusiasm came to light recently. The 'reforms savvy' Chief Minister Chandra Babu Naidu's Government, which is known for its impatience towards unions fighting for workers' rights, had sent certain proposals to the Government of India. In reply, the senior officials of the Ministry of Labour expressed their 'options', which manifest a surreptitious move.

In a letter to the Government of India, the Andhra Pradesh Government had made some proposals on the amendments to the Industrial Disputes Act, and the Trade Unions Act. In respect of the ID Act, the AP Government informed that it has 'decided' to omit the proviso of item (vi) clause (n) of Section 2 of the Act so as 'to empower the appropriate Government to declare any industries in the first schedule as a public utility service, for such period as may be specified in the notification, without imposing any restriction of six months from time to time'. The Senior Officials of the Government of India were so 'considerate' to express an option that 'provision of 3 years period may be specified for review on public utility services'.

The State Government has also proposed that 'It has also decided to omit Chapter V dealing with special provisions to lay off, retrenchment and closure in certain establishments in which not less than one hundred workmen were employed so

as to remove restrictions imposed on such employees under that chapter'. In this matter, the Government of India did not even bother to pay heed to the recommendations of the Second National Commission on Labour, which has suggested raising the provision to 300 workmen, leave aside to the demands of the Trade Unions. Before the matter is even discussed in any tripartite forum like the Standing Labour Committee of the Indian Labour Conference, the Senior Officials went ahead and suggested 'to raise 1000 workmen as against the existing provision of one hundred workmen'.

In respect of the Trade Union Act, the AP Government has proposed: 'under Sub Section (i) of Section 4, this Government suggested that in the case of Trade Union formed primarily for the purpose of regulating the relations between workmen and employers, not less than thirty percent of workmen connected to the employer may, ... apply for registration of the trade union under this Act.' Here too, the Trade Union Act had already been amended to the effect that 10% employees or a minimum of 100 would be necessary to register a trade union. Even the SNCL has recommended that this stipulation should not be made applicable to the unions of unorganised sector workers. But, the Government of India, out of consideration to the employees suggested to 'reduce 20% of workmen connected to the employer may be considered to form the Trade Union.'

Chandra Babu Naidu has become notorious for his outbursts against 'outside leadership' of trade unions. He feels that it is difficult and sometimes impossible to subdue outside leadership with threats of job loss. So it is no wonder that the AP Government has suggested 'to substitute the Section 22 of the TU Act as follows - the total number of the office bearers of every registered Trade Union shall be persons actually engaged and employed in an industry with which the Trade Union is concerned.' The Government of India was not averse to accept the proposal. It was only

(cont. on page 27)