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DEFEND RIGHT TO STRIKE

by P. Ramamurti, M. P.

General Secretary — CITU

A Critique of the Bills introduced in
Parliament in the last Budget Session
intended to Curtail the right to strike

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Two Bills namely, the Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Bill 1982 and the Trade Unions (Amendment) Bill 1982 were introduced in the Lok Sabha towards the end of last session. Another Bill—The Hospitals and other Institutions—(Settlement of Disputes) Bill—was hurriedly introduced on the 6th May the last day of the Rajya Sabha Session. The Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Bill had been introduced in the Lok Sabha in the teeth of protest from the entire opposition—barring of course the DMK and the AIDMK which are, as is well known, vying with each other to curry favour with the Congress (I). It is known that earlier in September, '81 the Essential Services Maintenance Bill was passed finally in the Parliament despite countrywide opposition of all Trade Unions, excepting the INTUC unions, and the unprecedented massive demonstration of half a million workers before Parliament against it and in the teeth of the opposition of the entire opposition. All these four Bills together constitute the bitterest attack on the working class aimed at crippling the activities of those trade unions which are not subservient to the Government. In order to understand the diabolical intentions of the Government, it is necessary to understand the implications of these Bills.

A Retrograde Step

They, together, throw Indian Working Class to the period three centuries back when the 'combination law' was enacted in Great Britain. At the time, when the workers started organising themselves in Trade Unions, the Law was passed by the British Parliament making such organisations illegal and any attempt to organise a trade union a criminal offence punishable with drastic sentences including death sentence. The workers had to fight the battle for decades in which many were sent to the gallows to win the right to organise the trade unions.

Background of T.U. Act

In many industrialist countries like Great Britain, France, United States of America, etc., there is no trade unions act, no registration of trade unions. They are just voluntary organisa-

tions with whose internal affairs, the Government does not interfere in any way.

In India, the need for a Trade Unions Act arose because of the notorious judgement of the High Court of Madras in 1921 in a suit filed by the management of the Buckingham and Carnatik Mills. At the end of the First World war a heroic strike struggle was waged by the workers of the Mill. The Madras Labour Union had earlier been formed by people interested in the working class namely, B. Shiva Rao, B.P. Wadia, V. Chakrai Chettiar and V. Kalyansundara Madalier. The strike was organised by this union and these leaders led the strike. It was a prolonged strike but was ultimately suppressed by brutal repression including repeated firing on the workers by the then British Government.

The Management of the Mill filed a suit for damage against these leaders in the Madras High Court on the ground that they were responsible for the strike and if the strike had not taken place, they would have made profits. Because of the strike, they had lost the profits. The High Court accepted this plea and decreed lakhs of Rupees to be paid by the leaders to the Management.

Thus, the position arose when no strike could be organised in this country. It was after that judgement, a big agitation took place and due to the efforts in the then Central Legislature, by the late Com. N.M. Joshi the Indian Trade Unions Act of 1926 was enacted. This Act nullified the judgement of the Madras High Court and gave the right to organise and strike to the working class.

Attempts to Impose Restrictions

The first restriction on the right to strike was put by an amendment to the Payment of Wages Act by the late Sir H.P. Modi a representative of the Bombay Mill owners' constituency in the Central Assembly. In 1934, he moved an Amendment to the Payment of Wages Act stipulating that if any group of workers acting in concert abstained from attending the factory for any cause not connected with their terms of service in the factory they would be liable to lose their wages upto seven days' wages. The Amending Bill was promptly accepted by the British Govt. and moved as an official Bill. But still it has come to be known as the Mody's Amendment.

That amendment was aimed at deterring the working class from going on sympathetic strikes with their fellow workers, and at the possibilities of political strikes in the wake of the rising tide of the anti-Imperialist movement and freedom strug-

gle. It is significant that the Congress Party in the Central legislature supported this legislation even during the British regime. After independence the Congress Govt. began putting further restrictions.

The first of these restrictions was the enactment of the Industrial Disputes Act of 1947 which was the first 'gift' of the Congress Govt to the Indian Working Class after India became independent. Prior to the enactment of this Act, the workers could go on strike at any time. This Act empowered the Government to declare any industry or Service to be an 'essential service', and once the Govt. declared so, the workers in that Industry had to give Fourteen days' notice to the employer and the Govt., and could not go on strike either during the notice period or after six weeks of the notice. Any such strike would be illegal.

Proclaimed Objective — an Eye-wash

Experience of the past 35 years has clearly demonstrated that the proclaimed objective of the Act that it was intended to protect the interests of the workers was just an eye-wash.

A close scrutiny of the present Bills and the Essential Services Maintenance Act would show that, as in the past, the proclaimed objectives of these Bills are also just a shibboleth. In reality, what the workers, by their heroic struggle, won from the British Government, the present Indira Congress Government seeks to take away by these Acts and Bills.

What Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Bill Provides

According to the statement of objects & reasons of the Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Bill, the objects of the Bills are "mainly to ensure speedy resolution of industrial disputes" and "to make certain other amendments". Actually the effect of the Bill will be further delaying of a settlement. A new chapter II (b) is sought to be inserted in the Act. Under the provisions of this Chapter, every employer in all factories employing more than 100 workers will set up "A Grievance settlement Authority" who will go into disputes connected with an individual workman. Without going through this process, the Government shall not interfere in such disputes.

When this authority is appointed by the Management and as such would be an employee of the management, what sort of justice could be obtained from this authority, can easily be imagined.

Govt. Wants Absolute Powers

It is only after this procedure is gone through by the Grievance settlement Authority, will the Government decide to interfere or not to interfere in the disputes. Already, under the existing Provision of the Industrial Disputes Act, when the Government refers a dispute for conciliation or later refers it to adjudication, any strike during the pendency of those proceedings is illegal. Now, these proceedings can be prolonged for months together. No time limit is specified in the Bill for the conclusion of these proceedings but it says that in each case when a dispute is referred to a tribunal or Labour Court, the Government will specify the time limit for concluding the proceedings. However, the proviso to this section provides that on approach by the parties jointly or separately, the tribunal or the labour court can extend such period as it may think fit by recording reasons for such prolongation. We know that this proviso will be utilised by the managements to the disadvantage of the workers and the proceedings would indefinitely be prolonged. The workmen will be bound hand and foot and cannot go on strike during this entire period.

A new provision says that "where the appropriate Government is satisfied in relation to any industrial establishment or class of establishments or undertakings under the control of that Govt. that the adequate provisions exist for the investigation and industrial disputes in respect of workmen employed in such establishment or undertaking, it may, by notification in the official Gazette, exempt conditionally or unconditionally such establishment or undertaking from all or any of the provisions of the Act".

Far Reaching Implications

The implications of this provision are far reaching. This means that if a state or Central Govt. is satisfied that a proper machinery for the resolution of disputes exists in a factory or undertakings under the control of that Govt., then, — suo moto i.e., unilaterally—the Govt. may decide to exempt all or any of the provisions of the Act. It may choose to retain those provisions banning strikes or the tribunal giving an award. That is, the Govt. may make the decision of the person chosen by the management as the final arbiter in all disputes in that undertaking. Then any strike will be illegal.

This means that in all Public Sector undertakings, strikes will be made illegal in a surreptitious way.

Unfair Labour Practices

Similarly, a new chapter, chapter V(c) is sought to be added in the present Act on 'Unfair Labour Practices'. "These unfair labour practices" are defined and enumerated in a schedule. Appearing to hold the scales even between the workers and the employer, the schedule defines what are unfair labour practices by the employers and by the trade unions separately.

Employers would Escape

Take the unfair labour practices on the part of the employer. The following are some of them;

(1) "threatening workmen with discharge or dismissal if they join union". Does any employer personally indulge in this? Pressure is brought through some stooge, and even if it can be proved that some such person issued threats, it can never be proved in a court that the threats were issued at the instance of the employer, who would declare that he has nothing to do with the person issuing the threat.

Then take the 2nd misconduct listed.

(a) an employer taking an active interest in organising a trade union of his workers, and (b) an employer showing partiality or granting benefit to one of several trade unions.

(3) "To organise employer — sponsored trade union". Does any employer do this openly. He will get some one to do this and always plead that he had nothing to do with the organisation of that union.

(4) To encourage or discourage membership in any trade union by discrimination against any workmen.

Can this discrimination be ever be proved in a court? The employer will always plead that the discriminatory promotion or the benefit was conferred strictly on the basis of an assessment of the merits and on no other consideration.

(5) "To discharge a workmen — (a) by way of victimisation (b) not in good faith but in the colourable exercise of the employer's right.

(c) by falsely implicating a workman in a criminal case on false evidence or on an concocted evidence. And similar vague formulations.

Will any employer be foolish enough to falsely implicate any worker in a criminal case and personally prepare false evidence?

Item 6

"To abolish the work of a regular nature being done by workmen and to give such work to contractors *as a measure of breaking a strike*" (emphasis added).

The employers will abolish regular work systematically wherever possible.

If there is any discontent among permanent workers, he will give that work to contractor *before* a strike breaks out and the question of the action being a measure of breaking a strike will never arise.

The remaining items are also of this nature. None of these items of unfair labour practices can ever be proved in a Court of Law.

In any case, it is the Government that has to take action and no trade union affected by those unfair labour practices on the part of an employer can directly approach the Court. Hence these become just an eye-wash.

Workers to be Punished

On the other hand, the items of unfair labour practice on the part of "workmen and Trade Unions of Workmen" are otherwise. The very first item is striking (1) To advise or actively support or instigate any strike declared to be illegal under this Act. It is well-known already that under the Essential Services Maintenance Act strikes practically in any industry have become illegal. Hence a union which organised a strike in such industries automatically becomes guilty of unfair labour practice.

Even the Supreme Court has held in a number of cases that although a strike may be illegal, it might be a justified strike and on that basis had awarded full wages for the period of so-called illegal strike to the workmen. But now even legitimate strikes may be banned with dire consequences.

To take item 2.

"For a trade union of its workers to picketing in such a manner that non-striking workmen are physically debarred from entering the work places".

Any amount of evidence could be managed by the managements through police officials, managerial personnel and even workers bribed for the purpose to depose that they have been physically prevented from going into the factory.

Item 5

“To stage, encourage or instigate such forms of coercive action or wilful “go slow”, squatting on the work premises after working hours, or “gheraos” of any of the members of the managerial or their staff”.

Item 6

“To stage demonstrations at the residences of the employers or the managerial staff members”.

Comment is needless. These are just illustrations. All the other items are of the same nature. Not only are the trade unions penalised and deregistered for these demonstrable acts but the leaders namely, the office bearers and members of the executive of the Union are automatically removed from their positions by this Bill and can be imprisoned for six months. Further any person guilty of an offence under this Act cannot become an office bearer of any trade union in the country for life. Thus, this Bill seeks to behead the militant trade unions of their leadership. The only good feature of the Bill is in these cases where a tribunal or court has ordered reinstatement of workers but the employer goes on appeal to High Court or Supreme Court and gets stay of the tribunals orders, the employer should pay the full wages for the worker till the case is disposed of.

But what is the use of this Provision when all militant trade unions would be illegalised and their leaders debarred from leading them? The Government has thus ensured that this section can be of little use to the workmen. For, the unions subservient to the employers can be expected not to take up such cases of victimisation and on the other hand collude with the management to get rid of the militant workers.

What the T.U. (Amendment) Bill Provides

The Trade Unions (Amendment) Bill proclaims that discouraging multiplicity of the unions is one of its main objectives. If one only remembers that it was the Congress Party with the blessings of the Late Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel which disrupted the till then united trade union movement in the

country by organising rival central trade union organisation namely, the INTUC and all these years the Congress Governments have been striving their best to shower their patronage on and encourage the INTUC unions with the state power, one can easily understand the crocodile tears which the Government sheds over the disunity of the working class. As a matter of fact, during the last few years, trade unions are coming together in united struggles and this process will certainly lead to greater and greater unity of the working class. But, this process of unity is based on united struggles of the working class against the policies of the Government and attacks on the working class. It is this unity that the Government is mightily afraid of and seeks to smash under the guise of discouraging multiplicity of unions.

Recognition by Verification Only

Recognition as a representative union will be by verification of membership of the Unions by the Labour Commissioner or any officer appointed by the Government for this purpose. Experience has shown that the verifying officers will completely co-operate with the Government and act according to their dictates. Again, it is also known that many unions inflate their membership with the help of the managements. It is on this basis that many INTUC unions had been given recognition for the past so many years.

However, wherever secret ballots of all the workmen in the factory are undertaken, the claims of many INTUC unions and recognition on the basis of those claims, even though verified by the Government officer, have been found to be fraudulent. The result of those ballots show that some other union was chosen by the workers as more representative than the INTUC unions.

Afraid for Secret Ballot

It is because of this situation that for many years all the trade union centres excepting the INTUC had been demanding the determination of the representative character of a union by holding secret ballots. It is afraid of it.

During the Janata regime when the Congress(I) Party lost power in most states, the INTUC had openly stated that it would not oppose the adoption of the method of secret ballot. But today, with the return of the Congress(I) Party, the INTUC has changed its tune and gone back to its original position of determined opposition to secret ballot.

Many enlightened employers have realised the futility of entering into agreements with trade unions not really representing the workers but certified to be representative unions by the Government. Recently, Naval Tata who represents a section of big business houses has openly come out strongly in favour of the secret ballot. Life has shown that such unions cannot deliver the goods. Similarly, the Andhra Pradesh Government for the last five years has been adopting this method of secret ballot. During the Janata regime, this method was adopted in certain public sector undertakings like the Bharat Heavy Electricals, Hindustan Photo Films etc. and this has yielded good results.

Stop this Fraud

The most glaring example of the fraud of recognition by the method of verification can be seen in the strike of the 2½ lakhs textile workers in Bombay for the last five months. The leaders of the recognised INTUC union dare not even hold a meeting of the workers. Workers have rejected them by refusing to accept their advice. Any decent person with an iota of democratic conscience would, under the circumstances accept the verdict of the workers and openly proclaim that he does not represent the workers; but decency and democratic conscience are alien to the leaders of the INTUC.

A Method to Disrupt Militant Unions

The most obnoxious feature of this Bill is that it creates what is called "A Trade Union Dispute" as opposed to "An Industrial Dispute". A trade union dispute is one within the trade union or between two trade unions. Where the Registrar of Trade Unions apprehends such a dispute inside a trade union or between two trade unions, he is empowered to interfere and become the arbitrator and his finding is final subject only to an appeal to the Government. It can easily be imagined why this new dispute has been created. Even with all the provisions against militant trade unions, sometimes it becomes impossible to deny recognition as a representative union to some militant unions. In such cases, the Govt. and the Management can easily put up some workers to create a "dispute". The Registrar can then step in and arbitrate and give an Award that those who have been elected as office bearers were not really elected and declare that those who are subservient to the Management are the elected office bearers of the Union.

Workers not so Naive

It has been found that many INTUC or other unions or

where recognition had been enforced by Govt. could not deliver the goods. Agreements entered into by them, — generally behind the back of the workers — had been rejected by the mass of workers who had gone on prolonged strikes which were termed 'illegal'. Despite heavy repression, in many cases the Govt. or the management had to negotiate with the union or unions leading the struggles. The present textile workers strike in Bombay is not the first of such action by the workers rejecting the imposed leadership.

The INTUC argues that secret Ballot would result in the workers being misled by irresponsible demagogic leaders, and 'responsible' trade unionism must be encouraged. Hence the determination of the representative character of a union by secret ballot is extremely harmful.

No greater damnation of the Indian Working Class can be imagined. The Indian Worker is not so naive as to be taken in by tall promises. He has enough experience to discern who is really serving his interests and who is betraying his interests.

It is this class consciousness that makes the leaders of the INTUC shudder and shy away from secret ballot.

It is the same class consciousness that makes the Government refuse to accept this simple democratic demand and to resort to instruments through which it can impose unions whose leaders will toe its line.

Taking Away Right Bit-by-bit

These are only some of the major anti-working class provisions in these Bills. But they are enough to show that through these Amending Bills, the right to organise and collective bargaining which the working class wrested from the British Government are now being sought to be taken away by the present Government.

It is worth noting how the Govt. bit by bit, seeks to take away the Rights of the Working Class.

The N.S.A.

First came the National Security Act, providing for detention without trial. It was solemnly promised on the floor of the Parliament that this Act will not be resorted to against Trade Union and Kisan leaders and is aimed only against anti-social elements. The same promise was made earlier when Preventive Detention laws were enacted. Every one

knows that those promises were thrown to the winds. Likewise, before the ink was dry on this new Act providing for Preventive detention, the solemn undertaking given in Parliament has been flouted and Trade Union and Kisan Leaders as well as political opponents have been the first victims of this Act.

The ESMA

Then came the Essential Services Maintenance Act., with its schedule listing fourteen industries as Essential Industries. Any strike in these scheduled industries is illegal. And the Govt. has been empowered to include any number of industries in the schedule, as and when it deems necessary.

The I.D. (Amendment) Bill

Next came the Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Bill whose main features have been discussed above.

The Govt. Dares not Punish Employers

And now the Trade Unions (Amendments) Bill, whose drastic Powers and brutal penalties have been described above. Will this Govt. dare to send members on the Board of directors of Companies to jail and debar them from holding office as directors or any other office for life as it has provided for Trade Union workers? According to the disclosures made by the Reserve Bank of India and the Public undertakings Committee of Parliament, thousands of crores of Rupees have been locked up in many companies, whose managements have looted the companies and closed them up. They have swallowed even the workers' contributions to the Provident Fund, ESI etc. What has the Govt. done in these cases? Actually, Govt. officers, and Bank Officers have been sitting as directors in all these cases. What have they been doing, except conniving at the massive fraud committed. Why, it can be easily imagined. How can one expect a Govt. which has been abetting the sequestering away of public funds and the hard earned money of workers (contributions to P.F. ESI etc), to take action against them?

Restriction on Outsiders

The Trade Unions (Amendment) Bill seeks to restrict the total number of office-bearers and members of the Executive of a Trade Union who are not workers in the factory, or establishment to 25%.

Normally, no trade union has more than 25% — not even 15% — of its office-bearers are from outside. But the issue is one of a fundamental principle. It is for the workers concerned — their democratic right — to decide this question and the Govt. has no business to interfere in the democratic right. Workers in this country are forced to seek the services of 'outsider' because the laws are so cumbersome and complicated that even an ordinarily educated layman is not able to understand them.

But more than all these, the basic reason has been that non-pliable office-bearers who are workers are always dismissed under some pretext or other. It is clear therefore that this restriction is intended to help the employers and the Govt. to develop unions whose office-bearers will be pliable.

Concessions to Employers

The Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Bill, exclude Hospitals, educational institutions, Charitable Institutions etc. from the definition of the word 'Industry' — This was done on the demand by the employers following the Judgement of the Supreme Court that these institutions also are industries covered by the Act. The implication of the judgement is that the workers and employees in those institutions have the same rights as other workers and employees.

Hospitals and Other Institutions

The Govt. as already noted by the provisions of the Industrial Disputes Amendment Bill, has specifically excluded these Institutions from the purview of the Act.

Strikes Prohibited

Now it has gone a step further and under the provisions of the Hospital and other Institutions (Settlement of disputes) Bill, has prohibited strikes in hospitals, educational institutions, institutions owned or managed by an organisation wholly or substantially engaged in any charitable, social or Philanthropic service, Institutions engaged in Khadi and Village Industries and every institution engaged in any activity relating to the sovereign functions of the Government, including all the activities carried on by the departments of the Government dealing with research, atomic energy and space. This last longish definition means all civil servants of the Government and non-combatant personnel of the military, such as office employee, workers and employees employed in laying of roads, constructing buildings, bridges etc.

An Incentive for Loot

It is well known how those so called charitable institutions, or others which are supposed to be run for so called social or philanthropic purposes are mal-administered and their funds looted by those who manage them. It is also well known that big business houses, on paper, have created trusts of their business and who enjoys these trust properties. Equally well-known are how the incomes from thousands of acres of land owned by so-called Trustees, but really managed by Mahants, Mathadhipathis, and big land lords are enjoyed by these so-called trustees. This provision will act as an incentive for the creation of more such trusts.

A Warning

As for Govt employees, this Govt which swears by democracy and professes to practise it may be reminded of what happened in Great Britain at the end of the 2nd World War. Sir Winston Churchill had emerged as the hero of that war as far as Britain was concerned.

But during the course of the War, when he was the Prime Minister, he had enacted a legislation banning affiliation of the civil servants' Association with the British Trade Union Congress. This single act of his was made the main issue by the TUC in the General elections immediately after the war and Churchill's party suffered a crushing defeat. The labour Govt immediately repealed Churchill's Act. In Britain, France, and all other Western countries, Trade Unions of Civil servants Teachers at all levels, employees of hospitals—in fact workers and employees of all institutions—enjoy the right of organisation and all the other rights that go with it including the right to strike and no restriction has been placed on these rights for any worker in any industry.

The Supreme Court Judgement

The Labour Minister, Govt. of India, introducing the Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha actually stated that this Bill was intended to carry out explicitly the principles enunciated by the Supreme Court for an undertaking to qualify for being an 'Industry'. The untenability of this claim will be clear from the following relevant extracts from the Supreme Court Judgement:

“Industry” as defined in S.2 (f) has a wide import.

Where there is (i) systematic activity, (ii) organized by co-operation between employer and employee (the direct and

substantial element is chimerical), (iii) for the production and/or distribution of goods and services calculated to satisfy human wants and wishes (not spiritual or religious but inclusive of material things or services geared to celestial bliss e.g. making, on a large scale, prasad or food), prima facie, there is an "Industry" in that enterprise. *Absence of profit motive or gainful objective is irrelevant, be the venture in the public, joint, private or other sector. The true focus is functional and the decisive test is the nature of the activity with special emphasis on the employer employee relations. If the organisation is a trade or business it does not cease to be one because of philanthropy animating the undertaking. (Emphasis added)*

The consequences are (i) professions, (ii) clubs (iii) educational institutions co-operatives, (vi) research institutes, (v) charitable projects and (vi) other kindred adventures, if they fulfil the triple tests listed above, cannot be exempted from the scope of S.2 (J).

A restricted category of professions, clubs, co-operatives and even gurukulas and little research labs, may qualify for exemption if in simple ventures, substantially and, going by the dominant nature criterion, substantatively, no employees are entertained but in minimal matters marginal employees are hired without destroying the non-employee character of the unit."

Applying these criteria the Supreme Court held that hospitals, educational institutions, Research institutes etc. where there are employees, and employer-employee relations prevail, are 'industries' for the purpose of this Act.

The only exceptions it has given is on the last para quoted above viz in these institutions where the number of employees is negligible and all other workers give their services out of love or motivated by a sense of social service. The extent the Govt is driven to shamelessly utter falsehoods of even reported judgements of the highest court of the land for the purpose of attacking the workers is clear from the blatant statement of the Labour Minister that this Bill corresponds to the principles and criteria laid down by the Supreme Court.

Designs against T.U. Rights

The Government encountered considerable opposition earlier from the organised working class to its earlier Bill, viz the Industrial Relations Bill. Huge rallies, the march of more than half a million workers to Parliament and the All India one day Protest Industrial Strike, were all hall-marks of this mounting opposition.

During the last three months, the entire country, including the working class, was exercised over the elections on the four states of West Bengal, Kerala, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh, — our every question connected with them such as whether elections will be held at all, what strategem would be resorted to by the Congress(I) to stall these election, and how they would be countered and the elections themselves.

It is precisely during this period that the Government has introduced these Bills.

Earlier the Govt. has been talking of bringing forward a compendious Bill regarding labour. It has thought it more convenient to bring in piecemeal legislation to carry on its designs against the Trade Union movement.

Worse than Janata Bill

The Janata Govt. brought forward an Industrial Relations Bill. That measure was very mild when compared to the drastic and new extinguishing of all the Rights of the working class through laws already enacted and proposed in these Bills of the Congress(I) Govt.

It must be said to the credit of the HMS, HMP, BMS etc. whose leaders happened to be the prominent members of the Janata Govt. that they joined with the CITU, AITUC etc. to firmly oppose the measure. The result was that the Janata Govt. virtually dropped the Bill.

Antics of INTUC Leadership

It is significant that the INTUC also joined in the opposition to that Bill and its then President Shri A.P. Sharma came to the common mass rally against the Bill at the Boat Club outside Parliament and thundered against the Bill. Completely ignoring that it was a united front rally on the single issue of the Bill, Shri Sharma sought to utilise the occasion for advancing the interests of his party and declared that only when Shrimati Indira Gandhi came to power, the working class can expect justice and its rights. He was then hooted down by the audience for misusing the common platform and had to be saved from the crowd which was surging towards the platform.

Today, the INTUC and its leaders extend their support to these draconic Bills or keep mute. This is their conscience. Subservience to Smt. Indira Gandhi comes first to these leaders.

It must be said, however, that lower down thousand of workers owing allegiance to the INTUC unions had joined in the protest meetings and rallies.

Result of Capitalist Path

The question naturally arises as to why the Govt. of India, 35 years after independence, seeks to take away all the rights that the workers had wrested from a foreign Govt. and to push them back to the situation that existed two centuries back, at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain.

The fact is that the Govt. of India, with spurious slogans with 'co-operative commonwealth', Socialist pattern of Society' and finally, 'Socialism' had embarked from the very beginning upon developing capitalism, without shattering but by compromising with the feudal landlordism, and in collaboration with imperialist foreign capital and multi-nationals. Capitalism and Imperialism has entered the phase of decay and the imperialists seized the opportunity to utilise India's dire needs of capital, machinery, and technology. More and more India is forced to depend upon massive loans from imperialist Governments and the International Financial Institutions dominated by the USA like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund etc.

Dictates of IMF — World Bank

Passing through an intense economic crisis, reminiscent of the 1930s the imperialism and their agencies to whom the Govt of India goes begging, resort to arm twisting and put conditions to open their purse strings. They want slave labour to extract maximum profits, to tide over to some extent the crisis. The Govt of India is unable to resist these pressures and obliges them. These anti-working class measures are the direct result of these dictates of the IMF, the World Bank and the Multi-nationals.

Noose of Neo-colonialism

What is at stake, therefore, is not only the Right to strike and the Right to collective bargaining, but the very right to organise without interference of the Government. And more than these, freedom and independence won after bitter struggles and sacrifices is at stake. The noose of neo-colonialism is drawing nearer. The class that can lead the struggle against this danger and smash it is sought to be strangled.

Fight Back Unitedly

It is against these diabolical attacks that the Indian Work-

ing Class should unite and fight. It is the task of all those interested in democracy and freedom of the country to unite and fight these sinister designs.

If they approach every worker, irrespective of the union in which he may be at present, all of them, including those who are in the INTUC unions, can be mobilised for this battle for democracy. For, the attack on democracy, on the people, every where begins with the attack on the working class.

It must also be realised that these measures are dictated by the multi-nationals, big monopoly houses, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Continuation of these policies of dependence would lead to our country becoming a neo-colonial country.

The battle, therefore, is not only a battle for the Rights of the Working Class and democracy for our people, but also for our freedom and independence. Mobilisation of the entire working class has, therefore, become urgent. A united working class can successfully inspire the entire people, and not only halt, but also turn this process.