



THE WORKING CLASS

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INTERNATIONAL TU MEETING AGAINST NEO-LIBERALISM AND GLOBALISATION

M K PANDHE

International TU meeting Against Neoliberalism and globalisation held in Havana on 1st was the first meeting of its kind held in India since the advent of globalisation. The meeting was held immediately after the 14th World Festival in Havana which was attended by presentations of over 300 trade unions and organisations from 60 countries all over the

Havana Conference Centre where the meeting was held was packed to capacity and in depth discussions took place during the three days on all aspects of globalisation and neo-liberalism. The meeting ended with remarkable enthusiasm among participants who express their firm intention to fight the worldwide capitalist system of neo-liberalism by the united strength of the workers and the people.

Participation to the conference consisted of 17 trade unions. The CITU was represented by M K Pandhe, General Secretary, V B Cherian, A Sounder Rajan, and S Sadhan Kanjilal, S Suryanarayana Rao, and TUCC was represented by Rajat

General Secretary, All India State Employees Federation, Ashok Rao,

President, National Confederation of Officers Association, R N Godbole, General Secretary, All India Bank Officers Confederation, N M Sundaram, General secretary, All India Insurance Employees Association represented their organisation in the conference. Appukuttan, Spl. Correspondent, Deshabhimani and photographer also attended the conference as delegates.

The delegates were welcomed by the Secretary of the International department of Centre of Trade Unions of Cuba (CTC) Dr Oswaldo Martinier, Director, Centre for Research on World Economy, while speaking on various aspects of globalisation, observed, "In talking about neo-liberalism, we are repeatedly told that the market can solve everything in the best possible way, that the state is, has been and will always be inherently inept and inefficient, that everything should be privatised to attain the supreme goal of efficiency."

"We cannot ignore the fact that globalisation exists and is presently making headway," he continued, "the dominant form of ideological manipulation generates serious consequences, which are the ones that have brought us together in this meeting."

Dr Martinier, pointed out that neo liberal globalisation has been and continues to be like a storm that is sweeping over the planet, affecting all countries to a

TU Working Committee Meeting At Shimla Rescheduled.

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greater or lesser extent, creating economies and societies increasingly exclusive and polarised.

Exposing the myth that globalisation would lead to faster rate of economic growth Dr Martiner noted that between 1950 and 1973 the world product grew at an almost 5% rate, between 1974 and 1980 the growth rate dropped down 3.5 per cent, during eighties it further dropped to 3.3% and between 1990 and 1996 its growth rate was mere 1.4%

Referring to the growing speculative activities in the capitalist system when the rate of growth is slowing down, Dr Martiner mentioned that present estimates indicate that for every dollar produced in the productive economy there are 30-50 dollars that emerged from the financial market turning round in the Roulette of "casino" economy. It was pointed out that the "financial bubble" in the economy involving adjustment process that would appear as a great world crisis, even more tremendous than the crisis of the 30s, would be just another manifestation of the peculiar capitalist recourse of recovering the lost economic balance through a process of destruction of the productive forces.

"In a condition of ever slower growth" Dr Martiner observed, "neo-liberalism proposes a war to monopolise increasingly larger share of the existing wealth, rather than generating wealth through productive investments in new areas."

Underlining the shocking effects of neo-liberalism on the working class and the toiling billions all over the world Prof Martiner drew the attention of the conference to the following glaring facts

- of the 5.6 billion people that inhabit the planet, some 2.8 billion people make up the economically active population. However 1.14 billion (41 per cent) of them are unemployed or underemployed.

- 300 million people, among them many are women depend on the informal sector, with no social security no unemployment insurance

- over 30 million people in major developed countries are jobless.

- More than 80 million children are forced to work and in some countries 25 per cent of the children under 15 are economically active for their survival.

- 1.5 billion of the people in the world live in extreme poverty and there are 800 million hungry people. In USA and Europe nearly 15 per cent of the population

live below the poverty line.

- 2.5 lakh people living in New York have to remain in shelters during the last 5 years, while in London 4 lakh persons are recorded as homeless.

- Worldwide environmental degradation by universalising technologies or exporting pollution. Stressing that neo-liberal globalisation has globalised exclusion, exploitation and social malaise Prof Martiner stated, "We must globalise resistance against it. The system operates at a higher level of internationalisation and even transnationalisation. Therefore our response requires a high level of coordination and international unity around a minimum programme of action against neoliberal globalisation.

"Let us wield our unity of action to end the system that provides opulence to 10% of humanity while degrading and dooming the remaining 90%," Prof Martiner concluded.

M K Pandhe General Secretary, CITU was on the Presidium of the conference on the first 2 days while KL Mahendra, General Secretary, AITUC on the last day. Pandhe was also the chairman of the Presidium for one plenary session.

After the inaugural plenary session the conference was split up into following 5 commission where a detail discussions took place.

1. Action taken against the ominous consequences of the policy of privatisation.

2. Coping with unemployment, under employment, reduced wages, the negative reforms of labour legislation and action taken against weakening of trade union organisation.

3. Action taken against privatisation, and cutback policies in the fields of social security and deteriorating health care and educational services. Action adopted by the workers to cope with the unequal distribution of wealth.

4. Action taken to eradicate the discriminatory treatment of women and immigration and the use of child labour.

5. Declarations and actions of trade unions and so on organisations vis-a-vis a unipolar world and the loss of national sovereignty and independence.

The discussion in the Commission veered round the dangerous consequences of globalisation in various spheres of activities and need for joint struggles all

over the world to fight the menace unitedly. The thread of common understanding was clearly visible in the discussion highlighting the unity of purpose in the entire approach.

All the members of the Indian delegation participated in the deliberations of the Commissions and contributed in arriving at Common conclusions.

Pedro Ross Leal, General Secretary, CTC explained the struggle of the Cuban workers against US blockade and expressed the determination to fight the blockade till the end. He thanked the trade union movement all over the world for rallying behind the urban workers in their valiant struggle.

In the light of conclusions drawn in the commission meetings a draft declaration was presented to the Conference which was considered at length by the Plenary Session. Over 100 speakers participated in the discussion and gave several suggestions to improve the content of the discussion. A large number of delegates from Latin American countries who participated in the discussion expressed their firm support to Cuba and condemned the US imperialists for their aggressive designs towards Cuba. Overwhelming majority of the delegates participating in the conference were representing all countries of Latin America. Several ICFTU affiliated organisations attended the conference to express their support to the struggle against globalisation.

In Plenary session, on behalf of India M K Pandhe, Sukomal Sen, N M Sundaram, Suryanarayana Rao and K L Mahendra addressed the plenary session and gave several suggestions to improve the draft declaration.

The Conference unanimously adopted the Declaration after incorporating 29 amendments moved by different delegates. The Declaration endorsed the decision of the 14th World Youth Festival held prior to the Conference to observe 8th October 1997 as the day of solidarity for Cuba against US imperialists machination. It further gave a call to give special emphasis on the struggle against globalisation during the celebrations of May Day all over the World.

The Conference ended with remarkable enthusiasm among all the delegates who gave slogans in different languages condemning globalisation and blockade against Cuba.

The next Conference against Globalisation will be held in Brazil in March 1999 which was endorsed amidst slogans by the conference.

At the end of Conference a Reception was organised in which Fidel Castro was present. M K Pandhe and K L Mahendra attended the Reception on behalf of India.

The Havana conference will unleash a powerful world wide Tu movement against globalisation and will also result in giving a new impetus to the renewal of the united trade union movement in all the continents of the world.

Message from the Embassy of the Democratic People's on Golden Jubilee of Indian Independence.

New Delhi 5th Aug. 1997

The Embassy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in India presents its compliments to the Centre of Indian Trade Unions and has the honour to send herewith the message of congratulations from the Central Committee of the General Federation of Unions of Korea, Pyongyang to the Centre of Indian Trade Unions on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Independence of India. The message dated 5.8.97 reads:

We extend warm felicitation to you and entire workers of India through you on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Independence of India.

After Independence, people and working people of India have been struggling devotedly for building a new independent society and achieved great successes.

We are rejoicing sincerely with your achievements. Believing that the relations of friendship and cooperation between our two organisations will further strengthen and develop through the common struggle for building a new prosperous Asia, we take this opportunity to sincerely wish you greater success in your activities for the independent development of the country and promotion of welfare of the working people.

The Embassy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Centre of Indian Trade Unions the assurances of its high consideration.

AGAINST RETROGRADE GOVT. PENSION SCHEME

WORKERS' MARCH TO PARLIAMENT ON 2nd SEPTEMBER

At the joint call of CITU, UTUC, UTUC (LS) and AICCTU, workers all over the country are preparing for the Parliament march on 2nd September 1997 to submit the mass petitions signed by several lakhs of workers to Lok Sabha protecting imposition of the design of loot on workers PF and demanding pension as a third retirement benefit among other demands.

Reports received from various states reveal that workers have been preparing with enthusiasm in different industrial centres for joining the Parliament March in a massive way.

Reproduced below the text of the joint call for the rally given by CITU, UTUC, UTUC(LS) and AICCTU:

"The Employees Pension Scheme, structured by way of appropriating almost half of the Provident Fund generation of the workers had been imposed on the unwilling workers by the Govt. of India two years' back through an enactment by the Parliament. Working class opposed vociferously this design of unprecedented loot on their PF although unfortunately the leadership of some Central Trade Unions supported the Govt despite the fact that many of their affiliates opposed the scheme even through strike action and court cases. Notable was the massive participation in Countrywide Strike of 23rd February 1996 by the workers of all affiliation at the joint call of CITU, UTUC, UTUC(LS) & AICCTU. There have also been several cases of workers rising spontaneously against the retrograde scheme exemplified most explosively by the protest action of Bhilai Steel Plant workers in December last year.

During last two years after the enactment, situation got further worsened. With an ill motive of alluring the resenting workers and their unions at the grassroots level, the Govt have made repeated pronouncement

that the scheme would be reviewed every year (instead of original provision of three yearly review) and accordingly the amendment to the original scheme was notified. But more than twenty months have elapsed since the scheme was enforced in November 1995, and no review has at all been made of the scheme, and the ill motive stands exposed.

The incapability of the Provident Fund Organization to handle and administer the pension scheme for two crore PF subscribers already stood exposed as daylight. In fact such incompetence and corruption in the PF organization in handling the earlier Family Pension Scheme led to an accumulation of Rs. 11000 crores on family Pension Account due to non payment to incumbment workers.

In case of pension scheme being handled by the Same PF organization, accumulation owing to non-payment would be much more, the Govt would continue to enjoy cheaper flow of fund at the cost of workers' hard earned savings in the pension fund. The Pension released to number of retirees till date as per the new scheme, being a meagre percentage of total number of retired workers, it has already established the ominous trend.

Inspite of the imposition of the scheme through enactment, and inspite of the support extended by some trade union centres to the retrograde scheme, the workers continue to oppose the scheme at grassroot level. There had been numerous stay orders in various high court of the country on the operation of the scheme on many enterprises/industries. In a recent judgement, in the case between Union of India Vs Steel Workers' Federation of India, ICI & IEL Employees' Federation, the Supreme Court of India upheld such stay orders and advised the Govt of India to bring all the pending cases on pension in various high Courts to Supreme Court. Workers at grassroot level have been continuing their legal battle as well.

The Govt of India and the Labour Ministry in particular has been arguing that although there is no provision for individual option to move out from the scheme, there is provision for exemption to be granted to establishment formulating alternative pension scheme. But that argument has already been proved fraudulent, as in reply to the query made by Calcutta High Court Govt. of India has been 'compelled' to speak the truth that they have received more than 90 applications for exemption from various companies but have not granted exemption to a single case.

The trade union organizations constantly opposing the evil design of loot on workers' PF money in the name of pension scheme, viz CITU, UTUC, UTUC(LS) AICCTU and many other independent unions and federations are determined to continue their struggle to defeat the present scheme and achieve the pension as third retirement benefit without any encroachment on PF. In the wake of

enactment of the Scheme a national joint convention of trade unions was held in Delhi on 25th August 1996 and as per decision of the said convention already mass signature campaign against the scheme is going on all over the country and wider section of workers are getting involved in the campaign. For submission of the mass petition to Lok Sabha, a massive demonstration would be held on 2nd September 1997 at Delhi. And the working class of India through the massive demonstration would declare their next course of action on the pension scheme.

It is the urgent need of the hour to take our struggle against the Govt pension scheme to further height of countrywide trade union action including strike. We must involve widest section of workers at the grassroot level to defeat the design of biggest loot on the working class. Let us work together to make the Delhi-Rally on 2nd September 1997 a massive demonstration of the working class.

GREAT SETBACK FOR THE GOVT. OF INDIA

SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS STAY ON GOVT. PENSION SCHEME.

It may be recalled the Hon'ble High Court of Calcutta has granted a stay in all operations of Employees Pension Scheme '95 on 17-2-1997 on the appeal by Steel Workers Federation of India and IEL Employees Union.

Govt. of India filed a SLP for vacation of the said stay order with the plea that thousands of employees are not getting the so-called "BENEFITS" of pension. The matter came up for hearing in Supreme Court on 16-7-1997. The stay was not vacated. It again came up for hearing on 19th August '97.

The Supreme Court ordered that:

- 1) The stay is to continue*
- 2) The stay will not prevent the eligible employees to get benefits under the scheme.*
- 3) Govt. should transfer all the cases pending before different High Courts in the same matter to Supreme Court for final hearing on merit.*
- 4) Next hearing after five(5) weeks.*

This is a big setback for the Govt. of India

Tapan Sen

(An international seminar on "Workers Participation within enterprise" was organised at Japan during 7-18th July 1997. 19 delegates from fifteen countries in the Asia Pacific region representing trade union, management of both public sector and private sector units, productivity organisations and government labour dept. participated in the seminar. The seminar was sponsored by Asian Productivity Organisation (APO) and implemented by Japan Productivity Centre for Socio-Economic Development (JPC-SED). The only delegate representing trade union in the said seminar was Tapan Sen from CITU.

The seminar activities comprised a number of in-house sessions at Tokyo along with visits to factories and interaction with the Japanese Trade Union, Employers' Organisations, Managers and trade union leaders at the enterprise level, both at Tokyo and in Shizuoka province at Central Japan.

In course of such interaction and the seminar, some ideas/information could be gathered on current situation of Japanese economy and the developments in the trade union movement).

ECONOMIC SITUATION

The industrially advanced economy of Japan is now struggling with problems of stagnation, facing a phenomenally low growth rate. The annual GDP growth rate plummeting from 5.6% in 1990 to a meagre 0.4% in 1992, 0.2%. As observed by the Japanese economists, the shock of recession was the aftermath of an unprecedented speculative boom patronised by a loose monetary policy popularly known as bubble economy. "An enormous volume of overseas asset was acquired in dollar denominated securities and other forms, but this investment evaporated literally like a bubble and this unprecedented supply-demand gap took a huge toll on Japanese economy." This was also accompanied by a number of financial scandals by the major corporate agencies stated to be also adding fuel to artificial boom destined ultimately to get burst.

Another notable factor is the increasing trend of major Japanese firms to establish their production

units outside the country at cheaper-labour region. Overseas investment by Japanese firms is increasing at a much higher rate than their investment within the economy. The foreign direct investment in Japan is much lower in comparison to the increasing outflow of Japanese capital in search of cheap labour and higher profit. Products of these Japanese companies at their foreign based firms are being imported in increasing quantities as popularly termed as Reverse Import which has put immense pressure on the competitiveness and the capacity utilisation of the domestic firms in Japan adversely affecting their economy. Such a phenomenon has become clearly visible in the composition of Japanese import during the recent years. During 90s the share of finished products, mainly the products of overseas Japanese factories in the total imports to Japan is fast increasing. From around little more than one trillion yen in 1991 such reverse import to Japanese soil from overseas Japanese factories has increased almost three times to 3 trillion yen in 1995. A survey by the Commerce, Industry and Labour Dept. of Japan in the Shizuoka province of the country, having heavy concentration of industrial activities, revealed that around 25% of the industrial units in that province have more than 25% of their total production from the overseas factories and 13% get more than 50% of their production from abroad. And such shift in production centres abroad means shifting of employment as well.

MOUNTING PROFIT

Notwithstanding sluggish GDP growth rate in Japan, the profit of Japanese Corporate sector marked steady rise even during recession. During 1994, 1995 and 1996 the profit earned by the major manufacturing enterprises in Japan grew at a double digit rate i.e. 28.6%, 35.8% and 14.1% respectively, over the previous year. In the non-manufacturing sector annual growth rate of profit was around 12% during 1994-96, and in the small and medium sectors (manufacturing) the growth of profit jumped from 15.2% to 23.2% during the same period.

The Bank of Japan Short Term Economic Forecast Survey (1996) projected that "the corporate profit growth in the manufacturing sector will remain in double digit for the third consecutive year. This growth has been brought about by restructuring and relocations abroad".

It is interesting to note that while the phenomenon of appreciating the value of Japanese currency Yen is creating serious problem for Japanese export trade making Japanese export costlier in the international market, the same appreciating yen has been pushing up the profit of major Japanese corporates through the reverse import route. Hence Japanese capitalists are reaping huge fortune despite the country's economy facing stagnation and recession.

BURDEN OF RECESSION ON THE COMMON PEOPLE

The Japan Federation of Employers' Associations (NIKKEIREN) had to admit in the process of interaction that "abnormally high difference between world and domestic prices in Japan are preventing the public from enjoying better life style. " And it is commonly acknowledged by all Japanese that Japanese products are cheaper in foreign market than in Japan. "The Report on Consumer Goods and Services 1996" published by Economic Planning Agency in Japan revealed that food prices in Tokyo were 2.13 times of that of New York, 2.43 times of London and 2.70 times of Paris. Clothings at Japan are dearer than New York by 1.88 times. Electricity Also is 1.5 times costlier than all European countries and USA. Gas is 2 to 3 times costlier compared to other G-7 countries. Same is the case with other consumer items, at Japan which are at least 1.5 to 2 times dearer than other G-7 countries.

The above situation demonstrates the glaring fact that Japanese people are being made to bear the burden of high prices to pay for the high rate of subsidy on Japanese export and for subsidising the high profit for the Japanese big business. Such a situation also exposed the violation of anti-dumping regulations of WTO by Japan with impunity.

Such a phenomenon of high prices alongwith stagnating real wages got reflected in downward pressure on the living standard of the common people of the affluent Japan. The Govt statistics admitted

that the personal consumption in Japan remained stagnant around 60% of GDP. The household Economy Survey(1995) carried out by Statistics Bureau of Management and Coordination Agency observed that "For the first time since 1963....consumption spending experienced a decline for three consecutive years....the sharpest decline was in the fraction of income that can be spent at the household's discretion namely the income minus non-consumption expenditures (taxes, social security premiums insurance premiums etc) educational fees, housing cost and utilities. The freely disposable portion of income plummeted to 17.2 percentage point."

RISING TAX BURDEN

In the face of declining tax revenue in Japanese exchequer for five consecutive years till 1995 caused by tax concessions to Business Houses and tax evasion by the corporate concerns, the higher tax burden is being thrust on the common people to raise the contracting revenue base. Consumption tax rate has been increased by more than one and half times to 5% from April 1997. Added to this has been the increasing burden of the social insurance premiums on the working class.

As has been observed by Japanese Trade Union Confederation (RENGO) "The lower the income heavier the social insurance burden.. Groups with annual income of 6 to 7 million yen at Japan (at the lower strata) carry a burden of around 16%, 6% on tax account and around 10% on social Insurance Premium and at the middle level having maximum working population the burden is as high as 24.5%" Unemployment is growing at a fast rate, it being 3.5% at present, - quite high in Japanese standard in view of the negligible population growth. If the surplus manpower still maintained within different companies due to some compulsion under Japanese Labour Standard Law is added to it, the figure would be over 5%. And such surplus situation has become a serious problem before the Japanese companies as commented upon by the NIKKEIREN - The Employers' Organisation in Japan - it being the result of scaling down of production owing to recession and also competition from 'Reverse import' and also of increasing automation/Robotisation at workplace.

Another feature is that the employment in manufacturing sector is declining at a faster rate, reaching 14.56 million in 1995 which is below the service sector employment of 15.6 million.

TOWARDS CASUALISATION

The quality of employment is also facing a downward pressure due to rising unemployment. The increase in employment of part time workers/temporary workers and more stress being given by Japanese Employers to flexible working condition has already set an ominous trend towards the change of employment pattern in new ventures and also in the existing companies, particularly in service sector.

As per Survey conducted by the Employers' Association (NIKKEIREN) in 1995, the non-permanent workers, comprising temporary workers, part time workers and workers on periodical contracts, accounted for 18.7% of the total workforce and the same would reach 30% in 1998.

Again the above figures are mere aggregation and the reality is some thing more serious. The Editor of "Bank Workers", the bulletin of "Research Institute of Bank Employees in Japan" observed that in eleven major Japanese Banks the total employment has gone down to 1,40,000 out of which more than 40,000 are part time workers predominantly female. During the visit to a small factory in Shizuoka province, producing automobile parts, it could be gathered through interaction with a shop level manager, that during last three months of the financial year, employment in the said factory has gone up by more than 30% - and they are all part time workers. This has been the pattern in most of the medium size enterprises operating as contractors of big companies. The Japanese Federation of Employers Association (NIKKEIREN) minced no words expressing their clear bias in favour of this so called "flexible employment system" or "Fluidification of Labour Market" in the face of increasing pressure of competition from foreign producers and from overseas Japanese products to reduce labour cost.

DEPRESSED WAGE LEVEL

As a natural phenomenon, the trade union movement of Japan is facing a big challenge. As admitted by the pro-govt Trade Union Centre of Japan (RENGO), the Enterprise level unions had to face a tough time

during spring time wage negotiation in 1997, and 1998 is going to be a more difficult year. The Employers' Association NIKKEIREN has openly denounced the system of wage negotiation every year and advocated a two years' holiday for wage increase after every wage revision or three yearly wage revision.

But question of negotiated wage revision arises only in respect of unionised workers and in Japan only 23.8% of the total workforce is unionised.

The wage-level in the small and medium enterprises is much lower than in the big companies and owing to lack of unionisation in this sector the gap is increasing. According to the report of National Tax Agency (1995), the average annual income in the companies employing 5000 or more amounted to 6.03 million yen, the comparative figure of those in small/medium enterprises is 3.50 million yen (58% less).

MYTH OF HIGHEST WAGE LEVEL

There is a common saying that the Japanese wage level is highest among the advanced industrialised countries. As NIKKEIREN has put it, "Japanese wages (nominal rate) are the world's highest". But what the employers do not admit is that the productivity of Japanese workers also is among the highest in the world particularly in manufacturing. But even in wage comparison there remains a serious flaw. Compared to all the advanced countries

particularly in G-7 group, the domestic price level at Japan is at least 1.5 to 2 times higher on the average. And if purchasing power parity among the advanced industrialised countries are taken into account while comparing the wages, then in real terms Japanese wage level falls much below than other advanced countries and is a complete mismatch with the high productivity of the Japanese workers. As commented by the ZENROREN official, "Japan is the most novel example of the capitalist system as to how the gains of high productivity of the workers are being completely appropriated by the capitalist class both through depressed wage and abnormally high domestic prices and higher tax burden. In spite of being highly productive and productivity increasing consistently, the workers have to buy in a dearer market to subsidise the profit of the employers."

EMPLOYERS DEMANDING TOTAL DEREGULATION

The Employers' in Japan voiced their strong opinion through their memorandum to Japanese Govt:

"If annual wage increment increases the fund needed, the wage system itself have to be reviewed...In todays condition enterprises having leeway in their ability to pay...should use them to maintain employment and to rectify high cost structure" (NIKKEIREN POSITION PAPER '97)

With the aging society and increase in pensionable population, the govt have decided to raise the pensionable age to 65 years after 2000 AD. Employers, in order to save on labour cost are re-employing a section of retired workers with lower wages and on contract basis pushing up unemployment among young workers despite very slow growth of population.

The employers demanded gross alteration of Labour Standard Law to remove all regulation relating to employment - which they call - Fluidification of Labour Market. Already the so called systems of "Long term employment system" and "seniority based wage rise and promotion"(so much propagated as the humane feature of "Japanese Style Management") have already started getting diluted and distorted through the process of widespread part time and temporary and flexible employment owing to desperate bid of Japanese capital to rationalise by cutting labour cost. The pressure and sweep of the challenges are so much as even the RENGO so long having a partnership relation with the employers' forum had to comment on the demand of the NIKKEIREN for deregulation of labour market that: "Talking about free flow of labour ignoring the favourable aspect of the said system of long term employment means merely advocating the freedom to dismiss workers arbitrarily and allowing employers to abandon their social responsibility....NIKKEIREN's new personnel policy serves only to destabilise employment and exacerbate social insecurity."

SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO TUs

The above situation poses a big challenge before the Japanese Trade Union movement. Out of a total workforce of 53.09% million, only 12.61 million workers are organised in unions represented by

RENGO (7.9 million) and ZENROREN (1.5 million) and in various other independent federations. While the biggest trade union centre RENGO pursues a pro-govt conciliatory line, the ZENROREN represents the left orientation in the trade union movement.

So long Japanese Trade Union movement travelled in two distinct parallel paths. One led by RENGO - the officially patronised TU Centre through collaboration with the employers' association. And the other one led by ZENROREN through mobilisation of workers in the struggle, braving victimisation and discrimination, for the rights, better living and due share of the rise in productivity and also to raise workers' consciousness beyond the four walls of enterprise level industrial relations.

Now in the background of recession and consequent efforts of the Japanese employers to pass on the burden to working class, the situation within the Japanese TU movement is probably heading for a change.

Political situation in Japan is also witnessing changes with the left wing politics gaining strength, and Japanese Communist Party increasing its strength in the Japanese Parliament and metropolis govt.

As reported to me by Mr Tadatsura Sahara, Head of the International Deptt of ZENROREN, the Secretary General of RENGO recently approached ZENROREN for a joint discussion on the situation arising out of increasing attack on working class and impending changes in Labour laws by the govt on the demand of the employers. One round of discussion between the two trade union centres has taken place and prospect of united movement of the Japanese working class against the attack on their rights and wages appears to be bright and it will have much positive bearing in the working class movement of the entire Asia Pacific region.

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TRADE UNIONS DEMAND WITHDRAWAL OF SICAB'97

[The text of the memorandum against the Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Bill, 1997 Amendment Bill presented to Shri I.K.Gujral the Prime Minister by the five Central Trade Unions is published — Ed.]

The Trade Union movement has been demanding amendments to the SICA, 1985 with a view to expedite the revival of the 'sick' industries and in that process the BIFR to function as 'Nursing Homes' instead of 'Mortuaries'. But we are surprised to note that the proposed SICAB 1997 will only serve the purpose of early detection of sick companies for early closure.

In this connection, we would like to state the following for your immediate consideration please :

- 1) In view of the drastic changes in the 'definition of sick company' and other related provisions, the Bill in the present form lends itself to increase the number of sick companies and ultimately winding them up.
- 2) Even the 'Preamble' of the Bill does not specify the object of Revival and Rehabilitation of the sick industries as mentioned in the original Act.
- 3) The BIFR under the SICAB, instead of being given the mandatory powers to direct the Government, Banks and Financial Institutions to implement the revival scheme, are being stripped off even the existing powers under SICA, 1985 reducing the Board to play the role of a Mediator/Facilitator and in certain cases merely a 'rubber stamp'; No power is vested with the Board even to satisfy itself whether a referred company has really become sick.

4) The role of workmen who are the major social partner in the running of the industries, has not been given any proper place in the entire scheme of the Bill. They will be merely consulted for sacrifices.

5) It is the secured creditors and none others including the workmen, who have to be satisfied about scheme that may be concurred by the Board.

6) In its totality the SICAB, 1997 is very retrograde and fails to address itself squarely on the question of industrial sickness or about the remedial measures. We are extremely sorry to note that suggestions put forward by the Trade Unions through the Labour Ministry have been totally ignored in the Bill. Further, memorandums have been submitted by the Trade Unions to the Standing Committee on Finance and the response is still awaited.

In view of the above, we request you to please appreciate the gravity of the issue and immediately intervene so that the impugned Bill is withdrawn and the matter is thoroughly discussed afresh with the Trade Unions to finalise suitable amendments to the existing Act including the scope and coverage (in 1985, when the SICA was enacted the Government took the position that the 'Government itself will be the BIFR' so far as the PSEs are concerned) aimed at expeditious revival and rehabilitation of the sick industries in the interest of the workers and the economy as a whole.

(The memorandum had been signed by the representatives of AITUC, BMS, HMS, CITU & INTUC)

Message from Council of Trade Union Federation of Uzbekistan, Tashkent greeting CITU on the Golden Jubilee of Indian Independence.

August 13, 1997

Dear Friends,

Recieve our warm congratulations on the occasion of 50th anniversary of independence of India.

We wish you and all people of India strong health,

successses in all beginning and prosperity to your wonderful country.

With respect and best wishes,

KHULKAR DJAMALOV
Chairman

MPs PROTEST NON-PAYMENT OF WORKERS' STATUTORY DUES**WALK OUT OVER FINANCE MINISTER'S EVASIVE REPLY**

On 11.8.97, a call attention motion on the issue of non-payment of statutory dues in respect of earned wages, Provident Fund, Gratuity, ESI etc. to the workers of Central Public Sector undertakings was brought in the Rajya Sabha. The call attention motion was moved by Gurudas Das Gupta (CPI), Dipankar Mukherjee, Jibon Roy CPI(M) and others, which brought forth in detail the Govt.'s negative attitude in assisting and reviving the Sick Public Sector Units leading to non-payment of statutory dues to the workers of many such sick PSUs. In many cases, even the employees retired after 30-35 years' service in the company have not received their payment of Gratuity and other statutory dues. Till September 1996, arrears of such statutory dues was around Rs.926 crores.

The Finance Minister in response to said call attention motion on behalf of the Govt. made a statement which was completely evasive of its responsibility over the payment of statutory dues to workers. He pleaded that, the responsibility of payment of statutory dues vests with the management of the respective public sector companies and the question of Govt providing the funds should not normally arise. While mentioning about the non-plan loan provided to some of the sick PSUs, Finance Minister also said that "Govt as a promoter cannot be expected or be responsible for meeting their day to day cash requirements". Total evasion of responsibility on the part of the Finance Minister for the non-payment of statutory dues to thousands of workers in central public Sector units owned and run by the Central Govt itself, created serious commotion in the Rajya Sabha. Dipankar Mukherjee, MP while denouncing the attitude of the Govt over non-payment of workers statutory dues lashed out: "How is it that govt do not take responsibility of workers, whether they are working in the private sector or in the public setor so far as their dues are concerned and so far as protection of

their human rights are concerned.....should we admit to say—it is not the responsibility of the Govt...the lives of 2,50,000 workers are involved in it." Referring to the deliberations in the parliament on the same issue on many occasions since 1995, Mukherjee said that on all previous occasions govt and the Ministers admitted that it is the responsibility and obligation of the Govt to ensure payment of workers' dues. And now, Govt is throwing the whole responsibility on the respective management although it is because of Govts' inability and rather reluctance to revive the sick PSUs owned by it. Due to non-provision of working capital in many cases, those sick PSUs are defaulting in making statutory payments.

Jibon Roy, MP while taking part in the discussion stated that the unpaid dues of the workers of sick PSUs are either their earned wages or their own hard earned savings in the form of PF or Gratuity. On these savings workers maintain themselves after superannuation. It is difficult for those living in affluence to realise what does it mean to a worker not getting his PF money or gratuity even on retirement after 30-35 years of service, or not getting salary for months together while in service. He also pointed out that it is the responsibility of the Govt. to see that statutes are implemented and the workers whether in public sector or in private sector get their statutory dues. It is very unfortunate that govt is remaining unmoved for years together over such serious development of workers not getting their statutory dues in public sector and such lack of concern is all the more ominous in the background continuing pressure of IMF for total liquidation of PSUs themselves. "It is all the more disgusting" Jibon Roy, commented "when workers are dyingthe govt is speaking in terms of technicalities whether it is the job of Finance Ministry or Industry Ministry and so on, although it is the govt holding on the

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JUDICIAL ACTIVISM IN WRONG DIRECTION

W R VARADA RAJAN

A full bench of the Kerala High Court comprising Justice K G Balakrishnan, Justice P.K. Balasubramanian and Justice K.B. Koshy declared on 28.7.1997, the calling and holding of bandhs by political parties or other associations or organisations illegal and unconstitutional.

The learned judges viewed that a violation of the fundamental right of a citizen was involved when a bandh was called.

The judges justified their pronouncement saying that when the call of bandh " entailed restriction of the citizen's right to carry on his avocation and if the legislature does not move any law either prohibiting it or curtailing it or regulating it, it is the duty of the Court to step in to protect the right of the citizen.

Who are the citizens that the Kerala High Court Bench was so concerned about?

One of the two writ petitions on which the judges passed the order was filed by the Ernakulam Chamber of commerce!

The High Court went further ahead in its enunciation of the thesis on bandhs.

The Court found that organisers of bandh like political parties trample upon the right of the citizen protected by the constitution.

The Court also ruled that no political party had the right to call for a bandh on the plea that it was part of its fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression.

The Court also sought to make it obligatory on the organisers of a bandh to compensate the loss suffered by way of destruction caused during a bandh.

The Kerala High Court would not trust the state governments to control any possible violence or to ensure that a bandh was not accompanied by violence. The judges lamented that " in the present set up the reluctance and sometimes the political sub-servience of the law enforcing agencies and the absence of political will exercised by those in power at the relevant time, has led to a situation where there is no effective attempt made by the law enforcing agencies

to prevent violence".

The judges would not stop here. They maintain that even in cases where there is no overt threat of violence and no physical prevention, the citizen faces a psychological threat. And, even a psychological restriction would be a restriction of a fundamental right of the citizen.

Ironically, the learned judges who would not trust the state Government to perform its duty of maintaining law and order during a bandh, directed the same state government to do all that was necessary to give effect to their declaration terming bandh as illegal.

The vested interests in the country have sung hymns and praises for the Kerala High Court judgement with unconcealed glee.

The bourgeois Press is full of long write ups hailing this 'bandh on bandhs' and even look forward to a set of similar judicial directives.

This judgement, to say the least, is an affront to democracy. This is a direct attack on the right of the working class and the people.

The learned judges in their enthusiasm to protect even the psychological restriction of the right of the citizen, seem to forget that those who seek to protest an injustice meted to them or the society at large, by calling for a bandh are also citizens of this self same country.

It is a pity that such an anti people judgment has come to be rolled out at a time when the country was preparing to commence celebrations of the 50th anniversary of Indian Independence, to achieve which even the great apostle of non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi gave calls for "hartal" as a form of popular mass protest.

Though the judgement has sought to make some sort of distinction between a general strike and bandh it does not take us any far. If " psychological restriction" is a case of violation of fundamental right, as argued by the judges, it could easily be stretched to ban any form of democratic protest.

There is so much lament on 'violence' accompanying a bandh call.

But have the learned judges for a moment thought of the violence let loose on the workers, peasants, youths, women, dalits etc., and the horrors of oppression and repression they are subjected to by the "law-enforcing agencies", which many a time is the cause for calling a bandh.

When state sponsored violence is sought to be protested by a call for bandh, the judiciary, in the instant case, appears to be over-concerned about the effect, glossing over the cause.

When on an emotional issue of desecration of the statue of Dr. Ambedkar, the dalit protesters were gunned down by the Maharashtra Government and its law enforcing agencies, how can any one fault the call for bandh to protest against this atrocity? The Kerala High Court exactly does this.

During general strikes, bandh or hartal, it is often the organisers or the protesters, who are at the receiving end of violence by employers, hired gangsters and police. Turning a blind eye to this fact of life, the learned judges of Kerala have tended to describe every protestor a perpetrator of violence.

Bandh is not a pastime for any one. It is not an everyday or frequent occurrence. A call for bandh is resorted to as the last recourse on rarest of rare occasions. To impose a blanket ban on bandhs, as the Kerala High Court has done, without any reference to existing laws, is an untenable exercise and an extreme measure of judicial activism, in the wrong direction.

Yet another fact must also be noted. The violence during bandhs, which the Kerala judges had lamented, is often the handiwork of anti-socials, engaged by the ruling classes. Willful destruction of properties are resorted to by these anti-socials, with the sole aim of implicating the organisers of the bandh and foist criminal cases on them. It is strange that the judges who could take cognisance of even "psychological" effects, could not perceive these simple facts.

The Kerala High Court judgement will have to be challenged squarely.

The working class and the democratic people must voice their powerful indignant protest against the judgement. Judgement or otherwise, the democratic right of collective protest can never be given up.

FIFTH PAY COMMISSION REPORT:

Employees Firm On Strike Decision

The last discussion between the Govt and the staff side of joint consultative machinery representing the employees, which took place on 19.8.97, had ended in dead lock as the Govt side refused to budge an inch from their earlier position. While all leaders of the Central Govt employees organisations participated in the discussion, the gov't was represented only by some departmental secretaries. Even the Cabinet Secretary was not present. Obviously the Govt did not take the discussion seriously. So the inevitable happened, the discussion broke down. The employees representatives remained firm in their decision for indefinite strike with effect from 24.9.97.

The position of both sides is well reflected in the letter addressed to the affiliated unions by JP Chawbey, General Secretary, AIRF who is also the convener of the Joint Council of Action. The letter

reads "...the official side came with no solution for settlement or anything to offer. The seriousness with a strong feeling that the workers all over the country have were impressed upon the official side. The approach and the attitude of the gov't and the official side was adding insult to the injury which was explained and the official side was told in the strongest possible term to fix a meeting only after response to demands is available." Chawbey then gave a call to intensify the movement.

Faithfully reflecting the pernicious philosophy of IMF and World Bank the Fifth Pay Commission's report is extremely retrograde particularly as far as the group C and Group D employees are concerned and hold out dangerous portends for working class of the country as a whole. What is however most deplorable is that the Govt of the United Front, too, has totally failed to make amends for this and

concede at least some of the reasonable points raised by the staff side. And worst still they have also failed miserably even to take the employees duly in confidence for arriving at some negotiated settlement. It would appear as if the govt was playing hide and seek with them. The way the official side denied their earlier commitment to discuss with the staff side before the govt decision was announced was unprecedented. This naturally evoked strong reaction. Then we find that the Finance Minister held a dialogue with them during the course of which he gave the staff side to understand that there would be discussion with them before govt decided anything. He even told them that the Prime Minister does not want to keep the employees unhappy. But surprisingly, in utter disregard for the assurance given, the Govt decision was ventilated through the press without any discussion. Sharp reaction on the part of the staff side was only expected. They immediately announced their decision to go on strike from 24.9.97. The most obnoxious part of the whole development is that the Cabinet Secretary came out with a threat that they would hold back their decision to implement the report as if to teach the staff side leaders a lesson. In a statement the CITU condemned this in strongest possible terms. Later in response to the staff side appeal for intervention, E Balanandan, President CITU, addressed a letter to the Prime Minister on 12.8.97. It urged him to intervene to end the deadlock and reach a negotiated settlement with the staff side to the satisfaction of the employees. The text of the letter is as follows:

"From press reports as well as from the communication received from the Central Govt. Employees' Joint Council of Action it is learnt that consequent upon the rejection of the legitimate demands of the employees by the Govt the unions and associations constituting the joint council have decided to embark upon indefinite general strike beginning from 6.00 AM on 24th September 1997. The demands on which the staff side is going to launch the strike are apparently the bare minimum that the employees could reasonably demand. It also appears that in their eagerness to reach a negotiated settlement they have even drastically scaled down their vital demand relating to minimum wage. It is inexplicable why in such favourable background the Govt failed to rise to the occasion and reciprocate the spirit of the staff side virtually compelling them to decide for strike. In the circumstances one can not question the justification of the strike decision taken by the employees.

The working class however, expect a better deal from the Govt. of the United Front. The CITU therefore, reequest you to personally intervene in the matter and to use your good offices to bring about a just settlement to the satisfaction of the 39 lakh employees of the central govt."

There are now two conceivable alternatives—either the govt will come to a reasonable settlement or the employees will go on strike. If the employees are at last forced to go on strike, no doubt the entire working class will stand behind them.

Attention Public Sector Trade unions
 Extended meeting of the CPSTU
 19-20 September, 1997
 Dy Speaker Hall
 Constitution Club
 Rafi Marg, New Delhi
 CPSTU Unions to send representatives

CITU WORKING COMMITTEE
 CITU working Committee meeting has been rescheduled. The meeting will now be held from 25th to 28th October, 1997 at Shimla, HP. Meeting of full Secretariat will be held at Delhi on 24th October, 1997

M K Pandhe
 General Secretary

MASSIVE INDUSTRIAL STRIKE IN DELHI AND ADJOINING AREAS

A massive strike was observed on 11.8.97 by several lakhs of industrial workers in Delhi, NOIDA, Ghaziabad and Faridabad at the call of Delhi State Committee of CITU. The strike was called to press for a 11 point charter of demands the major ones being Rs.3,100.00 per month minimum wage at AICPI 1834 and Rs. 2.00 per point D.A, House Rent Allowance, proper implementation of all labour laws, pension as third retirement benefit and review of the Supreme Court judgement for shifting/closing of industrial units in Delhi in the name of pollution to save the employment of lakhs of workers besides other demands.

MAGNITUDE OF THE STRIKE

According to reports, in Delhi the strike was total in G.T. Karnal Road, Samaypur Badli Industrial Areas. In Rajasthan Udyog Nagar and Wazirpur Industrial Areas it was quite massive. Also in Friends Colony and Jhilmil Industrial Areas in East Delhi the strike was total. In Okhala Industrial Area Phase I & II, Mathura Road and also in Mayapuri the strike was around 50%. In several factories at Ghaziabad cent percent workers observed complete strike. In NOIDA and Surajpur Industrial areas on an average 75% workers including those from many major industrial units like Pheonix, Flex and T-Series Establishments participated in the strike.

On the day of the strike in different industrial areas huge processions were organised by the striking workers. Demonstrations, dharnas were also organised by the fraternal trade unions to express solidarity with the strikers.

THE PREPARATORY CAMPAIGN

The most important factor behind the resounding success of the strike is the long drawn massive campaign undertaken by the Delhi State Committee of CITU in a most planned manner. Apart from the entire state organisation of CITU, the other mass organisations were also involved in the campaign.

Several lakhs of pamphlets were printed and distributed to the workers, thousands of posters were printed and pasted, massive wall writing was done. Hundreds of meetings in factory gate and in the colonies of workers were organised. In the industrial areas processions were also organised. The street plays enacted by the Jan Natya Manch attracted huge crowd and played effective role in the campaign. It was this alround vigorous propaganda campaign which swept the strike much beyond the limit of CITU's membership and sphere of influence. In other words workers from all affiliations responded magnificently to the call of the strike given by CITU.

BRUTAL ATTACK BY INDUSTRIALIST-ADMINISTRATION NEXUS

Being alarmed at the reverberating success of the strike the U.P. state administration came down heavily against the workers and trade union activists and leaders of CITU at NOIDA Industrial area. The police swamp into action and resorted to indiscriminate lathi charge on the striking workers at several places and arrested many leaders. Despite such provocative action of the police the strike rather passed off peacefully.

It is a matter of serious concern for the democratic trade union movement that U.P. state administration has been acting at the open dictate of the industrialists. The NOIDA Employers' Association led by the local BJP MP Shri Ashok Pradhan organised a so called 'gherao' of a NOIDA police station, supplied a list of CITU leaders to the police and demanded their arrest. The actual attack started practically after that only and the atrocities on the workers and their leaders reached alarming height from that point.

The police have gone for mass scale arrest of the workers and have been conducting raid in the workers

colony in the darkness of night and have been picking up workers indiscriminately and even women are not spared. So far more than 80 workers have been arrested and lodged in the jail and these include even child labour also ! Each of the arrested workers has been charged with a record number of upto 14 different charges. The high-handedness of the police can be noted from the shoking incident that in the absence of the President of NOIDA district committee of CITU, his 55 years old father was arrested by the police and kept in the lock-up for 18 hours. Similarly raiding one jhuggi they arrested the brother and a visiting guest of one Shri Ram Jatan who had nothing to do with the strike. The barbrity reached its climax when a woman was picked up from her home and kept in the police lock-up throughout the night of 15th August when the nation was celebrating the 50th anniversary of independence. Till the time of writing this report no one has been granted bail. A delegation led by Jibon Roy, M.P.

visited the Ghaziabad jail and saw that many workers have been injured due to police beating. Section 144 of IPC has been promulgated in NOIDA industrial area and police is even not allowing to open the union office.

UPBEAT MORALE OF THE WORKERS

True to the fighting character of the working class despite police atrocities including large-scale arrest of their leaders, the workers have been demonstrating the determination to fight back the Industrialist-Administration nexus and convert the massive support of the workers into the organisation of CITU and realise the just demands.

The Delhi State Committee of CITU left leaving no stone unturned to protect the workers from the onslaught of the administration and the industrialists. The senior leaders are moving round the factory and workers colonies and preparing for mass actions to defeat the game to dislodge the organisation of CITU.

STRIKE IN UP

Reports have come in of successful strike on 11.8.97 in several parts of UP as well.

In Lucknow, Chinhat Industrial area and Nadargunj area witnessed total strike. A public rally was also organised. In Ash Baug area all engineering units were closed.

Kanpur witnessed a 100% strike in engineering, tannery and unorganised sector industries. Though the other trade unions did not evince interest, the workers responded to the CITU call. BMS on the other hand took an active part on the side of the employers. In the biggest industrial area, Dharanagar, Panki, the workers defied prohibitory orders and organised big march. Dharna was held at different places.

At Dehradoon also the strike was a big success with a huge procession which ended at the collectorate. Demonstrations were held and a delegation met the collector to-present a memorandum. Despite provocations from the goondas engaged by employers, workers carried out the strike peacefully. In Varanasi, the strike evoked good response, particularly in Chandpur industrial area. All major

factories remained closed.

Workers responded to the strike call at other places like Agra, Jaunpur, Bareilli, Rampur, Moradabad, Sarangpur, Bulludshar, Bijnour, Allahabad, Ferozabad, Gajrola and Muzaffurnagar.

PHILLIPINES MASSIVE STRIKE IN TRANSPORT SECTOR

The transport service in Manila, the capital of Phillipine was completely paralysed on 8-8-1997 by militant strike action by the Transport Workers protesting hike in Oilprice and deregulation of Oil Sector. The strike of the transport workers was widely supported by the working class of other sectors and various mass organisations. Transport workers of other Phillipin cities also joined strike action in a massive way.

The struggle against the hike in oil price and the Oil-deregulation Law enacted by the Phillipines Govt to liberate the Oil Companies to raise prices as per their will, is being spearheaded by KMU alongwith other mass organisations from a joint platform "THE COALITION AGAINST OIL PRICE INCREASE".

BHEL WORKERS STAGE DHARNA

As decided by Co-ordination Committee of BHEL union, the BHEL workers staged day-long dharna in all the major BHEL units all over the country on 12-8-97 demanding of immediate commencement of wage negotiation, formulation of separate pension scheme for BHEL workers and against contract system in permanent area of work, besides other demands.

So far, reports of massive dharna and demonstration have been received from Tiruchurapally, Ranipet, Bhopal, Jhansi and Hardwar plants of BHEL. In Hardwar 300 workers including 35 women sat on day-long dharna before the plant gate inspite of heavy

rain all the day. The dharna was concluded by mass meeting in afternoon which was attended by thousands of workers. In Jhansi 80 workers sat on dharna in the main gate of the plant and the mass rally in the afternoon has drawn workers from other unions in a big way. In Trichy plant and also at Bhopal hundreds of workers participated in day-long dharna. From all the mass meeting, call was given to join in thousands the Parliament March Programme on 2nd September against the Govt. Pension scheme. On 3rd of September 1997, BHEL unions from all the centres would jointly demonstrate before the BHEL Corporate Centre.

BRUTAL ATROCITIES ON TEXTILE WORKERS AT KATHUA(J&K) POLICE RAMPAGE IN WORKERS' COLONY.

During mid-night of 30-7-1997, the big band of police alongwith a group of armed gangsters carried on organised rampage in the textile workers' colony at Kathua near Jammu. The colony is inhabited by the workers of Chenab Textile Mill owned by the Birlas.

At dead of night when workers and their families were asleep, the police force alongwith gangsters entered the colony, broke open the houses and dragged many workers and beat them brutally on the street. The family members also were not spared by them. The brutality of the armed custodians of law and gangsters stooped to such level of perversions that women were dragged out of their house and turned naked before being molested and severely beaten up. More than 200 people including women were severely injured, and two were beaten to death. More than 300 were arrested and 98 workers were still untraced. The workers were doubting that they have been killed and put into the boiler of the factory. 13 women were reported to be gang raped by the police and gangsters. On 2.8.97 Com. Jibon Roy MP, Secretary CITU and Com. Basudev Acharya MP, visited the workers' colony at Kathua. Initially the police authority was not in a mood to allow them inside the colony which was practically gheraoed by the police force like a concentration camp. Even the press people were not

allowed. Basudev Acharya and Jibon Roy enquired into the incident and also talked to the workers and addressed the rally of the workers in protest of police-barbarity.

The whole incident appears to be the calculated attempt by the owner of the Chenab Textile Mill of the Birla Group to suppress the workers union with the help of local police administration who are practically subservient to Birlas. Most of the workers are temporary or Badli workers, being paid paltry wages and denied of the statutory benefits. Chenab Textile Industrial Workers Union is the only union representing all the workers there. The union was previously an independent one and recently affiliated to CITU. The employer, with the active support of Police and local gangsters has created a reign of terror inside the factory and outside and the trade union was not practically allowed to function. Police played a direct role at the behest of the Birlas to prevent any trade union activity on the plea of maintaining Law and order in a so called disturbed area like Jammu. In fact abnormal situation and tension in J&K was an instrument for the Birlas and their subservient police authority to suppress the workers and compel them to submit to a life of bonded labour. The employer maintained and patronised a group of noted criminals who have been

used to threaten and terrorise the workmen.

On 29th July evening, Sunil, an union activist was brutally beaten up by Japan Singh and Balaram, both noted criminals of the locality at the direct instance of a manager. The workers spontaneously reacted to such happening and demonstrated peacefully inside the factory. Within no time police reached and dispersed the workers by lathicharge.

Then at the night of 30th at the instance of Mill management, police force and the gangsters jointly carried on rampage-operation in workers colony.

Workers told the names of some of the well known gangsters of the locality like Kailash, Japan Singh, Balram etc. who took active part in ransacking the colony and molesting the womenfolk on that dreadful

night alongwith police. Many of the women folk namely Saila, Bharati, Anita, Dharmshila, Indrani Mishra, Poonam, Shabnam, Sudesh etc. complained to Jibon Roy and Basudev Acharya, that they have been turned naked and then beaten up by the police accompanied by the local goondas. Another worker, Pandey complained that his wife was raped. Entire colony was under a situation of suffocating terror. Jibon Roy and Biplab Dasgupta, MPs also met Chief Minister of J&k, Dr. Farooq Abdullah on 1.8.97 at Delhi and demanded immediate action against both the police and the Birla management for such brutal happenings. The matter was also raised in zero hour in Rajya Sabha by Jibon Roy MP demanding a judicial enquiry.

WEST BENGAL:

STRIKE IN HOWRAH ENGINEERING UNITS

The workers of small engineering units in Howrah District of West Bengal have been on continuous strike since 23.7.'97 demanding implementation of minimum wage declared by the State Government and House Rent Allowance at the rate of of 5 per cent.

These workers are deprived since long of most of the statutory benefits inspite of their hard labour. Repeated persuasion of the Howrah Metal & Engineering Workers' Union (CITU) with the Associations of owners of small engineering units for a negotiated settlement went in vain which ultimately led to continuous strike.

Inspite of passage of more than one month after the commencement of strike the morale of the striking workers is still high. They are determined to fight to the last. Workers and Trade Unions from other industries in the district and other mass organisations too came forward in support of the striking workers. They held solidarity mobilisation and led deputation to District Administration for their intervention. Some of the owners of small engineering units in the district have in the meantime conceded the demands of the workers and signed agreement with the Howrah Metal & Engineering Workers' Union. Due to adamant attitude of the owners of some other

small engineering units, strike is still going on. State Labour department also has been prevailing upon the employers for an amicable solution. Nimai Samanta, Secretary of Howrah District CITU has called upon the common people of Howrah for more active assistance and support to striking workers.

HOTEL WORKERS' PROCESSION ATTACKED BY EMPLOYER

Procession of the workers of HANSARA HOTEL at Siliguri, West Bengal was attacked by the owner of the Hotel and the Hooligans. On 11.8.97, the owner of the Hotel opened fire from the roof of the Hotel at the procession of the Hotel Workers opposing dismissal of workers. While workers were peacefully demonstrating against the illegal dismissal of workers the gangsters engaged by the owner Shri Gurnam Singh, started throwing stones at the workers rally passing by the Hotel followed by firing by the owner himself from his gun. Four workers, viz Salim Ali, Rambahadur Kouar, Bhudhadev Sarkar and Pradip Mohanta sustained serious bullet injury and were admitted in North Bengal Medical College and Siliguri Hospital.

Prior to the incident of firing, repeated complaints were lodged by the union with the local police

authority on the coercive action, and attack on the workers and the union on several occasions by the Hotel owner and the gangsters engaged by him but police took no action on the same. But even after the incident of firing, and specific complaint being lodged against the Hotel-owner, police took no action on the Hotel Owner and the gangsters but arrested some of the workers and union activists. This has created serious resentment among the people who

demanded immediate release of the workers. In a statement on 14.8.97, Chittabrata Mazumdar, General Secretary, West Bengal State Committee of CITU has condemned the attitude of the local police and demanded strong action against the Hotel owner and the gangsters. He also urged action against the concerned police officials conniving with and abetting the Hotel owner. Further, he demanded immediate release of the arrested workers.

GOVERNMENT FORCED TO WITHDRAW INSURANCE REGULATORY AUTHORITY BILL

A galaxy of high-profile executives from the overseas insurance companies had gathered in India.

The occasion was an International Conference on Insurance convened by Confederation of Indian Industry.

All of them, industrial magnates from India and abroad, hoped to celebrate with pomp and glory the passage of Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill, which was being voted in the Parliament.

Alas, they were disappointed.

The Prime Minister I.K. Gujral, himself had to announce withdrawal of the IRA Bill.

The Insurance Regulatory Authority was the first step

towards opening up of the insurance industry to private and foreign capital.

The CITU, the trade unions in the insurance sector, with the All India Insurance Employees Association in the forefront, had campaigned for thwarting the IRA Bill.

The defeat of the IRA Bill, mainly because of resolute opposition by the left MPs in parliament has come as a big morale booster for the trade unions which have been organising resistance.

But the pressures from the international finance capital will see fresh efforts to resurrect the IRA Bill. The working people will have to be vigilant to frustrate such efforts.

SICK FERTILIZER UNITS

GOVT. JETTISONS REVIVAL DECISION MPs OPPOSE CLOSURE MOVE

About sixty (60) Members of Parliament cutting across all political parties protested the contemplated move by the Cabinet to close down four major fertilizer plants of the country viz. Durgapur and Barauni Units of Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation (HFC) and Talcher and Ramagundam units of Fertilizer Corporation of India (FCI), in contravention of an earlier decision of Union Cabinet under Congress Government. In a letter addressed to the Prime Minister of India, jointly signed by sixty Members of Parliaments including. E. Balanandan, Dipankar Mukherjee, Tarit Topdar (CPI-M), Sushma Swaraj (BJP), G. Venkat Swamy, P. upendra (Cong.), Jalaludhin Ansari (CPI), V.P. Durai Swamy (DMK),

Janardan Jadav (BJP), Bhimprasad Dahal (SD), Jayanta Roy (Forward Block), Pramothesh Mazumdar (RSP), Narendra Pradhan (JD) and many others, the MPs pointed out in clear terms that in April 1995 the Union Cabinet decided to revive the above units of FCI and HFC alongwith Sindri and Namrup units which was also conveyed to both the Houses of Parliament and Committee of Public Undertakings. The letter pointed out that "we understand now after 3 years since the viability studies were undertaken in 1994 (of all the above Fertilizer units) by a Technical Committee of the Ministry of Fertilizers, the viability is now being questioned by a Financial Institution (and not by any technical committee)

based on which a fresh proposal is being put up before the Cabinet” for closing down all the Fertilizer Units under HFC & FCI barring Sindri & Namrup. The MPs demanded immediate intervention of Prime Minister and reversal of such a disastrous move to close down, most of the public sector fertilizer producing units in the country, in the background of increasing import of Urea.

In a separate letter dt. 4.8.97 on the same matter to Prime Minister, G. Venkat Swamy MP Chairman of Committee on Public Undertakings (COPU), stated that “I take strong exception to such a decision as the issue has been discussed in the Committee on Public undertakings earlier and they were given the impression (by the Govt.) that revival scheme.....(of

all the concerned Fertilizer units) under HFC & FCI which were approved in principle by the Cabinet in April 1995 could not be implemented only due to delay in tie up of funds. However the viability of these units was not questioned”.

It is amply clear that the decision in-principle of the Union Cabinet in 1995 for revival of the Fertilizer Units under HFC & FCI is now sought to be reversed by the Govt. For the said purpose the viability report of those Fertilizer Units under HFC & FCI prepared by the committee of Technical experts under Fertilizer Ministry is being challenged by the Financial Institution under the control of Finance Ministry to create ground for closure of the Public Sector Fertilizer Plants.

REVIVAL OF IDPL : GOVT. DECISION

A Communication from Chaturanan Mishra, Agriculture Minister, Government of India conveyed the decisions of the Group of Ministers, headed by the Finance Minister, on IDPL, the Public Sector Drugs and Pharmaceuticals company, as under:

“1) As per original plan submitted by the management with the concerned Trade Unions, Rs.264 crores will be given by the Government to revamp the 3 units of IDPL.

2) 10 per cent price preference will be given to IDPL and necessary instructions will be issued to different Ministries and institutions.

3) For Muzaffarur and Madras Units, joint sector will be attracted and if within one year no joint venture comes forward, it would have to be closed.

4) Other State units will be handed over to the different states.

5) The land available with the different units will be sold and the sale proceeds will be given to Govt. of India.

6) The whole process will start unit-wise on the basis of Voluntary Retirement Scheme as proposed.

7) There shall be a Joint Management Council with the Trade Unions in the Management.

8) The Trade Union and Management should immediately chalk out programmes for running these units and raising production (profitability).”

CITU welcomed the decision to revive the three units of IDPL at Rishikesh, Hyderabad and Gurgaon. CITU urged the Govt. to grant cabinet approval for this decision without delay. This decision for revival is a step in right direction in revival of sick public sector units, a promise made in the CMP.

CITU, however, is opposed to the decision to make efforts to attract joint sector for the Muzaffarpur and Madras Units, failing which to close them down.

CITU also resents the decision to handover other units like UPDPL, RDPL, UDPI to respective states. The CITU urges the Govt to take all these units together and revive them all as a whole.

CITU expressed reservation over the decision to sell the surplus land, which was not at all necessary.

Again CITU is opposed to VRS being forced upon the workers.

The decision to form Joint Management Council with the Trade Unions is welcome.

(-Parliament Continued from page 11)

workers’ hard earned saving in the form of PF etc. accounting for the big part of such statutory dues”. Govt cannot shirk off its responsibility.

Among others who spoke on the issues were Biplab Das Gupta, Sompal(RJD), Urmila Ben Patel (Congress), Jayant Malhotra (Independent).

Protesting the irresponsible attitude of the Finance Minister the left MPs in Rajya Sabha staged a walk out.

CONTRACT WORKERS AT AIRPORT

STRUGGLE FOR REGULARISATION

The Contract Workers in various international airports in the country have long been fighting for regularisation of those engaged in permanent work. In many places, including at Delhi contract workers working for more than a decade have been thrown out of employment by the new contractors appointed by Airport Authority at the direct indulgence of the Airport Management. The workers led by CITU unions at Delhi and Calcutta airports had long been fighting for such unjust treatment meted to the contract workers. In that process CITU unions at Calcutta and Delhi took the initiative to build up co-ordination between the contract workers unions in all the Airports of the country. An All India Airport Co-ordination Committee was formed consisting of the union representatives of five international Airports in the country. The Co-ordination Committee conveyed to the management the main demands of the contract workers and demanded early settlement failing which, there will be strike action in all the Airports.

On 4-8-1997, a delegation of Co-ordination Committee along with Nirmal Chatterjee MP and Basudev Acharya MP met Shri C.M. Ibrahim, Union Minister for Civil Aviation. Chairman of the Airport Authority of India also attended the meeting.

In the meeting with the Minister, the unions demanded immediate implementation of Supreme Court Judgement dt 6-12-'96 prohibiting engagement

of contract labour in sweeping, cleaning and security work and also demanded regularisation of the contract workers doing permanent nature of job under Airport Authority, Air India, Indian Airline and Pawan Hans Ltd. Union also objected to the Medical Check-up of the workers to be made a plea for debarring the absorption of the contract workers.

The Minister assured that all the contract workers in the concerned areas would be regularised within 30 days and medical check-up will not be a barrier for regularisation of the contract workers. Minister also committed that the contractors and the Board through which Security guards had been deployed in Airport Authority in Delhi and Mumbai will be removed and the concerned workers would be regularised. He also agreed to look into the cases or reinstatement of 45 sweepers at Delhi and 51 Trolley-men at Chennai Airport. Minister also assured that in other areas also the existing contract workers already in work would continue and would not be disturbed in the event of change of contractors.

The Trade Union delegation to the Minister comprised of Ranjit Singh, Dalbir Singh, Chandrasekhar, Rajender, Abed Hussain and Ramashankar of Airport Employees union (CITU/Delhi) Swapan Gupta, Sunil of Calcutta Airport Union (CITU/Calcutta) and Shri Dipti Gupta (Mumbai).

NPCC WORKERS STAGE DHARNA BEFORE PARLIAMENT

The workers of National Projects Construction Corporation Ltd. staged three days' dharna during 12-14 August 1997 at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi to protest against non-payment of wages to workers for five to twelve months at various construction units of NPCC all over the country, non-payment of statutory dues and govt. inaction for revival/revamping of NPCC.

The Dharna was jointly sponsored by NPCC Workers Union of India (CITU), NPCC Staff Association

(INTUC) and All India NPCC Employees Federation (AITUC).

It was pointed by the spokesman of the trade unions that while more than 1500 NPCC workers working at various construction sites/units are not being paid even their regular salary for a period ranging from 5 to 12 months, besides being denied other statutory dues, lakhs of rupees are being misappropriated through corruption and mis-management.

More than three hundred workers gathered from

different parts of the country and participated in the three days' long dharna.

The Dharna was also addressed by various members of Parliament Basudev Acharia, Anil Basu, Hannan Mollah, Jibon Roy, Asim Bala, Dipankar Mukherjee, KSR Murthy and also by Tapan Sen and P.K. Gangul

from CITU and Mr. Sachdeva (AITUC).

From Dharna a delegation met the Labour Minister and also the Prime Minister Shri I.K. Gujral on 14.8.1997, to demand immediate payment of workers' dues. The Prime Minister assured to look into the matter to ensure early payment of wages.

HAL: Contract Workers Organise to fight

Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL), Bangalore has its operations in various states.

HAL, a public sector, management has been engaging massive numbers of contract workers in all its divisions.

In Nasik, the contract workers have organised themselves and formed Nasik Workers Union under the banner of CITU, in 1995.

The Contract Labour Court investigated the complaint over contract labour being engaged in permanent nature of jobs and passed an order on 15.5.95 abolishing the contract system in HAL Nasik. But the management has not taken the contract workers

on the rolls of the company as yet.

The HAL management was also not paying the statutory minimum wages. After formation of the union, the management has been forced to pay minimum wages under the Act.

To circumvent the legal provisions, the management is resorting to signing individual contracts with the workers, showing them as direct job contractors. Technicians are also appointed on consolidated salary of Rs 2000/- per month.

The Nasik Workers Union is fighting for regularisation of the contract workers, gratuity payment, medical facilities, etc.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

50th Anniversary of Independence Celebrated

Thousands strong rally and mass meeting was held in the hill town of Simla on 15.8.1997 to celebrate 50th Anniversary of Independence. The Himachal State Committee of CITU organised the programme. The independence day celebration also coincided with the release of Comrade Rakesh Singha, President of Himachal State CITU from Jail along with Rakesh Malik after long imprisonment.

Rally of workers, employees, students and youth offered a warm welcome to Rakesh Singha at different spots on his way from Nahan Central Jail to Simla. Notable was the shortspan meeting at Sirmur, Kumarhatti and Solan where thousands of people from working class, peasantry, students and youth gathered to celebrate the independence day and also to welcome Rakesh Singha.

In Simla, inspite of frequent raining thousands strong procession with Red flag and National flag rallied round the main bazar of the city, which was concluded

by mass meeting at NAZZ near Mall. The procession was led among others by Mohar Singh, State Secretary CPI(M) and Kashmir Singh Thakur, Rakesh Singha and OP Chowhan, General Secretary, President and Working president of Himachal State CITU respectively.

The mass meeting was addressed by Rakesh Singha, Kashmir Singh Thakur and OP Chowhan and also by Tapan Sen, Secretary CITU. The speakers, while respectfully remembering the heroic sacrifices by numerous martyrs in the freedom struggle, stressed upon the need to defend the independence of the country and integrity of the people from the communal and divisive forces and also to fight against New Economic Policy of liberalisation and globalisation which posed a severe threat to the economic sovereignty of the country. From the rally, call was given to join the Parliament march of Setpember 2, against the Govt. Pension Scheme.

Consumer price Index Numbers for Industrial Workers

(Base 1982=100)

State	Sr.No.	Centre	May'97	June'97	State	Sr. No.	Centre	May'97	June'97
AP	1	Gudur	355	354	PB	45	Amritsar	311	308
	2	Guntur	355	357		46	Ludhiana	318	309
	3	Hyderabad	330	330	RAJ	47	Ajmer	351	360
	4	Visakhapatnam	338	337		48	Jaipur	345	343
	5	Warangal	342	349	TN	49	Chennai	377	376
ASM	6	D D Tinsukia	316	315		50	Coimbatore	348	350
	7	Guwahati	350	351		51	Coonoor	378	372
	8	Labac-Silchar	315	316		52	Madurai	361	354
	9	Mariani Jorhat	337	337		53	Salem	356	360
	10	Rangapara-Tezpur	336	335		54	Tiruchirapally	398	396
BHR	11	Jamshedpur	338	334	UP	55	Agra	329	329
	12	Jharia	297	297		56	Ghaziabad	336	342
	13	Kodarma	299	302		57	Kanpur	339	346
	14	Monghyr	315	313		58	Sharanpur	318	318
	15	Noamundi	334	333		59	varanasi	365	366
	16	Ranchi-Hatia	327	331	WB	60	Asansol	316	316
GUJ	17	Ahmedabad	355	357		61	Calcutta	350	356
	18	Bhavnagar	362	375		62	Darjeeling	298	299
	19	Rajkot	345	348		63	Durgapur	355	356
	20	Surat	370	372		64	Haldia	377	380
	21	Vadodra	349	350		65	Howrah	360	363
HRY	22	Faridabad	351	354		66	Jalpaiguri	305	306
	23	Yamuunanagar	327	329		67	Raniganj	309	310
J&K	24	Srinagar	349	339	CHD	68	Chandigarh	338	343
KAR	25	Bangalore	357	362	DEL	69	Delhi	373	378
	26	Belgaum	372	381	PON	70	Pondicherry	424	429
	27	Hubli-Dharwar	361	364					
	28	Mercara	369	367			ALL INDIA	352	355
KER	29	Alwaye	364	373					
	30	Mundakayam	372	394					
	31	Quilon	387	391					
	32	Thiruvananthapuram	390	390					
MP	33	Balaghat	332	336					
	34	Bhillai	319	322	AP	1	Kothagudem	361	365
	35	Bhopal	375	379	HP	2	Himachal Pradesh	331	331
	36	Indore	357	358	RAJ	3	Bhilwara	344	345
	37	Jabalpur	348	353	MP	4	Chhindwara	350	353
MHR	38	Mumbai	391	403	TRI	5	Tripura	338	335
	39	Nagpur	364	362	GOA	6	Goa	410	421
	40	Nasik	374	371					
	41	Pune	379	385					
	42	Solapur	365	371					
ORI	43	Barbil	333	343					
	44	Rourkela	334	341					

Additional Series of Labour Bureau

AP	1	Kothagudem	361	365
HP	2	Himachal Pradesh	331	331
RAJ	3	Bhilwara	344	345
MP	4	Chhindwara	350	353
TRI	5	Tripura	338	335
GOA	6	Goa	410	421

Government of India
Ministry of Labour
Labour Bureau
Shimla

MESSAGE FROM THE WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS, PRAGUE, GREETING CITU ON GOLDEN JUBILEE OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE

August 12, 1997

To
Com. M K Pandhe
General Secretary
CITU, New Delhi
Dear Comrade,

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the victory of the national liberation struggle of the Indian people, marking the half century of free India the second most populous country in the world, the World Federation of Trade Unions warmly greets the CITU and all trade union organisations and working people of India.

The working people and the trade unions in India played a great role in the national liberation movement, a struggle which gathered abundant international solidarity in the common struggle of the world peoples for an end to the colonial empires

of the imperialist powers and for national independence, democracy and human rights and for peace and social progress. The 50th anniversary of India's independence is thus a great occasion for working people and trade unions all over the world in their struggle against all forms of exploitation as well as against imperialist economic domination and social oppression.

We wish the working people, the trade unions and all people of India great success in carrying forward their united struggle to build a better life through economic and social development, upholding the rights and interests of the working people, friendship and all round cooperation among all nations and peace and prosperity for all citizens of our planet.

With greetings,
Yours fraternally,
ALEXANDER ZHARIKOV
General Secretary, WFTU

SITUATION IN KOREAN PENINSULA

Recent developments in the Korean Peninsula have attracted worldwide attention and further exposed the sinister aggressive designs of US imperialists and their south Korean puppets, who are brazenly engaged in hectic preparations for northward invasion through military exercise under the joint command of US forces and south Korean troops.

On August 6, 1997 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK has issued a statement condemning the US imperialists and the south Korean puppet regime for stepping up military preparations for an adventurous invasion under the pretext of safeguarding "peace and security" on the Korean Peninsula. The statement exposes the sinister joint military exercise named "Ulgi Focus Lens," which is to be carried out from August 18 to 20. More than 16,000 US troops and a large number of south

Korean puppet forces are likely to participate in the exercise.

Strangely, the exercise has been announced on the eve of "four way talks" being held to realise peace and security in the Korean Peninsula. This reckless action shows that the US and its puppets do not desire to build a peacekeeping system and establish confidence -building mechanism between the two sides in Korea.

The CITU strongly opposes the aggressive designs and double-dealing attitude of US imperialists and their henchmen. It believes that the key to lasting peace in the Korean Peninsula is total withdrawal of American troops from the area. As long as the US and its south Korean puppets continue to brandish bayonets and carry out war provocations against the northern part of Korea no lasting peace in the area can be realised.