

**DEEPENING  
CRISIS !**

**RISING  
STRUGGLE !!**

*Review and Documents of the CITU  
Working Committee Meeting,  
New Delhi  
October 3-5, 1973*



**CITU PUBLICATION**



## **Meeting of the Working Committee of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions Held in New Delhi, October 3-5, 1973**

### **A RESUME**

The Working Committee of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions met at the Constitution Club in New Delhi on October 3-5, 1973 to review the developments and the activities of the CITU since the Second Conference held at Ernakulam in April, 1973.

The meeting was attended by thirtysix members of the Working Committee and five invitees—Comrades V. P. Chintan, Chandi Prasad, Ghanasyam Saran Sinha, Nrisingha Chakravarty and Satya Narayan Tewari. Comrade B. T. Ranadive, President CITU presided over the meeting.

At the outset, Comrade P. Ramamurti, General Secretary moved the resolutions on Martyrs and Condolences. The meeting paid homage to the martyrs who had laid down their lives fighting police repression and gangster attacks. The meeting also expressed its heartfelt condolences at the untimely death of Comrade Chandrasekhar, member of the Delhi Committee of the CITU.

Comrade Jyoti Basu, Vice-President moved the resolution on the counter-revolutionary coup in Chile. It was supported by Comrade Samar Mukherjee. It denounced the counter-revolutionary coup engineered by the CIA and massacre of the fighting people of Chile and demanded the withdrawal of the trial of Comrade Luis Corvalan, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Chile, and his release. The resolution was adopted unanimously.

A separate resolution was adopted paying warm tributes to the memory of Pablo Neruda, the revolutionary poet of Chile and a great anti-fascist.

Comrade B. T. Ranadive then delivered his presidential speech ( for text see later pages ).

Comrade M. K. Pandhe, Secretary moved the names for the Resolutions Committee and the following members were elected to that Committee :

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|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Com. Sudhin Kumar (Convener) | 5. Com. Ravindranath |
| 2. „ R. Umanath                 | 6. „ Niren Ghosh     |
| 3. „ N. Prasada Rao             | 7. „ Biren Roy       |
| 4. „ S. Y. Kolhatkar            |                      |

The meeting also elected the following members to constitute the Credentials Committee :

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|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Com. Nalla Sivam (Convener) | 3. Com. K. Padmanabhan |
| 2. „ S. M. Chowdhury           | 4. „ P. K. Kurane      |

### GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

Comrade P. Ramamurti, General Secretary then placed his report before the meeting ( for text see later pages ). The report reviewed the developments and the activities of the CITU since the Second Conference, the big united mass actions sweeping the country and the role played by the CITU affiliates in building up united actions of the working class.

Eleven members and invitees, including Comrades R. Umanath, Monoranjan Roy, E. Balanandan, Vishwanath Menon, P. K. Kurane, Mohan Punamia, N. Prasada Rao, Chandi Prasad, Ghanasyam Saran Sinha, Satya Narain Tewari and N. Chakravarty, participated in the discussions on the report of the General Secretary. After discussions, the report was adopted unanimously.

In their discussions, the Comrades narrated their experiences highlighting the achievements as well as the weaknesses of the movements. They pointed out how the rising prices and the anti-people policies of the Government have forced even the backward sections of the working class to come into struggles in several States. Referring to the wave of mass actions sweeping the country and the big

united struggles taking place everywhere, they pointed out that in many of these struggles the CITU has not only taken initiative to build up united actions but has also played a dominant role. Special mention was made of the strike actions by the Loco workers, the State Government employees of Rajasthan and the textile workers of Maharashtra and the successful Bundhs in West Bengal, Rajasthan, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu, which were joined by lakhs of workers irrespective of affiliations. Referring to the role of the AITUC and HMS unions in their respective States, they pointed out how the growing urge for united action among the workers forced the AITUC and INTUC unions to participate in many of these united struggles.

### **Report on Industry-wise Activities**

Comrade M. K. Pandhe, Secretary gave a report on the industry-wise activities of the CITU since the Second Conference. He explained the activities and organisational position of the CITU unions in the Road Transport, Engineering, Bidi, Mining, Electricity, Jute, Cement, Paper, Chemical and Fertiliser and other industries and the efforts made during this period for the formation of Federations or for building up industry-wise co-ordination in these industries.

Members who took part in the discussions on this report included Comrades Krishnapada Ghosh, Robin Mukherjee, Ravindranath, Kamal Sarkar, R. Umanath, S.Y. Kolhatkar, Niren Ghosh, Monoranjan Roy, Nalla Sivam, K. Ramani, Robin Chatterjee and E. Balanandan. On the basis of these discussions, the meeting took some organisational decisions to improve industry-wise co-ordination and guidance of activities.

Comrade Monoranjan Roy, Secretary then gave a brief report on the talks which he and Comrade Vimal Ranadive, Secretary of the All India Plantation Workers Federation (CITU) had with Comrade Kuzmin, representative of the

Trade Union International of Agriculture, Forestry and Plantation Workers after the affiliation of the AIPWF to this TUI body.

Comrade Sudhin Kumar, Vice-President reported on the 15-day Seminar on Family Planning at Bombay, organised by the Central Board for Workers' Education in collaboration with the I.L.O., which was attended by him on behalf of the CITU. He pointed out that the CITU's viewpoint on Family Planning had been forcefully put forward in the Seminar.

### **On Productivity**

Comrade P. Ramamurti, General Secretary reported on the Seminar on Productivity called by the National Productivity Council at New Delhi which he and Comrade M.K. Pandhe attended on behalf of the CITU. He also initiated a discussion on the question of Productivity and those who participated in the discussions included Comrades R. Umanath, M. K. Pandhe, K. Ramani, N. Prasad Rao, Ravindranath and Sudhin Kumar, among others. In this context, the meeting also discussed the CITU's stand regarding participation in official Committees and seminars in general and the National Productivity Council in particular. Comrade B.T. Ranadive summed up the discussions on this issue and explained the guidelines which should determine the CITU's attitude in this respect.

Comrade Samar Mukherjee, Treasurer read out the accounts for January-September, 1973 which was adopted by the meeting unanimously.

The meeting also adopted a report of the Credentials Committee recommending grant of affiliation to 30 Unions having membership of 3480.

### **Resolutions**

The meeting also adopted several resolutions on important national and international issues. These included resolutions

greeting the working class and people of China on the occasion of the anniversary of the foundation of People's Republic of China ; welcoming the Soviet help of 2 million tons of wheat ; welcoming the relaxation of tension in the sub-continent following the repatriation of Pakistani POW's and civilians in Pakistan and Bangladesh ; condemning the barbarous repression and police atrocities on the people ; denouncing the framing of the Indian Penal Code Amendment Bill and use of DIR, MISA etc. against strikes and democratic movements and demanding withdrawal of the obnoxious Bill and release of all political prisoners ; denouncing the growing atrocities on Harijans ; supporting the struggle of the Central Government employees against the recommendations of the Third Pay Commission ; congratulating the struggles of Loco workers, Rajasthan State Government employees and doctors of Maharashtra and supporting their demands ; etc. (For texts of resolutions see later pages.)

The Working Committee also decided to hold the next meeting of the General Council in the first week of February, 1974.

In conclusion, Comrade B.T. Ranadive summed up the discussions in the meeting. He pointed out that the CITU has a great responsibility to-day as there is a growing realisation among the working class that without united struggle they cannot win their demands. Hence the CITU should be the uncompromising champions of the working class and should avail of every opportunity to unite the broadest sections of workers and build up struggles against the attack on their livelihood and living conditions. He further pointed out that the weaknesses in our organisational functioning can be overcome with proper planning and systematic work. During this period, he said, we pursued our line of united action well, but we must guard against mistakes and adopt correct tactics while pursuing this line.

## **Speech of B. T. Ranadive, President CITU at the Working Committee Meeting, New Delhi, October 3-5, 1973.**

Comrades, we are meeting nearly six months after our Session in Ernakulam. These months have been full of rapid developments affecting our country, our movement here and the international movement abroad.

Before I describe them let us all remember our heroic comrades who fell victims to goonda daggers and police firing in the last six months. The toll of martyrs at the hands of Congress gangsters continues in West Bengal. Comrades were murdered in Durgapur. On behalf of all of you let me offer my greetings to our esteemed Comrade Chintan who though grievously wounded foiled the game of hired gangsters to murder him. Comrades, hundreds of our workers in West Bengal are facing gangster attacks daily. In the mining area of Raniganj and elsewhere their houses are raided, their wives and children beaten but they continue to uphold the red banner. Hundreds all over the country are arrested and thrown in jails during strikes. Hundreds are lathi-charged by the CRP and wounded. Many fell victims to police firing. Our organisation will be nothing but for the revolutionary courage of most of our workers.

Hundreds of our comrades and other democrats are languishing in the jails of West Bengal—maltreated, illfed-victims of the class vengeance of oppressors who rule this land. We must assure them of our support and continue to agitate for their immediate release.

Comrades, we must all stand in reverence to the memory of Dr. Allende, who refused to surrender to the enemies of the working class, the enemies of the people of Chile. The murder of this fighting leader of Chile will go down in his-

tory as one of the most abominable deeds perpetrated by the fascist enemies of mankind.

Comrades, we mourn the death of another great son of Chile, a fighter in the cause of the international working class, a great anti-fascist—the poet Pablo Neruda. Son of a railway worker, though he rose to eminence in different circumstances, he could never forget his class, his people. He joined the mainstream of the working class movement, became an active Communist and leader of the Chilean Communist Party. Relentlessly his voice struck at the fascists and imperialists. His muse remained faithful to the cause of the international proletariat.

We express our solidarity with the working class and people of Chile in the struggle against the military junta. We join our voice with others in denouncing the executions, the brutal massacres of workers, Communists, Socialists, democrats and progressives in Chile and nail down American Imperialism and the CIA as the main instigators of this crime. We send our greetings to the fighting Communists and Socialists who are bearing the brunt of repression and leading the struggle.

Comrades, we should send our fraternal greetings to the working class and people of Peoples' China on the occasion of the anniversary of their great revolution. We hail their remarkable progress and wish them victories in the task of socialist construction.

### **Friendship with Pakistan**

In our Ernakulam Conference we demanded a quick settlement of the question of repatriation of prisoners of war and civilians in Pakistan and Bangladesh. We all must welcome the fact that things have started moving, prisoners are being repatriated and a certain relaxation of the situation and tension is evident. We stand for the establishment of peaceful and friendly relations among the three countries of the subcontinent in the common interest of the democratic

and socialist movement of the three peoples. We express our joy that the prisoners will soon be united with their families.

Notwithstanding the evidence of relaxation, we cannot but take note of the forces arrayed against friendship and settlement. Whatever outward appearance the American imperialists are putting up, they are busy laying the basis for future tension and discord to regain the lost initiative. One of their aims in feverishly arming Iran is to assure the reactionary military circles in Pakistan so that their services will be available when necessary. These circles are opposed to the democratic people of Pakistan, their aspirations and are only biding their time.

In India there are the reactionary parties like Jana Sangh and others who are on the lookout to discredit any move for peaceful settlement as national surrender. They would like to go back on the Simla agreement ; they would like to keep the war prisoners permanently in India. All these help forward the American efforts to seize lost initiative on the sub-continent. Our unions must fight these reactionaries, and help the working class and democratic forces in Pakistan and Bangladesh to fight their own reactionaries.

### **Sufferings of the People**

Comrades, the last six months again have been the most trying months for our people and the working class. Never before were our people and the working class assailed by so many *economic calamities* simultaneously. Added to famine were the man-made calamities. Electricity shortage, shortage of industrial raw material (yarn etc. for the handloom and power looms, cement, steel,) rising prices, shortages and non-availability of foodgrains and all other necessities of life, lay-off, lock-outs, and finally callous attitude of the Government accompanied by merciless repression whenever the starving people moved to defend themselves.

The suffering of the rural masses knew no bounds. Unorganised, defenceless, a prey to the bureaucratic adminis-

tration, they were cheated, robbed, their wives and children slowly starved, incapacitated for life. When some of these suffering people died of starvation, the Governor of the State callously explained that they died of malnutrition not of starvation—adding further that mal-nutrition has always been prevalent in the country.

The wholesale price Index (1961-62=100) for all commodities rose by 21.1 per cent between August 26, 1972 and August 25, 1973. The corresponding figures for the two years ending August 25, 1973 are—All commodities 30.3 per cent ; food articles 37.2 per cent ; retail prices have risen still more. But all the price indices have ceased to have any meaning with the actual prices—underhand prices—breaking all records and taking everything beyond the reach of the people. With rice sold at Rs. 4 per kilo and more, wheat also Rs. 3 to 4, bajra and jawar at similar prices, Vanaspati at Rs. 10 or 9 per kilo. Official prices and indices are ceasing to have any meaning. The Government pursues a policy of appeasing the wholesale blackmarketeers. It does not touch their stocks. It does not arrest them. At best it directs the anger of the people against the small retailers and makes a show of intervening. After some time it regularises the prices imposed by the wholesalers and promises to punish those who transgress them. The new price schedule becomes another call for raising prices. This is the trick followed by the Government of Maharashtra, West Bengal and other States to defraud the people, the working class of the gains through wage-advance and bonus.

This has made a mockery of the consumers price indices as a guide to the changes in the cost of living of the working class. We have had occasion to point out that the compilation was being done in a fraudulent manner to rob the workers of an adequate dearness allowance. But the present situation reduces the indices to a complete farce as the so-called regulated prices at which nothing is available in the market are recorded in compiling the index.

This has already led to a rapid erosion of the D.A., more so for those who do not get apoint to point full neutralisation. Whatever gains were secured by the workers during the last two years have been completely wiped out by the rise in prices. The minimum bonus, the wage settlements—all have been eroded and the workers are put back where they were a few years ago. The employers and the Government must realise that this is bound to lead to widespread discontent and action.

This makes it all the more necessary to secure by legislative sanction need-based wage for workers—guaranteed need-based standard free from the effects of official price manipulation and index fraud. The monstrous price rise has strengthened the determination of the workers to fight for the need-based wage.

### **Central Employees**

Comrades, in this connection we all must fully support the fight of the Central employees for need-based wage, full neutralisation for rise in prices, bonus and other demands. The Government and a number of reformist leaders are continuing to deprive them of this legitimate demand. We only hope that the vigilance and unity of the Central employees themselves will enable them to overcome the designs of the disruptors and compromisers.

Comrades, while the working class and the employees are unable to defend their existing standard, while it is being eroded by the rising prices, the Government is contemplating further attacks, and preparing for wage-freeze. Certain experts are busy. A secret document has been prepared to attack the workers. It is being given final touches before springing it on the workers and their organisations. There is no doubt that certain trade union leaders will be consulted beforehand and their support bought overnight to bolster this new attack.

A wage policy which ignores the decline in real wage,

which does not ensure need-based wage, and which does not even guarantee remedies against the constant erosion of real wages, such a wage policy is bound to be resented by the workers and will repel the workers from additional productive efforts.

### **Foreign Collaboration**

Comrades, a feature of the present economic situation must be sharply brought before the people and the working class. That is—the successive breakdowns of plants built in the public sector with foreign collaboration. The bursting of boilers in a public sector concern, the breakdown of power generators, the sudden stoppage of a fertiliser factory after the departure of foreign experts, the quick wearing out of foreign-constructed coke ovens, the repeated closures of atomic plants producing electricity, also of thermal plants of their failure to utilise full capacity have now come sharply in the picture accentuating the crisis. The Durgapur Fertiliser Project could not produce an ounce of urea till now though the mechanical side was completed in September 1971. Attempts to start production, have, however, been frustrated by mechanical failure of imported critical items. Pumps were imported from Italy and boilers from West Germany. At Cochin also imported compressors supplied from abroad have been a source of trouble and sabotage of production. Official circles seek to minimise the shutdowns as routine or ordinary happenings which is far from the truth.

### **Production Capacity Exaggerated**

It now seems that the production capacity of some of the Public Sector Plants has been deliberately rated excessively high for publicity purposes or for justifying spendthrift expenditure for corrupt purposes. After expansion, the capacity of Rourkela plant was estimated at 1·8 million tonnes but now it turns out that it is only 1·4 million tonnes.

Similarly the capacity of Durgapur plant was rated after expansion at 1.6 million tonnes but according to the engineers and workers it is only 1.2 million tonnes. Our union has been the first to point out that construction of the plant was defective and capacity was exaggerated.

The workers were being blamed for not producing to the full extent of capacity. Now it turns out that the capacity was deliberately exaggerated and the workers held responsible to conceal the crimes of the foreign capitalists and corrupt officials.

### **Capitalist-Landlord Economy**

Comrades, the working class, like the rest of the people is made the scapegoat of the capitalist-landlord economy, relying on loans from imperialist Governments. The limping stagnant economy chokes all avenues of employment, depresses wages through inflation and by other means and condemns the workers to a penurious existence. The Annual Report of the Reserve Bank of India estimates that national income growth in the years 1971-72 and 1972-73 will be considerably less than 2 per cent. The rise in real per capita income for 1970-71 is estimated to be 1.1 per cent and for 1972-73 2.6 per cent. What chance has the working class under this miserable growth rate? Need then we wonder at the rapid increase in unemployment? You all know the colossal character of our unemployment problem. There are now more than 7.5 million registered unemployed; educated unemployment has reached 3.5 million. The total number of unemployed in rural areas may now exceed 25 million. The scramble for jobs can be seen from the fact that 12 lakh persons applied for 14,000 jobs in Kerala. In West Bengal also more than a million applied for 12,000 jobs. The capacity of the stagnant economy for employing the workers is decreasing every year. The growth rate of employment has been rapidly going down since 1965-66. In the five years prior to 1965-66 the increase was at the compound rate of

5.5 per cent. In 1971-72 it had dropped to nearly 2.8 per cent—the highest since 1966-67. Even this rate could not be kept up in 1972. In recent years the rate in private sector has been  $\frac{1}{3}$  per cent and in the Public Sector 3 per cent.

In some important industries there has been a reduction in the absolute number of employed over the last five years—the years of recession. The average daily employment in cotton textile mills was 842,000 in 1966; it was 706,000 in 1971, the employment in jute mills was reduced from 249,000 in 1966 to 234,000 in 1971—an underestimate. The employment in tobacco industry was reduced from 160,000 to 121,000 in 1970 itself. The total employment in factories increased from 47 lakhs in 1966 to 50 lakhs in 1971—slightly more than 6 per cent increase in five years. The employment in tea plantation declined from 804,000 in 1966 to 760,000 in 1970; the employment in mines declined from 699,000 in 1966 to 603,000 in 1971; the employment in railways increased from 1,357,000, in 1966 only to 1,393,000 in 1972.

The stagnating economy is strangulating employment and there are no prospects that the situation will improve unless a fight is put up against all its distortions. This is no longer a question of factory or industry, but of the entire society and of the class policies of the Government.

Once again the organised trade union movement must demand the enforcement of right to work, pending its immediate grant of unemployment relief to urban and rural unemployed. The cause of the agricultural worker has to be championed by the advanced trade union movement whose responsibility it is to see that the agricultural labourer gets adequate wage and protection against rising prices.

### **Demand Nationalisation of Foodgrain Trade**

Every worker ought to know that the main cause of the rising prices, the daily erosion of his wages is the monstrous deficit financing of the Government.

To expect the Government to control prices in the

interest of the people, therefore, is pure moonshine. The Finance Minister by announcing that Government expenditure will be reduced by Rs. 300 crores in the name of austerity, to check prices is just fooling the people. The most effective way to check the blackmarketing prices in foodgrains is to commandeer the stocks of the landlords in the villages and sell them at reasonable prices. This precisely is what the Government will not do. Nor will it lower the rate of deficit financing. It is therefore cheating the people with a show of effort at controlling prices.

The trade union movement must demand in the interest of the working class and the people the nationalisation of wholesale trade in rice and all foodgrains and denounce the Central Government's treachery. After its show of take-over of wheat trade the Central Government staged a cowardly retreat before the sabotage of the landlords and wholesalers and sacrificed the people to this blackmarketing gentry. The cowardly State Governments, acting as the tool of the wholesalers and landlords incited the workers and the people against small retailers. The working class and the trade union movement must be aware of these tricks and see that the edge of its attack is directed against the landlords, the wholesalers and the Government. It must seize initiative in dehoarding stocks and demand a fair price for the peasants produce—a better price so that it also throws its full weight for nationalisation and the landlords are not able to exploit it for their own aims. It is no longer possible for the working class and the organised trade union movement to protect the food of the working class by relying only on increased dearness allowance. It must jump in the fray for nationalisation of food trade, for commandeering of food stocks of landlords, for dehoarding in cities and effective public distribution. It cannot be said that our unions and workers have done their job in this respect.

## Capitalist Prosperity

While the people and workers were driven to desperation by high prices, the capitalists, like the landlorde thrived and made considerable profits. The foreign monopolists had a free run of the country and amassed huge money at the expense of the people. A recent study by the *Economic Times* on profits and dividends revealed that the dividend rate in 1972-73 was high at 12.2 per cent compared with 11.5 per cent in the preceding year. If bonus issues are taken into consideration, the rate would be 13 per cent. More than hundred companies retained profits of more than Rs. one crore each while many had profits exceeding Rs. 4 crores.

Foreign collaboration companies or companies with foreign capital retained fantastic profits, companies like Hindusthan Levers, Brooke Bond, Glaxo, Pfizer, Union Carbide, Indian Aluminium and Phillips India earned pre-tax profit of not less than Rs. 4 crores in 1972-73—the year of famine, crisis, high prices for the people.

Among the foreign controlled companies Godfrey-Phillips declared a dividend of 35 per cent ; Food Specialists 25 per cent ; Phillips India 24 per cent ; Cafe 25 per cent and ESSO 81.25 per cent.

Whether good or bad crop the peasant, the poor peasants get ruined. This is seen in the plight of West Bengal's jute peasant today. After lot of fanfare the Jute (Purchasing) Corporation was appointed. It seems both the Jute Mills and the Jute Corporation worked hand in glove to bring down jute prices and rob the peasants. Now the Government has come out with a face saving device but with so much explanation why its own handiwork has failed. And the price promised is too inadequate to meet the demands of the peasantry.

In the last six months several other sections have risen in defence of their interests constantly assailed by high prices. We have supported their struggles and lent every help to them. We continue to support the demands of the

Central and State employees. Our CITU in Rajasthan played an important role in mobilising the working class in support of the valiant struggle of the State employees. Our CITU in Maharashtra lent full support to the struggle of the hospital doctors. We congratulate the doctors on their victory. We congratulate the Rajasthan State employees on their success.

It is our desire that the artificial barriers between the employees and the trade union movement should be eliminated and all should rally under one common banner.

We expressed our sympathy and support for the power engineers' demand who sought parity of treatment with the IAS officers. Some of these engineers often behave towards our workers exactly like the hardboiled IAS Officer. But their demand was correct. It is also the doctors demand. The refusal of the Government to accept it only means that it prizes the anti-people bureaucrat more than the doctor or the engineer. The IAS is more useful to run the machinery of repression than the engineer and the doctor. Production and health of the people come next to running the State with the aid of repression.

Comrades it is necessary to bring to the notice of the people how political bias of the Government, how its patronage to certain organisations imposes unnecessary strikes on the workers entailing avoidable sufferings and loss of production. Quite a considerable number of strikes can be avoided, the percentage of loss of mandays lowered if the authorities show minimum respect for democracy in their dealing with the workers. The strike of the Railway Loco workers could have easily been avoided had the Railway Board not refused to negotiate with the LRSA and not decided that its favourite the AIRF was the representative of all workers simply because the Railway Board said so. Now again the Railway Board in conjunction with the AIRF leadership is doing its best to sabotage the August agreement and provoke the workers to another strike.

The Stevedore Workers' strike in Calcutta for 20 per

cent bonus has been prolonged through sheer obstinacy of the Transport Ministry officials and shippers have said the strike was holding up export worth Rs. 50 crores besides obstructing unloading of foodgrains. Who is responsible for this? The Stevedores were specifically told not to concede anything more than  $8\frac{1}{3}$  per cent bonus though they were willing to settle the issue as they were making huge profits. The strike of the blast furnace workers in Durgapur which lasted several days and brought a standstill in production exposed once more the bankruptcy of the authorities. In the blast furnace department the authorities had recognised the INTUC and entered into agreement with it regarding certain conditions. The workers were not even informed of the terms of the agreement, much less consulted. They naturally objected when they were asked to work according to the agreement. The leaders of recognised unions chosen by the authorities hardly consult the workers. The authorities are in search of pliable leaders. The result often is a strike when the implementation of the agreement starts. Knowing that the workers were not consulted the authorities should have understood the workers difficulties and opposition. For a long time they refused to come to any compromise and inflicted a big loss on the plant. The Steel Minister unthinkingly supported the authorities and tried to play the role of a strong steel man. Fortunately all the unions—six in number—including the CITU, INTUC and AITUC stood firm and the workers were saved. The Congress party should instruct its INTUC leaders to introduce democracy in the INTUC unions and not to sign agreement behind the backs of the workers. The CITU has been insisting that recognition should be decided by secret ballot of workers and all agreements effecting the conditions of the workers should be ratified in a mass meeting of workers. This will avoid strikes and dislocations due to settlements with leaders and organisations patronised by the authorities.

## **Bombay Agreement**

Another scandalous agreement which had to be scrapped post-haste was the agreement to work the Bombay Textile Mills for seven days. The Congress controlled Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh—the recognised union, whose President is Rajni Patel, who is also the President of the Bombay Congress Committee, hastily entered into the agreement and presented it to the Prime Minister as an earnest of Textile workers to help production. The workers of course were not consulted. Their opposition in fact was well known. Our CITU union together with the AITUC and Lal Nishan unions gave a call to nullify the agreement, organised two strikes in protest. In the end the agreement had to be withdrawn at least for the time being. Once more an arbitrary agreement over the heads of the workers led to avoidable strikes.

The Seven Day Agreement in Bombay, apart from the fact it would have helped the millowners to pile up profits, also involved corrupt practices. By agreeing to sacrifice the workers' right to common weekly holiday the RMMS secured the privilege to have a say in the appointment of new recruits. It was further provided that preference would be given to the relatives of the present employees. Here was a corrupt attempt to lure a section of workers by promising jobs for their relatives. This has nothing to do with principles of trade unionism, democracy and honesty.

The Government and the INTUC have been justifying the seven days week in the name of increasing employment and production. This is just an eye wash. The real reason is to bolster the profits of the millowners who also promise to earn foreign exchange for the Government through exports. Additional employment can certainly be provided by ensuring that mills which at present work only two shifts switch over to three shifts. Last year nearly 40 lakh spindles—22 per cent of total—were idle in the first shift. What about production? The Seven Days work is not required for mills

which produce cloth for the ordinary people. They are not working even three shifts. If the Government were sincere in providing cheap cloth to the common people, for whom the present prices are prohibitive, it would have concentrated on these mills and ensured three shifts working for them.

But the Government is keen on advancing the profits of the Khatau, the Mafatlals etc.—who last year piled up enormous profits. They produce superfine and mixed fibre cloth—which fetches high price and which the ordinary man cannot afford. The export market also has been buoyant. These people determined to make as much profit as possible in the coming period are demanding seven days work. And it is for their sake that the common holiday was to be sacrificed.

Another sinister game is to launch the offensive of 'modernisation' for which the Government is providing funds under the Seven Day programme. The Seven Day work will enable them to conceal the retrenchment inherent in modernisation, introduction of automatic looms and escape without working class resistance.

The textile workers of Bombay are to be congratulated on their success in defeating this selfish game. It is regretful that elsewhere in some cities the INTUC has been able to thrust this agreement on the workers.

### **New Challenges**

Comrades—Recent months have thrown new challenges to our movement. The open communal exploitation of the Muslim minority masses by the League portends danger for our common movement. Our movement should be deeply conscious of the oppression which the Muslim minority masses have to face under Congress rule. Defending their rights we must wage a relentless fight against League communalism and devote special attention to enlist minority workers in our common struggle.

Another feature of recent months is the wild rampages

of the bureaucracy and the police against the people. We are all accustomed to brutal firings and tortures in the course of our struggle. But what happens in West Bengal or Kerala or Tamilnadu surpasses all imagination. Tortures and deaths in police lock-up are becoming very common. Murders at the hands of gangsters are increasing. It is a matter of shame and infinite disgrace that under the Right Communist-Congress coalition women are raped in police stations and men are tortured. How can the Right Communists fight repression elsewhere and perpetrate in Kerala.

But the main guilty party is the Indira Government whose bureaucracy treats the people in the same way that the British did. Every section of the people is made to feel that it cannot have an honourable existence under the Congress rule. Workers, peasants have always been the special victims of this rule. But today doctors, lawyers, students, nurses, housewives, professors any one of them can be killed, tortured by the police, insulted and humiliated. The Congress police behave like an army of occupation. And worse is the lot of untouchables. Their homes are burnt, their women raped, their lands taken away—with none to protect them. This emergence of the bureaucracy as the dominant force overriding all other considerations is nothing but the perfecting of the apparatus of State repression and the first step towards establishment of one party dictatorship.

As I have said while every section is being attacked, the untouchable masses are singled out for the worst atrocities. They are not only the victims of the police tyranny, they are the target of the local landlords. Their oppression is helped because other oppressed sections in the villages and elsewhere do not run to their help. It should be our privilege to raise our voice in defence of the honour of their women, against the tyranny practised against this section of toilers. I think our General Secretary should contact all central organisations to fix a common day for voicing the working class protest against these inhuman tyrannies.

Comrades—comrade Ramamurti in his report has described the success we have secured in organising united struggles in the fight for united action. These constitute a matter of pride for us and arms us with confidence in relation to the future. We must vigorously pursue the line of united action, we must strengthen the unity already embodied in the UCTU and see that it develops into still broader unity. The problems before the working class do require such a broad unity and we must see that it is achieved.

**Report of P. Ramamurti, General Secretary to  
the Working Committee Meeting, New Delhi,  
October 3-5, 1973.**

Comrades,

I offer my salutations to the memory of our comrades who fell victim to the police firing and goonda attacks during the last three months. I send my greetings to hundreds of our comrades who are in the prisons of West Bengal and other States. On your behalf I send my warm greetings to Com. Chintan who narrowly escaped death at the hands of the hired murderous assassins.

The months since our Second Conference have been full of struggles and activity by our affiliated unions, by our State Committees. They have seen big and prolonged strike struggles and prolonged and vindictive lock-outs; a concerted attempt by our unions to rouse the working class against price rise, electricity shortage and attacks on living standards, solidarity actions and intervention by our unions and State Committees in defence of employees of the Central and State Governments. Above all in these months our State Committees and affiliated unions have steadfastly pursued the path of building united actions, seeking understandings and united front with other organisations to unite the resistance of the fighting workers. The struggle for united activities goes beyond the organisations under the UCTU. Our unions it must be remembered have scored singular successes in our struggle for unity.

Another important feature must be noted. The CITU has been pointing out that our trade unions have been totally indifferent to the question of the rural masses—the mass of poor peasants and agricultural workers. This weakness was again pointed out at the Second Conference of the CITU. It

seems now that a conscious orientation is now being made and in some important centres the workers are being made aware of their duty towards the demands of the peasantry.

It should be realised that the struggles led by us form only a part of the big strike-wave sweeping the country. A large number of struggles are led by the local organisations of workers, not affiliated to any central organisation. A large number are led unitedly, a large number are led by other central organisations.

It is necessary to take note of some of the important struggles not led by CITU affiliated unions. Perhaps the most important among them is the August Strike of Railway Loco Workers led by the All-India Loco Workers' Association. Its victory occupies an important place in our struggle to day, for it has given big jolt to institutionalised betrayal and strike-breaking on the railways. Not only was it the first victory of railway workers after a number of years scored through direct action, it was the first defeat inflicted on the reformist leaders after a number of years. That this victory could be achieved in the midst of a grim economic situation which the authorities exploited to prejudice the cause of the workers, also reveals the isolation of the Government more particularly the Railway ministry. The alternative to settlement was wide-spread repression to justify 14 hours work-day —influential circles in the Government naturally shrank from it.

The successful end to the strike of the loco workers led by the All India Locomen's Association constitutes an outstanding achievement of the railway workers' movement. Perhaps never since Independence did the railway workers achieve such direct and outright success as a result of struggle. The unity of the workers, the organisational skill of the loco leaders, the determination of the workers to face the repressive measures of the Government resulted in an inspiring victory for them.

The loco workers fought for very just and minimum

demands. They demanded eight hours' work day instead of the 14 hours imposed on them by the bureaucratic reactionary Board. That they had to go on a strike and face repression for raising the demand for an eight-hour day under a Garibi Hatao 'Socialist' Government was a bizarre comment on the gap between official claims and practice.

The Loco Workers' Association demanded recognition and also put forward other demands of immediate importance and interest to the workers. These demands were being raised for the last several years without any response from the administration.

Compelled to resort to direct action for saving themselves from sweated labour, for the right to organise, the workers acted with unprecedented unity and militancy which overtook the administration and the Government by surprise. Accustomed to believe that no widespread action could take place on the railway thanks to the sabotage and treachery of the leaders of the two federations—one controlled by the HMS and the other by the INTUC—the railway ministry and administration treated the warning from the Association with scant respect. But the action spread like wild fire from one end of the country to another. The rail system was more or less paralysed on all railways except the Central and certain sections of some other railways. The railway Moghuls soon woke up to the situation. They and the Railway Minister had to yield before this unity and solidarity of the workers. Negotiations were opened. The Government agreed to reduce the hours of work from 14 to 10 hours which meant a big victory for the workers. It agreed to withdraw all victimisation measures, release all those arrested under the DIR. It agreed to open talks with the representatives of the Loco Association for settling the remaining demands.

But the Government did not yield before launching repressive measures, uttering threats and ultimatums and circulating lies and slanders against the workers to prejudice

their case before the public. Every day the Railway Board gave false reports belittling the strength of the strike. The Railway Minister lied to the public that they were fighting for recognition for their craft organisation. Deliberately and mischievously both the officials of the Board and the Railway Minister concealed from the people that the locomen were made to work for fourteen hours and that they were fighting for eight hours day. The minister further concealed that he had failed to honour past commitments. He delivered an ultimatum to the workers to withdraw the strike in twentyfour hours or face the consequences. He refused to talk to the workers unless they called off the strike.

Some busy bodies, reformist and revisionist leaders, while formally supporting the strike created confusion by acting as the messenger boys of the Minister. Instead of calling upon the workers to remain firm, they certified the sincerity of the minister and suggested that the strike be called off unconditionally leaving all the demands for talks after the strike. A number of Right C.P. M. P.s with their publicity hunting statements and desire to appear as the leaders of the strike played this role which would have harmed the morale of the strikers had the leadership not been firm and united.

The leaders of the AIRF and the NFIR who always act as the agents of the railways opposed a settlement on the basis of eight hours day. They fully backed the bureaucrats of the Railway Board who even during the strike refused to shed the illusion that the AIRF alone represented the workers.

Normally, the workers' struggle would have had no chance against this combination aided by the widespread arrests and repression. Besides, this time the economic and food situation was extremely serious, with famine and shortages, high prices and collapse of the public distribution system. The Government exploited the situation to arraign the workers for callousness towards the suffering people. It was

expected that the people's anger would mount and compel the strikers to beat a retreat.

But exactly the opposite happened. Large sections felt scandalised by the fact that the workers were made to work for fourteen hours. The people supported their cause. All opposition parties joined hands in the Parliament, to demand justice for the workers. The CITU and other central trade unions, the organisations of central employees and all democratic forces attacked the Government for its reactionary and repressive policies. Even the press was critical of the dishonest policies pursued by the Railway Board especially its policy of dealing only with organisations recognised by it.

The isolation of the Railway Board and the Railway Ministry was complete.

The firmness of the workers and their leaders combined with the widespread popular support gave them a tremendous and deserving victory. The popular support seemed to have its impact on the inner circles of the Government; otherwise the labour Minister and his department would not have played an active role in settling the dispute.

The Loco workers deserve the congratulations of all sections of workers and especially the railway workers for the magnificent fight that they put up against sweated exploitation. No doubt they have added a glorious chapter to the annals of the trade union movement of our country.

The Loco workers were able to secure this historic victory; because in the first place, they broke away from the treacherous groups of the reformist leadership of the AIRF. Time and again, the reformist leaders betrayed the locomen at the bidding of their masters. The exclusive and arbitrary recognition granted to the AIRF was a device of the Board to keep the workers under the reformist grip. But the loco workers saw through it and formed a separate organisation free from the agents of the Railway Board. They nursed it; they built unity at grass roots level. They took collective decisions and continued to build and strengthen unity during

the strike. They built an apparatus which could communicate all over India within a few hours. It is this combined with popular support that earned them their victory.

The locomen's strike has unmasked the criminal role of the Railway Board which must be branded for involving the country in a strike in the midst of a serious economic situation and imposing a loss of crores of rupees on the country's finances. Its Labour Policy, its policy of recognition stands out as a policy of deceit, of nursing yesmen and favourites and not of collective bargaining with the real representatives of the employees. It is this anti-working class policy that has been responsible for the wide discontent among the railway workers and a series of lightning strikes. The country cannot afford to have this reactionary agency at the head of the railway communications system. The sooner these medieval fat salaried autocrats are made to retire the better.

The trade union movement and all democratic forces must unitedly demand dissolution of the Railway Board, installation of a management with democratic outlook and a complete reversal of the present policy of denial of recognition and right of bargaining to the real representatives of the workers.

These important lessons of the loco strike must be borne in mind. The new situation, the militant spirit among the railway workers must also be seen. At the same time the fight for railway workers' unity has to be carried on in various ways. Work inside the recognised federations has to continue to be able to unite the workers in a common resistance. Bolstered by the Railway Board by granting recognition, they are able to disrupt the workers and paralyse effective action. They are also able to live on the illusions of sections of workers.

Among some of the most tenaciously fought struggles must be mentioned the fight of the Jay Engineering Workers'—now a united fight with the two UTUCs, with

AITUC and INTUC joining us against the vindictive lockout and attempt to impose additional workload on the workers by the employers. The lockout started in April last and workers are determined to win their demands. The West Bengal Government has now declared the strike and lockout both illegal but has failed to do justice to the workers' demands. Work has now resumed. Our affiliated union whose functioning is still illegally prevented by goonda terrorism and the ruling party's followers continues to lead the workers and claim the loyalty of thousands of workers. Such determination and loyalty constitute the glory of our movement.

Another determined struggle which must be mentioned is the prolonged struggle of the Dandeli (Karnatak) West Coast Paper Mills Workers led by our affiliated union which lasted for fifty days; the prolonged struggle of Kesoram Rayon Workers of West Bengal against lockout; and the 125 days old strike at Indian Explosives Ltd., Kanpur led by the IEL Employees Union affiliated to the CITU.

Another protracted struggle was that of the Voltas Workers against the Tata management of Voltas. The struggle was led by the All India Voltas and Volkart Employees' Federation and lasted for four and a half months in Bombay and for 41 days in other units all over the country.

Comrades, let me now turn to some important struggles in the States. Since the midnight of September 3-4 the entire Kerala State Road Transport has been paralysed at the call of the CITU and other six unions which include the INTUC and the AITUC unions. The representatives of all the unions unanimously demanded bonus of 14.5 per cent but the Government would not move beyond 11.5 per cent. The Coalition Government has been making every effort to wean away the INTUC and AITUC unions and split the ranks of the workers. The two organisations it seems have decided to back out but the workers are determined to carry

forward the struggle to success. It is a matter of shame that the Coalition Ministry which is led by the Right C. P. Chief Minister is issuing threats, repressing the workers and thereby drafting the army to run the transport. How can the AITUC leaders repress strikes in Kerala and support them elsewhere (The strike is now withdrawn).

A month earlier on August 2 Kerala saw a completely successful bandh at the call of the CPI(M) and other opposition parties, the CITU and other mass organisations. The bandh was called to protest against the rising prices and the miserly ration of a few hundred grammes and to enforce the demand of 12 oz. ration per day. Police brutalities knew no bounds. Two people were killed in police firing; two injured. Indiscriminate lathi-charges were made all over the State. Over 5,000 people from all over the State had been arrested by the day of the bandh and on the day itself thousands more were arrested. Secretary of Socialist Youth Federation was murdered by Congress goondas.

The Right C. P. leaders who head the Coalition Ministry in Kerala covered themselves with disgrace when they unleashed brutalities against the starving people. In other States they demand DIR and other action against the hoarders; in Kerala they repress the people.

Despite this the bandh was a glorious success. It affected all sections and paralysed all activity. To quote one instance of its sweep in Cannanore district alone over one lakh organised workers including plantation, agricultural and coir workers participated. Hundreds of Bidi and Handloom factories were closed. All shops big and small joined the bandh.

Four weeks earlier on July 10, the working class and other sections of the toiling masses massively responded to the bandh call given by the Kerala State CITU to protest against the terrible food crisis, which has already resulted in the starvation deaths and demanding minimum 12 ounces of food daily. More than 50,000 workers participated in Ernakulam. In Trivandrum transport was paralysed and more

than 20,000 handloom and coir workers participated despite the ban on the strike. 2,000 Idikki Project workers joined the strike apart from 10,000 cardamom workers ; in Kottayam those participating numbered 14,000 while in Quilon the number was one lakh. In Alleppey 25,000 industrial workers and an equal number of agricultural workers participated. In Palghat the number was 70,000 which included 10,000 agricultural workers ; in Kozhikode the number was 25,000, and in Cannanore it was 73,000.

These three massive bandhs in Kerala against price rise, against food famine show the rising tempo of the working class. Along with this there have been innumerable struggles of workers of all sections. Protest strikes, indefinite strikes for their immediate demands. State Electricity Board workers, Gwalior Rayon workers, Travancore Electrical Chemical workers, Rubber tappers, Wynand Coffee Plantation workers, Boat Building workers, Saw Mill workers, Private Bus workers, State Transport workers, workers of Spinning Mills and cotton mills, ministerial employees of private colleges, stevedore labour, lorry drivers and cleaners, coir workers—in short almost all sections used the strike weapon at one stage or another during the last five months. A large number of these struggles were led by the CITU and many were led by the CITU in cooperation with other trade union centres,—the AITUC, INTUC and others.

One of the most successful strike of the recent period was that of the Kerala Railway Loco workers for Onam advance, in view of the rising prices. The Central employees in Kerala also joined satyagraha.

### **Tamilnadu**

In Tamilnadu our State Committee has been taking systematic steps to organise the movement, to carry forward the line of united actions; to overcome economism and leading ever growing strike struggles. It has all along to contend against the vicious gangsterism of the DMK which

shows on many occasions that it has to learn very little from the Congress in the matter of police aided goondaism and attempts to capture unions with the aid of anti-social elements.

This led to the dastardly attack on Com. Chintan, member of our General Council and one of the foremost leaders of our trade union movement in Tamilnadu. It was only the exemplary courage and presence of mind of Com. Chintan that could save his life. This heinous crime roused a wave of indignation among the mass of workers and on July 19 more than a lakh workers of the Madras industrial establishments were joined by workers from Central Government undertakings like Hindustan Teleprinters, Surgical Instruments Factory. Bus transport was paralysed. Workers under AITUC and ADMK joined in the protest which spread to other industrial centres like Coimbatore.

The CITU in joint front with the INTUC and the DMK organised a united strike in the Indian Rare Earth on the demands for full wages for lay-off period and wages for the weekly holidays etc. The united action could wrest some of the demands after nearly a month's struggle.

Seven thousand and five hundred Textile workers of the Madurai Mills went on strike on June 3. The strike was sparked off by the assault on spinning workers by mill officials. More than 25,000 civic and sanitary workers of the State went on a token strike on July 11 in support of the demands. A Coordinating Committee of the CITU and AITUC representatives was appointed to lead the action. Work in the Madras Corporation and in some of the major municipalities came to a standstill. The workers secured a 12% increase in allowance as a result of the strike. Thousands of Bidi workers in Madras also observed a one-day strike on June 18 in support of their demands of minimum wage of Rs. 5. 50, one paisa DA per point and a guaranteed daily wage of Rs. 7 per worker.

Two thousands five hundred workers of the Nallikupam

Sugar Mill started a stay-in-strike on June 22 calling upon the management to start negotiations with the CITU union. The trouble started because the management with the encouragement of the State Government was attempting to foist a stooge DMK union on the workers. This stooge organisation with the help of anti-socials raided the CITU office and on complaint from the union the police sealed the office, prevented the union from functioning it.

Tamilnadu Electricity workers organised a Statewide Dharna before the Board offices in 50 centres on 15th June in support of their five-point demand. Workers of the Transport and Bottling sections of the Madurai Coca Cola Factory (an enterprise owned by the daughter and son-in-law of the President of India) went on an indefinite strike on June 12 to protest against the dismissal and arrest of workers.

Tamilnadu bandh on 13th September at the call of CPI (M), CPI, ADMK, CITU and other mass organisations was a 100 per cent success.

The bandh call was given by CPI (M) as a protest against the anti-people policies of the State and Central Governments which was responsible for the price rise, unemployment, powercut and other hardships faced by the people. The ADMK and CPI, however, blamed only the State Government for all ills.

The DMK Government arrested 8,000 leaders and workers of CPI (M), CPI and ADMK and adopted all other strike-breaking methods. In spite of victimisations by the Government and terrorisation by the DMK and Congress (R) goondas with the help of police, the Bandh was a magnificent success throughout Tamilnadu.

In accordance with a bonus agreement signed on July 6 between workers and management of Tea and Coffee Plantations of Tamilnadu, workers will get  $\frac{1}{4}$  per cent more bonus for 1972 (10.75 for Tea and 10% Coffee workers, in all) than last year. For the first time, this was achieved through the joint participation of all plantation unions including

CITU, AITUC, HMS, DMK and ADMK, all of whom signed the agreement.

### **Andhra Pradesh**

**Bandh Against Rising Prices :** A successful one-day "Andhra Bandh" was observed on August 24 to protest against spiralling prices and rampant blackmarketing etc. The call for the bandh was given jointly by the State Units of CITU, AITUC, HMP, Bank Employees' Federation and A.P. All Shop Employees' Federation supported by the CPI(M), CPI and the two Socialist Parties.

Preceding the bandh, a month-long programme of dharnas and demonstrations were organised by the CITU City Council and the All Parties Price Resistance Committee at Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, Nellore, Rajahmundry, Vijayawada and many other centres.

**Growing Struggles :** A lockout was declared at the HMT factory, Hyderabad on August 2 after all its 3,000 workers had gone on a spontaneous strike and had gheraoed the General Manager to protest against the dismissal of three leaders of the Staff and Workers' Union. A year earlier, following assault on one of these leaders by two members of a rival union, the management had suspended the victim of the assault as well as the culprits. But when the rival union lost its hold on workers and the Staff and Workers Union grew stronger, the management vindictively dismissed the three leaders on August 1 last. Following the strike, the workers carried on a stay-in at the factory until, at the intervention of the Collector, a settlement was reached and the lockout lifted on August 3.

The employees of the Coromandel Fertilisers Ltd. are on an indefinite strike from August 20 to protest against stoppage of all promotions from this year by the management and their refusal to pay Bonus though the Company earned a huge profit. All the units of the factory, except one ammonia unit, are paralysed, conciliation efforts have failed.

All the workers of Gammon (India) Ltd., contractors of the Naval Dry Dock Construction in Visakhapatnam, are on strike from August 6, along with relay hunger-strike, demanding reinstatement of six discharged drivers and implementation of the 1971 agreement between the Company and the Employees' Union.

### **Maharashtra**

Immediately after the CITU Session, the CITU State Committee undertook campaign to bring the workers on protest action against Government's policy towards the famine-stricken peasantry and rising prices. At the united call given by the CITU, AITUC and Sarva Shramik Sangh (Lal Nishan) more than five lakh workers in the Bombay-Thana-Ambernath belt came on a protest strike on the 15th of May. The police resorted to a brutal lathi-charge on the demonstrating workers who were marching in a procession numbering 25,000.

The Maharashtra CITU took up the struggle for resisting the Government's attempt to impose seven days working on the Textile Industry. The INTUC union which is a recognised union signed a treacherous agreement with the Millowners' Association agreeing to accept 7-day week. The CITU union formed a joint front with the AITUC and Lal Nishan unions to defeat this offensive. They organised week long demonstrations and observed protest strikes on two successive Sundays, thus asserting the right to common weekly holiday. On 15th of July and 22nd July nearly two lakh workers struck work. For another fortnight the workers organised satyagraha trying to enter mills which were given weekly holiday according to the staggering scheduled. So successful was the struggle that the Government had to beat a retreat and announced that for some time at least it had no intention to go against the wishes of the workers.

## **Rajasthan**

Rajasthan has seen a number of strikes in defence of workers' interests. The strike of the Beawar Textile workers, the struggle of the Multi-Metal Mazdoor Sangh of Kota and several other struggles have taken place in the period. The biggest campaign and struggle waged by the CITU was the solidarity action in support of the State Employees' struggle. The employees went on strike on 9th July. They had to undergo terrific repression, arrests, firing, raids on houses. The strike could be concluded only by 15th of August. The CITU actively worked for the success of the strike. Its main office-bearers—President Punamia and General Secretary Shirali along with hundreds of others were arrested during the course of the strike. The CITU formed a joint front with the AITUC, HMP and other trade unions and on 24th July organised a successful mighty bandh to protest against Government repression of the strikers. This mass bandh was of direct help to the employees struggle. Earlier on 17th July a Jaipur bandh was organised on the call of the Coordination Committee to protest against the killing of a driver of the State Electricity Board in police firing.

A call to organise mass satyagraha against the imposition of Section 144 was given jointly by the CITU, AITUC and HMP on 14th of August. 1,500 volunteers led by the CITU and others by HMP were arrested in Jaipur alone. Elsewhere the CITU sent batches after batches and according to official radio the number arrested reached 2,500.

## **Uttar Pradesh**

In Uttar Pradesh after the J. K. Jute Mills strike, the most prolonged and bitterly fought struggle was that of the workers of the Indian Explosives, owned by the foreign monopolist company Imperial Chemicals. The arrogant management violated the former agreement, tried to impose additional work-load. The workers resisted and since April they were locked-out. The General Secretary of the union

along with 70 workers was arrested. The CRP was let loose on the workers. In the end the issue was referred to arbitration after 2½ months' struggle.

## **Bihar**

**June 7 Bandh Complete :** The Bihar bandh of June 7, called by all the opposition parties in the State in protest against the rise in prices and the murder of Suraj Narayan Singh, MLA, by the goonda-police combine, was a complete success.

**Repression :** Colliery workers, under the banner of the Colliery Mazdoor Sabha (CITU), observed a successful strike in 6 collieries and organised a massive demonstration in front of the Group Custodian's Office, Barora. When they were dispersing after the demonstration, armed policemen suddenly swooped down on them inside the premises of the Colliery Mazdoor Sabha office at the Central Kenduadih Colliery and began a wild lathi-charge.

The police later fired nearly 150 rounds injuring a number of workers. 19 workers were arrested and many living quarters were looted. Police terror is still continuing; the INTUC goondas have also been collecting money forcibly from the workers.

**Successful Strike by Bokaro Workers :** A complete, 4-day strike by the power plant operators—reinforced by one-day strike in other operation departments—recently stopped the management of the Bokaro Steel Plant from imposing on the workers a heartless new shift rota.

The proposed rota would have done away with a workers' day off before a change of shift and would have also forced him to work double shifts at least once every week. This the workers resisted en masse. Since the management was in no mood to listen, a strike began at the power plant from June 3.

Eventually, with the strike spreading to other operation departments on June 6, the management climbed down and the new shift rota was withdrawn forthwith.

Recently the CITU has spread itself in Jamshedpur and nearby areas. In Adityapur the workers of Zenith Draft Forging Company conducted a 63 days strike under the leadership of the CITU Union. Many other workers from different factories like Bihar Insecticide, Pioneer Engineering, Mining Equipment, Minerals India etc. have won their demands through action.

### **Delhi**

Delhi and its nearby Delhi areas of Faridabad have been recently centres of strike struggles during the course of which workers had to face police firing and arrests. The successful conclusion of the 24-day strike of 27,000 textile workers of Delhi was a remarkable achievement of our Delhi Committee. Demanding higher wages and interim relief the workers launched a struggle supported by a joint front of CITU, HMP and a section of the INTUC. The local leaders of the AITUC openly campaigned against the strike and betrayed the workers. The strike ended on 5th May with the workers securing an interim relief of Rs. 20 per month and an advance of Rs. 200. The question of revision of DA has been referred to an arbitrator.

On July 6 in Faridabad the police opened fire on demonstrating workers, killed one and injured many for the crime of demonstrating solidarity with the Goodyear workers who were on strike. The victims of the firing were workers of Gedore Factory and members of the CITU affiliated union. The workers of this union had disaffiliated their organisation from the AITUC and joined the CITU recently. The police lathi charged and tear-gased the workers and next day broke into and ransacked the office of the CITU Union.

### **Karnatak**

The strike of 3,500 workers of the West Coast Paper Mills of Dandeli in Karnatak was one of the most bitterly fought strike in Karnatak since our Ernakulam Conference. It

lasted for fifty days. Higher DA, recognition of CITU union and above all regularisation of 600 casual and 1,200 contractor labourers and abolition of the contract system were the issues. It led to demonstration of tremendous solidarity on the part of other workers in the region and culminated in a Dandeli Bandh for which a joint appeal was given by the mass organisations including a section of the INTUC-led union.

On 29th of August South Canara (Mysore) district observed a huge bandh on the call of the left and democratic trade unions belonging to the CITU, AITUC, P & T, Mysore State Electricity Board, LIC, AEBI. Transport was paralysed. Tile, cashew, coffee-processing, and beedi industries and engineering units were completely closed.

On the same day plantation workers in Chikamagaloor, Hassan and South Canara district observed a strike to protest against price rise and press for wage demands. The strike call was jointly given by CITU, INTUC, HMS and other unions.

### **West Bengal**

Important developments have taken place in West Bengal since our Ernakulam Conference. Despite the continuing terror and of late its extension in areas like Raniganj Coal Belt and tea-gardens of North Bengal, the valiant working class and the democratic people of West Bengal organised series of important struggles. Many of these struggles were protracted continuing for months and some of them are still continuing. Our CITU unions have played a dominant role in these struggles giving courageous lead to the struggling workers. The most significant event, the focal point of the struggles of this period is the successful State-wide General Strike and Hartal of 27th July, 1973.

The massive and determined participation of the working class and the toiling masses in the General Strike of 27th July, even in terror affected areas, despite the new spurt of

violence and large scale attacks and false and malicious propaganda of the All India Radio throughout the day of the General Strike, without any picketing anywhere, revealed a new experience. It was a great turning point and tilted the balance in favour of left trade unions and the democratic movement in West Bengal.

The success of the General Strike has shown that even in the midst of terror and State violence, it is possible to unite the working class and the toiling masses and effectively mobilise them in State-wide movement.

The West Bengal State Committee has reviewed the impact of the General Strike in its third State Council meeting and have rightly decided to consolidate the gains taking due note of the weaknesses revealed in some cases during the General Strike.

The success of the General Strike of 27th July cannot be assessed in isolation from the most effective struggles of the preceding days. One day industry-wide strike of the jute workers on 15th June in protest against the cut in Dearness Allowance, General Strike and Hartal in Garden Reach area on 5th July in support of the strike of G.E.C.A.E.I. workers and General Strike and Hartal in the entire Hooghly district on 9th July in protest against police firing on the workers of Hindustan Motors when four workers were killed and a number of workers were arrested are the most inspiring struggles and prepared the ground for the state-wide General Strike heightening the morale of the working class.

Our Union—Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union have showed their mettle in organising the token protest strike of jute workers on 15th June. This strike was doggedly opposed by INTUC and HMS. The date of the strike was fixed earlier on 8th June and at the request of AITUC our union deferred the date to 15th June. The participation of AITUC in this strike helped to achieve greater unity at the base and ward off the opposition of INTUC and HMS. Since 1970 this was for the first time AITUC joined with us in organising a

strike inspite of the opposition of INTUC and HMS. In this respect participation of AITUC in jute workers strike has immense importance. The strike was most successful in all the Jute Mills, even in terror affected areas ; the workers of the Mills which were closed on 15th June for power crisis observed the strike on 16th June. The image of CITU as a champion of unity and struggle has become more clear before the jute workers and their urge for unity and struggle has been further strengthened. This strike was a source of inspiration to the entire working class of West Bengal and benefitted most the Engineering workers. Inspired by the strike the Engineering workers started vigorous campaign at the base for waging strike on their economic demands then under negotiation at the tripartite level ; as a result the suggestion of the Chief Minister for wage rise at Rs. 20 plus something was changed to Rs. 45 plus something and the economic gains of the Engineering workers was much higher than what was proposed before the jute workers strike taking advantage of the vacillation of INTUC, AITUC and HMS.

The workers of Jay Engineering Works Ltd. carried on glorious struggle during this period against the attempt of the employers to impose increased work load violating the tripartite agreement of August 1970 on norms of production in the moulding department of the Sewing Machine Factory. The workers spontaneously stopped work in both Sewing Machine and Fan Factories in protest against increased workload and the employers in retaliation declared lock-out on 23rd April 1973. It is already known that our union—Jay Engineering Workers' Union could not function due to terror since 1972 Election and nine of our workers were served with termination notice for forced absenteeism. But during the struggle both INTUC and AITUC Unions in this Factory had to take identical stand as of our union in the negotiations at both bipartite and tripartite level. The influence of our union on the workers of Jay Engineering and urge of the

workers for united struggle helped to forge this unity. The employers were very much disappointed at the united stand of the three unions and for tactical reasons lifted the lock-out without resolving the issues. But the workers unitedly continued the struggle and stayed away from work demanding settlement of all out-standing issues, The West Bengal Government sent their recommendations to the employers on 13th September 1973 broadly accepting the demands of the workers jointly placed by the three unions but subsequently under pressure from the employers revised their own recommendations and applied DIR on 18th September 1973 giving all the concessions the employers wanted. Even the workers were not given the full benefits of the tripartite Engineering Settlement. Our Union requested INTUC and AITUC Unions to unitedly continue this struggle for fulfilment of the legitimate demands of the workers but they refrained from responding to this call and unilaterally decided to terminate this struggle directing their members to resume duties. The developments in Jay Engineering have thus further exposed the INTUC and AITUC Unions and the Government and have drawn the workers more nearer to our union even though our union cannot function in this unit.

In National Rubber Manufacturers Ltd., 3,500 workers continued a prolonged struggle against the lock-out declared by the Company on 21st May 1973 purported to pressurise the workers to accept reduction in man-power and increased work-load based on the recommendation of the National Productivity Council. Local AITUC leaders tried to disrupt the struggle of the workers by running a parallel body to our union-National Manufacturers Workers' Union. The Factory has been re-opened recently following application of Section 10(3) of the I.D. Act by the Government declaring the lock-out illegal. But the issues are yet to be settled.

The Birlas in Kesoram Rayon Factory resorted to mass lay-off to frustrate the struggle of the workers for realisation

of their Charter of Demands. The workers decided to launch a continuous strike demanding withdrawal of the lay-off. The Management then declared lock-out with effect from 21st May 1973 and the struggle is still continuing. The three unions in the Factory belonging to CITU, INTUC and AITUC made a joint appeal to all Central Trade Unions to organise protest action of the workers and employees in all Birla units in order to force the Birlas to settle the demands of the workers of Kesoram Rayon and lift the lock-out. 3,500 workers are involved in this struggle.

3,500 workers of G.E.C.A.E.I. are continuing their strike since 29th May 1973 for settlement of their Charter of Demands. In G.E.C. Union we are not in a majority now even though we are a formidable force. The Management laid-off 250 workers, retrenched 36 workers of Paharpur Works and suspended 2 before the workers launched their continuous strike. Massive solidarity campaign is being carried on in the Garden Reach area in support of this strike coordinated by a joint Committee constituted with the representatives of all unions in the area. On 23rd August police forced entry of the Officers into Paharpur Works of G.E.C. Company to assist the Management to take out finished materials. The workers immediately protested braving indiscriminate lathi charge resorted to by the police. Police also arrested a number of workers. Immediately the workers of all the factories in the area stopped work and came out in thousands in a protest demonstration and assembled before the police station demanding release of the arrested workers. The next day a protest general strike was observed in the whole area of Garden Reach. Both CITU Centre and West Bengal Committee have given full support to this struggle. A rally was organised in Calcutta on 13th September 1973 by our unions in support of the struggle of the workers of Jay Engineering, Kesoram Rayon and G.E.C. A.E.I., participated by about 15,000 workers.

The strike of 30,000 Municipal workers in 90 Municipali-

ties of West Bengal on the demand for wage rise, 40,000 Rickshaw Pullers' struggle in Calcutta against police interference, Shore Mazdoor's (Calcutta Port) struggle on various economic demands when police resorted to brutal lathi charge arresting 24 women workers, one-day token protest strike by the workers of Bharat Ophthalmic Glass, Durgapur demanding implementation of Engineering settlement in line with existing practice and their struggle against suspension of General Secretaries of CITU and UTUC (Lenin Sarani) unions and termination of service of 8 Canteen workers are some of the major events of this period. The struggle of Stevedore workers in Calcutta Port for higher quantum of bonus is still continuing. Recently the entire 4,000 workers of Prem Chand Jute Mills have been laid-off.

In Alloy Steel Plant our union achieved spectacular victory in the elections for Sports Committee. This election was held in a tense situation when all the workers were threatened not to vote for CITU candidates. During counting in presence of police when the men of Congress found that CITU candidates secured overwhelming majority of votes in three constituencies already counted, they destroyed the ballot boxes and ballot papers in order to foil the election. None-the less the Congress goondas could not erase the fact that CITU union enjoyed the support of the majority of the workers.

It is significant to note that in many of these struggles INTUC and AITUC unions have been compelled to take united stand with our unions on various issues. This was seen also in the dispute in Blast Furnace of Durgapur Steel, on bonus demand and implementation of tripartite Engineering Settlement in Hindustan Motors as in other cases already cited. The INTUC unions which did everything to suspend functioning of our unions and forcibly restricted entry of our workers inside the factories were forced by circumstances to sit with our unions and take united stand. This is not a small achievement. This was possible only due to our

consistent work championing the cause of the working class. The working class have taken to their heart that no effective struggle is possible unless unity is forged with CITU unions and this realisation of the workers has acted as force compelling the INTUC and other unions to take joint stand with our unions.

In the meeting of the State Labour Advisory Board held in Calcutta on 10th September, 1973 AITUC also joined our State Committee in condemning the attacks on trade unions and infringement of trade union rights and all Central Trade Unions including the INTUC, in spite of their divergent views, unanimously condemned attacks on workers and trade unions and made an agreed recommendation to ensure workers right to report for work with safety and security, withdrawal of termination letters already issued to workers in various establishments for their forced absenteeism, restoration of union offices occupied by the men of Congress party and full freedom of trade union functioning. This is a significant development in our struggle against the terror.

Our unions in West Bengal made further progress in realising wage demands. In the tripartite settlement on Cotton Textile workers demands, the minimum wage has been fixed at Rs. 235 (at 200 consumer price index number of 1960 base) with variable D.A, at the rate of Rs. 1.15 per point above 200 CPI (of 1960 base). The employers and the Government demanded inclusion of three most derogatory clauses in this agreement and this was almost accepted by INTUC, AITUC and HMS. At the insistence of our unions (represented by Cotton Textile Workers Federation) two clauses were changed but the third one remained as proposed. It would have been better if this clause had been deleted.

In the tripartite Settlement for Engineering workers also our unions (represented by Federation of Metal and Engineering Workers' Unions) exerted their utmost in achieving satisfactory changes in various matters despite the reclining attitude of INTUC, AITUC and HMS. The minimum

wages were fixed (a) for factories employing 50 to 249 workers—Rs. 240 (at 200 CPI of 1960 base), (b) for factories employing 250 to 1,000 workers—Rs. 270.50 (at 200 CPI of 1960 base). The variable D.A. was fixed at Rs. 115 per point above 200 CPI of 1960 base. The demands for wage rise for workers in factories employing less than 50 is under negotiations. The wage rise for the workmen in (a) category was Rs. 50 out of which Rs. 35 will be paid immediately and the balance in instalment of Rs. 5 in three years; for (b) immediate wage rise Rs. 45 and Rs. 5 in two equal instalments in next two years; and for (c) category immediate wage rise Rs. 49 and Rs. 5 in two equal instalments in next two years. But in majority of the factories the employers have still not implemented the settlement and the matter has already been taken up with the Government.

In the tripartite settlement on tea-garden workers there is some wage rise on interim basis and the demand for final wage rise has been referred to a Wage Committee. The demand for the Wage Committee was made by all the unions including our unions. Our experience shows that Wage Committee is a dilatory tactics to deny the workers legitimate wage rise.

The members of our unions in Bengal Paper Mills and Refractory and Ceramic Factory (Burn & Co.) at Raniganj and Aluminium Factory at J. K. Nagar are carrying on their struggle against terror with exemplary courage since Feb. 1973. After the general strike of 27th July, our unions in this area are made a special target of attacks. There is practically no improvement of the situation in this area even after the State Labour Advisory Board's meeting on 10th September.

Our West Bengal Committee has taken up with all seriousness the issue relating to compilation of Consumer Price Index Numbers and method adopted to defraud the workers from payment of proper Dearness Allowance.

The West Bengal State Committee has also taken initia-

tive to organise the movement of Beedi workers, Tailors and Handloom workers. A few lakh workers are employed in these unorganised industries. A convention of Beedi workers was held recently and the response was most encouraging. To organise the handloom workers an All West Bengal union has been formed in a convention held in Calcutta. At the initiative of this new union the handloom workers have already organised series of demonstrations in the districts in protest against yarn shortage and abnormal price rise and a central demonstration was also held in Calcutta on 4th July, 1973.

The Ernakulam Session discussed the problem of organising the women workers. In accordance with the decision the Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union held a convention of women workers in jute industry and discussed their problems.

Comrades, I have already referred that some of our comrades have started educating the trade union movement about its responsibility towards the rural peasant masses and agricultural labourers. It is good that the CITU unions in Maharashtra and in Maharashtra CITU State Committee took up the question of collecting funds for the famine-strickens on behalf of the all-Parties Nonofficial Committee. They contributed Rs. 90,000 to the common fund. This contribution could have been atleast three times bigger had we succeeded in rallying the fraternal feeling of the worker for the peasant to a higher pitch. However as a beginning this was quite a good contribution. Following this the CITU in cooperation with Lal Nishan and AITUC succeeded in bringing about strike of our workers to protest against Maharashtra Government's famine relief policy and the sufferings it imposed on the peasants. The West Bengal Committee of the CITU, though it was in great difficulty sent its contribution to demonstrate its solidarity with the Maharashtra peasantry. This was a very welcome and necessary step.

The Chatkal Mazdoor Union, our biggest union has taken

the much needed step to bring the jute peasant and jute worker together. The small jute peasant of West Bengal, unlike some of the rich and substantial cotton farmers of Maharashtra, is completely defenceless against the jute monopolists-traders and capitalists, a prey of the ups and downs of the market, to the manipulation of the speculators. Whether the jute industry is prosperous or not he never gets a square deal. In fact part of the prosperity of the jute factory is dependent on the robbery of the peasant. He cannot be protected unless the organised jute workers throw their full strength behind him. And this is exactly what our Chatkal Union has started doing.

The Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union and West Bengal State Committee of All India Kisan Sabha jointly organised a Convention for fixing the raw jute price at Rs. 80 per maund and the purchase of raw jute by Government at this price direct from jute growers. A joint rally of jute workers and peasants was held on 15th September in Calcutta and memorandum was submitted to the Government.

Our other trade unions should take a lesson from this and work for building firm ties between the Kisan and trade union movements.

### **Report of Plantation Federation**

The Working Committee of AIPWF met at Kaladi and Ernakulam town in Ernakulam district on 17th April 1973. Com. B. T. Ranadive, the President CITU was present at the 2nd Session. After the discussion on the question of the rules of the Plantation Labour Amendment Bill 1973, on gratuity, on fixation of wages on the family basis etc.

1) It was decided to hold Zonal meetings in South and North, to discuss the rules of the Plantation Labour Amendment Bill, at Coonoor on the 19th and 20th of May, and at Mal, Jalpaiguri in the month of June.

2) The draft constitution was adopted unanimously with some minor changes. It was decided to circulate it.

3) It was further decided to take up the question of unemployment, filling up the vacancies, land labour ratio, equal wage for equal work etc. along with the demand of Charter adopted at the conference.

4) Com. Vimal Ranadive was elected as the Secretary. The post of the Vice-President from Karnatak was deferred for the future date.

According to the decisions taken, both the meetings, in North and South Zones were held. The office bearers of both zones except a few, attended and discussed the rules. A note on the amendments from the office was circulated before discussion.

As decided amendments were sent by the unions from Karnatak, Tamilnadu, Assam and West Bengal, to Rajya Sabha Select Committee and copies sent to us. The office did not receive any copy from Kerala and Tripura. Perhaps, they have sent their amendments to the Committee.

A memorandum was sent to the Rajya Sabha Select Committee by the A. I. P. W. F. and copies were circulated to all the unions.

(1) A token general strike in Karnatak Plantation took place on 29th August 1973. 15,000 workers were on strike. All other unions belonging to AITUC, INTUC, DMK, ADMK, John Taylor Union and independent unions—all in a joint action.

(2) Nilgiri Plantation Union—agreement signed by all unions—AITUC, INTUC, CITU, DMK, etc. Bonus p. c. higher than last time—Agreement on 10.75 p. c. for the year of 1972.

(3) Agreement signed in Jalpaiguri in tripartite meeting on 24th July 1973 in pursuance of the Charter of Demands submitted by the Co-ordination Committee of Tea Plantation workers.

### **A. I. P. W. F. Affiliated to TUI**

The AIPWF sent the affiliation letter along with the report on the activities of AIPWF, a copy of our constitution, list of the unions and office bearers etc. The letter dated 6th September 1973, informing us about the affiliation, was received by us, and replied on 16th September. The representative of TUI is visiting our office on 25th September. The letter of TUI, and our reply to them will be circulated to the unions.

### **Report of Rubber & Tyre Workers**

The Firestone Rubber Employees Union has successfully negotiated a settlement with the Company after prolonged agitation. The agitation included departmental actions, morchas and a one day strike. The settlement high-lights are withdrawal of charge sheets and suspension orders given during the agitation, guarantee of a higher minimum D.A. at 140 per cent of the Bombay Textile Revised D. A. (Currently it comes to about Rs. 370 per month, formerly it was 110 per cent only), Rs. 40-50 p. m. house rent allowance and Rs. 350 leave travel allowance, raising of piece rates by 2% and other minor benefits. We shall be circulating copies of the settlement soon.

The Federation fully supported the Firestone workers struggle. The Federation organised a morcha of Ceat workers to the Firestone and had threatened to call out all tyre and rubber workers in Bombay city for a one-day strike in support of the Firestone struggle. Our action has strengthened the Federation in Bombay.

The Federation received a letter from the INCHEK Staff Union about a cut in the salaries of the H. O. Staff of Inchek and NRM. We immediately wrote to the Director of both demanding restoration of this cut. Before further steps could be taken, we were informed that the cut was withdrawn.

Workers of the Good Year Tyre and Rubber Company of Faridabad, Haryana State have been on strike since nearly a

month. On July 6, the strikers procession was fired upon by the police resulting in at least one death. You must have read the news. Federation sent a protest telegram and called on all our unions to pass resolutions condemning the firing, demanding judicial inquiry, punishment of officers responsible for firings and settlement of workers demands and sent appropriate messages to the Haryana Chief Minister and the Good Year workers and their union.

Comrades, our organisation participated in a number of Committees and Seminars called by the Government. We participated in the Third Mines Safety Conference held on July 14 and 15 in Calcutta. We and the two UTUCs received the invitation only at the eleventh hour and then also we were asked to attend as observer. We protested and staged a walk out. The Labour Minister informed us on July 14 evening that the department had reversed its earlier stand and requested us to send a delegate and an adviser. Com. Robin Chatterjee, General Secretary of the Colliery Mazdoor Sabha of India and a member of the CITU Working Committee attended the Conference on July 16. We also participated in the Standing Committee on Safety for Steel Industry. Com. Dilip Mazumdar, President of the HSL Employees Union represented us on the Committee. Com. Biren Roy and Gerald Pereira, Working Committee members have been chosen by the Secretariat to represent us on the All India Trade Union Committee on Family Planning. Com. Sudhin Kumar, our Vice-President represented us on the National Committee for Family Planning.

Under the auspices of the ILO the Central Board for Workers' Education organised a National Workshop for Trade Union officials on Welfare Tasks and Family Planning on August 27 in Bombay. The Secretariat nominated Com. Sudhin Kumar and V. Vishwanath Menon, member of the Working Committee to participate in the Workshop.

A Seminar was convened by the National Productivity Council on 19th and 20th August in New Delhi. Com. M.

K. Pandhe, Secretary and myself participated in the gathering. Representatives of nine trade union centres participated in it. The draft was jointly discussed by the representatives of Central Trade Unions before submitting to the Conference and was endorsed by the latter.

A Steering Group was appointed to study several issues pertaining to productivity in depth. It consists of Executive Director of National Productivity Council as Chairman and nine representatives from nine central trade union organisations. I represented our organisation on this Committee.

The Central Trade Union Organisations agreed to contribute Rs. 500 each for promoting productivity studies. I informed them that I would have to consult my organisation before agreeing to accept this proposal.

We also participated in a meeting called by the Planning Minister. The Minister of Planning spoke of the need for promoting healthy industrial relations as well as on integrated policy of wages, prices and incomes and invited suggestions from the trade union representatives.

I had to question the basic assumptions of the Approach document and warn that if old bases continue the Fifth Plan would meet the same fate as the earlier plans. How can one talk of Public Sector and simultaneously support monopoly; how can self reliance go hand in hand with encouragement to foreign private capital? What chance has war against poverty so long land is not distributed to the tiller? Regarding productivity, the experience of the working class is more they produce the more people loose their jobs.

Once again I advocated for union recognition on the basis of secret ballot. The recognised union should undertake to refer all agreements to the workers for final ratification. For trade union unity I suggested representation for unions in proportion to their strength among the workers.

Comrades, I would like you to discuss the question of our participation in the various committees. Some Comrades feel

that our participation in committees like Family Planning and much more to Productivity meetings is not correct. I would like the question to be properly discussed at the meeting.

Comrades, we have recently received a message from OSPAAAL (Organisation of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America, Havana) greeting the Second Conference of the CITU. The message sent in the name of Rafel J. Ramon, Assistant Secretary reads :

"We hereby acknowledge receipt of your invitation to the second Conference of the Centre of India Trade Unions which unfortunately arrived after great delay. We hope you have achieved every success in that event so important to Indian workers.

"We request you to send us the documents of the Conference which will be of great use in our work."

We have also received a message from Workers Central Union of Cuba greeting our Conference. It reads :

"Comrades, we thank you for your friendly invitation for a delegation of C. T. C. ( Workers Central Union of Cuba ) to participate in the 2nd Conference of your organisation, which will be celebrated from the 18th to the 22nd of April in Kerala, but we are sorry to say that same arrived late in our hands.

"We wish that the materials approved in the event ( i. e. the proceedings of the Conference ) were sent to us, if possible, to allow us to be acquainted with the developments of the same ( Conference ).

"We avail of the occasion to reiterate ( reaffirm ) the ties which unite the working class of Cuba with those of India in their struggle against imperialism."

Comrades, since the inception of our organisation we have stuck to the line of united actions and trade union unity despite the obstacles and sabotage created by the reformists and revisionists. You all know that at our 2nd Conference we reviewed our efforts in this direction and found that we were achieving considerable progress.

The last six months have seen our unions and State Committees going more boldly and more firmly on this road and achieving remarkable advance. Not that the reformists and revisionists have given up their outlook; nor do they shirk from obstructing our advance with the aid of the Government and the capitalists. The INTUC and AITUC leaders still continue to oppose our participation in official conferences, recognition to our organisations or talks with our unions. They often sign agreements with employers behind our back, dividing the ranks of the workers and helping the employers. They play the role of dividing the workers and often help the Government to screen its anti-labour policy. Nonetheless the situation in the trade union movement, the correlation of forces, the consciousness of the workers—all these are changing and this is reflected in a growing adhoc united front arrangements, joint actions and joint negotiations. Where the CITU unions are able to take the initiative, rouse the masses to action, or where they already possess a sizeable strength—the chances of united front actions are bright. It depends on the initiative, and capacity to rouse the workers whether the united front will be formed and whether it will last during common action and end in united negotiations.

But the main driving force is the need felt by the mass of workers for united action against the effects of crisis—high prices, electricity shortage, rising unemployment, food shortage and falling real wages.

It is because of this objective basis that the line of no struggle, of no truck with us is crumbling in many places. We see the evidence of it in growing number of united struggles, creating a greater sense of comraderie and defence of working class interests.

You know your participation in the UCTU is one of our weapons of forging unity. Since our conference in Ernakulam the UCTU has met three times. Its biggest achievement was the convention of central employees and state employees it called on July 25 and 26 in New Delhi. Its aim

was to rally the central employees against the reactionary recommendations of the Third Pay Commission which constituted an open offensive against their right to defend their wages and earnings and a need based wage.

The call for such a convention overriding organisational affiliations and calling for united trade union support should have come from within the employees' organisations. But the Government and its agents had created sufficient disorganisation to prevent it. The Government has been using its authority to recognise and derecognise unions arbitrarily to promote docile agents as leaders of the organisation. The CITU realised that the two wings of the workers' movement - the trade unions and the employees' unions could no longer advance their interests by remaining aloof from each other and playing the role of a passive spectator when the other was under attack. It was the duty of the organised trade union movement to lend a helping hand to the sister movement when its unity was corroded and interests challenged.

To throw the entire strength of the trade union movement behind the convention the UCTU wrote to all central trade union organisations and Federations, all central and state employees' organisations to participate in the convention. The AITUC, HMS, INTUC did not respond. Nor did the central employees' organisations affiliated or connected with them.

But the convention 'Against the Recommendations of the Pay Commission and Bonus for all' became an expression of the desire of lakhs of Central and State employees to forge unity to fight for their demands. For the first time a representative gathering of such a magnitude embracing both the Central and State employees came together to take common decisions. Over 600 delegates who represented 126 unions of Central and State employees participated in the meeting.

This call created great enthusiasm among the organisations of the employees and they made serious preparations for its success. The National Federation of P & T employees

held an all India Convention of their own on 23rd July. The Confederation of Central Government employess and workers unions held their meeting on July 24. The All-India State Employee' Federation held a meeting of its National Executive on July 24. The All-India Confederation of Railway Employees with its catogory-wise unions joined the convention. The All-India Confederation of Central Government Officers' Association participated in the gathering. It should be recorded that the AIRF leadership refused to participate. The National Railway Mazdoor Union—(Central Railway) an affiliate of the AIRF participated in the gathering. The All-India Loco Staff Association which was soon to embark upon its historic strike and the Chittaranjan Railway Workshop Union took active part. Several delegates came from the branches of unions affiliated to the AIRF.

Efforts were made to have a Coordination Committee for Central and State employees for further consultations. They could not succeed for the time being. It was however agreed that the bodies representing the State and Central employees should meet in Ahmedabad in September to discuss further plans.

The UCTU also gave a call to observe the anti-unemployment day on 23rd July. It was massively observed by workers, employees, youth, students and other sections of democratic masses.

An important event in the development of the UCTU is the formation of the State UCTU in Bombay in a largely attended convention of delegates from the three constituents—CITU, HMP and UTUC. The convention was held on August 12 and was addressed by George Fernandes, Comrade Kolhatkar, Kurne and myself. It came in the background of several united front mass actions in Bombay and Maharashtra and gave organisational shape to the unity that had already developed. It passed resolutions on need based wage, famine situation, price-rise and unemployment. It passed a policy resolution stating that the Congress party and the Govern-

ment had brought the country into the throes of serious crisis, while letting off the landlords, wholesalers and monopolists scot-free. It was also undermining the independence of the country by increasing its dependence on imperialist powers. Seeing that the masses were now beginning to stir, it sought to avoid their wrath by implanting communal and linguistic hatred among them. Therefore the working class has to be doubly vigilant to foil such machinations, heighten its class consciousness and be prepared for big and long battles. The convention elected a fifteen member Executive Committee.

Outside the UCTU also great strides are being made in united front actions. It must be noted that recently on a few occasions the initiative for united front has also come from the AITUC leadership. In the Bangalore Bandh the AITUC called our organisations to join in common action. During the Loco Workers' strike in August Com. B. T. Ranadive and myself received a letter from Ranen Sen and Dange—President and General Secretary of AITUC to discuss the common approach for the strike. We were glad and I phoned Dange who assured me that he would phone back but no further contact was established. This was unfortunate because a common approach and consultation would have saved some awkward situations and helped to overcome some weaknesses of the strike. Nonetheless we are glad to note that the AITUC leaders saw the need of the initiative and common consultations. Dange also sent a message condemning the outrageous attack on Com. Chintan and wishing him speedy recovery. If these are straws in the wind which I think they are, they are all for the good of our common movement.

Let me further refer to some of the massive united front actions, in cooperation with the AITUC. The Rajasthan Bandh, the Andhra Bandh, Tamilnadu Bandh, a series of joint mass strikes in Bombay and Maharashtra and finally the biggest and most important, the West Bengal Bandh of

27th July, constitutes a series of achievements in the struggle for unity of the trade union movement.

These bandhs and strikes involving lakhs of workers, belonging to different organisations and affiliations are leaving an indelible imprint of unity, of common fight for isolating the ruling classes and the ruling party. The Rajasthan Committee of the CITU very correctly estimated the importance of unity when in its leaflet after the withdrawal of the strike it said "The State Committee of the CITU treats this broad-based unity of workers and employees as a sacred trust entrusted by the Revolutionary Peoples' movement and pledges to always defend and further strengthen it, against the State power equipped with arms, repressive laws and ordinances in the struggle for a better living, this unity will be a grand weapon in the hands of the employees and workers in the defence of their class interests. The CITU calls upon all the workers and employees of the State to protect this unity."

In Maharashtra the constituents of the UCTU—CITU, HMP and UTUC had by their joint campaign and action already prepared the ground for united actions. But the main difficulty was the immobility of the AITUC, especially its textile unions. In spite of several attempts to have joint front; the response was not there, not so much because the ranks were hostile but because the leadership did not want it as it was its policy of strengthening Indira's hands. That is why in the last two years there have been big strikes of textile workers—for bonus etc.—but they were in the nature of simultaneous actions for the same demand, simultaneous calls, but not formally joint leadership. The May 15 strike for the defence of the peasantry and against price rise—in which ranks of all organisations worked with equal zeal, began to change the situation. The political and economic situation also made the process inevitable. The Government's offensive to impose 7 day week with the aid of the INTUC union—an ally of the AITUC in the National Council, sealed

the issue and the two successive textile strikes of July and the Satyagraha finally ended in a textile conference convened by the GKU, but in which we and the Lal Nishan also participated. It ended in a mass rally in which Dange and myself addressed the mass from the same platform. From simultaneous action to joint conference we have come. Judging the spirit of the times Dange announced in the meeting that we will wage a united fight against the Central Government's new Labour Relations Bill. Latest reports to hand show that in Nagpur also there was a textile conference sponsored by AITUC leaders in which the CITU was a participant. The struggle for unity has travelled along two points—strengthening of the UCTU—and joint actions with AITUC. As I have said the West Bengal Bandh of July 27 must be deemed to be a big achievement of our struggle for unity. All these years we were facing the terror alone, having been singled out by the Congress party as its special objective. Three hundred of our unions still continue to be under occupation of the Congress goondas. In certain areas including the Steel town of Durgapur with its boastfull Public Sector we cannot open our trade union offices. The Right C. P. which heads the AITUC leadership is in alliance with the ruling party and takes pride in it. Till recently it had never protested against this terror against us. On the other hand in the earlier days it had carried on slanderous propaganda against us, screening the crimes of the Congress and its terror against the trade union. In recent months though exchanges and consultations could take place, as well as some joint strikes and protest action, a common action, of the type of Bandh was unthinkable.

But the disillusionment of the people and the mounting indignation over rising price, food shortage, did the trick. While the CPI(M) and other left parties, along with the CITU and other constituents of the UCTU were preparing for a bandh in protest against price rise, food shortage and official policies helping the monopolists, hoarders and land-

lords the Right C.P. and AITUC gave a call to observe a bandh on 27th of July. It was clear that they were shying away from a united front with us. The AITUC leaders only made appeal through the press for support; they neither opened talks nor were prepared to sit together to discuss how to organise successful bandh. They were under the pressure of their allies and were discussing with them all the time assuring them of their good intentions. They also assured that they were not fighting the Government but the hoarders and monopolists. Unable to maintain this ridiculous position they resorted to equivocation. Our allies, the other constituents of the UCTU failed to see the quandary of the AITUC leaders - the pressure of the masses, the first feeble crack in the alliance with the Congress. They refused to support the bandh. The CITU fully supported the bandh, took lead in organising it and made it a glorious achievement of the united action of the democratic forces and the working class. This was one of the biggest reply to the terror, and the organisers of the terror.

On the eve of the bandh more than 600 workers of the CPI(M) and other left parties, of the CITU including leaders of mass organisations were arrested. Assaults and intimidations of workers, students, teachers were carried on on a big scale. Goonda elements, police, Congress volunteers were mobilised to break the strike. Some workers in some localities were forcibly taken from their homes and forced to report to work. Some factory managers were forced at gun point to reopen mills closed because of the strike. Three workers were murdered during the day of the bandh. Along with our cadres, the workers and cadres of the AITUC were also attacked, arrested and intimidated. Large number of them were put in jail. The unofficial united front was being sealed in jails and in police and goonda beatings.

In spite of the terror the bandh was a huge success. More than 2 million industrial workers participated in the strike. The entire mass of people supported.

As a follow up of this mighty handh the AITUC leaders recently supported our protests to the labour minister against gangster attacks on our unions. This time not only all the constituents of the UCTU joined in the protest, the AITUC also lent its support to our demand. Similarly all the Central organisations joined with us in protesting against West Bengal Ordinance banning strikes.

There have been many united front actions for local demands in protest strikes or indefinite strikes. In Kerala on many occasions the CITU, HMS, INTUC have joined hands. To mention the latest reports one and a half lakh cashew nut workers observed a day's token strike on 25th August in support of their demands for bonus. The call was unitedly given by the CITU, INTUC unions. At the call of the same organisations seventy thousand plantation workers observed a day's strike on August 31 demanding 50% rise in wages. Handloom workers of Badagara and Cannanore, Rubber workers, tea and coffee plantation workers of Wynad, Saw Mill workers of Kollai (Kozhikode), Kerala Spinner workers of Alleppey, Cotton mill workers of Trichur etc. have carried on their struggle under the leadership of CITU, AITUC and other central organisations. I have already mentioned the united actions in Tamilnadu, Maharashtra and other States.

These successes however do not mean that there is no need to struggle against the outlook of policies of the reformist and revisionist leaders. They mean that the first hurdles to mass action are being overcome. I have already shown how the INTUC and AITUC leaders oppose us a place in the tripartite body or in negotiations. It is necessary for them to do so because otherwise they will not be able to compromise and enter into anti-working class deals and agreements. Especially where the workers are not in action the reformists and revisionists are liable to compromise for the least excuse to keep the good will of the employers and the Government. Let me quote in this connection Com.

Umanath, General Secretary, Tamilnadu Committee of the CITU.

"The latest of the surrenders by the AITUC is in the Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. The Government of India has constituted a negotiating committee consisting of representatives of the management and of the AITUC, INTUC and recognised unions in their four plants in Hardwar, Bhopal, Ramachandrapuram and Tiruchirapalli to negotiate revision of wages and other basic demands. They have consciously avoided the CITU from being represented on the committee despite representations.

### **SECRET COMMITMENT**

"Recently, an interim relief to the tune of a minimum of Rs. 35 has been announced by the Committee. The AITUC, INTUC and the recognised unions were vying with each other through handbills and speeches to take the credit for interim relief.

"But the minutes of the meeting of the Negotiating Committee held on June 14 and 15, 1973 at Delhi, which fell into our hands recently, made the shocking revelations that the AITUC joined the INTUC in giving a secret undertaking to the management that increase of workload would be as much a part of this agreement as wage revision would be."

Besides during the course of the struggle the AITUC leaders with their vacillations, with the collaborationist attitude towards the Government, take a vacillating stand which undermines militancy and solidarity and creates danger of disruption. I have already referred to their role in the Loco workers strike which they were supporting but which at the same time they were successfully undermining because of their faith in the railway minister and their attitude to the Government. Not having faith in the militant class struggle they resort to puerile actions like individual hunger strike in the midst of a huge struggle involving thousands and divert attention from the main fight. This is exactly

what they did during the glorious strike of Rajasthan employees. When intense mass action was necessary to compel the Government to open negotiations the Right C.P. M.L.A. from Rajasthan and their State employees' leader from Punjab entered upon a hunger strike. Soon after, their followers started to divert the attention of the employees and launched a 'Save Leaders Life' campaign. The game, however, failed. But the point to be noted is that even when everyone has been won for joint action great vigilance is required to conduct the struggle correctly and prevent all diversionary moves.

As I have said the economic and political situation, the growing disillusionment and discontent among the masses, their wretched condition all dictate greater and bigger united struggles and we must pursue our policy of united front more vigorously than ever before.

## RESOLUTIONS

( Adopted in the Working Committee Meeting )

The Meeting adopted a resolution on Martyrs.

The meeting paid homage to the memory of Com. Tilak Raj, shot dead by Delhi police on July 6th, 37 persons who lost their lives during U.P. policemen's struggle for T.U. rights, Com. Sukaran who was stabbed by goondas and two workers shot dead by the police during Kerala Bandh on July 10th and large number of workers, preasants and students killed by Congress gangsters and police in West Bengal, Mysore and other places. The meeting pledged to carry forward the sacred task for which these martyrs laid down their lives.

### On Condolence

The meeting deeply mourned the death of Com. Chandrasekhar, Member, Delhi State Committee, CITU and the large number of leaders and activists of the trade union and democratic movement who had passed away.

### On Chile

The meeting strongly denounced the murder of President Dr. Salvador Allende of Chile and the subversion of his Government, which had taken many progressive measures for the welfare of the Chilean people, and establishment of rule of fascist military junta sponsored by the CIA. The meeting paid its tributes to the heroic Chilean working class and the people for their glorious resistance to the fascist military junta and demanded the release of Com. Inis Corvalan, General Secretary of the Communist Party and others held by the military junta and end of terror.

## **On recognition of Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam and Sihanouk Government of Cambodia.**

The meeting strongly condemned the Government of India for its refusal of recognising the provisional revolutionary Government of South Vietnam and of the Sihanouk Government of Cambodia even though the Algiers Conference, in which India participated, has called upon all member states for giving immediate recognition to these two Governments. Behind India Government's refusal to recognise these two Governments is its class policy and heavy dependence on American aid. The meeting demanded of the India Government for recognising immediately the PRG of South Vietnam and Sihanouk Government of Cambodia.

### **On Third Central Pay Commission Report**

The Central Pay Commission which has fixed minimum wage for a bachelor at Rs. 185 and for others at Rs. 196 in arbitrarily disregarding the norms and principles laid down by the 15th Indian Labour Conference, has virtually upheld the wage-freeze policy of the Government. The meeting congratulated the Central Government employees for expressing their firm disapproval to these recommendations and hails the decision for carrying on the struggle against those recommendations which had been adopted at the Convention of Central and State Government employees held in Delhi in July 1973 at the call of UCTU.

### **On the Loco Running Staff Struggle**

The meeting warmly greeted the Loco Running staff for the heroic struggles conducted by them throughout the country facing DIR, large scale arrests, police brutalities against themselves and their families and which had compelled the Railway Board for reducing the working hours of Loco Running Staff from 14 to 10 hours. The CITU has warned the

Loco Running Staff to be vigilant against the machinations of the Railway Board, the bureaucrats and the Government for sabotaging the agreement arrived at between the Railway Board and the employees and appealed to them for carrying on united struggle for their other demands.

### **On High Prices and Food Scarcity**

The meeting noted with deep concern that the wholesale prices of all commodities and of food which were abnormally high, have further shot up by 30.3% and 37.2% respectively at the end of August 1973. Over and above this the Central Government and State Governments manipulate in a fraudulent way the compilation of Consumer Price Index which show fall in prices when there is persistent rise in prices and thus the workers are deprived of the little benefits due to them in the shape of increased Dearness Allowance. The Committee considers that behind the abnormal rise in prices lies the Government of India's policy for fattening the Capitalists and landlords at the cost of the interest of the common people and urged the working class and the people for carrying on united struggles on the demands of compulsory procurement of all marketable surplus of food grains, statutory rationing of food and other necessary articles, extension of modified rationing in rural areas, relief to the distressed people and cheaper prices.

### **On use of DIR, MISA and other repressive measures against trade union and democratic movements**

The meeting protested against the continued use of DIR, MISA and other repressive measures including goonda attacks, backed by police for crushing the justified struggles of the workers, peasants and the people for the redressal of their legitimate grievances and against the anti-people policies of the Central and State Governments, which had been evident in Mysore, Kerala, in West Bengal on 27th July, in the case of struggles of Jaya workers, the Press workers where

DIR had been invoked for crushing their movement, in banning future strikes of Railway workers, Food Corporation workers etc. by DIR. The meeting demanded the withdrawal of DIR, MISA and Emergency and urged the workers and the democratic people for carrying on united movement on those demands.

### **On West Bengal Labour Advisory Board Decision**

The meeting noted the following proposals of the West Bengal Labour Advisory Board regarding the attacks on trade unions in the State :

- 1) All those who have been dismissed from service for forced absenteeism due to terror both in public and private sector undertakings must be reinstated.
- 2) The workers who are unable to attend duties due to terror should be given guaranteed security so that they may go to their duties.
- 3) The evicted workers and trade union leaders should be allowed to go to their areas and residences and their security should be guaranteed.
- 4) All T. U. leaders should be allowed to attend factory gates and freely hold meetings.
- 5) All forcibly occupied areas should be vacated and all the T.U.s should be allowed to function freely.

The meeting demanded that the Central and State Governments should take immediate measure to implement these decisions and called upon the West Bengal State Committee of CITU to carry forward the struggle against continued semi-fascist terror against the T. U. movement in the State.

### **On Electricity Workers**

The meeting, while greeting the electricity workers all over the country, supported the demands of the workers relating to need-based minimum wage, abolition of contract

and casual labour system and other issues. It blamed official policies for the present power crisis and stressed that the acceptance of workers demands was essential for running the power system properly.

The meeting also conveyed its warm greetings to the U.P. electricity Board workers who were on strike demanding increase in wages and improvement in working conditions. It condemned the U. P. Government for banning strike and resorting to other repressive measures and demanded their immediate withdrawal.

### **On Beedi Workers**

The meeting condemned the low national minimum wage of Rs. 3.25 and 3.50 per thousand beedis and demanded fixation of Rs. 5.50 instead with a fall back wage of Rs. 7.00 per day and introduction of DA seeking 100% neutralisation.

### **On Raw Jute Price**

The meeting condemned the Central Government for its collusion with the jute magnates in fleecing the jute growers and demanded fixation of Rs. 200 per quintal as price of raw Jute to be entirely purchased by Jute Corporation of India. It also demanded nationalisation of jute mills and foreign trade in Jute without compensation and called upon the workers and the jute growers to unitedly struggle to achieve these demands.

### **On Repatriation of POW's And Civil Internees**

The meeting expressed satisfaction at the beginning of repatriation of POW's and interned citizens of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh as per Simla and Delhi agreements and appealed to three Governments to create proper atmosphere for the solution of the other outstanding issues which was essential for peace in the sub-continent.

### **On Soviet Offer of 2 Million Tonnes of Foodgrains**

The meeting welcomed the Soviet offer of 2 million tonnes of foodgrain and expressed the hope that this would strengthen the bonds of deep fraternal feeling between the peoples of both countries.

### **On Coal Mine Workers Demands**

The meeting expressed its concern at the dilatory tactics adopted by the Government in settling the claims of the workers arising out of nationalisation of Coal mines and criticised the top-heavy administration of the nationalised undertakings for their anti-labour policies. It demanded 25 per cent wage rise as interim relief and immediate settlement of all outstanding issues of the mine workers.

### **On Greetings to Peoples China**

The meeting sent its warmest fraternal greetings to the working class and the people of China on the occasion of the anniversary of the Great Chinese Revolution.

### **On Engineering Industry**

The meeting expressed concern at the prevailing low rate of wages paid to the engineering workers of U. P., Haryana and Delhi State. It noted that even the recommendations of the Wage Board had not been implemented in these States. The meeting supported the decision of the engineering workers to launch struggle to get these recommendations implemented and called upon other workers to support their struggle.

### **On Bank Account**

The meeting authorised B. T. Ranadive, President, P. Ramamurti, General Secretary and Samar Mukherjee, Treasurer, to operate the savings and fixed deposit bank accounts of the CITU.

DECEMBER 1973

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