

THE VOICE
OF



THE WORKING WOMAN

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Re 1.00



Dorothy Nyembe, Veteran Fighter, released on March 25, 1984 after 15 years in jail

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WE CONGRATULATE YOU, BACHENDRI PAL

"The All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women (CITU) hails the magnificent victory achieved by Bachendri Pal of reaching the highest peak, Everest Mountain on May 23rd of '84 thus becoming the first Indian woman to climb 8848 meters despite so many odds. Bachendri Pal with her 20 member team which included 7 women, took six and half hours to reach the last point. She was at the top for 45 minutes enjoying the fruits of her labour and dream which ultimately was fulfilled. Bachendri Pal comes from Uttar Pradesh, is 28 years old, and an employee of Tata Oil Mill.

The women all over India, including working women congratulate Bachendri Pal for her heroic feat which honoured her as the first woman to climb the Everest and wish success in her future adventures.

WE MUST PREVENT NUCLEAR WAR

A Message From Soviet Women

At this crucial time when our future and the future of our posterity are on the scales of history, we, women of the Soviet Union, are appealing to you, to your minds, hearts and conscience.

International tension and the race in arms, first and foremost nuclear arms, have approached a critical point. The deployment of Pershing II and Cruise missiles in Western Europe—first-strike nuclear weapons has confronted the world with the real danger of nuclear war. And the attempts to spread the arms race into outer space are increasing the threat of destruction of our planet many times over.

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Attack On Cabin-Crew Including AIR-Hostesses

—Karuna Chattopadhyay

The Indian Air-lines management has recently launched an inhuman attack on eight of its cabin crew members, including five Air-Hostesses. This is another example of what its real masters, sitting at the top of the Govt. of India, are exactly doing against the working people of our country. When the Prime Minister is often shedding tears for the miseries of women, things are going on just the opposite, in all spheres of life. Thus the above mentioned incident in Indian Air-lines testifies to the hypocrisy of the Indian ruling class.

A batch of eight cabin crew, including five Air Hostesses and three flight Purseres, left Calcutta at 5.35 p.m. on 5th May, by a flight. On the same night, they reached Bombay via Delhi by another flight. They had their scheduled night rest there. These crew members were scheduled to reach Delhi on the next day and then to Calcutta. Three of them had their scheduled weekly off on the 7th May. On the 6th May, the flight was delayed by more than six hours in Bombay. So, they requested the Movement Control, Delhi, that no one of the eight Cabin Crew, should be given further flight, back to Bombay; because of the long delay of the flight, they are bound to land in Delhi after mid-night. This message was relayed to Movement Control, Delhi, both by S.S.S.B. and T.P.

On reaching Delhi after 1 A.M., at deep mid-night, the Cabin Crew team reported to the Delhi Movement Control and requested them for transport and Hotel accommodation in accordance with the message sent from Bombay. But to their utter dismay and desperation, they were told that they must take the next flight, back to Bombay. The fatigued, harrassed and mentally upset Cabin Crew members repeatedly requested the

authority not to send them further. They referred to the agreement between the authority and the Union. They also rightly pointed out that according to the International Standards and Practices, 'Rest Period' were intended for the purpose of recovery from fatigue. They stressed that they are fatigued and would not be of much assistance if an emergency arose. They also told that they had given prior intimation several hours back. This request of the Cabin Crew members were turned down. Over and above, they were threatened with dire consequences, if they do not follow the instruction. More ever, they were refused transport accommodation and food. Thus the eight Cabin Crew members, including five Air Hostesses, were left unattended, insecured and uncared for, for the rest of the night. Even their request for the hotel accommodation at their own cost, to be debited later on, was turned down.

India is a member to the Convention of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and is a signatory to the Convention of International Civil Aviation. The latter has its sets of recommended Standards and Practices for the operation of aircraft in commercial Air transport. As per the clauses of the said Standards, the Cabin Crew members shall establish and maintain training programmes. They should be capable in the use of emergency and as well as first-aid-kits and also be knowledgeable as regards the effect of oxygenation, lack of oxygen, also physiological phenomenon, accompanying a loss of pressurisation, etc. Govt. of India accepted those standards and norms by Gazette notification. Further, there is an agreement between the management and Air Crew Employees' Union, of which the Cabin Attendants are members.

The agreement was entered under the provisions of the Industrial Disputes Act. It has also got statutory force under the provisions of the said act, which provides exhaustive explanation on the 'Rest Period'.

But the management of Indian Air-lines, not only flouted all the above agreements, norms and International Standards, but preferred to issue suspension orders to the eight Cabin Crew members, followed by charge-sheets.

After hearing the news of attack on the Cabin Crew members, the other employees of Calcutta Station, burst out in anger. They started registering their protest by refusing to carry out the illegal orders. As a counterblast in total violation of the law, the management started inviting volunteers, who had no training at all as Cabin Attendant. Thus the authorities indulged in fraudulently issuing tickets to the passengers, involving total risk. They deducted ten-days salary from the employees' pay-bills, for their actions. The Cabin Crew members of Bombay and Delhi, successfully observed one-day' token strike, as a mark of solidarity towards the struggling Calcutta Crew members. After successful completion of ten-day's Struggle, the employees jointed their duty, at the instruction of the Union.

The Cabin Crew members, including Air-Hostesses, are inseparable part of Indian working class. Though they work in such a field, which is not much known to all and their status is apparently little well-off, yet they suffer the same humiliations and tortures in the hands of the management, as all the workers, including working women in our society. So the incident is not an isolated one. Rather it reflects the same symptoms of illness, that our entire class-ridden society is suffering from. But

the most significant chapter of the said episode is that, no attack on the working people of to-day, is allowed to go unchallenged, unprotested.

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Each of us must realize the nature and scale of the disaster that threatens us and resolutely oppose any doctrines about the "admissibility" of using nuclear weapons and about the possibility of waging "protracted" or "limited" nuclear wars. These doctrines are not only utterly inhuman, but fundamentally wrong. There can be no limited nuclear war. Inevitably, it would grow into a global conflict.

We must act decisively before it is too late. We are appealing to you for joining our efforts to prevent a nuclear war. By joint efforts let us bar the road to a nuclear conflagration and save our common home, the Planet—Earth!

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WOMEN IN STONE INDUSTRY JOIN CITU

—Minoti Poddar, Bihar

As per the report of Santhal Pargana Division Pramandal Pathar Udyog (Stone Industry of Malpahari, Shaharkol, Kolajora, Sonajuri, Tilmitta of Pakur Sub-Division) and Mirzachowki of Sahibaganj Sub Division, there are about 15,000 tribal women working for several years in the stone grinding machine. This industry is running under the private sector management where these women are being brutally exploited by their management. Their inhuman exploitation can be noted from the following :

1. No record of work is being kept by the management of these working women due to which the management does not bother for its responsibilities. At the same time because of not being enrolled in the register, these women do not get any legal facilities. As there is no record of the work of these women, they do not get other facilities too such as, bonus, gratuity, provident fund, pension, etc.

2. They do not get any security of their job under any welfare scheme. Nor do they get maternity leave, or toilet facilities. There is no welfare scheme for them.

3. This industry is under the Central Govt. control; even then they do not get the minimum wages for their work that is fixed by the Govt. rule. Now they have decided to join the union under the CITU and struggle for their demands.

VICTORY OF WORKING WOMEN OF HATHUA METAL AND VANASPATI OF PATNA

The working women of above said industry were not getting any leave and even at the time of festivals or other important occasions they were supposed to work.

Com. Shibani Chaudhury represented all the working women and placed a demand before the management for granting leaves at the time of festivals, etc. But the management refused to do so. At last all the working women decided not to go to work at the time of festivals. They went on strike on Holiday festival, with the result that the management had to accept their demand and declare all the festival days as the holidays.

WOMEN SUPPORT THE MOVEMENT OF RAPTAKOS BRETT FIELD WORKERS

Since January last, the field work in Raptakos Brett and Co. Ltd., a monopoly drug company remained totally paralysed due to countrywide agitations launched by the Federation of Medical Representatives' Associations of India. FMRAI, under which the medical representatives are organised, submitted a charter of demands on behalf of them to the company in July 1983. When these field workers were patiently waiting for a negotiated settlement, the management started attacking them without any provocation. Trade Union functionaries and negotiation committee members were dismissed and transferred. The management filed false cases against a number of field workers. In this situation, the workers launched agitation, such as a one day strike on 29th November, 1983, again 2 days strike and dharnas have been staged in every state before the company's establishment. The management remained adamant and to suppress the movement bribed the police officials recruited anti socials and RSS hoodlums as field workers.

The movement took a new turn with the participation of the family members in it. In Bihar, the mothers, sisters, and wives of medical representatives staged dharnas

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Whither National Integration

Years back when some of the leaders in the ruling Cong. (I) party raised the slogan of jobs for the 'sons of the soil' in order to cover up their failure to take steps for employment generation or accept the demand of right to work as justiciable fundamental right, the democratic opinion had warned the powers that with that the death knell to the national integration has been sounded. How true was the warning will be seen from the following sordid story.

Every one knows the special problem in NE Region. After 37 years of independence the region still remains industrially as backward as it was before, and the mounting unemployment problem there needs immediate attention. Hence when the Central Govt. decided that employment in this region should be limited to candidates sponsored by the employment exchanges of this region, there was no opposition. In accordance with this rule vacancies in Silchar Telegraph Traffic Division comprising of telegraph offices of Karimgani, Silchar, Agartala, Dimapur, Kohima, Imphal and Aizawl were being filled up by the candidates sponsored by the Employment Exchanges of this area on a combined list on the basis of merit. Accordingly 4 girls from plains area were selected and posted at Dimapur as telegraphists. One of the leading workers who had connections with Congress (I) and who had already secured his promotion irregularly out of turn, Shri N. K. Sema, was reported to have made some obscene advances towards these girls. The girls with the hope that they would get justice and protection, lodged complaint about sexual harrasment to higher authorities and also to the recognised union. One of the Union leaders visited Dimapur on June 2. Shri Sema then brought his political influence to bear upon the

situation. On June 3, Shri N. Ghosito Achumi, Joint Secretary, Nagaland Youth Congress (I)/General Secretary, N.S.T.W.A / General Secretary INTUC, Nagaland Branch Dimapur addressed a letter to the General Manager Telecom, N.E. Circle Shillong and demanded, "Withdraw the 4 (four) girls who had been recruited in the month of May, 84 under DTO Dimapur, on or before the end of June, 84 and appoint the local youths, otherwise if anything happend in your Department, by the local youths the Department will be the responsible for damage or loss of anything or the local youths will take their own course of action".

This letter sent in the pad of "Indian National Trade Union Congress" was an open declaration of mayhem and it naturally terrorised the poor girls, who immediately left Dimapur feeling insecure. It was clear as the daylight that with such political backing justice will be a far cry and there would be no protection to honour or life. Another employee from the plains area Shri I.K. Debnath who was considered by Shri Sema as a potential witness against him was also threatened for which he also had to leave Dimapur even though it disrupted the studies of his son.

The slogan of jobs for the 'sons of the soil' has its pernicious effect. Criminals can now invoke this slogan to protect themselves. And the cause of "National Integration" becomes a casualty along with the honour of women. They seek protection under Youth Congress (I) and INTUC. One would like to have the reaction of Smt. Indira Gandhi on this incident. Com. Samar Mukharjee M.P. has taken up the issue with the Government.

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before the Company's establishments at Patna and Ranchi. While at Ranchi the family members numbering 16 staged a day long dharna on April 30, paralysing the functioning of the Depot, at Patna. They continued the dharna for full six days from April 30 to May 5 in the scorching heat. They raised slogans, physically obstructed supply of goods to and from the depot and compelled the local management to make trunk call to Bombay to convey their protest. They participated in the gate meetings daily which were addressed by leaders of the various fraternal trade unions. Among those who participated in the programme were Sarama Roy, Ila Chatterjee, Rita Adhya, Mitul Chowdhury, Manju Tarafdar, Tapsi Chatterjee, Rita Roy, Meera Bannerjee, Chhaya Mukherjee, Kabita Chakrabarty, Aparna Chakrabarty, Suravi Ghosh, Bharati Majumdar, Mitali Sarkar, Reena Sahay, Ruma Bhattacharjee, Dipali Bhowmik, Latika Chatterjee, Mrs. Prasad Singh Roy, Sabitri Das, Ira Ganguly, Tapati Bishwas, Sanghamitra Ghosh, Kakoli Nag, Piu Guha Thakurta and Shanti Sharma.

Stop Withdrawing Concessions—Kerala

The working women all over India express deep concern at the unsympathetic and unhelpful attitude taken by the Administration in the Accountant General's Offices throughout the country towards the women employees. In the wake of the decision to bifurcate the Audit & Accounts, the Administration is trying to withdraw the concessions extended to the women employees of not undertaking tours in the remote areas in the state. They are being forced to go to remote interiors. Women employees are prepared to undertake tours to those places where train, travel and other facilities are available and from where they can return home on the same day. How the administration is compelling the women employees to undertake tours to far off places and re-

mote villages without taking into account the difficulties they have to face?

Letter to the Prime Minister, dated 5th June, 1984 by the All India Co-Ordination Committee Of Working Women

Dear Madam,

I am enclosing a copy of the letter received by me yesterday from the Circle Secretary, All India Telegraph Traffic Employees Union, Class-III Branch Gauhati for your information. It is stated that the four lady telegraphists recently posted at Departmental Telegraph Office Dimapur under Silchar Telegraph Traffic Division who were recruited from Cachar District and Agartala, seriously complained against two officials who are trying to molest them, and making their lives unbearable. The enclosed letter speaks for itself the horrible experiences these ladies are passing through, ultimately being driven to the extent that they might commit suicide.

An immediate intervention from your office is very much necessary to save these ladies from the criminal and threatening attitude of these officers by removing them to other posts if possible or to make them understand the responsibility they have towards the staff, especially the women.

I would therefore request for immediate action from your side.

Thanking you.

Vimal Ranadive

First Conference Of AIDWA In Khagaria Dist-Bihar

The first Conference of AIDWA, Khagaria district, was held on 27th May 1984, at Janata Vidyalaya Mansi with hoisting of the AIDWA flag and homage to martyrs. Ramadevi, Droupadidevi, and Savitridevi were elected on the presidium. Vimal Ranadive, Vice-President, AIDWA and Secretary of AICCWW inaugurated the conference. A big procession of about 700 women, mostly agricultural, paraded all over Mansi with slogans. While welcoming the delegates who had launched continuous struggles under Kisan Sabha, Vimal Ranadive explained the various movements launched by women under AIDWA in Bengal, Kerala and other places, against the injustice made by the Congress rulers, the reflection of which is seen in the increasing membership of AIDWA which stands at about 15 lakhs within such a short time. A report of the work in Khagaria Dist. was placed by Jayashri Devi outlining the various struggles, including the one when thousands of women courted arrest against the policies of the Bihar Govt. More than 10 women delegates spoke on their various problems. Ramadevi from Parvati area attacked the Mukhia and Sarpanch who belonged to the Congress, for stealing the money from the pension available for widows and old women. She said "we get only Rs. 30/- per month, as widow pension, out of which the Mukhia has Rs. 5/- as his share. If it is denied, no pension will be available for us". It was reported by a number of delegates that out of 1000 only 20 women under that 'Anchal' are entitled to get pension. Even to get the application form, and later on pension the bribe is to be given to Mukhias, Sarpanchs and so on. "We have to prove that we are widows! we have nobody to support! This is unbearable...". Recently they have stopped giving application forms for widow pension. The majority of the

delegates being agricultural women, complained about the unequal wage they receive for the same type of work. "We work as 'Khurapi', the same work as the men do, but we are paid Rs. 2/- to Rs. 4/- at the most when men are paid Rs. 8/- to Rs. 9/-. Rukmani from Malma Anchal, whose husband died in a Bagpat Bridge Railway accident in 1981, is still not receiving any pension. She said, "I have a grand daughter who is to get married soon. But where can I find Rs. 10,000/- as dowry". Pavitradevi complained charging the Mukhia who continues to illtreat her because she collects money for the Conference. Due to overflow of Ganga water about 200 families had taken shelter on the land of the landlord, who was trying to evict them. In spite of petitions Parvati Devi said "no help was received from the Government". Ramadevi said, "give us money for hutments and we will leave the place..."

The session continued till 10-30 in the night with the help of the patromax! After summing up the discussion by Vimal Ranadive, a new committee with 13 members was elected with Savitridevi as President and Jayashri Devi as Secretary. The resolutions on atrocities on women, equal wage, dowry deaths and on peace were adopted unanimously. Com. Sudha Bindu Mitra, the leader of Bihar Janawadi Mahila Samiti concluded while giving the future programme of action.

The open session was attended by 800 women and men where Com. Krishnakant Singh, President, Kishan Sabha, Com. Anandi Singh, Secretary, CPM, Com. Geeta Yadav, Kishan Sabha, Khagaria, Surendra Prasad, SFI and Hariram Choudhari, DYFI greeted the delegates besides Vimal Ranadive assuring full support to the cause of women's movement and their demands.

Women To Observe National Integration Week

The meeting of AIDWA, presided over by Manju Gupta, held on 21-22 June 1984 at Delhi heard the report made by Susheela Gopalan, General Secretary on the serious situation developing in the country especially with regard to Punjab, and Bhiwandi in Maharashtra. She said, "the independence of our country is in danger and women have to play a big role in keeping the unity of various nationalities and fighting against the divisive forces." Ahilya Rangnekar reported about the terrible communal developments in Bhiwandi and other places in Maharashtra when poor men, women and children of minorities were killed, their huts were burnt, the police machinery remaining a silent spectator. A serious note was taken of the disruptive activities of the Christian missionaries, foreign agents, and the so-called left and feminist groups etc., who try to approach various sections of women under the plea of taking up their economic demands, but weaning them away from the common democratic movement. The meeting felt that the AIDWA in the states and districts should try to counteract their propaganda ideologically.

Two important decisions were taken in the meeting in this connection. A deputation on behalf of AIDWA should visit Bhiwandi and other affected places, with a donation of Rs. 2000/- to be paid immediately, and Rs. 7000/- to be collected and sent later on. A delegation also should visit Punjab when the situation permits in consultation with the Punjab branch of AIDWA.

The committee congratulated the democratic people of Tripura, including women for the glorious victory in the Panchayat elections, defeating the authoritarian and divisive forces in a big way. It was noted, the victory of the Panchayat elections in

Tripura was particularly important in the present unhealthy happenings in Punjab, Maharashtra and Assam. The left front Govt. of Tripura and West Bengal could keep the unity of the people because of the tradition of the democratic movement despite attempts of disruption by Upajati Samity and Congress (I). The committee heard the reports of the activities from the states which included the signature campaigns on the introduction of Dowry Prohibition Act, price rise, observation of 8th March and Children's Day on 1st June and women's participation in peace rallies. At many places like Maharashtra, Delhi, Tamilnadu, Andhra, joint programmes by different organisations with AIDWA's initiative were taken up.

Important discussion on the question of employment of women and the 7th 5-year plan, on the state and central commission on women took place. After the discussion it was decided that the AIDWA should demand from the Government a meeting of the Planning Commission with women's organisations to discuss various ways and means to increase the employment of women and for training facilities.

The meeting adopted the following programme: 1. A week to be observed from 10-16th July as National Integration week. 2. Signatures on the Dowry Prohibition Act to be collected and submitted to the Government by 15th of August, 84. 3. A campaign for common civil code.

Following members were present from the states. Mythily Shivaraman (Tamilnadu), Damayanti Parikh, Niru Patel (Gujarat), Ahilya Rangnekar (Maharashtra), Sudha Bindu Maitra (Bihar), Rama Das (Assam), Kanak Mukherjee, Manju Gupta, Madhuri Dasgupta, Sarala Maheshwari (W. Bengal), Udayam (Andhra) and Susheela Gopalan and Vimal Ranadive.

"Constitute Women's Commissions"

The following reply dated 12th June 1984 was received by Com. Susheela Gopalan to the Memorandum, submitted to Prime Minister on various issues relating to welfare of women.

"I am directed to refer to a memorandum dated 12-4-1984 submitted to Prime Minister of the above subject and to give my comments, on the various points raised in the memorandum as under :-

1. **Immediate passing of the amendment to Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 as recommended by the Joint Parliamentary select committee.**

The bill to amend the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961 has been introduced in the last session of the Parliament.

2. **Constitute Women's Commission in State and Central level.**

There is already a national machinery, comprising a National Committee on Women and the Women Welfare and Development Bureau in the Ministry of Social Welfare. Therefore no useful purpose is likely to be served by constituting another statutory commission. It is felt that the problems concerning women are such that they can not be solved by merely constituting such a commission. The crucial need is to bring about social awareness and attitudinal changes about the situation of women for which prominent voluntary organisations like the All India Democratic Women's Association can render valuable assistance.

3. **Constitute Family Courts to deal with the cases of women and children.**

The Department of Justice of the Law Ministry is processing the case for introduction of a bill in the Parliament for constitution of Family Courts.

4. **Give immediate effect to the laws passed by the Parliament on rape and cruelty to women.**

The Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act, 1983 has been enacted to deal with situations in which women are subjected to harassment or cruelty for inability to meet the demands of their inlaws and it is often as a result of these harassments that women are driven to committing suicides. A new section 498-A has been inserted in the CPC to punish the husband or any relative of the husband of the woman who subjects her to cruelty, with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 3 years and fine. The offence has been classified as cognizable, if information relating to the commission of the offence is given to police by the victim or by any person related to her by blood, marriage or adoption or if there is no such relative, by any public servant authorised in this behalf by the State Government. The offence is also non-bailable. It also provides for compulsory inquest by an Executive Magistrate and post-mortem in all cases of suicide or death in suspicious circumstances of married women within 7 years of their marriage.

It also amends the law of evidence to provide that where a woman has committed suicide within a period of 7 years from the date of her marriage and it is shown that her husband or relative of her husband has subjected her to cruelty, the court may presume that such suicide has been abetted by her husband or such relatives of her husband.

The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 1983 has come into effect w.e.f. 25th December, 1983.

To combat the menace of dowry deaths instructions were issued on 22nd July, 1980 and 13-8-1982 to all the State Govts. and UT Administrations that through investigation should be conducted in all cases of attempted suicide or death in suspicious circumstances of young married women during

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Women's Place is in the Battle-field

—Vimal Ranadive

"Now that you have touched the women you have struck a rock, you have dislodged a boulder, you will be crushed". Singing the song, more than 20,000 women, majority of Black in South Africa walked in the streets, of Pretoria, with hundreds of signatures on the petition forms, in spite of the ban on procession by the white regime minority Government against the pass laws. This was the women's day, 9th August 1956. The preparations for this went on for months. They collected money and signatures from towns and villages. Many walked miles to assure the success of the women's Day. The representatives of the Apartheid Govt. had no time to meet the delegation and the bunches of the signatures were kept in the office of the Prime Minister.

This memorable procession was a part of the anti-pass movement which began since 1955. The Government issued the instructions, that, "African women will be issued with the passes from January 1956". Men had already got them. Therefore women knew what pass laws meant, the night raids, stopping persons in the streets by police vans, searches, loosing the jobs, arrests, disappearance of black people any time, forced labour on the farms of white people, which means separation of the family. No pass books means no pension, dismissal of the nurses and teachers who do not have pass books ! Why should the black person require to have the pass ? It was an insult and women decided to fight against this blatant injustice. Pass books were burnt publicly, refused when offered and big movement was launched with the result the Government was compelled to withdraw the order. This was a victory for the women's movement.

Tortures under Apartheid

Is it not surprising that in the 20th century there should be a Government on racial basis, elected on the minority votes, when majority are blacks ! But it is so. Nowhere we will find the "Bantustan", a segregation of the people huddled in thousands, deported and separated from their families for no fault of theirs. The leaders of the movement are jailed, murdered. Many women are the bread winners in their families. At present, 1000 children, aged between 11 to 12 are in jail under the so-called charges of political activities against the Government. 5,60,000 people are imprisoned between the period of June 1982, to June 1983, main reason being breach of pass laws. Over 200 women were brought to trail, 150 were banned, or under house arrest when they participated in the movement against the anti-terrorism legislation, which was introduced in 1960. They were not spared from the tortures and solitary confinement. Mrs. Ritta Ndzanga, one of the leaders narrated the horrible experience in the following words : "My first interrogation took place on 16th May. I was taken to a room.....Major Swanepoel called me by name.....I kept quiet. Other security officers continued to question me day and night. Then struck me when I fell on the floor. They said, "stand up" and kicked me when I lay on the floor.....they poured water on my face, told me I must stand up and speak.....". During her third interrogation they began hitting, then took her shoes off and asked her to stand on the bricks. One of the police officers climbed a chair and pulled her by hair. They did this again and again. "The man who pulled me by the hair had his hands full of my hair....." This is one of the hundreds of

instances as to how the women were tortured. Women were jailed because of the activities of their husbands. White women, supporters of the movement also were not spared. Pixie Benjamine had to go on hunger strike lasting for 48 days in protest against her arrest without trial. This continues till today.

A Massacre at Sharpsville : A turning point

A demonstration of women and children taken out on 21st March 1960 against the pass laws at Sharpsville was brutally fired upon by the police when 69 men and women were killed and 180 injured. Emergency was declared lasting for 5 months. Raids and detention were the order of the day. There were 20 white women who too participated and were detained. The African National Congress the organisation of the democratic people was banned, women had to shoulder the burden of this massacre by helping the people and children.

The General strike called for 29th May 1961 against this, brought army mobilisation, helicopters and tanks in the township with largest display of naked force to crush the demonstration against the Apartheid laws. This was the turning point in the political struggle in South Africa when the emergence of 'Umkhonto We Sizwe' a military wing of the new illegal African National Congress came into existence.

The Issues on which the Women's Movement in South Africa was built

Women are exploited and discriminated in all the capitalist countries without exception including the so called advanced countries like USA and Britain. But, in South Africa women are oppressed and insulted as "Black Women". They suffer sexual harassment from their white bosses. They have to be 'Ayas' to look after the children of white women while their own children are neglected with the result they

are snatched by whites and compelled to labour on their land without any wages. Any time, men and women are evicted from their homes and sent to the Transkei, the camps. It is a common thing in South Africa that men and women break away from the police while they are being put in the van. Women are demanding the right to stay with their families and refuge to go back to the camps where they are starved. Under this situation women in South Africa worked for many years organising themselves on various issues on economic, political, etc. under the Women's League attached to the African National Congress. After a few years the Women's League was banned.

In 1975, during International women's year, a new Black Women's Federation was established, with the object of linking black groups with others in practical activities. There were increasing activities on the economic front by ordinary women and also by working women. The Federation took the common problems like food, prices, housing, education, and the children. The special character of the Federation can be noted from the participation of white and coloured women side by side. The Federation adopted a charter of demands which includes, right to vote, right to full employment opportunities, equal rights with men in relation to property, marriage and children, and for removal of all laws and customs which deny women equal rights. They pledge to strengthen the national liberation movement and organise women in trade unions. By this time, women and their organisation had become a part of the underground resistance movement and the general preparation for armed struggle to end the Apartheid system.

1984 a year of the Women

African National Congress has fully recognised the militant role and power of women's movement which strengthened the ANC. "When women started playing a

significant role in the national liberation struggle, the ANC grew in volume and content, and one may add in militancy". This is how the leaders of the ANC view the important role of women in the present struggle of National liberation against the Boatha regime of Apartheid. Recently the ANC declared 1984, the year of the women. It was in fact, a great tribute for the militant struggles waged by women in South Africa, "the mighty detachment of our revolutionary struggle for national liberation and social emancipation". This is how the leaders have commented and praised the role the women have played.

Apartheid as the leaders say, can not be reformed. The only solution is total change in the present system, dismantling of the machinery and transfer of political and economic power to the democratic majority. The Boatha Government is well aware that they cannot rule the old way. The Government is alive because of the support from the Imperialist countries, the USA and Britain. Through the efforts of the ANC, the United Democratic Front was formed with broadest sections of the people against apartheid system. The ANC has given a call to mobilise the people in rural areas where the apartheid system had deep roots on the slogan of "Seize the land".

Boatha, an Unwelcome Visitor

The Prime Minister Peter Boatha when he recently visited the European countries was an unwelcome visitor. He faced massive demonstrations of people in England, was insulted and howled. The demand was raised in West Germany, and other countries to release Nelson Mandela and others, they protested against the violation of human rights. He knows very well that the days of Apartheid, the minority ruling over the majority are coming to end. The people of South Africa have united and are giving blows to the white regime. And women are playing a significant role in the overthrow of the Government.

ANC Honours Fighting Women

The President of ANC in a statement said, "It will be our special task this year to organise and mobilise our womenfolk into a powerful, united and active force for revolutionary change. The task falls on men and women alike, all of us together as comrades in struggle. We wish to stress the need of the present hour, for the

emergence on the political scene of a women's movement that is politically and organisationally united. Our struggle needs and demands this political mighty force". Further he stressed, "Our national and social emancipation can never be complete if we continue to treat women of our country as dependent, miners, and objects of one form of exploitation or another, certainly no longer should it be that a women's place is in the kitchen In our beleaguered country, the women's place is in battlefield of struggle". This is how the leaders of ANC, visualise the role of women in the present struggle against the white regime. And the ANC will be observing the year 1984, honouring these fighting women in South Africa. What a great advance, the women in South Africa have made.

The Federation Completes 30 Years

In April 1984, the Federation of South African women completed 30 years. During this period there were arrests, bannings, detentions of the women leaders. Lilian Ngoyi, the President, was continuously served with banning orders. Dava Tamana, acting Secretary General, Helan Joseph were under house arrest for years. The white regime tried to silence Albertina Sisulu. Dorthy Nyembe was released lately after 15 years in jail. Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, the undisputed leaders, and the symbols of resistance to white regime continue to be in prison for 20 years.

The year 1984 will be observed with befitting manner by all the democratic people in South Africa and supported by the women all over the world. The people as a whole have suffered a lot under the racial regime, lost hundreds of lives, including women. Women in the country are proud of the heroic sisters who are playing important role in the national liberation struggle, and for their own emancipation.

The immense sacrifice of men and women in the national liberation struggle in South Africa will not go in vain. The determination and the participation of majority women in the struggle confirms, the day is not far off when they will see the Boatha regime crumbled under the weight of the biggest movement. The Apartheid "has struck a rock, dislodged a boulder" and they are bound to get crushed under the weight.

We salute the heroic women and pledge full support to their cause.

Dwindling Employment Of Women In Maharashtra

—Subhasini Ali, Bombay.

The following paper on Woman and Employment was submitted at the Women's Conference, Aurangabad, Maharashtra by Com. Subhasini for discussion held on 12-13 Nov. 83.

1. The data on women and employment and on the economic condition of women in general suggests that unless their social status is changed and the structure of society itself is completely smashed and re-made, they will remain in a trapped situation where even progressive steps like protective legislation and technological innovations will deprive them of job opportunities; where every change in every sphere will be used by the vested interests, property owners, contractors and capitalists to increase their exploitation and their unemployment.

2. From 1901 to 1956, the Planning Commission has noted a trend of replacement of women workers, a disappearance or diminution in many traditional women's occupations. This trend was seen to continue till 1971. The reasons again were that (a) the secondary sector (industrialisations) rejected them, (b) the tertiary sector (services etc.) didn't expand much and (c) in the primary sector (agriculture) they started getting crowded out by population pressure.

3. In the industries that traditionally absorbed women, they were thrown out of employment because of the combination of protective legislation and technological expansion e.g. the textile industry which employed 35,000 women in 1950, employed only 6,000 in 1975 and now in post-strike 1983, the number has dwindled to 2,000.

4. This falling rate of women's employment can be illustrated by the following figures.

Maharashtra : Women Employed.

	1950	1975
Textile (Bombay)	35,000	6,000
Mines, Plantations, Forests and Fisheries	13,00,000	11,00,000
Household Industries	40,00,000	13,00,000
Trade	8,00,000	5,00,000
	1961	1971
Agriculture	3,30,00,000	97,00,000

Economically active females as proportion of total no. of females

1901	31.70%
1911	33.73%
1961	27.96%
1971	12.73%

5. The declining trend of women's employment would seem to find reflection in other indicators of the social and economic condition of women. Discrimination in the pre-entry situation in the organised sector leaves women to crowd the unorganised. Here the women work to maintain a minimum subsistence level which keeps the general wage level low and increase the work-load on women. The General discrimination against women and their being trapped into accepting any kind of work perpetuate the differentials in male and female wages.

Differential wage rates of 1975 in some industries in Maharashtra.

	<i>Male P. d.</i>	<i>Female P. d.</i>
Handlooms	6.06	4.76
Silk Weaving	4.84	2.35
Agriculture p. m.	44.05	29.50

6. From 1971 to 1981 the trend of declining employment has been *slightly* reversed mainly because of increased employment of women in the public sector. Here also it has been mainly in the categories of teaching, nursing, midwives and clerks, i. e. traditional women's work. The growth has been as below.

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Public Sector</i>	<i>Private Sector</i>
1971	10.73 (Millions)	6.76 (Millions)
1979	14.98 (Millions)	7.20 (Millions)

7. There is no room for complacency, how-

ever, as this slight increase is too slight for comfort, it is offset by the huge increase on new female entrants every year, by the growing number of unemployed women on the Unemployment Exchange rolls etc. The figures for industrial employment in Maharashtra also give ample scope for pessimism :

Factory Workers in Maharashtra

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Female workers' Percentage of total</i>
1966	7,55,706	69256	9.16
1967	7,41,024	65204	8.79
1968	7,56,578	63172	8.34
1969	7,91,662	66251	8.36
1970	8,06,141	66316	8.22
1975	8,63,105	59351	6.87

Continued from page 10

the first 10 years of their marriage. Such cases are required to be investigated by an officer not below the rank of Dy. Superintendent of Police and the post-mortem should be done by a team of two doctors. Disposal of the dead body without post-mortem should not be permitted except with a 'No Objection Certificate' by the Police and he should not give each certificate unless the dead body has been seen by the parents or guardians or other closed relatives of the bride's side of the family. The instruction is being monitored.

All the State Governments and the UT Administrations have been asked to set up District Advisory Committees having a fair representation of women for assisting investigation and prevention of crimes against the women. The State Government/UTs

are taking action to set up District Advisory Committees in the respective States/UTs.

In view of some allegations about misbehaviour with women arrested or kept for interrogation by the police, the Home Ministry has written to all the State Governments and UT Administrations bringing out clearly the legal provisions for effecting the arrest of women, their search etc. and advising the State Government to ensure that the instructions are followed in letter and in spirit by the State Police.

5. Set apart an adequate amount in the 7th Five Year Plan for Women's employment and training facilities.

A Working Group on Women and Development has been set up which is in the process of completing its report and this is one of the items under consideration by the Working Group.

Training Class For Working Women

West Bengal

On 30th March '84, the Nadia Branch of the women's sub-committee of the State Co-ordination Committee of State Govt. employees organised a seminar at ABT Hall, Krishnanagar. The subject of the seminar was, "Role of the Working Women in the Trade Union Movement. 50 women from various sectors of Krishnanagar Town and surrounding areas attended this seminar which was held on the occasion of the Training Class for Working Women. The Joint Secretary of the District Co-ordination Committee Com. Dilip Chakraborty initiated the discussion. The topics like development of social science, the beginning of T.U. movement in the international sphere, participation of working women in the movement and their future responsibilities were the points of discussion in the seminar.

AIDWA Formed At Karnal

Haryana

A meeting of women was held at Karnal on 29-4-84. Smt. Shanti Devi presided over the meeting which was attended by 35 women representing different sections like Nurses, Teachers, Students and Housewives. The meeting was attended by the General Secretary of the AIDWA, Susheela Gopalan and Vimal Ranadive. Prof. Indu Sharma welcomed the leaders.

Addressing the meeting Susheela Gopalan elaborately discussed about the evils of capitalist society where women are subjected to all sorts of exploitation and torture. She called upon the women to organise under AIDWA and launch a relentless struggle against their exploitation. Vimal Ranadive highlighted the exploitation and attacks on women under the Congress(I) rule and explained the present political and economic situation.

The meeting ended with formation of the district committee of AIDWA. A 7

member adhoc committee was formed with Shanti Devi as President and Pramila Abrol as Secretary.

First Conference of AIDWA held at Kota and Ganganagar

— Sumitra Swami, Rajasthan.

Janwadi Mahila Samity, Kota District held its first conference on March 22. Inaugurating the conference Sumitra Swami spoke about the aims and objectives of the organisation, appealed to the women to fight for peace and against war. Radhika Singh presented the report. The conference condemned the murderous attack on the Divisional Secretary of CITU. 156 women participated in the conference in which a 20 member-Working Committee was formed. Sarla Rani was elected President and B. P. Swami, the Secretary. A procession was taken out after the conference.

The First District Conference of Ganganagar was held on February 17. Com. Vimal Ranadive was the chief guest who spoke of the danger of war and of the imperialist war designs. She exhorted the women to struggle for peace. Sumitra Swami presented the report. The participants spoke of the growing atrocities on women, on rising prices and on the anti-people policies of the Government. 150 women attended the conference and a 21 member working committee was elected with Com. Gomti Sakya as President and Com. Durga Swami as secretary.

Suman Sood, Tulsi Devi, Krishnadevi and others also addressed the delegates. At the open session of the conference held at the main square area, Com. Hetram Benewal, Secretary of Dist. CPI(M), Com. Shivcharan Pande, CITU, Bhajan Singh, SFI and Vimal Ranadive addressed the gathering.

Working Women Should Take Up Their Seats Around The Negotiating Table

(From World Trade Union Movement)

Today, when speaking of workers, we often forget the existence of working women. In the last twenty years, women's participation in economic life has risen from 24.2% to 33.7% in North America, 22.7% to 28% in Oceania, 29.3% to 32.2% in Europe. Just because more women are now working does not mean that their financial situation has improved. Pay day is the best indication that the working world is still dominated by men. ILO studies in certain countries reveal that men earn twice as much as women who have the same qualifications and length of service. In the so-called low wage bracket, women are, on the whole, three or four times as numerous as men. The problems affecting women in the workplace and the causes and possible solutions were the subject of a recent ILO survey. Below are some of the principal conclusions of this report.

Segregation in Employment

Working women are usually to be found in a very narrow range of employment and professions, which normally require few skills, is very repetitive monotonous jobs offering minimum job security and career opportunities. Here are some examples:

—A survey carried out in France revealed that women make up half the work force on assembly lines, whilst they represent only 30% of the labour force in corresponding branches;

—according to a poll carried out by the Commission of European Communities 8 million out of 9.2 million part time workers are women. These workers are often the first to be sacked when a company is in financial trouble. Women usually have jobs with few career opportunities and little social insurance cover;

—many women have office jobs, and have mixed views on the advent of new technology. In actual fact, although the introduction of new office technology has made some jobs more interesting and stimulating it has also made many jobs more boring and meaningless. The problem is that, once again, the men usually reap all the advantages and women are shifted to more trying jobs needing lower qualifications.

Two Days Work for One

The number of married working women is constantly rising. The number of working women with children of less than three years old stands at 32% in the Federal Republic of Germany, 43% in France and 80% in the German Democratic Republic. After their day's work these women have to start another day's work at home. Even in Sweden, where the need for a revamp of the traditional family roles caught on fairly early, 51% of women and only 13% of men spend over 20 hours per week on housework and child care, says a poll.

A Vicious Circle

Over recent years many improvements have been made concerning women's employment matters and working conditions. There is still a long way to go, however, especially towards equal wages and promotion. Through membership of a trade union and participation in the democratic process and collective bargaining—fundamental mechanism to improve women's working conditions—women can be involved in decision making concerning new ways of reducing discrimination at work, stresses the report.

Take, for example, wage differences. The reasons advanced to justify these are

well known and many countries have adopted ILO recommendations on ways of eliminating this unfair practice. But women should demand that their employers take notice and apply these recommendations at factory or company level. One of the obstacles to this is that women are less involved in trade unions than men. Their trade union involvement is still "limited due to lack of time from looking after a home and a job; high staff turnover in monotonous and menial jobs, and a high proportion of women working part-time or at home", adds the report. Because of all this, specific women's demands such as equal wages, access to genuine training, promotion and the creation of creches are not adequately defended by trade union representatives during the collective bargaining procedure, which could put many women off joining a union or becoming more involved in union work. This is a vicious circle which must be broken with fresh efforts, both from unions and working women themselves who should take up their roles at the negotiating table to defend their legitimate interests.

Greetings by TUI Commerce
to AICCWW on 8th March

This year the International Women's Day will be commemorated in an extremely delicate atmosphere. The resumption of the armament race, sharpened by the development of new American missiles in Western Europe which threatens peace and the whole world with a nuclear disaster, the increased exploitation of working women by transnational corporations, the ever-growing unemployment of women, etc—due to all these, women who are increasingly coming to understand their role in the struggle through their militant participation, constitute an important social force alongside their brothers.

Our TUI and its affiliated and friendly organisations pay warm tributes to all women workers in commerce and assure them that they will do everything in their power to provide an adequate place for them in trade union organisations catering for our industry, in the daily struggle for social progress, for the defence of the common rights and interests of the working class and for the guarantee of the working women's specific interests.

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MORE THAN 6000 NURSES ON STRIKE

The largest strike of 6000 nurses in American history affected 15 hospitals of the 17 in Minneapolis which began in the first week of June, 1984. Doctors had to cancel the operations, transfer patients to suburban hospitals and some patients were sent home.

The managements of the Minneapolis hospitals argued that the growing competition in the health care field made it compulsory on their part to curtail expenses on the labour cost which means retrenchment, or lay off of the nurses. The negotiations failed and the strike began. The nurses state that during last two years already 20 percent full time nurses were curtailed. Now, reducing the working hours, which the managements wanted, means that women do not need full time employment. The strike is continuing very well. Negotiations were to resume shortly. Meanwhile, nurses in several other cities threaten to follow the lead of their Minneapolis sisters.

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Women Engineers—A Myth ?

Madras Correspondent

In Britain, "the engineering industry today (1980) affords only 7% of women's employment. And the 608,000 women in engineering firms fill the lowliest ranks. No less than 93% are employed in the low-skilled categories of clerical, operator and 'other employees', who are often canteen and cleaning workers. In these firms, while no less than 70% of clerical workers are women, only 2% of scientists/technologists are women. 2% is also the female proportion of technicians and for engineering craft occupations only around one third of 1% are women. (*Excerpt from the article 'Caught in the Wheels' by Cynthia Cookburn in 'Marxism Today', November, 1983*)

"Let's talk about the 'male occupations' that Soviet women have mastered. There are more women engineers in the Soviet Union than in the rest of the world combined. While in the USSR one in every three engineers is a women, in Bulgaria a larger proportion, 40% are women. In the German Democratic Republic, every third chief engineer, chief economist and enterprise director is a woman.

"Equal rights for women is not only one of the fundamental principles of democracy and respect for human rights, the actual implementation of this equality is also a fundamental condition for the overall progress of society as a whole, and for the development of each individual woman. The history of the Soviet Union and other Socialist countries, where discrimination against women no longer exists in any form, is concrete proof of this fact. Equal rights for women depend on many concrete economic and social conditions. But undoubtedly the most important factor is the implementation of Socialist changes in the country". (*Excerpts from N. Vishneva-Sarafanova's "Soviet*

Women—A Portrait", Progress Publishers, Moscow).

Equal Pay, But Also Equal Opportunities !

In UK, "The Equal Pay Act was the result of pressure from the growing number of women in the trade union movement, the demands of the developing women's movement and individual MPs. The Trade Union Congress was forced, by the end of the 1960's to put real pressure on the government for legislation that would make it unlawful to pay women less than men. When the Equal Pay Act was passed in 1970, manual full-time women's earnings were half of men's.

"But the Act was drafted so as to have a very limited effect. It deals only with situations where women and men are doing the same or similar jobs, or where there has been a job evaluation scheme that has valued them as the same (many of these schemes are themselves discriminatory). Reality is somewhat different. A study published by the Department of Employment in 1980 showed that 45% of women and 75% of men are in jobs that are totally segregated. The Equal Pay Act does not therefore deal with the real problems of women's low pay and job segregation. By 1982, manual full-time women's earnings were still only two thirds of men's." (*Excerpt from 'Focus' in "Marxism Today", October, 1983*) The point at issue is thus not only equal pay for women doing similar jobs as men, but to demand *equal opportunities* for entering higher paid professions currently monopolised by men. A major component of democracy is availability of equal opportunities to women to acquire professional and technical skills, which alone can put an end to the job segregation referred to above.

No Empty Promises—Give Us Our Due

This is the election year. Once again the ruling party is trying its best to create illusion among the masses. Every alternate day, women are promised employment, creches, increased number of ICDS schemes and so on and so forth by the Ruling Party in the 7th five year plan. Over two lakh children, including those of the weaker sections in the rural, tribal and slum areas will be covered under the "creche for the children of working and ailing mothers"—says the Central Social Welfare Board in 1984-85, a sum of Rs. 395 lakhs was provided under this programme as against Rs. 78.91 lakhs in the year 1979-80. The number of creche units in 1984-85 would exceed 8,000, benefitting more than 2 lakhs, the official press release in Delhi announced on 30th June 1984. The CSWB also announced programmes for rural women, training in public co-operation, implimentation of family welfare motivational camps, and family counselling centres. The Government has increased the number of ICDS projects to 1003 where the children and women will be benefited with food, health services for women, etc. As per the report, ICDS services were being provided by 46,034 women workers assisted by a helper each in Anganwadi centres, during 1983. As far as the facts of the creches, Anganwadi etc. go, the actual beneficiaries will tell as exactly as to how much they have been benefitted by the schemes. Our own sources viz. those who are working in Anganwadi and creches, convey a different story altogether. It is true that some of the projects under ICDS do work sincerely, such as the 79 projects under the West Bengal left front Govt. under the Ministry of Welfare, have done good work, trained women and employed them who are doing good work in rural areas. In Bhatpara in 24 Pargana Dist. for instance in 1981-83, 111 projects of ICDS were

sanctioned, 101 women were selected and all the 101 were trained. From the inception of the scheme, the projects were expanded from 2 areas to 800 areas. We do not have full information about the actual functioning of these schemes from other stages. Whatever little information that has reached, shows a different picture.

The teachers in Anganwadi under Delhi Administration once brought the chaotic conditions of the school and women teachers to the notice of the Co-ordination Committee. The women who have been trained have to singly conduct classes of 25 children ranging from 3 to 16 years from 9 A. M. to 1 P. M. for which they are paid only Rs. 150/- and again take adult literacy classes for 10-15 women from 1 to 3 in the afternoon for which they secure an additional Rs. 50/-. The teachers and helpers do not get the facilities accorded to other schools. The helpers who work for the same number of hours are just paid Rs. 50/- per month. They are sometimes made to sign blank papers under pressure and forced to leave their jobs. This is only one instance where the conditions of teachers and helpers are bad. The other schools are too not exceptions. All these boil down to a scheme of part time employment with a mere pittance as wages. Now let us examine what is the reality.

The Reality-Displacement Of Jobs

In a reply to a starred question, No. 242 in Loksabha on 13th March 1984, on women's employment, the Ministry paid emphasis to promote the additional employment of women under the scheme "such as public distribution system, rural godowns food dairy development and social forestry". It was also said that, "there was also emphasis on promotion of self-employment among women and modernisation of tradi-

tional occupations of women such as spinning and weaving, match making, coir, cashew, rural marketing, agriculture, animal husbandry, fishery, etc..." One is unable to understand from the statement what exactly the Government wishes to do with the self-employment in all these spheres. But the above statement makes one thing very clear that they would go for "modernisation of traditional occupation of women". Already the modernisation of departments in Textile and Jute, mechanised loading and unloading in coal mines, and tobacco, threw out a considerable number of women to starvation. There is going to be mechanisation in match making industry according to reliable sources. Women workers in Coir Industry in Kerala threatened to break the machines when the Board attempted to introduce them. All the items mentioned above are the ones, where majority of women workers are employed and therefore rightly they are apprehensive about their fate if the modernisation is introduced without any alternative employment.

The displacement of women workers started from 1850 due to technological changes, after the introduction of legislations like Equal Remuneration and Maternity Benefit Acts, which continues unabated. Between 1971-1981 cotton handlooms were replaced by power looms, the number displaced being 13.86 lakhs, the majority among whom were women. From the report of the Commerce Ministry 1980, this regularisation of power looms was against the Government policies. But it was done.

The number of women job seekers increased from 22 lakhs in 1981 to 30 lakhs in 1982. Though the Government may be pleased itself with the small growth in women's employment in organised sector which is 29.84 thousands in 1983 as against 27.02 thousands in the year 1980, in fact, the lakhs of women entering in the labour market will conclusively prove the worsening situation faced by working women in future.

The ruling Congress party is fully aware about the discontent among women who can not be employed on the skilled jobs because of lack of training facilities. There is a blatant discrimination while occupations are being chosen. Women are given training only in garment, electronics, needlework, embroidery and so on. That is how the question of training facilities for women acquires importance. The Govt. recently announced "New Vocational Training Programmes for women". (Statesman, 29th, February 1984.) The women's organisations and other interested organisation have raised their voice against this blatant discrimination which prevents women getting skilled jobs, and have to be satisfied with low paid, part time jobs of whatever nature they may be. Government knows this very well and accepts the fact. What is this "New vocational training programme" announced by the Government? "These include skill training in new areas, staff development and income-generation non formal programme". The explanation given further was "staff development programmes would help them in extension work, audio-visuals management evolution and report drafting, decision making and project monitoring". All these ideas, we are sure, will go over the heads of the ordinary women, unless explained in detail. It is beyond our capacity to understand as to how a woman, that too a woman worker can be trained for report drafting, decision making and so on. Even for educated women, it will take years to get trained for audio-visuals management evolution, etc. What about the stipend for that period and the guarantee of jobs. These are some of the relevant questions for those 30 lakh women job seekers on the employment register.

The explanation for Trainees' development programme was the following—"they would relate to home management, nutrition population, education and entrepreneurship".

The Government made it clear that the programmes of vocational training offer, "training courses at basic and advanced levels of skills in electronics, secretarial practices, embroidery and needle crafts, hair and skin care, dress making and the like..." Women are already employed on a large scale in electronics, assembling parts, needle crafts and embroideries. Are they going to be provided advanced skills in electronics, and what is that? Big words, and promises do not help to get an employment for the needy.

Another scheme for women's employment has been published. "The Khadi and Village Industries Commission trains women in Khadi Industry, processing of cereals, pulses, fibre, cane and bamboo work." A number of women SEWA and others are doing this sort of work. A few women are employed with low wages. The organisers are dependent on the market which is already shrunk. Women do this sort of work at home. If they expect some better skilled jobs which earn more, they will be happy.

Now as for the "Self-employment scheme" talked about time to time, as the only solution on the unemployment problem, the report which appeared in Patriot dated 20-5-84 under the heading "Job Scheme in Gujarat a Hoax", is revealing. The report states: "The needy have been left out and the greedy have lapped up all the cream with the active connivance of politicians and bankers!" What more criticism on the scheme is required? It further says: "the ambitious programme of the Prime Minister of giving loans to the educated unemployed did in fact achieve its targets. It educated the unscrupulous elements in the art of defrauding the banks". The directorate of cottage Industries, Mr. Y.M. Maru says that between September 1983 and March 1984 Rs. 15.42 crores were disbursed to 10,497 beneficiaries out of a total of one

lakh applicants. "According to reliable sources, only 6200 applicants actually received the loans, 63 percent of the applicants were bogus and received loans from more than one bank and at times for the same purpose". And there was so much pressure on the bankers from the "above" to achieve the target! The way the things are moving in Congress ruled states with regard to the welfare schemes, bank loans for self-employment, etc, the above report is not at all an exaggeration, but reveals what is happening.

Empty Promises

The 6th plan promised working women's hostels, housing, hospitals, medical services, etc. How many hostels have come up for working women who need them badly, when they are transferred from one place to other, and the security of women is involved?

The Congress rulers, especially the woman Prime Minister is appealing to the backward sections like Harijans and Tribals, and women in particular, in the coming General Elections. One of the main question debated is employment for women. While displacement of women workers from traditional sphere of employment is on the increase, the proposed scheme offers part-time employment with a pittance as wages evading the basic question of right to work and unemployment benefit. The women themselves must mobilise on this basic question and demand (1) total ban on retrenchment, (2) create more opportunities of employment for women, (3) training facilities with stipend in all occupations without exception and (4) unemployment benefit. □

Second Janwadi Mahila Samity Conference of Delhi

—Rita Karat

The Janwadi Mahila Samity, Delhi held its Second State Conference on June 29 and 30 at the Ashoklata Jain Hall named after its first President. The 214 delegates who attended the Conference deeply grieved Ashoklata's absence but at the end of the Conference they were no doubt consoled by the fact that the organisation of which she was a founder member had undoubtedly moved forward on the path chartered by her. For the organisation of and deliberations at the Conference showed a marked improvement in the discipline of the women attending the Conference with attention to the speeches made and also demonstrated the confidence with which they spoke.

The Conference was preceded by preparations by the units throughout Delhi and Faridabad. General Body Meetings were held in all the areas and delegates were elected. In some areas house to house collection was made, in others street plays by Jana Natya Manch were organised as part of the Conference campaign. For the first time, in many areas women themselves formed groups and pasted posters. It was perhaps because of the preparation that went on before the Conference that the delegate attendance was cent per cent. In fact when the State Committee had proposed a two day Conference some were sceptical as to how many delegates would attend the second day—in fact the attendance on the second day was only marginally less. Another first attempt made this time was the organisation of a creche. This also had a positive impact on the Conference deliberations because usually the children make such a din that it is difficult for the mothers to concentrate.

The Conference began with the hoisting of the flag by Com. Vimal Ranadive, Vice-

President of the AIDWA who along with Com. Kanak Mukherjee, also Vice-President of the AIDWA led the delegates in paying homage at the martyrs' column. This was followed by revolutionary songs by Parcham. The Presidium consisting of Ranjana Nirula, Kalindi Deshpande, Kamla, Lilavati and Kalavati was then elected. The Conference passed condolence resolutions and paid homage to the memory of Coms. Promod Dasgupta, Desraj Chaddha, AIDWA EC member Shipra Bhowmick and its own President, Ashoklata Jain. Com. Kanak Mukherjee then made the inaugural speech in which she laid stress on the organisation of a strong women's movement as part of the larger democratic movement of the workers and peasants and other toiling sections of the people. Her speech was punctuated with enthusiastic applause from the delegates and invitees. The inaugural session was concluded with a most moving ceremony in which two young girls from economically deprived families were handed scholarships for Class IX and X by the Ashoklata Jain Memorial Committee. On the occasion Dr. Moonis Raza, Ashoka's teacher in JNU and Dr. Veena Mazumdar who are both members of the Scholarship Committee, spoke.

The delegate session then started with the presentation of the report by Rita Karat. The report detailed the condition in Delhi and the issues which have come up in the last two years and the organisation's perspective on them. It included an issue-wise report of the struggles launched and noted that there was hardly a single month in the last two years when there was no programme. It also included a detailed report on organisation pointing out the positive developments and also the weaknesses.

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Women Fight Against Dowry Deaths

—Damayanti Parikh, Ahmedabad.

On the burning issues such as dowry deaths, rape and other atrocities on women, price rise, unemployment and against closures and lockouts, the state unit of All India Democratic Women's Association has been holding mohalla meetings in Ahmedabad. Chatur Bahen, Asha Bahen, Nurjhan Bahen, Draupadi Bahen, Rajkumari and Damayanti have been addressing these meetings and campaigning against these evils of the capitalist system of society. It is to be noted that through these meetings influence of AIDWA is increasing which is relevant from the increasing membership of the Association.

Yet another dowry victim

Rita, daughter of Purshottam Pal Karshan Bhai Chowhan of Ram Rajyanagar has been burnt to death on 4 May 1984 at Ambikanagar by her in-laws. Coming to know about this barbarous killing from Rita's parents, the Democratic Women's Association and DYFI organised a mass meeting on 20th May at Ambikanagar which was attended by thousands of people including women. The meeting was addressed by Damayanti, Chatur Bahen and Draupadi Bahen of AIDWA and B. Paneer and Lakshman Bhai Patanbaria of DYFI. Speakers criticised the Government for failure in preventing dowry deaths and punishing the culprits. A resolution was adopted against the Dowry Act, its inadequacies and copy was sent to the Chief Minister.

Another incident of dowry death was reported from Bapunagar, Morar Chowk. A delegation of the State AIDWA met the Home Minister of Gujarat on the issue and handed over a memorandum and demanded punishment of the culprits immediately. No step has yet been taken by the Government.

An attempt was made to rape a harijan woman at Padand Gaon. On being informed, the Joint Mahila Morcha met the Police Commissioner and the Home Minister who immediately made an enquiry and the culprit was arrested.

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Twenty four delegates spoke on the report.

The majority of these were women who only 4 years ago were confined to silent domestic drudgery—and here they were, one after another coming up to speak not only of their own experiences but to generalise on these experiences and reach certain conclusions, mainly connected with the role of the Congress (I) and the need for organisation and struggle.

The point to be noted is that in comparison with the previous Conference the level of discussion and interest of the delegates was much better. This should be seen in the background of the composition of the delegates. The Credentials Committee report presented by Babli Gupta showed that the overwhelming majority of the delegates were from the working class, were under 35 and married. Two-thirds were either completely deprived of formal education or had studied only upto Class IV and V. 40 were employed, although a large number said they required employment.

The Conference passed resolutions on peace, national integration, for more employment opportunities for women and demanding implementation of the Joint Select Committee's recommendations for amendment to the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961.

Greetings to the Conference were made by the CPI (M), Delhi Committee Secretary, Com. Prakash Karat, Chacha Shadiram, President of Delhi CITU; by Com. Subodh Verma, Secretary of Delhi SFI and Com. Pushpinder Singh, Secretary of Democratic Teachers' Front.

The concluding address was made by Com. Vimal Ranadive who inspired the delegates with the All India picture she gave of the struggles being fought by women under the banner of the AIDWA, the largest women's organisation in the country.

The Conference elected a 25 member State Committee with nine office-bearers with Indu Agnihotri as President and Rita Karat as General Secretary.

At the Conclusion of the Conference Jan Natya Manch staged a play for the delegates.