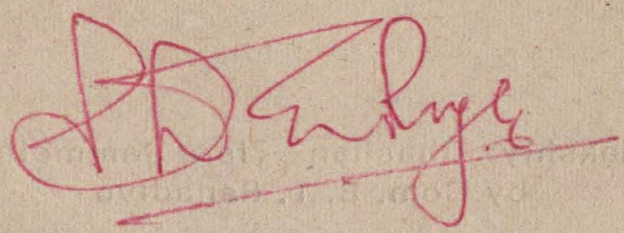


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NEW SITUATION AND THE WORKING CLASS



B. T. RANADIVE
President CITU.

Speech Delivered in the General Council Meeting
Calcutta: 18-21 August 1977.



A CITU PUBLICATION.

MP-R
CEN.R

Price Re. 1/-

Centre Of Indian Trade Unions

172 Lenin Sarani,
Calcutta-13.

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New situation and the Working Class

Comrades,

Our General Council is meeting after an interval of two years. We were faced with the emergency rule immediately after the Bombay Session of the CITU. It was not possible to convene a general council session under the circumstances and the Working Committee could meet only twice during this long period.

With the lifting of the Emergency our unions and the working class were engaged in the all important electoral and political battle. The delay in convening the council meeting was due to circumstances over which we had no control.

Comrades, you will join me in paying tribute to the memory of our Comrade A. K. Gopalan who passed away in March this year. His death has removed from our midst a stalwart revolutionary figure, a person who had no life apart from the life and struggle of the masses. It will take years to fill the void created by his death. The kisan movement which he led personally for years has lost its tallest and the most beloved figure. No less is the loss of our trade union movement which counted on his help in times of acute struggle and crisis. In him the CPI(M) has lost its most beloved mass leader.

Comrades, I offer my tribute to the memory of those who were martyred during the emergency rule.

Rajan & Vijayan of Kerala and Snehlata of Karnataka tortured & killed by the police stand witnesses to the ghastly murderous regime of the emergency period. Several others died in jails due to inhuman treatment. The life of our Comrade Bhairav Bharti was extinguished by a callous administration which denied him medical treatment in time.

Comrades, in several states our CITU cadres had to face heavy and wholesale repression. In Rajasthan entire cadre of CITU in factories was rounded up on the first day of the emergency. Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal saw a large number of arrests and many leading cadres had to go under ground.

I welcome all our fighting cadres and leaders back to the fighting front. They have added to the prestige of the CITU and helped in deepening the loyalty of the working class to our organisation.

New Situation

Comrades, the defeat of the forces of authoritarianism, of the imposters who imposed the emergency rule, creates a new situation which our CITU and its affiliated unions must take note of.

The Working Class which along with the people had lost all its trade union and democratic rights, with strikes and meetings banned, and even union committee meetings prohibited has after the elections regained partially at least its rights and is in a much more favourable position to defend its interests. This change in the situation—the qualitative change from complete suppression of all rights, should not be under-estimated. Without it, as the experience of the emergency-struggle shows, it is

next to impossible to defend ourselves. This is a victory which the working class has gained along with the people and it has to be consolidated and expanded.

The Janata Government

The Janata Government has taken a number of important steps against the consequences of the emergency rule ; the lifting of the emergency, the restoration of the freedom of the press, the release of large number of political prisoners constitute important steps towards demolition of the authoritarian structure. But the task is half-done. The MISA still disfigures the Statute Book. Large number of political prisoners are not yet released. The MISA was used in Kashmir to gain an electoral advantage. The 42nd Amendment Act is yet to be repealed. The criminals who unleashed so much repression against the people, at whose behest not only tens of thousands were jailed, but many were murdered in cold blood are not yet brought to book. Instead of quick trials prolonged inquiries are ordered. Such elaborate enquiries are generally ordered when the authorities do not intend to punish the criminals. To put Indira Gandhi, her son and the members of the caucus on trial must be regarded as an important part of the fight to demolish the forces of authoritarianism.

Demand Political Changes

The trade union movement, our CITU and its unions must demand not only complete restoration of democratic rights but also their further expansion to prevent a repetition of the 1975 events. Article 352 of the Constitution empowering the President to

declare emergency should be repealed ; the right to recall should be embodied in the Constitution to assert the supremacy of the people over the Parliament and the elected representatives ; steps should be taken to see that the 'Fundamental Rights' of the people are put beyond the mischief of any political party or Government and that no one is allowed to tamper with the distribution of power among the different agencies of the Government under the Constitution. The concentration of power in the hands of the Central Government should be drastically reduced and wider power for the States should be given and their autonomy should be strengthened. Proportional representation, reduction of voting age, removal of right to property from the list of Fundamental Rights and enshrining the right to work and living wage in the Constitution must be ensured.

Without these the fight against authoritarian dictatorship will not be complete and it cannot be uprooted from its soil.

Our trade unions must ponder over the fact that the provision of the 'Fundamental Rights' under the Constitution proved illusory and the rights were just withdrawn without any ceremony. It once again proves the historic truth that rights provided under a bourgeois class constitution are unable to protect the working class and the people when they become inconvenient and dangerous to the ruling classes. Only the struggle of democratic forces can defeat their erosion. The constitutional declarations have proved to be deceptive. That is why changes in the Constitution basically shifting the balance in favour of the working class and the people are necessary.

Democracy Vs. Dictatorship

The working class and the trade union movement have to understand that the attempt to establish dictatorship was not an accidental phenomenon. International experience teaches us that the trend towards dictatorship is inevitable under bourgeois democracy and that on every occasion when the economic situation gets beyond control, the capitalist ruling class—the monopolists—attempts to resort to open dictatorship.

The defeat of the Congress at the Centre and the States has put a temporary halt to this trend. The victory of the opposition, of the Janata, the Left alliance in West Bengal and other parties opposed to the Congress open the way to undoing the mischief of the 19 months of emergency.

But the elections have not ended the domination of vested interests nor has it finally settled the question of democracy vs. dictatorship.

In fact, the question cannot be settled unless the monopolists, the big capitalists and landlords are deposed from their economic power. Democracy is not safe unless the grip of foreign monopoly capital over Indian economy is removed. Unless the people and the working class are able to control their economic life by socialisation of the means of production, the issue between democracy and dictatorship will not be finally settled.

Nevertheless, the defeat of the Congress Party, the victory of the democratic forces, the formation of the Janata Party Governments and the Left Government headed by the CPI(M) in West Bengal place the

people in a highly favourable position to deal vital blows at the forces of authoritarianism.

However, the working class, the trade union movement and the people cannot relax their struggle against the forces of dictatorship leaving it to the Governments. The coming months must see a constant and intensive battle to root out the consequences of emergency and one-Party dictatorship and expand democracy on the basis of the programme given above.

Trade Union unity hence means cementing the forces of all unions, all central organisations of workers and employees to carry on a fight for expansion of democracy and rooting out the forces of dictatorship. It means fight against the Congress caucus, against those who compromise with it, against a policy of slowing down the process of democratic advance. The trade unions must put their combined might to press forward this struggle and provide a solid class basis, a solid foundation for developing the unity of the left and democratic forces in the country which can consistently carry forward this struggle.

Our CITU must undertake common campaigns for these political objectives so that the struggle is not allowed to relax. Without our initiating such campaigns and actions, the battle against the authoritarian forces will not be continued with vigour and there will be a tendency to rely on the government to do the job of the popular movement.

Offensive against the workers

Taking advantage of the emergency the employers resorted to widespread closures, lockouts, retrench-

ments, and lay-offs. More than five lakh workers lost their jobs for some period or other and several thousands lost them permanently.

The number of registered unemployed reached 10 million. The workers could not resort to any action without threat of legal reprisals.

The employers at the same time increased work-load, intensified labour and made the working day a day of agony, of toil and sweating. Heavy work was extracted from the workers in private and public concerns alike. The production per miner in coal mines was raised by 30 to 40 per cent. Similarly, work-load was increased in cotton textile and jute industries. In the latter thousands of workers were retrenched while the bhagawala system was introduced to extract maximum work with minimum pay.

The Congress Government surpassed the private employers in its attack. It introduced the Compulsory Deposit Scheme to rob the workers of the increased D. A. and wage ; it amended the Bonus Act to deprive them of their legitimate share. It shamelessly went back on the agreement with the LIC employees to deprive them of their bonus. It saw to it that all wage increases were frozen. Its officials manipulated the cost of living indices to cheat the workers of their D. A. instalments due under previous agreements. It besides retrenched, retired and dismissed thousands of Central and State employees-carrying on a political vendetta against union leaders and members. It threw out of job thousands of Port and Dock workers in Calcutta, Goa and other ports.

At the same time, all the claims made about the gains of the emergency turned out to be false. The

bankrupt Government could not control prices which continued to remain at the high level and started rising again from March 1976.

Behind the back of the Indian people, protected by press censorship, the Congress Government invited the multinationals to "stabilise" the stagging economy. It offered them exploitation of cheap Indian labour and high profits and agreed to have junior partnership for Indians

Never before did the working class and the people suffer so much. Never before was the peasant taxed so much, his land and effects so freely sold for realising his debts. Never before was he humiliated and treated like cattle when he was forced to undergo compulsory sterilisation.

This was how the burdens of the crisis were thrown on the common man.

In contrast to these burdens on the people, the monopolists, big capitalists and landlords thrived during the emergency and during the years preceding the emergency. The assets of Birla, Tata, Mafatlal and other monopolists increased rapidly during these years when the people were passing through excruciating misery.

The Economic Crisis

Comrades, these were the results of the deep-rooted economic crisis that has beset the Indian Society under the so called mixed economy.

During 1975—76, one million tonnes of steel and 10 million tonnes of coal had piled up for want of internal demand. When the workers raised their

productivity and produced more there was no one to buy. Fifteen million tonnes of foodgrains were stored in Government godowns, but it could not be said that the mass of poor peasants and agricultural workers, masses of city urban poor were able to have two square meals a day. In fact the overall rate of consumption was going down. Once more those who produced more were unable to feed themselves with the product of their labour. The jute, the cotton textile, the handlooms employing lakhs of workers and a number of other industries, were in doldrums. The number of sick cotton mills exceeded 100 and they were followed by sick tea gardens, sick jute mills and sick engineering concerns. These were the gains of the emergency.

The large increase in agricultural production in 1975-76 did not benefit the mass of peasants nor did it expand the market for industrial goods—for consumer goods in rural areas. "The demand for these consumer goods—which could reasonably have been expected to find markets in the rural sector of the economy did not increase appreciably. While hopes were high that substantial increase in agricultural production would give an impetus to rural demand for say, textiles, the fall of agricultural prices at farm level seems to have acted as an inhibiting factor. The failure of textile prices to fall in spite of the sharp decline in the cotton prices in 1974-75—seems to have been a contributing factor. In the event production of cotton cloth fell down by 11 per cent in 1975-76".

This speaks volumes for the class bias of Congress policies. The food grains producer who was blessed with a record harvest was defrauded by lower prices with the result that he could not purchase the esti-

mated quantity of cloth. The procurement policy of the Congress Government was manipulated to force him to sell his stock at the lowest price to the trader.

And it is on the basis of this defrauding that the Congress could boast of a partial fall in prices during 1975-76 and claim success for its policies. The so called check to rising prices was based on the ruination of the peasant masses.

Crisis Continues

The crisis conditions continued in 1976-77 inflicting unbearable sufferings on the people. The class policies of the Congress Government made the workers, employees and peasants the scapegoats of the crisis. The Economic Survey indicates an industrial growth rate of 10.6 per cent for 1976-77 as compared with 6.1 per cent in 1975-76. But increased production in both years did not lead to increased purchases and exchanges, but accumulation of stocks. More than a million tonnes of steel lay accumulated in stock-yards which are overful with none to buy.

The Government was forced to export steel at fantastically low prices incurring heavy losses to the country. At one time there were huge accumulations of coal also. Textile, engineering and various other industries are now heavily dependent on foreign markets. Despite this, in most of the industries, substantial production capacity lies unutilised. The Survey itself speaks about growth in inventories of industrial products which were faced with demand recession such as steel, fertilisers, coal, engineering goods, chemical, cement, paper and textiles.

The increased production in many industries does not really reflect the growth of the internal market and is not an indication of an upward trend in the economy.

Simultaneously many important and vital industries not only do not show any rising trend, but show a decline. It has been already mentioned that cotton textile production fell by 11 per cent in 1975-76. In 1976-77 also the same trend continued. "In contrast to this emerging trend in production in 1976-77, the incidence of sickness among industrial undertakings has persisted. In particular in major industries like cotton textiles, jute textiles, sugar and engineering, a significant number of units faced considerable difficulties resulting in closures. Some of the industries had to carry unduly high levels of inventories." The figures of accumulated stocks, however, are not given in the Survey though earlier surveys used to give them. But according to the Chairman of Coal India Ltd. Lt. Gen. Garewal, the total pit-head stock of coal mounted upto 13.5 million tonnes on March 31, 1977.

Sufferings of Workers

This bald statement does not convey the depth of the crisis. During 1975-76 and 1976-77 several lakhs of employed workers had to put up with permanent or temporary loss of jobs. Thousands of jute workers were permanently retrenched and increased workload was imposed on those at the job. There was more than 10 per cent retrenchment in the nationalised textile sector, large numbers were retrenched by the coal mining authority. Besides these, hundreds of concerns, including small industrial concerns, were permanently closed down.

Comrades,

In Kerala, during the emergency, the economic and unemployment situation worsened beyond measures. The coir, cashewnut, the bidi and handloom industries threw out thousands out of work. The acute unemployment situation led to illegal emigration, thousands seeking jobs abroad on the lowest pittance, virtually accepting the status of bonded labour.

Today also thousands of coir workers are totally or partially unemployed. The cashew nut workers are in the same position finding perhaps work for only 80 days in a year. The handloom workers are in distress, with the problem of unemployment facing the mass of workers.

The wretched coalition government would not lift its finger to give relief to the workers. Much relief can be given if only the government undertakes monopoly procurement of coir husk, and ensures its equitable distribution. But this would affect the enormous profits of the merchants. How can the coalition agree to this ?

The economic crisis and the capitalist path have now created a dangerous situation for the entire country. They have made the country growingly dependent on western countries and the markets provided by them.

Reliance on Exports

The only way out is exports and more exports-even when your own people are starving, naked, without house and shelter. The capitalist economy can survive only if you produce cloth, sugar, fish, etc.

in huge quantities for foreign markets, if you utilise your skill, engineering, technical, in electronics, in the service of foreign paymasters rather than your own people. Exports have become the basis of survival. The figures of rising exports were paraded by the Congress Government as great Indian achievements, betokening to the maturity of India as an industrialised country. On the contrary, they are a witness to the country's inability to consume the products of its own labour, due to poverty, to the dependence of the economy on the Western Capitalist markets. They are not the triumphs of a flourishing economy selling abroad to enrich its own people, its economic life. They represent deprivation and denial to the mass to keep the capitalist economy going.

Competitive Export

This makes the economy vulnerable to the ups and downs of the capitalist market and enables it to exercise dominating influence on the Indian economy. It further means that Indian exports must be competitive on the old market i.e. they must be produced or priced as cheap as those countries with the advanced technique, or with the low price goods of countries under the influence of imperialist countries—all of which means in the end the price of labour must be cut down. A large number of our goods have been often sold on the world market below the cost of production - steel for instance - and the country has to pay huge subsidies to the exporting capitalists amounting to crores of rupees. In 1975-76 the subsidy according to the revised estimates amounted to Rs. 274 crores, In 1976-77 it increased to Rs. 300 crores. The Janata Government has continued the subsidy following in the footsteps of the Congress Government.

The working class and the people have to bear this huge burden and pay the price of the crisis and finance the dependence of the economy on the Western capitalist countries. The working class is also faced with further attacks on its living standards.

Notwithstanding some reassuring statements from Mr. Mohan Dharia, the Commerce Minister, the Janata Party Government is unable to strike a new path. The Finance Minister Patel declared in his Budget speech : ".....It is necessary that exports should continue to increase at the rate they have been growing in the past two years. Such an increase is essential for acquiring greater manoeuverability with regard to economic management. Government is committed to providing a stable policy from the conducive to continued expansion of our exports".

Certain important changes in the policy and status of Indian big capitalists, follow from its emphasis on exports. It is in the first place leading to further dependence of the country on the west, a greater integration of our economy with the capitalist market. Secondly, this is already leading to the demand for further concessions from foreign multinational companies and private foreign capital and their acceptance by the Government. Thirdly, it is leading to relaxation of controls over Indian big capital, further concessions to the private sector, the collapse of the anti-monopoly Acts ; opening of new avenues to the monopolists and big houses, export subsidies to the export houses and so on.

Above all, in the desperate effort to capture foreign markets, this is leading to joint ventures

abroad, export of capital, sub-contracting with foreign monopoly firms in third world countries. This is creating new economic interests, new economic allies. The content of the entire process, of exports - imports, of offering concessions at home and seeking them abroad, is the striving for collaboration and partnership with foreign monopoly capital.

These are very serious developments endangering the independence of the economy, creating new vested interests in alliance with foreign capital.

Danger of increased exploitation

At the same time these developments directly affect labour, because the main condition of partnership in joint ventures - in India and abroad - is supply of cheap labour and its guarantee. This was freely promised by Indian capitalists and the Congress Government. Further influx of foreign capital in the country or joint ventures abroad only promise accentuated exploitation of Indian labour and growing opposition to improvement in living standards.

Already tens of thousands of Indian workers are being lured abroad by Indian contractors on low wages, to be exploited there like bonded labour. The present Government has not taken steps to stop this exploitation and looks upon it as one of the ways of adding to the foreign exchange of the country.

A deep game

Comrades, we must understand the deep game of the multi-nationals in the present situation. The Congress Government made a show of controlling foreign capital by laying down certain conditions and

calling for majority of shares in Indian hands. But such conditions do not affect the running of the concerns. For by controlling a majority of equity shares in one country the local bourgeoisie is not in a position to control or restrict the activities of the huge multinational machine - a machine which cannot be controlled even by the powerful USA Government. Acceptance of the condition of the majority of equity shares only means sop to the national feelings in underdeveloped countries and a bait to the local bourgeoisie.

More of multi-nations

There are now more vigorous efforts to woo the multi-nations. There are proposals to invite multi-nations to start a steel plant with six million ton capacity, employing only two to three thousand workers. There are similar proposals about establishing an aluminium plant with their help. Attempts are afoot to enlist collaboration of West Germany and Japanese multi-nationals for projects connected with the Bokaro Steel. Besides there are proposals that multinationals should start giant concerns and export the entire product. This, it is said, will give foreign exchange to India for nothing and add to employment. In reality this is a proposal to loot both Indian labour and foreign markets.

Already in our country the multinationals are oppressing our people and refuse to accept either the trade union rights of the workers or obey the instructions of the Government. The multinational drug companies, Pfizer, Glaxo have unleashed victimisation of trade union leaders, ordered lock-outs to starve the workers, defying the Government and public opinion.

Fight the entry of Multinationals

The stanglehold of multinations means danger to the independence of the country, support to forces of reaction and dictatorship in the country and intense exploitation of the working class and the people. Comrades, the C I T U and the entire trade union movement must fight this disastrous policy and demand immediate change.

We must demand an end to the present export policy which makes our jobs and wages dependent on Western capitalist countries and their markets. We must demand an economic policy based on the expansion of the home market, making Indian industry self-reliant. We must unitedly demand a ban on the entry of multinationals in the interests of our people, our country and the working class. We must demand nationalisation of foreign monopoly concerns, of Indian monopoly concerns, if the power of big money to control our economic life is to be broken, if its power to impose economic misery on us is to be done away with.

It must be further realised that there is no escape from the present situation, from un-employment and mass misery unless the land monopoly of the landlords is broken and the peasants and agricultural workers are freed.

End Monopoly domination—Capitalist Path

The experience of the present crisis, of the last decade again tells us that the trade union movement by itself cannot eliminate the basic ills of society unless it champions the cause of the entire society against big money and big landed property. Unemployment, wage reductions, insecurity of jobs are the

inevitable accompaniments of the domination of the monopolists and the capitalist path and the united trade union movement must raise its voice against this domination. The goal of socialism cannot be reached without eliminating the domination of the vested interests and placing the means of production in the hands of society.

Our Weaknesses

Comrades, here I must refer to a basic weakness of our trade union movement. Our trade unions start replying to the offensive of the employers only when it reaches the factory, when it is at the stage of final assault. At the preparatory stage, when the policies are being decided, when full preparations are being made, the movement generally does not take notice of them or at best lodges some verbal protest. The attack becomes real only when it reaches the factory or industry, exhibiting the level of factory consciousness.

Besides the trade unions hardly intervene, utilising their strength when official policies are on the anvil, policies which affect the jobs and living conditions of the workers and employees. These policies decide the fate of the workers behind their backs and at best the trade union movement fights the final effects of these measures. Official policies relating to exports, imports, industry, taxation and excise, vitally affect the well being of the workers. But they are generally never discussed before the workers, are hardly opposed and the strength of the labour movement never utilised in time to influence or change them. The role that the State and the Government plays in saving the employers and the capitalist systems is thereby concealed and the workers are

rendered the helpless victims of official policies. This is nothing but the crudest type of factory consciousness, the elementary trade union consciousness.

The trade union movement will not be able to defend the interests of the workers if they remain unperturbed by official policies and do not bring the workers into action to counter them.

We must untidely speak with one voice on such matters. We must take common stand and protect labour's interests when official measures are on the anvil. We must have a common front in conferences and meetings when policies are being discussed. And we must unitedly carry the fight against reactionary policies to the mass of the workers and draw them into active resistance. The united struggle of the trade union movement and the employees' associations is a sufficiently powerful force and the authorities will not ignore it easily. This will raise the trade union consciousness to a higher level and enable the mass of workers to look beyond the factory and day to day grievances.

Left Victory in West Bengal

Comrades, the victory in West Bengal of the Left alliance headed by the CPI (M) constitutes a very important part of the victory of the democratic forces in India. It has its unique features. Here the known Left forces with their Left programme have triumphed over other parties, including the Janata Party, whose local leaders adopted an actionary line. The victory came in the background of five years of ceaseless terror against the people and our CITU unions: you know that offices of three hundred of our

unions were occupied by congress goondas; and thousands were uprooted from their localities.

Persistent fight put up by the CPI - M, CITU Unions and the other Left forces against this terror at last fructified in this electoral victory. It is a victory of those forces whose consolidation on an all - India plane will orientate the nation's policies in a new direction. The West Bengal ministry represents a big triumph of India's Left forces and will be the rallying point for their further consolidation. The workers of West Bengal and our CITU unions have played a key role in securing this victory. A large number of our General Council and Working Committee members have been elected to the Assembly. Our Vice-President Com. Jyoti Basu heads the Ministry. Another Vice President Com. Sudhin Kumar heads the Food Ministry. Our Worknig Committee member Com. Kesto Ghosh heads the Labour Ministry. Our General Council member Com. Md. Amin heads the Transport Ministry and another member Com. Radhika Banerjee heads the Relief and Rehabilitation Ministry. Also our Com. Parimal Mitra holds the Ministry of Forest. We greet them and our M. L. A.'s and wish them success.

The West Bengal Ministry is bound to be our important instrument of fighting the forces of authoritarianism. It has already set the pace by releasing political prisoners, by releasing Naxalites and by assuring the workers and the people that the Ministry will guard their fundamental rights. Its statements about strikes and gheraos stand in sharp contrast with those emanating from other sources. It has taken back all State Government employees, victims of the previous regime.

Notwithstanding the limited power under the

Constitution the Ministry will ceaselessly work to fulfil the demands of the masses, of the workers, peasants and employees with the help of the organised trade union movement, of the CITU, will succeed in overcoming the resistance of the vested interests. Only the combined forces of the people, of the working class and the Ministry will overcome all obstacles and secure relief for the people and the expansion of their democratic rights. The CITU will do everything to see that the workers and the Ministry move in unison to defeat the vested interests and uproot the plan of the agents of authoritarian forces.

Comrades, no contingent of our working class has gone through such fiery ordeal of repression and terror as our West Bengal workers. They kept the flag flying in the midst of terror and expanded the influence of the CITU. And finally they succeeded in defeating the forces of terror and routing them at the polls. We congratulate them for the great victory of theirs.

During these years the steel workers of Durgapur, the workers of Jaya Engineering, the Jute and Engineering Workers have passed through unbearable suffering imposed by victimisation, repression, retrenchment, closures, lock-outs and wage reduction. Today after electoral victory the entire working class is pulsating with new life and vigour to reverse the injustices of the emergency period, to reassert the right to bonus and jobs. The CITU and its unions have to lead the workers in their struggle ; they have to mobilise their full strength to secure their urgent demands. It is at the same time the bounden duty of the working class and our unions to fight and defeat the conspiracies of the caucus agents against

the ministry, against the rule of democracy in West Bengal. We cannot win our immediate demands in isolation from the struggle against the forces of dictatorship. If the latter gain the upper hand both economic demands and freedom to fight for them will be lost. The working class and the trade unions must take a lead in ensuring success for all the measures of the ministry concerning democratic rights and demands of the people. In particular the trade union movement must throw its full weight behind ministerial measures to benefit the peasantry—steps for securing land for the peasantry and wage for the agricultural workers.

Let it be known that without full mobilisation of our strength on every issue vital to us and our people the ministry will not be able to use its power effectively.

Comrades, we consider the victory of "Janata party" as a victory of democratic forces over the forces of authoritarianism. However, we find that the policy declarations and statements of the government fall short of the expectations of the labour movement and are often indistinguishable from the policies of the Congress Government. Ministerial statements often decry strikes and gheraos but maintain silence on the harrowing conditions of the workers on lay offs retrenchment and unemployment. The trade union movement has heartily welcomed the decision to reinstate the railway strikers and those victimised under the MISA. But the Railway Minister has yet to implement the assurance for 10 hours work for Loco employees. The private employers have stubbornly refused to reinstate the workers victimised

under the emergency and even some government departments are yet to implement the decision. The trade union movement welcomed the decision to scrap the CDS but was shocked by the government's refusal to pay in cash instalment due to them under the scheme. It seems that the Janata Party Government abides by the discredited theory so dear to the Congress rulers which holds the workers pay packet responsible for inflation and high prices. This class theory was again disproved during the course of emergency when more than 1500 crores of workers' money was impounded but prices continued to rise. The real cause was the increased money supply in the hands of the exploiting classes—the industrialists, the big capitalists, the traders exporters & landlords. The economic survey presented by the government also tells the same truth and yet the Central Government continues to hug this discredited theory of wages chasing prices. We welcome the recent decision of the government to give cash instalment to the workers. We hope this represents a change in outlook and is not due to certain fortuitous circumstances. We are happy to note that the labour ministry has carried on successful negotiations with the Port and Dock Organisations conceding some of the urgent demands of Port and Dock workers. At the same time we find brutal firing taking place against coal miners in Madhya Pradesh, and the inability of the government to check the closure and lock-out drive of the employers for instance in the Jute industry.

Some official spokesmen and capitalists agents alike concentrate attention on the developing strike-struggle and call for "discipline" but conceal the owner's offensive through lockouts. The government till now has not accepted the

workers' demand for bonus though accepted in the Janata Party manifesto. At the same time the budget made a concession of not less than 200 crores of rupees to the capitalist investors and perhaps a concession of 200 to 300 crores to the exporting capitalists.

Index and Rising Prices

We welcome the appointment of a committee to go into the question of the compilation of the cost of living index but we strongly oppose the attempt to impose a new D.A. formula on the workers and bypass the principle of full neutralisation. We cannot be a party to any formula which automatically imposes a cut in real wage on any section of the workers.

Comrades, we cannot but sharply criticise the inability of the Central Government to control the prices of necessaries of life. Prices of edible oil, tea and several other necessities have gone beyond the means of the common men, causing acute sufferings to the people. All that the people have had till now is appeal to hoarders and god and verbal promises of action. But the prices continue to rise or remain at the same high level undermining the confidence of the people in the Govt. The discredited caucus and its sychophantic followers are lying in wait to stage a come back utilising the failure of the Govt.

Control of prices, capacity to bring them down has become the acid test of the Govt.'s efficiency and sincerety. The same people who voted en mass for the Janata Party are getting impatient and angry every day.

It is true that part of the difficulty arises from the consequence of the policies pursued by the Congress Govt. But the new Government has been elected precisely to remove these consequences. There is however no sign that it is moving in a new direction and laying the foundations for a sound price policy.

On the contrary its own measures and policies and its faulty economic understanding have intensified the price situation and spiralling of prices. Its deficit financing which despite its denial is estimated to amount to more than 1000 crores of rupees, and its export policies have contributed to the present uncontrollable situation. And finally its unwillingness to take over wholesale trade in essential commodities to secure equitable distribution at controlled prices has left the people helpless before the forces of the market.

Though many Janata Party leaders firmly believe in the public sector, there are others who are opposed to interference with the Private Sector. That's why a decisive step to break the wholesalers machinations is not taken and wholesale trade in essentials is not nationalised.

The trade union movement definitely demands taking over of the wholesale trade and calls upon the farseeing elements in the Janata Party to support this demand.

Difficult Situation

Comrades, it will be realised that we are face to face with a difficult situation even though we are able to exercise our democratic rights and carry on our struggle without interference from arbitrary

legislation. The problems of wage rise, adequate D.A., retrenchment, unemployment, lay-offs and work-loads all demand immediate attention. The workers have suffered too much under the emergency and every resistance to these demands has to be overcome quickly. There must be continuous mobilisation of our movement to see that the labour policy of the Janata Govt. does not go against the interests of the workers. We cannot accept any restriction on our right to direct action when the employers continue to attack us.

We call upon the Central Government to fulfill the promise regarding bonus made in the Janata Party's Manifesto. The party has declared before the electorate that bonus is a deferred wage. It must now ensure 8.33% bonus for all, scrap the present Act. The Govt. should assume powers to stop lay-off, retrenchment and reinstate the dismissed workers. The Private employers have not implemented the government directives and they must be compelled to do so. Bilateral wage negotiations should be started immediately, with the Govt. using its full power to secure justice for the workers.

Sufficient finances should be made available to take over sick mills and concerns and run them as nationalised units. In consultation with the trade unions, the Govt. should announce a viable scheme for immediate unemployment relief.

All-in Trade Union Unity

This brings us to the supreme importance of all-in trade union unity. Unless the labour movement exercises its full strength to shape the policy decision of the Govt, it will not succeed in defending

the interest of the workers. The CITU calls upon all Central Trade Union Organisations, all organisations of employees, of central and state Govt. employees and also associations of teachers and professors to join together to press for a common labour policy and safeguard the interests of all sections. The mighty awakening in the trade union movement the great strikes made by the state and central Government employees association which now have the power to move lakhs; the strength shown by the associations of the teachers and professors all show that the trade union movement is a powerful force sufficiently strong to shape the policies of the Govt., to counter all anti-working class laws and defend common interests. It is our desire that all these organisations should immediately come together to take stock of the situation, present a common front on the question of demands and legislation and declare to the employers that the labour movement is one and indivisible. In this common task the only condition we lay down is loyalty to the working class and the agreed demands. We would therefore like to revive the CITU on a much bigger scale and make it all embracing like the historic anti-wage-freeze convention in 1974.

Comrades,

The trade union movement, the CITU and the entire working class cannot forget the role of the INTUC and AITUC leaders during the emergency period. In the most shameless manner the leadership of these two organisations openly supported the emergency, the Congress attacks on the people and the working class, the banning of strikes, and imprisonment of thousands. They acted as the hirelings of the enemies of

the people, of the capitalist class. They agreed to work in the Apex body, agreed to exclude organisations like the CITU which opposed emergency and with verbal formal protests supported all the infamous measures against the working class—denial of bonus, increased work load, lay-offs and retrenchment. Verbal criticism they made, but that was to save their face. But they openly supported all the political measures to suppress the workers' demands.

Revisionism and reformism led to treachery and conspiracy with the ruling party to crush the working class and the people. When we had to leave the AITUC, there were many who perhaps felt a bit hesitant but we knew where the AITUC leaders intended to drag the movement. It is the bounden duty of the CITU to fight these policies while working for the unity of the movement.

The CITU and the trade union movement must unequivocally denounce the atrocities on untouchables—their murders, burnings of their houses and rapes of their women—committed with impunity in the villages. The Belcchi atrocities, have set a wave of horror in the country. These outrages are a continuation of the state of affairs that existed under the thirty years of Congress regime. They were intensified during the emergency, but press censorship prevented the people from knowing about them. Democracy in India will be a farce, a fake, if the untouchable masses are denied not only equality but also the right to live, the right to protection of the law. These outrages often arise because the agricultural labourers coming from this section dare demand more wages, or the peasants dare take possession of the land distributed to them. They are part of the class struggle which

the working class is waging against the landlord oppressors. The upper caste rogues must be defeated and silenced by the might of the mass movement. The Janata Government has the responsibility of taking effective steps and should not content itself with wordy declarations like the Congress Government. It is outrageous that the Bihar Janata Government should have come out with an atrocious account of Belcchi happenings portraying it as a fight among two gangs, thus screening the landlord harijan murderers.

Industrial Relations

Comrades, certain questions again have been raised in recent times after the formation of the Janata Govt. in the centre and we must express our stand in relation to that. The labour ministry has appointed a committee to go into the question of industrial relations. All previous legislations have failed because they mainly concerned themselves with restricting the workers' freedom to strike rather than ensuring the minimum rights and demands. The idea of industrial peace generally meant one sided restriction on the workers movement without guaranteeing them minimum living conditions. If industrial relations are to be amicable, legislation must be based firstly on the understanding that labour is the oppressed party and the weight of the Govt. must be thrown on its side; further there should be effective curbs on the arbitrary power of the capitalist to hire and fire the workers and to dictate economic conditions. Secondly, such legislation to be successful must be based on legal provision for minimum economic conditions like need based wage, violation of which should be met with drastic and severe punishment. Without legally enforcing minimum conditions and living standards, industrial

relations can never be amicable. Besides, it is absolutely necessary that the Govt. should be able to hold the price line and thus remove a perpetual source of discord. In the alternative there must be a binding legal provision for neutralisation of the rise in the cost of living and finally it is necessary that the trade unions should have full freedom of organisation and action without any attempt on the part of legislation to restrict it. Any legislation which adopts the trick of considering the workers and employees as equal partners and putting strikes and lockouts on the same plane is sheer deception and will only aggravate the situation. Unless the legislation deprives the employers of their arbitrary powers of retrenchment, dismissal and suspension, it will be considered to be one sided anti-labour device.

Workers' Participation in Management

The congress Government propagated the idea of workers participation in management as a means of giving equal status to the workers. The pitiful results arising from it are there for all to see. Plant level committees have been hardly established anywhere including the Public Sector. The Private Sector has virtually ignored the entire scheme. The Public Sector could not go beyond the establishment of a few Floor Committees discussing at best only some problems affecting the particular department. On the railways there are hardly any committee worth the name.

If the Janata Government want to go ahead with Workers' Participation it must base itself—entirely on new premises. There must be a desire to invite genuine participation and give equal status to the workers in running the industry. Every aspect of

the industry including its finance, its purchasing policy, raw materials, equipment etc. must be put before the workers and their views sought in final decision. This cannot be achieved just by putting a worker or two on the Board of Directors. There must be equal number of directors on the Board from the workers side and with equal powers.

It is further necessary that the unequal status between the employer, the management and the workers should be removed. The standing orders, the concept of discipline, the arbitrary powers of the management for hiring and firing—all these reduce the worker to the status of a slave and there cannot be equal partnership so long as this status lasts. Besides in the Public Sector the worker is virtually a prisoner with Industrial security force hovering round him.

Finally it is necessary that certain minimum living economic conditions like need based wage should be guaranteed to the worker before he is called upon to contribute his best to running the industry. It is futile to talk about workers' participation with a starving wage and with a status of a slave.

The previous government did not want to change any of the conditions and only talked about workers' participation. In effect its policy amounted to a call for workers' collaboration to intensify their own exploitation and slavery. This is really the meaning of workers' participation when advocated by the capitalists or their government. They do not want the workers to be equal partners in running the industry as a social asset but seek their help to perfect their own exploitation. That is why they are

only keen to discuss how to increase workers' productivity which increases their profits. The CITU rejects in toto the class collaboration of this type and will warn the workers against this type of participation.

Wage and Income Policy

Once again there is a talk about wage and incomes policy. The wage and incomes policy of the Congress Govt. had the aim of reducing the wage bill and was not a policy of bringing down higher incomes in relation to the wages or levelling of wages in relation to higher incomes. The wage and incomes policy to be genuine must have as its aim reduction of the income disparities as between classes, as between higher and lower sections. But the Congress government had no such aim. Its spokesmen busied themselves with the idea of reducing the disparities in wages, that is disparity between worker and worker which meant reducing the wages of those whose earnings were slightly higher than the average. The capitalist class, high salaried sections and others were to be left with their big incomes. The disparity between their income and the workers was not to be reduced. Only the disparity between worker and worker was to be reduced at the expense of those earning above the lowest wage.

A genuine wage and income policy must include, guarantee of need based minimum wage and reduction of income disparities between classes. The Janata Party manifesto states that the wage and income policy should reduce income disparities and bring the ratio of lowest and highest incomes to 1:10. This is sound principle ; Needbased wage and reduction of income disparities between classes must

form the basis of a sound and just wage and incomes policy.

Sick Mills and New Proposals

More than hundred textile mills, and large number of Engineering concerns and Jute Mills have joined the rank of sick mills. This has entailed sufferings and loss of jobs for tens and thousands of workers besides leading to huge wastage of society's resources. This is what private ownership of industry has achieved for the country.

It is the minimum duty of the government to take over and nationalise all these concerns and run them in the Public Sector for the benefit of the society. Any shirking of this responsibility means letting down the people and being a party to inflicting misery on them. It is therefore astonishing to find a Janata Minister saying that the Government will not take over any more sick mills and run them. Some ministers have gone further and asked the workers to run these concerns themselves. This is a cruel joke on the workers who are being called upon to run capitalists concerns dominated by capitalist market and price making. Nobody on behalf of the workers ever claimed that they were better organisers of capitalism than the capitalists themselves. The proposal amounts to making the workers responsible for their own exploitation in the interest of the capitalist economy. It is the duty of the government to nationalise these concerns without any compensation to the big shareholders and run them with the help of the workers. The workers of course will do their best, to help the nationalised concerns but they cannot be asked to run a factory which is at the mercy of the capitalist market. Only the

government can intervene in the market to curb the capitalists and speculators. Similar is the proposal that the the Bhilai workers should set up a cement factory in the workers' sector with the help of the bonus money that they may get. The proposal amounts to confiscation of workers funds for government's manoeuvre against the crisis. These proposals amount to evading government responsibility to manage the economy.

Discarded Suggestions

Suggestions that workers should run the factories in times of crisis or they should contribute share capital and thus enter into partnership with the capitalists have been made from time to time in advanced capitalist Countries and the workers have ridiculed them. No share in equity capital, no partnership will save the workers from wage slavery. It is only when the means of production and distribution are socially owned that the workers will cease to be exploited as a wage slave.

International Solidarity

Before I conclude I would like to draw your attention to one of the most disturbing events of the recent period. During the emergency India was experiencing a wholesale attack against democratic rights and forces of authoritarian dictatorship were enslaving the people. During the period the advanced section of the world working class movement was not only silent but certain sections openly supported the Congress party and described its attack as an attack against the forces of Facism.. Comrades, it is difficult to believe that from the trade unions which express their determination to fight for

peace, democracy and socialism, not a voice of protest was heard against the dictatorship in India. It is doubtful whether even now the truth is being told to the workers in these countries about the torture chambers in India which had nothing to learn from the Chilean torture camps. No doubt the leaders of the AITUC did their best to mislead the international movement, but the responsibility of the latter is no less. We earnestly hope that the trade unions of these countries will re-examine their policies and avoid in future such gross mistakes which weaken and jeopardize our common movement. We on our part will continue to hold firmly the banner of proletarian internationalism to defend the countries of socialism and the world working class movement against the American imperialism and the danger of fascism and never forget the solidarity of the working class of the world.

On behalf of all of you, I greet the working class and people of the socialist countries, the revolutionary working class and people of Vietnam, Kampuchia and Laos, the antiracist liberation fighters of Africa, the freedom fighters of the Arab land and the working class of the advanced capitalist countries engaged in a bitter struggle against unemployment and economic crises.

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