

172, Lenin Sarani, Calcutta - 700013

30.8.75

To
Shri Raghunath Reddy
Minister for Labour
Government of India
New Delhi - 1.

Dear Shri Reddy,

I find from various papers that you have made certain objectionable observations about CITU in the Labour Consultative Committee meeting held in Delhi on 22.8.75. The remarks were made when you explained in reply to Shri Md. Ismail M.P. as to why CITU was not called in the meeting to discuss problems of the working class and to an "Apex Body".

I am not really concerned about the persons whom you have thought fit to invite for the formation of such body, but what is a matter of concern is your alleged remarks about the CITU.

Here I quote from The Economic Times, New Delhi, dt. 23.8.75 "The Minister said that trade unions like Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh and CITU could not be invited to important meetings since they are supporting the right reactionaries. The Government will not allow them to hamper the progressive measures which it had launched".

It is indeed amusing to know that those who stand by the working class and against the vested interests and exploitation are according to you supporters of right reaction and those who betray the interests of the working people and help or acquiesce in imposing burdens on them and in destroying their democratic and trade union rights are progressive. You certainly have your reasons for consulting those organisations which will sign on the dotted line and carry out the behest of the Government particularly during the emergency. But why slander our organisation taking advantage of our difficulty in placing our contradiction before the people due to the censorship and the suppression of the freedom of expression.

May I, point out to you that the reality which prevails after the emergency, despite the professed objectives, is that the employers and the management have never had it so good and have a free hand to impose hardships on the workers, scrap all previous agreements disadvantageous to them, to rationalise, lay-off, declare closure, to ignore all trade union rights, to take any penal measures in the name of discipline etc. On the other hand the workers and trade unions have been deprived of all fundamental rights acquired as a result of great struggles in the past. It is not the workers who have deliberately placed impediments in the way production or the utilisation of existing capacities of industrial concerns. Yet they have been made to suffer as never before.

After proclamation of internal emergency the Govt. launched a countrywide offensive against CITU leaders and activists. Hundreds of CITU cadres have been put behind bars and warrants of arrest have been issued against many others. The President and General Secretary of Andhra, Rajasthan, Punjab and U.P. State Committee of CITU have either been arrested or are in the wanted

wanted list. Several offices of CITU unions have been sealed by the police and their records tampered with. In Rajasthan CITU activists have been tortured in police lock-up. Some have been given electric shocks while hot iron rods were placed on the hands of some activists. In Kanpur the General Secretary of the State Committee of CITU Com. Ravi Sinha has been declared absconder and all the belongings of the family were confiscated though his wife is the earning member of the family.

The Central and State Govts. are just behaving like silent spectators when thousands of workers in jute, engineering textile and other industries are being laid-off without even paying lay-off compensation according to law. Retrenchment and dismissal of active trade union workers has become a matter of common occurrence. In Tansa iron ore mines under the Rourkela Steel Plant though the CITU union is recognised by the authorities the Vice-President has been removed from service on 'security' grounds. In Surakachar Coal Mines in Madhya Pradesh the leading activists were arrested under MISA for merely raising a dispute. Even for writing protest letter or criticising the management vindictive action is taken by the authorities.

In Dhanbad coal belt the CITU has been made target of special attack by the authorities. Several trade union activists are put behind bar because they dared to criticise the anti-social activities of some of the officials of the CMAL. Threatening union activists with removal from service for raising simple grievances has become a matter of routine for many officials. A large number of office-bearers of Govt. of India and West Bengal State Govt. employees organisation have been detained under MISA on the morrow of the proclamation of emergency and some have already been dismissed. Many others including 40 tea garden labourers in West Bengal have been arrested under DIR and MISA and all will be dismissed unless they are released immediately. While normal trade union activities are practically banned the gangsters are given full freedom to terrorise and intimidate the workers. Outward support to twenty points programme has become a weapon in the hands of these anti-social elements to carry forward their nefarious activities freely.

The press censorship imposed by the Govt. has surpassed even the one during the British Government. Even the extracts already published in other journals are not allowed to be published in our journals. I am enclosing herewith the extracts from the financial weekly "Capital" which were not cleared by the censoring authorities for publication. Similarly an article published in "Economic Times" giving factual material about the price situation was not allowed to be published in our journal "The Working Class". Even paragraphs from an article written by one of your Joint Secretaries and published in the National Labour Institute Bulletin could not escape the wrath of the censor. All this shows that your talk of fight against reaction is only a cover to suppress the trade union and democratic movement.

I do not wish to elaborate further. But I hope that you will ponder over your statement and refrain from taking advantage of the censorship to attack an organisation in an unfair manner. The newspapers and the opposition are being told by responsible leaders of the Government to desist from wild and unfounded allegations. Should this advice not apply to all including ministers ?

Thanking you,

Copy to :
The Prime Minister
Government of India.

Yours sincerely,
Sd/- Jyoti Basu
Vice-President.