

Nationwide strike a 'total' success

Statesman News Service
& Agencies

NEW DELHI, April 16. - The first major resistance against the economic policies of the NDA government, especially the disinvestment drive, today resulted in work in central public sector undertakings, banks and insurance companies being paralysed throughout the country as more than 10 million employees participated in a nationwide strike.

All major trade unions, except the pro-Congress Intuc participated in the strike. Even the pro-BJP BMS joined the protest. Other unions taking part in the strike included Aituc, Citu, Utuc, Utuc-Is, Intuc. The trade union leaders led by Aituc general secretary, Mr Gurudas Das Gupta, and Citu leader, Dr M K Pandey, and leaders from the BMS and the HMS declared the "strike a total success" and said this is the "first warning" to the government against pursuing the present economic policies. They demanded the resignation of the finance minister and 'radical changes' in the economic policies.

Reacting to the strike, the BJP spokesman, Mr Vijay Kumar Malhotra, urged the government to protect the workers' interests while deciding on any economic policy. He also called for a consensus before implementing the proposed labour



Activists from different trade unions sit beside a banner of hammer and sickle while protesting against the government's privatisation programme. Thousands of employees working for state-owned banks and other companies went on strike, also targeting reforms in insurance, labour laws and taxation in the Capital on Tuesday -AFP

Banks, airlines

to the rich employees of the BI) also joined

Maharashtra. Mumbai witnessed a significant drop in business volume in respect of commercial transactions between banks

According to a Guwahati report, the agitation paralysed banking as well as post and telegraph operations, but its im

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THE WORKING CLASS

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Admits Total Breakdown

All-India Bank Employees Association general secretary Karakeshwar Chakraborty said, "the strike was against the ever increasing portfolio of bad-loans now aggregating more than Rs 75,000 crore". He also said the strike was also against the moves made by StandChart against its employees by way of large scale violations of laws of the land, awards and settlements, malafide transfers and large number of contract labourers. The All-India RBI Employees Association, and All-India RBI Workers Federation, representing class-III and Class-IV employees, also struck work. These unions said, besides Mumbai, the metro centres

medicine shops

Almost all offices, shops and markets. Public vehicles and and trams did not public, private and closed following the there were no report. Even the airport. Rail services were CITU state g Chittabrata. Major strike was 100 per strategic sectors like and steel among o

The response to various trade union in different banks



BEEDI FEDERATION MEETS AT JABALPUR

The Working Committee of the All India Beedi Workers Federation met at Jabalpur on 6 and 7 April 2002. Tanulal Mandalwar, Vice President of the Federation, presided over the meeting which was attended by members from the nine states of Assam, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Jharkand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

In the meeting, after a review of the successful all India Rally of 20,000 beedi workers on 27 November 2001, there were useful discussions on the demands of beedi workers, including the crucial demand for a uniform all India minimum wage for beedi workers. Several important organisational decisions were taken, some of which relate to women in the beedi unions.

The Working Committee decided that sub-committees of working women were to be formed in all the states. Two day classes are to be held in all the states by July/August 2002, to be

attended by women activists from the beedi industry and union/CITU leaders. The subjects include laws in the beedi industry, the impact of globalisation on the beedi industry, CITU and other trade unions and working women in the beedi union. State workshops for detailed, concrete planning of how to increase work in the beedi industry will be completed by August.

After the state workshops are over, an all India workshop will be held at the Federation Centre. Conventions of women working in the beedi industry will be held by September in all the states. Resolutions were passed in the meeting supporting the strike call on April 16, condemning the carnage in Gujarat and against the cut in Provident fund interest rate.

On Saturday, the 6th of April, there was a big rally of over 3000 beedi workers in Jabalpur. Despite the scorching heat, the rallyists marched through the streets of Jabalpur, carrying red flags and raising slogans for their demands. The vast majority were women, many of them barefooted. But they had come from many districts of Madhya Pradesh: from far off Bhopal and Gwalior, Indore and Guna, Damoh, Satna, Sagar, and of course, Jabalpur itself. They had come by train, bus, on foot, determined to make their voices heard, and this they did.

Tanulal Mandalwar presided over the rally at Super Market Chowk, in the heart of Jabalpur. T A Padmanabhan, State Secretary, Madhya Pradesh CITU state committee, conducted the proceedings. Badal Saroj, General Secretary, CITU state committee of Madhya Pradesh, in his address dwelt on the atrocious conditions beedi workers live and work in, and the government policies which are making these still worse. He warned against the communal designs of the Sangh Parivar, which had demonstrated through its carnage in Gujarat, the lengths to which it could go, to push its Hindutva agenda. Pramilla Pandhe, Vice President of the AIDWA expressed solidarity with the beedi workers. P K Ganguly, General Secretary, AIBWF, Md. Nizamuddin, Secretary and Ranjana Nirula, Working Committee member addressed the rally.

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THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

MAY 2002

HERE & NOW | Sudhir Tailang



It's a dream budget session for
Sinhaji! It began with Ayodhya and
will probably end with Modi!

Courtesy: The Hindustan Times

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EDITORIAL

FORWARD TO FURTHER STRUGGLES...

APRIL 16 STRIKE has been a landmark event in the fight against the anti people, anti worker policies of the NDA Government at the Centre led by the BJP. The reports from different States and industries, received till the time of our going to the Press, indicate that the workers irrespective of affiliations had unitedly come forward to register their indignant protest at the mad pursuit of the 'reforms' process by the Government.

The meeting of the national executive of the ruling BJP held in Goa was insensitive to the angry response from across the country to the genocide engineered by the Narendra Modi Government in Gujarat. But, the very same meeting, which was taking place just prior to the strike, had to take note of the impact of the overwhelming support to the strike call, witnessed throughout the length and breadth of the country. The meeting is reported to have handed in a strong message to the reforms savvy Finance Minister, Yashwant Sinha, that his harsh proposals in the budget need to be pruned drastically, if the ruling party has to survive the wrath of the people, which is evidently finding harsher expression.

The NDA alliance, which had no common bond except clinging on to power, is jolted by the differences that have surfaced over handling of the impasse created by the BJP top-brass over serving quit notice to Narendra Modi - the country's MOST UNWANTED MAN. It is also harassed by the success of the strike.

The April 16 strike was officially joined by the Bharathiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) with the saffron flag and by the rank and file of the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) with the tri-colour banner, defying the writ of its national President, Sanjeeva Reddy. Its unprecedented success has proclaimed the united resolve of the working class of the country that they can no longer countenance the whimsical pursuit of ruinous policies of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation.

Even the national media - print and electronic - that usually prides itself in carrying the reforms on its shoulders as it were - had this time a better appreciation of the issues of the strike. But, it was the lone dissenting voice of the INTUC chief, who chose to amuse himself by congratulating his unions that did not join the strike.

We only hope that the massive response to the April 16 strike will force Sanjeeva Reddy to rethink on the wisdom of singing hymns and praises of the reforms and denouncing the glorious resistance by the workers. Otherwise, he will only reduce himself to an object of ridicule.

For the workers and their organisations that have contributed to the success of the April 16 strike, the call of the hour is to carry forward this unity to further heightened struggles.

SUCCESSFUL COUNTRYWIDE STRIKE 16th APRIL

At the call of all the Central Trade Unions in the country - except the national leadership of INTUC - around 20 lakhs workers of all central public sector undertakings staged a massive countrywide strike action on 16th April reflecting the almost total unity of working class against the anti-national policy of the NDA Govt. The strike was to voice opposition against the policy of privatisation, downsizing of workforce, Govt. move to make drastic pro-employer changes in labour laws, undermining even the existing social security provisions and increasing tax burdens on the workers and the common people.

And it was not the strike by the PSU workers alone. 40 lakh State Govt. employees all over the country also stayed away from work and staged daylong dharna at the call of All India State Govt Employees Federation. State Govt. Employees Strike was complete in West Bengal, Tripura, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, UP, and in Andhra Pradesh. In Haryana, Tamilnadu, Kerala, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Orissa and MP, the State Govt employees stayed away from workplace and took part in day-long dharna. More than 7 lakh Anganwadi workers in 18 States have joined the strike action.

In the financial sector, the strike was total throughout the country. Not only the employees of all the nationalised banks and insurance companies, the

employees of other financial institutions like rural banks, cooperative banks etc took part in the strike in throughout the country and the financial sector employees staged numerous demonstrations in all their locations along with the workers of other sectors. All the unions even those affiliated to INTUC joined enmasse.

STRIKE IN FIVE STATES

In West Bengal all the trade unions called for general strike on the day and it is converted into a virtual Hartal involving the private sector industrial workers as well, completely paralyzing the normal life. The whole of Tripura observed a bandh with the workers of State and central govts, central and state PSUs and also of both organized and unorganized sector joining the strike enmasse. Almost similar paralysing bandh like situation was reported from Andhra Pradesh where 90% private sector industries and 70% of the public transport system got paralysed due to strike by the concerned workers along with the workers of Central and State PSUs.

In Himachal Pradesh and Jharkhand also private sector workers in those States also joined the strike action in a big way along with the public sector workers creating a bandh like situation.

IN OTHER STATES

Even in riot torn Gujarat, the working class came down on the street in voicing their united protest against the anti-national

policies of the BJP led Govt at the centre demonstrating all in unity in action. As per report received from the State, huge dharna participated by thousands of workers was staged at the chowk near the Town Hall at Ahmedabad. In Bhavanaga also massive demonstration was organized at the call of NPMO in solidarity with the striking PSU workers. Both the rallies were addressed by almost all the central trade unions besides the unions in Bnaks, insurance and other sectors. Reports of industrial strike was also received from Baroda, Bhavanagar, Surat etc. In Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and some other places, report was received regarding the Beedi workers and the headload-workers joining the strike in a big way.

In Punjab the strike in all the major PSUs including banks and insurance was complete and the employees of the Punjab State electricity Boards were also in total strike. All the unions in Punjab State Transport and Roadways struck for two hours from 8am to 10am in solidarity. The Medical Sales Representatives of Punjab an affiliate of FMRAI, started their three day statewide strike action on 16th April and the strike was total throughout the State. The loading-unloading work in FCI godowns all over the State were completely paralysed due to strike.

In Assam, complete strike was

reported from the coal mines, paper mill, oil refineries and the telecom centers besides banks and insurance offices. In Kerala, the strike in the PSUs were total and numerous rallies were organized all over the State by the workers of all sections. In Rajasthan, the Khetri Copper plant came to standstill owing to strike and all the district towns including the state capital Jaipur witnessed massive rallies and procession. In Haryana, besides the public sector units, the major section of the state electricity employees also struck work and joined in dharna before various district headquarters. Maharashtra also reported complete strike in all the PSUs, besides total collapse of operation in banks, insurance and Port & dock.

ALL IN UNITY IN ACTION

The opposition of the INTUC leadership to strike action could not keep away most of the industry level unions of INTUC from the strike. The INTUC federation in Port & Dock sector joined the strike along with others and all the Ports of the country reported participation of over 80% workers in the strike. Particularly in JNPT port in Maharashtra, Thoothukkudi port in Tamil Nadu, Kochi port in Kerala and in Kolkata port strike was almost complete.

IN OTHER PSUs

In the coalmines all over the country under ECL, BCCL, CCL WCL, NCL, NECL, SECL, Mahanadi Coalfield and Singareni covering AP, west Bengal, Assam, Jharkhand, Orissa, UP, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh more than

95% percent workers joined the strike. In the Steel industry, strike was a full success in the integrated steel plants in Durgapur, Burnpur, and Salem. Steel plants in Visakhapatnam also reported 60% strike. In Bokaro and Rourkela steel plant, strike was partial. The workers of the iron ore mines all over the country also joined the strike enmasse. In the oil sector companies like IOC, OIL, BPCL, HPCL, ONGC, IPCL etc, in all the oil installations and refineries, overwhelming majority of the employees were on strike.

The public sector cities of Bangalore and Hyderabad having high concentration of public sector units reported almost complete strike in all the PSUs like, BEL, BHEL, ITI, HAL, HMT, BEML, all the units of KGF, ECIL, MIDHANI etc and the striking workers held massive rallies and procession in the cities denouncing the policies of the Govt. In Bangalore 10000 strong rally of public sector workers moved throughout the city. In Hyderabad, the private sector workers also joined the strike and public rallies. In Visakhapatnam, the Shipyard, BHPV, HPCL and other PSUs also were affected due to massive strike action. The BHEL units at Trichy, Bangalore, Ranipet, R&D, Hyderabad reported almost complete strike by the workers whereas in other units like Jhansi, Bhopal, Hardwar etc strike was partial. Most of the Fertiliser plants in the country under NFL, HFC, FCI etc and all the units of MMTC throughout the country also reported almost paralyzing

situation due to strike. Workers of the recently corporatised telecom sector in MTNL and BSNL also took active part in the strike throughout the country.

SOLIDARITY ACTION

As decided by all the central trade unions at the State level, thousands of demonstrations and rallies have taken place in almost all the district headquarters and state capitals in the country where private sector workers and those in the unorganized sectors participated in thousands to express solidarity with the striking workers. In Delhi massive dharna was organized before Parliament in solidarity. At the SCOPE complex at Delhi, where most of the PSUs are situated, a massive rally of striking PSUs workers were held. It was also noted that workers from many new areas who could not be brought to strike action earlier and also those areas, which have been taken up for immediate privatisation, joined the strike enmasse against the policy of sell-out of the nation as such.

TASK AHEAD

More than 1.5 crore workers were on strike and few crores more were on the streets all over the country in solidarity action. CITU congratulates the working class of the country and the PSU workers in particular for the magnificent strike. The need of the hour is to keep up the tempo of struggle and resistance generated by the 16 April strike action. We must prepare for a bigger countrywide united action against the anti-national anti-people policies of the Govt.

MAY DAY MANIFESTO OF CITU

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) extends revolutionary greetings to the working class fraternity all over the world, on the historic May Day - the day of the international solidarity of the working people!

The CITU greets the working class and the people of the socialist countries for steadfastly holding aloft the banner of socialism, despite the setbacks of the last decade.

The CITU greets the working class and the people of the advanced capitalist countries, who have raised the banner of resistance to the neo-liberal globalisation policies, putting up an inspiring and militant struggles against capitalism.

The CITU warmly greets and pledges solidarity with the working people of the developing countries, engaged in fighting back the offensives of imperialism on the one hand and the onslaughts of the ruling class on the other.

II

Following the September 11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York and Pentagon in Washington, the US imperialists have further intensified their aggressive offensives all over the globe.

The US administration had declared a so-called "war on terrorism" under which any one opposing the US designs is equated with "terrorists" and targeted for attack. After turning Afghanistan into a land devastated by bombs and missiles, the US has now proclaimed an "axis of evil" targeting countries like Iran, Iraq and North Korea. The USA had tacitly backed Israel in its military offensive against Palestine and laying a siege on Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. The trade and financial war waged against countries like Cuba, Iraq and Libya, through imposition of economic blockade has hit the common people, particularly the children, of these countries. The servile partners in the G-7 Group acquiesce and actively collaborate in all these atrocious onslaughts of the US imperialists.

The aggressive onslaught of economic exploitation indulged in by the world capitalist system, led by the imperialist powers, has resulted in widening inequality and disparities worldwide.

This in turn has led to fundamentalist forces of various hues raising their heads at different parts of the world, which have become the bedrock for all terrorist activities. The imperialist forces, led by the U.S., pampered and aided these fundamentalist-terrorist brigades to undermine the democratic and progressive forces on various occasions. Now, the same imperialist bandwagon, on the plea of countering terrorism is pitching for further aggressive hegemonic onslaughts.

The CITU unequivocally condemns these imperialist machinations aimed at achieving global hegemony. The CITU expresses full sympathy to the victims of imperialist onslaughts in various parts of the globe. The CITU pledges to mobilise the working people and all other masses in India to fight the nefarious designs of imperialism and extend solidarity to the patriotic struggle carried on by the courageous people of those countries targeted by imperialism.

III

We are passing through the most aggressive phase of fundamentalist and communal orgy and violence that has shocked the entire country.

The Bharatiya Janata Party, (BJP) heading the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), has faced an utter rout in the successive elections to the legislatures of the different States, held ever since the 1999 elections to the Lok Sabha. The BJP is seeking to fully revive their rabid communal agenda, targeting the religious minorities in the country for horrendous attacks, every time it faced electoral defeats.

Gujarat is the only major State, where the BJP is in the Government. Utilising the anger among the people of the State after the horrifying torching to death of 64 persons, including women and children, travelling in train, near Godhra railway station, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bajrang Dal and other sangh parivar outfits unleashed a horrendous communal carnage all over Gujarat. The country was shocked at the barbarian crimes perpetrated against the minority community in the land of Mahatma Gandhi.

The BJP Government in Gujarat, led by its notorious Chief Minister Narendra Modi, had

actually sponsored this communal carnage, which had resulted in the murder of almost a thousand people and uprooted over a lakh people from their homes, which have been razed to the ground. The media the National Human Rights Commission, the Minorities Commission, the entire democratic opinion in the country and even some of the allies in the ruling coalition had squarely held the Chief Minister guilty of all the crimes perpetrated on the minority community. The carnage continues still with daily reports of further tolls. Yet the BJP leadership, from the Prime Minister onwards, are shielding him to the hilt. Worse still, the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) - the parent organisation of the entire sangh parivar - which is calling the shots, has adopted a resolution handing a threat to the Muslim community in the country that they can live only at the mercy of the Hindu majority community.

The CITU is determined to thwart the game plan of the saffron brigade to destroy the secular fabric and the communal harmony of the Indian society. The CITU pledges to fight hard to root out the communal venom emitted by the fundamentalist fanatics of the majoritarian communalism as well as that of minority variety. The CITU will rededicate itself to preserving the class unity of the workers and the people, countering this heightened communal frenzy.

IV

We witness that the so-called economic reforms have virtually grounded the country's economy in a deep recession. Industrial slowdown is widespread covering all broad sectors such as manufacturing, electricity and mining and all end use based groups such as capital goods, intermediary goods, consumer goods, both durables and non durables. The slowdown in domestic and global demand appears to be the major factors constraining industrial growth. Growth rate of the primary sector of agriculture has sunk below the growth rate of population.

On the employment front again it is a dismal picture. The overall employment growth has declined to just one per cent, with organised sector employment growth being lower still. An absolute shortfall in agricultural employment had occurred for the first time.

Opening up of the Indian market for unhindered

invasion by foreign goods, including the agricultural products had set to ruin the domestic industries, small-scale industries and Indian agriculture.

Privatisation has become the mad pursuit and the selective deals struck by the Disinvestments Ministry with the private bidders have become ridiculous scandals. Industrial sickness is proliferating and closure of industries including in many of the vital sectors have been rising manifold.

Thus, the policies of the BJP led Government at the Centre has shattered the self-reliant base of the Indian economy and has set it on a disaster lane. The Left Front Governments in West Bengal and Tripura and earlier in Kerala had always resisted the Central Government policies and have been a source of inspiration to the popular movements in the country.

But, the resistance to the Government policies of neo-liberal globalisation has also been growing. There have been innumerable sector wise strike actions, mostly on policy issues rather than on economic demands. The growing unity of the trade union movement with the organisations of peasants, agricultural workers, women, students and youth, under the banner of the National Platform of mass organisation (NPMO) has paved the way for more determined struggles against the disastrous policies of the NDA Government.

The CITU conveys its warm greetings to all sections of the working people and toiling masses, who have been participating in the powerful strike wave emerging in the country against the policies of globalisation. The CITU congratulates all the public sector workers, bank and insurance employees, the Port & Dock workmen and the State Government Employees under the banner of the All India State Government Employees Federation for the historic strike staged by them on 16th April, 2002 against the liberalisation and other anti-people policies of the Government of India. The CITU also congratulates the five-lakh defence-production employees for their countrywide united strike on 23-24 April, 2002. The three-day strike of six lakh coal miners against privatisation has manifested the united opposition of the working class to the policies of privatisation. The indefinite strike, lasting over a month, by the

six lakh State Government employees in Kerala is another inspiring saga of struggle. The prolonged strike struggles waged by the transport workers of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu testify to the growing determination of the working class to come together in joint struggles on common issues. The stone quarry workers of Haryana braved repression and brutalities of the State Government-Mafia nexus in defending their rights. Unorganised workers in Anganwadi, Handloom and other sectors have also fought several glorious battles resisting the attacks on their livelihood. The CITU pledges to carry forward this growing resistance into a countrywide mass struggle to defeat the disastrous economic policies.

V

This May Day in India, the working class and the trade union movement is facing severe onslaughts, as the NDA Government has embarked on

a series of legislative changes intended to take away the hard won rights of the workers.

Workers' right to form trade unions of their choice had severely been restricted through an amendment to the Trade Union Act. The Industrial Disputes Act is proposed to be amended to vest the employers with absolute powers to hire and fire workers. The Contract Labour Act - which has already been diluted with the Supreme Court reversing its earlier beneficial judgement in the Air India case — will be amended to facilitate the process of contractorisation of all core and non-core jobs.

The Government has been paying just a lip service to social security. In practice even the limited social security measures, existing as of now, are being steadily undermined.

The Government of India has shut out the Government Pension Scheme for the new entrants, besides restricting recruitment to just one in these

vacancies. The State governments are also being prevailed upon to follow suit.

Terming it as a response to industrial slow down, the Government has set in motion a softer interest rate regime. Interest rates on Provident Fund, Small Savings etc. have steeply been reduced. This has only served to scale down the interest liability of the huge internal debt incurred by the Government.

The entire spectrum of the trade union movement in India has taken up these challenges and is rallying all the forces to squarely defeat the nefarious moves of the Government. The CITU pledges to resist these affronts by mobilising all sections of workers and the toiling masses in united powerful struggles.

Long Live Working Class Unity!
Long Live International Solidarity of the Working Class!
Down with Imperialism!
Down the Communalism!
Long Live Socialism!

UNMASKING THE MYTH OF DOWNSIZING

Jayati Ghosh

The issue of downsizing is again one of the major mantras of our times. Everybody talks about downsizing and there is a strange notion going around that more you downsize the more efficient you are.

In fact, it is simply untrue. You cannot remove people from an organisation without putting more burdens on the people, who have remained in the organisation. You cannot, in fact, reasonably expect to make people suddenly cover up the whole work efficiently, when 20% of their colleagues have been removed. In fact, the ongoing downsizing would deter efficiency. This

is seen in Public Sector Banks, where a VRS has been implemented. There are huge queues, there are immense delays, there are over worked and harassed employees, who cannot keep pace who are therefore upset, irritated, resentful as well. In other words, it does not increase efficiency; it decreases efficiency.

ARE THEY TOO MANY?

But there is another aspect, in fact, a larger problem, to the issue of downsizing. Implicitly, it assumes that in fact the public sector employees in India are too many relative to the population that have too much in terms of public sector work

force. In fact, looking at international scenario, we have one of the lowest ratios all public sector employees to population in the world, one of the lowest in the world.

In the developed countries, this ratio is six per thousand on the average. The average even in Asia is 4.5 per thousand. In India this is only two per thousand, which is very very low internationally. Now, there is a reason why the developed countries have the public employees to population ratio of six per thousand. This is not because they like to have lot of public employees but because they need to fulfil lot of public services. Surely, nobody in India would ever actually agree that we have sufficient, adequate and efficient public services for our whole population. They are totally inadequate. They are completely inaccessible to most or the majority of our population. For our population, we do not have enough doctors, enough teachers, enough nurses, enough administrators of hospitals, enough officers to run schools, enough people actually to ensure efficient law and order, to ensure smooth functioning and wide coverage of postal services and communications, infrastructure, ensure the basic provision of various other public services. The access of the common people to all these basic public services is the lowest in our country and various govt. reports testify to it. Yet the govt. is adamant on reducing govt. employees, in all public services. It is assuming that we have got adequate public services, which is also not true. We do not have adequate public service. We need a substantial increase in the number of employees to provide basic services and most of all.

EXPENDITURE REDUCTION?

Even the argument that downsizing is required to reduce expenditure and to ensure fiscal compression makes no sense at all. Both Yashwant Sinha and Vajpayee announced that they are going effect 10% cut of all employees in the Central govt. in five years, by not filling up the vacancies on retirement and cutting down 2 per cent a year. How much they would save by such reduction? 10% cuts in manpower means saving of 0.2% of revenue expenditure, i.e. less than one fifth of one per cent of the total revenue expenditure of the govt. It is nothing. The huge

saving which was supposed to result from this fiscal compression doesn't exist and what we get in return is worst public services and inadequate facilities for our population, for this completely non-existent fiscal return.

The other problem of course with privatising the whole range of public services is the issue of accountability. There is an argument that the trouble with Government services in India is that it is not accountable. But, the way to deal with that problem is not to, therefore, get rid of Govt. but to say we must try and make it accountable. We must in fact may try and make our public service more responsive, more accountable to the people they serve. What is important to remember that, in fact, at least we can try to make public service accountable only till these services are with the Govt., the public sector. Public service in private hands or private service cannot be. A private company cannot be held accountable for not providing adequate services to people. A public sector can. We can actually try and make our institutions more democratic to force public sector organisation to be more accountable to force greater local participation and accountability in our schools, in our basic institutions, in our local managements, and so on. For similar services under private sector you cannot think of such trial at all. Only if you can pay the price, you may have a test of such services and majority of our people would not be in a position to pay for those public services in private control. This is sure and certain.

(Excerpts from the keynote address at a conference against privatisation in Hyderabad)

CITU Vice-President T.K. Rengarajan represented the CITU at the 50th Anniversary and 50th National Ordinary Congress of the Confederation Revolucionari de Obreros Y Campesinos (CROC) at Mexico city on April 12-14, 2002. He availed this opportunity to meet and develop fraternal relations with the trade union functionaries of Mexico and other Latin American countries.

FIGHT IMPERIALIST AND COMMUNAL OFFENSIVES!

E Balanandan

The communal conflagration started soon after the unpardonable crime of the ghastly killings of 58 karsevaks - including women and children - returning from Ayodhya by Sabarmati Express by torching a bogie at Godhra station on 27th February, 2002, is still continuing over a month. The Chief Minister Narendra Modi's claim that they could restore normalcy in the State within 72 hours has proved to be false. The death toll is estimated to be beyond 800. About One lakh people - comprising men, women and children of the Muslim community - are languishing in the so-called refugee camps, where even bare minimum facilities for human living, including sanitary facilities, are absent. There are no visible signs of easing of the tension and restoration of normalcy in the State; on the contrary violence is spreading to new areas in remote villages.

MODI HAS TO GO!

The National Human Rights Commission in its interim report noted that the recent events had resulted in the violation of the Fundamental Rights to life, liberty, equality and the dignity of citizens of India as guaranteed in the Constitution. The Commission also raised serious questions of discriminatory treatment of in the matter of compensation to the next-of-kin of the victims - Rs. 2 lakhs for Godhra victims and Rs. 1 lakh for the victims of the subsequent violence.

The NHRC squarely condemned the Gujarat Government for not functioning as per the constitution and the law of the land. Therefore, the Narendra Modi has no right to continue in office and he should be removed from Chief Ministership immediately.

It is obvious that the BJP rulers at the Centre and in Gujarat are implementing the RSS agenda of Hindutva through fascistic means. We have to mobilise the whole working class and the people against this, in order to save the country.

We are totally opposed to religious fundamentalism - of both the minority and majority, since it disrupts the unity of the working class. We have, therefore, to intensify our ideological campaign against religious fundamentalism and

obscurantism. We must boldly intervene to stop communal conflagration for restoring peace and amity at all costs.

THE DRACONIAN POTA

A joint session of the Parliament was specially convened on 26th March 2002 to get the Prevention of Terrorism Bill approved, after it was defeated in the Rajya Sabha.

Many civil rights activists and eminent jurists had stoutly opposed passing of this law. The National Human Rights Commission was also "unanimously of the considered view that there is no need to enact a law based on the draft prevention of Terrorism Bill, 2000 and the needed solution can be found under the existing laws, if properly enforced and implemented, and amended, if necessary."

However the bill was pushed through and passed by the joint session with 425 voting for and 296 against. The opposition described it as a black act, which went against the interests of the nation. In the background of the Government patronising and implementing a fascist agenda, resort to such draconian law curtailing democratic rights and infringing freedom of the citizens, has ominous portents. The first victims of this anti democratic law will be the political opponents of BJP Raj. This law will be used to scuttle the developing working class resistance against the economic policies of the Government. So we have to resolutely oppose this draconian law.

IMPERIALIST ARROGANCE

The barbarous terrorist attack that took place in New York and Washington on September 11, 2001, has skilfully been used by the United States administration to finally impose a proxy Government in Afghanistan. Under their control, Afghanistan will be used for implementing their main agenda of exercising control over the oil and gas rich Central Asia.

Having completed their first agenda, they wish to proceed with their second agenda of attacking the so-called "rogue states" listed by them viz., Iraq, Libya, North Korea, besides Syria and Iran, of which the first priority is Iraq.

Here one point must be taken note of. The aggressive onslaught of economic exploitation indulged in by the world capitalist system, led by the imperialist powers, has resulted in widening inequality and disparities worldwide. This in turn has led to fundamentalist forces of various hues raising their heads at different parts of the world, which have become the bedrock for all terrorist activities. The imperialist forces, led by the U.S., pampered and aided these fundamentalist-terrorist brigades to undermine the democratic and progressive forces on various occasions. Now, the same US led imperialist bandwagon, on the plea of countering terrorism is pitching for further aggressive hegemonic onslaughts for global dominance.

ISRAELI AGGRESSION

The situation in Middle East is reaching a flash point due to the Israeli Army's attack against the Palestinian people. Using their full military might, the Government of Israel has laid a siege on the Palestinians leader Yasser Arafat. The attack was continuing for weeks killing hundreds of Palestinians and thousands of them wounded. Still the Palestinian resistance is continuing. The world public opinion against the Israeli attack is growing.

Israel is deliberately backed by the United States. The peoples' protests against Israeli aggression have been growing not only in Europe but also all over the world. Therefore, at last George Bush was forced to formally demand that Israeli Army should be withdrawn from Palestinian territory. However, the situation still remains to be explosive.

NUCLEAR DANGER

The "new nuclear policy" officially presented to the U.S. Congress on 8th of January this year titled as "Nuclear Posture Review" (NPR) has provoked widespread criticism in the United States and other countries.

The "NPR", which outlines several situations where the use of nuclear weapons could be "justified", offers a chilling glimpse into the world of nuclear war to cover every conceivable circumstance.

This Nuclear Policy Review says that the "United States should develop plans to use nuclear weapons in an Arab-Israeli conflict, in a war between China and Taiwan or in a conflict between the two Koreas and lists seven countries

- Russia, China, North Korea, Libya, Iraq, Iran, and Syria - as targets against which nuclear weapons might be used".

It is said that the US strategic command is taking steps to develop new generation of low-yield bunker-busting mini-nukes and other nuclear weapons and to prepare a plan for their use.

This new official policy of the United States shows that they are again planning to plunge humanity into a nuclear disaster like that of Hiroshima during the Second World War.

The policies being pursued by the Vajpayee Government to coordinate our defence strategy with that of US will definitely endanger our freedom. We must oppose the same strongly.

ECONOMY IN RECESSION

The economic deceleration and recession since 2001 is continuing. The IMF forecast a growth of 0.7 percent for the USA in 2002. Japanese economy, now facing its fourth recession in ten years, is projected to decline at (minus) 1.3 percent in 2002, after a (minus) 0.9 per cent decline in 2001. The European Union is estimated to have grown by a mere 1.5 percent in 2001. Growth in Germany, the leading economy of the European Union, is estimated at 0.7 percent in 2001 and 1.3 per cent in 2002. Retrenchment and closures are on the increase in the developed world.

The crisis of over-production leads to the intensification of trade war, in spite of the WTO conditionalities. The imposed restrictions on steel imports has invited serious opposition from Germany, Russia and some other countries. They have threatened that they will also impose restrictions on entry of many American goods into their countries. Some economists have described that this development will end in the death of globalisation itself.

The developing inequalities between the developed and the under developed countries, between the few rich and vast majority of the population, who are suffering due to poverty and deprivation, cannot be solved within the frame work of capitalism. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary to mobilise the working class in strength, together with the large majority of the population, to change the very system.

(Presidential address to the CITU General Council)

PREPARE TO BUILD A POWERFUL STRUGGLE!

M. K. Pandhe

The CITU had been taking active initiative both at Central level and also in States to develop united struggles, with the support of all the trade unions. Global protest day against globalisation on 9th November was widely observed throughout the country.

The CITU carried on continuous dialogue with the other Central trade unions including INTUC and BMS for united actions against the economic policies. In that process, all the Central Trade Unions except INTUC met in the CITU office on 10th January 2002 to decide on the common line to be taken by the trade unions in the pre budget discussion. In the pre budget discussion with the Finance Minister all the central trade unions except INTUC submitted joint memorandum, which unequivocally denounced the ongoing policy of liberalisation, and the increasing tax burden on the common people while awarding huge concessions to richer class. On 11th January, again, all the central trade unions met and decided to observe countrywide "National Protest Day" on 14th March against the anti-people policies to be preceded by State level joint conventions and also gave a call to prepare for countrywide strike action. Although INTUC did not consent for the said programme in the said meeting, INTUC subsequently decided to join the 14th March demonstration as a result of our

persuasion. The 11th January meeting also conceived a countrywide strike in public sector in the second half of the budget session of Parliament. The Central trade unions again met on 11th February in BMS office to discuss about further course of action. There had been some vacillation about the public sector strike as well, but ultimately such vacillations could be overcome. BMS leadership joined with other Central trade unions in the strike call and many INTUC unions in the industry level also decided to join the strike. All the trade unions in the financial sector also joined the 16th April strike. Although our effort at the Central level for a general strike covering the the private sector and others on 16th April could not fructify, our persuasions and campaign at the State level could bring round other trade unions outside the Sponsoring Committee for general industrial strike in some States.

CHANGING SITUATION

The above experience of ours points to certain distinct features of the changing situation and also the urgent task before us. The deepening crisis of the economy and the blind pursuit of the policies of LPG by the ruling polity has created such widespread resentment among the mass of the workers that it is becoming increasingly impossible for the leadership of the most reformist trade unions to stay away from united

struggle as they did during the last decade. In such a situation, constant pursuit of our line of united action only can unify the entire working class against the anti-people policies and expose those preaching such policies in the polity. The assertion of united struggle will also go a long way in defeating the forces of disruption. Without such conscious initiative of ours, and maintenance of its continuity, the crisis and resentment will create desperation and demoralisation. Secondly, since the beginning of the new decade, the policies of LPG started creating visible impact also on the other sections of the people in the society, particularly among the agricultural workers and peasants and the voice of dissent against the policies has started becoming louder and widespread. The working class movement and - the CITU activists in particular must - comprehend the changing and spreading dimension of dissent and take more initiative to activate NPMO and to ensure greater and broader participation from other sections of society, in the united struggle. For that, trade union movement has to rise and agitate on the demands of the agricultural workers, poor peasants, women, students, youth and others. CITU committees both at the Centre and the States and major industrial centres have to plan their activities to have concerted joint campaign and

actions with the like minded mass organisations to start with, to create ground for more active participation from other sections of society in the struggle. We had discussed about this on earlier occasions also but could not make much headway. We can't afford to have repetition of the same experience any more. Thirdly, maintaining continuity of the united struggles is of tremendous importance in the present situation. Without that, we will not be able to carry the struggle to a higher pitch which is the urgent need of the hour. Without that, we will not be able to break the barrier of ritualism. Our independent initiative in the campaign and agitation at all levels, our conscious effort to expose the policies as well as the politics of the ruling class in our campaign can create the atmosphere for maintaining the continuity in united agitation and struggle.

OVERCOME THE HURDLES

To take care of the urgent tasks before us, which happen to be more challenging, we must have to take our organisation to a different height. For that we must plan at all levels of our organization to go with our campaign beyond our known limited peripheries. We have already identified this shortcoming as a major hurdle for our organisational breakthrough. We must take concrete steps to overcome this hurdle.

The observation made in the General Secretary's report to the Tenth Conference of CITU places before us the perspective of our future struggle: "The

developments in the national arena, during the period since our last conference, point to the frequent changes in the correlation of the political forces in the country. These changes are occurring in the background of deepening economic crisis and its grievous impact on the common people. This situation also enjoins upon the working class and the forces fighting against the economic policies and communal offensives to present a viable pro-people alternative before the people. Such an alternative can only emerge through sharpening of the struggle against the capitulationist economic policies and the forces of communalism, and not by any other means.... We must take up this challenges and convert them into an opportunity to channelise the spontaneous expression of discontent into organized countrywide mass actions..."

DISASTROUS DESIGNS

The coming period is bound to witness further deterioration in the economic situation to more and more attacks on the toiling people. The fast growing opposition to NDA Govt's economic policy is being ignored with arrogance by the Govt. despite their increasing isolation from the people. In this background, the BJP-Sangh Parivar bandwagon has been resorting to ugly communal tactics in their bid to overcome the situation. Never before the country faced such ugly design costing the humanity so dearly. The situation enjoins upon the working class movement to

expose these worst enemies of the humanity sitting in country's governance.

The political situation in the country is also becoming more complex exposing rank opportunism of a major section of the political parties. The NDA allies despite expressing dissents in public on many aspects of the governance and the communal exercise by BJP, are clinging to BJP bandwagon. Only through powerful mass struggles, the contradiction within the NDA camp can be intensified towards further change in correlation of forces. The Congress Party with 15 State Govts under its control is waiting in the wings to capture power at the Centre. Though being a secular party despite all vacillations, the Congress is also in favour of the policy of imperialist globalisation. There is, therefore, urgent need for adoption of a pro-working class, pro-people policies at the Centre, quite different from the LPG brand followed over the last one decade.

We have already emphasised the need for a countrywide struggle for such a popular alternative policies.

Let the CITU take the initiative in unifying and preparing the working class for such bigger struggles in active cooperation with other toiling sections.

The tasks before us are immense! The possibilities of building a powerful movement are great! Let us prepare the working class to play its historic role to change situation in favour of the toiling millions.

(Excerpts from report to the General Council)

CBT: "NO PF INTEREST RATE REDUCTION"

W.R.VARADA RAJAN

The Special meeting of the Central Board of Trustees (CBT) held on 12th April, 2002, unanimously rejected the Ministry of Finance directive to reduce the rate of interest on Employees Provident Fund from 9.5 to 9 %, aligning it with the interest rate decided by the Government for the GPF, PPF etc. The CBT desired that the Government reconsider the earlier recommendations made by the CBT and reiterated that the interest rate of 9.5 % should be continued in the interregnum.

CBT PROPOSALS

The CBT in its earlier meeting during January last had made the under-noted recommendations:

"1. RBI may be requested to take over the total investments of CBT, EPF and give an inflation indexed return of 6% on the same.

2. The Government of India may convene a tripartite meeting consisting of Employers, Employees and representatives of Finance Ministry to discuss the issues of administered interest rate structure in the economy, investments pattern/guidelines for CBT, EPF and rate of interest being declared for EPF subscribers.

3. The rate of interest admissible on accumulations in Special Deposit Scheme may be raised to 12%.

4. Till a decision on all of the above is arrived at, the CBT, EPF may recommend the rate of interest to EPF subscribers @ 9.5% on monthly running balances for the year 2002-03."

But, the response of the Government placed before the CBT on 12.4.023 was as follows:

"The recommendation of the CBT, EPF for the declaration of the rate of interest was referred to the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance. With the approval of Hon'ble Finance Minister, the Ministry of Finance has indicated that interest rates on GPF, PPF etc. have been reduced by 50 basis points as per the Budget Speech (2002-03) of the Finance Minister. The proposed interest rate of 9.5% on EPF accumulations as proposed by the Ministry of Labour, is not sustainable. Ministry of Labour may, therefore, review their proposal and bring it in

alignment with the interest rates on PPF, GPF etc." (Interest rates on PPF, GPF has been reduced to 9% w.e.f. 01.04.2002.)

UNTENABLE STANCES

The prescription by the Ministry of Finance that the EPF interest may be aligned with that of GPF, PPF etc., is undermining the very status of the CBT, and subordinating it to the administrative decision taken by the Ministry of Finance. This is not acceptable. The CBT is bound only by the provisions of the EPF act and the Rules made there under.

On the recommendation of RBI taking over the total investments of CBT, EPF, the RBI had expressed its unwillingness. But, the letter from the Dy. Governor of RBI had dealt with the issue of the portfolio management function of EPF investments. The CBT recommendation was that

the RBI should take over the entire corpus of the EPF accumulations under all the three schemes. The RBI is itself administrating the Provident Fund of RBI Employees, without any specific portfolio but in a proforma account Interest with the funds invested in day-to-day operation of RBI. It was paying an interest of 13.25% for the years 96-97 and 97-98, even when the EPF interest rate was 12 %. The SDS investments, which comprise almost 80 % of Provident Fund, are lying with the RBI itself. It is therefore, illogical for the RBI to turn down a recommendation for extending the same treatment to the EPF funds as in the case of RBI employees PF.

The RBI letter also assumes the EPF to have gone under regulatory jurisdiction of the Insurance Regulatory and development Authority (IRDA), which again is factually incorrect.

Hence, the RBI stance is untenable and requires a reconsideration recommendation of the CBT. The Government of India cannot as a matter of parity bring down the rate of interest on SDS equal to the interest on GPF of Government employees.

The Government of India, while bringing down the rate of interest on small savings instruments under NSC, NSS, etc, on successive occasions, had made it applicable only to future deposits under the respective schemes. But, the Government discriminated the EPF by effecting the reduction on the entire accumulations in the SDS.

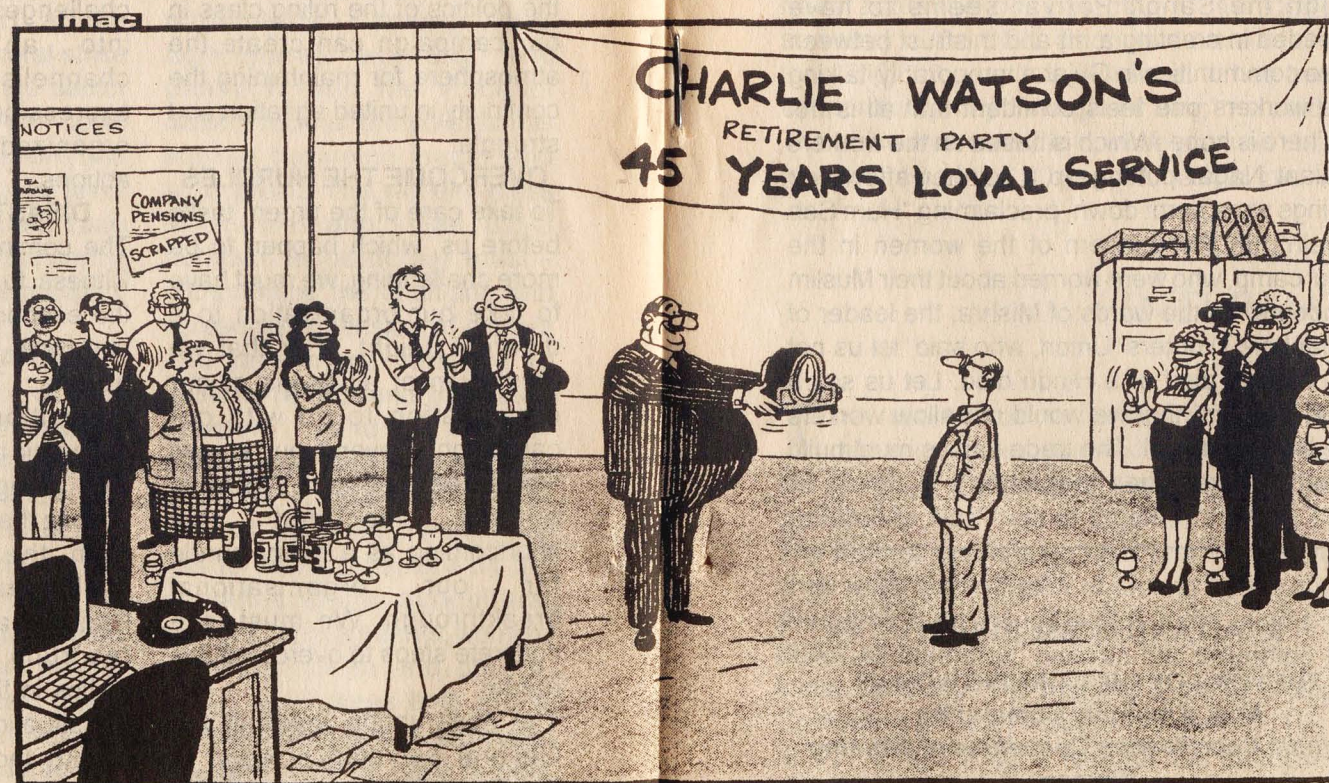
TRIPARTITE DIALOGUE

The Government of India is yet to respond to the recommendation for convening a tripartite meeting consisting of Employers, Employees and representatives of Finance Ministry. This was in the context of Finance Ministry considering the report of the Reddy Committee on administered rates of interest and allied issues. The Finance Minister has arbitrarily announced in the Budget speech this year implementation of the Reddy Committee recommendation, which will have a long-term implication, as the rate could plummet to below 7 % even for the next year.

The total investments of all the three schemes (P.F., Pension Fund & Employees Deposit Linked Insurance Scheme) under the EPF as on 31st March was Rs. 102163.04 crore, out of which Rs. 81222.84 core, i.e. 79.5 % vests with the Government of India. Thus, the Government of India is the sole beneficiary of the reduction in the rate of interest, as it is trying to reduce its interest burden at the cost of 2.6 crore worker-subscribers of the EPF. The workers are already losing over Rs. 2500 crore a year, because of the earlier reduction from 12 to 9.5 %. This loss will further go up to Rs.3064 crore, if the rate is further reduced to 9 %.

Hence, the CBT also desired the Minister of Labour to persuade the Government to convene a tripartite dialogue as recommended by the CBT, before the budget is taken up for voting in Parliament.

Sharad Yadav, Labour Minister, who chaired the CBT meeting, had assured that in case the Union Cabinet did not accept the CBT recommendation, another meeting of the CBT would be convened shortly.



'As a token of our appreciation, Charlie, please accept this clock which was bought with what remained of your pension.'

Courtesy: The Daily Mail, London

being provided food twice a day and nothing else. The workers had no work since the last more than one and a half month. They were still afraid to go out for work. Some organisations like SEWA were trying to provide work like sewing, making paper bags, beedi rolling, agarbatti rolling etc. But this work was not available to all. While they wanted to go home, they still felt insecure. The women described the barbaric crimes committed on them by gangs, which came with covered faces. A young girl told how the devils slit open the womb of a pregnant woman and cut the baby into pieces; women were gang raped in public. Women are the first victims every time there is a communal violence. But, this time it was even more. The goondas looted all their belongings including cooking utensils, black and white televisions etc. and burnt their houses. One woman told that she had lost her every thing in the '85 riots, moved to this place, started life from a scratch and was just settling. Now again she lost every thing. What would she do?

The 'Hindu' camp at the Ananda Flat Municipal School in Bapunagar housed around 1400-1500 people. It appeared well maintained. The residents included diamond workers, beedi workers, power loom and textile workers, mill workers etc. The inmates told that the Hong Kong Red Cross donated saris, dresses, tents etc. They were given tea, breakfast, lunch and dinner. As 13th April was the Telugu New Years' Day (all of them were Telugu speaking people), kheer was served. Rs. 100/- was given for observing Puja on the day. They were ready to go home. But they were concerned about their Muslim neighbours, who were left with nothing except the clothes they were wearing, about what they were made to suffer.

WORKERS AFFECTED

It has been estimated that approximately 10 lakhs workers were affected either directly or indirectly due to closure or shifting of the industries because of this communal violence in Ahmedabad alone. They included around 20000 workers in small and medium tea stalls, around two and a half lakh diamond workers, around 1 lakh vendors and hawkers, around 75000 garments workers, around 10000 beedi and 10000 agarbatti workers, 20000 workers in hotels and restaurants, 1,50,000

industrial workers, 1,50,000 power loom workers, besides thousands of workers in the Municipal Corporation, contract workers, loaders and un loaders, transport workers, brick kiln workers, auto drivers and rickshaw pullers, cart driven food stalls and workers engaged in ancillary work like supplying batter for idlis, peeling garlic, supplying samosa, or masalas, etc to these food stalls. A large number of them were women. It has been estimated that since the violence erupted, the workers have lost around Rs. 300 Crores and are still losing.

The trade unions noted that it was of utmost importance to instil confidence among the workers. At the local level they have decided to observe May Day jointly in a big way by mobilising their entire strength. It was also decided to make serious efforts to develop united movements of the workers in the State on their class issues and strengthen their unity. The Working Class should not allow Gujarat to happen elsewhere in the country.

'WE ARE ONE'

Though the Sangh Parivar seems to have succeeded in creating a rift and mistrust between the two communities in Gujarat temporarily, talking to the workers one feels confident that all is not lost. There is hope. Which is based on the workers of Salaat Nagar putting up a banner after their dwellings were burnt down, proclaiming "Hum Sab Ek Hain"; on the concern of the women in the 'Hindu' camp, who were worried about their Muslim neighbours; on the words of Mishra, the leader of the Manhole Workers' Union, who said 'let us not say a Muslim died or a Hindu died. Let us say a worker died and that we would not allow workers to die like this again'. The trade unions must build on this and strengthen their unity.

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ITALY STOPS WORK IN PROTEST AT LABOUR LAW

Italy's first full-day general strike for 20 years brought much of the country to a standstill yesterday, raising the stakes in a bitter battle between trade unions and the government about changes in labour law.

The massive response to the strike call underlined just how polarised Italy has become, with trade unionists determined to resist what they see as the erosion of fundamental workers' rights and Silvio Berlusconi, the prime minister, adamant that he has a political mandate for reform.

Sergio Cofferati, the leader of the largest and most militant union, said that energy consumption was equivalent to that of a Sunday, confirming the strikers' success in halting economic activity. Most air and rail transport came to a stop, while factories, schools, banks and post offices closed in support of the strike, which was backed by all the main unions.

"The government is moving in exactly the opposite direction to dialogue, but we won't stop until we have achieved our objectives," Mr Cofferati, secretary of the CGIL union, told a crowd of more than 200,000 people in Florence. "It has been an extraordinary day throughout Italy," he said.

The strike was called to oppose planned changes to article 18 of the 30-year-old labour law, which

obliges employers to reinstate workers who can prove they were unjustly sacked. The government wants to replace the right to reinstatement with financial compensation in a limited number of specific cases. Workers see it as the thin end of a wedge that could dismantle long-established rights and protections.

The issue has galvanised a demoralised opposition and propelled Mr Cofferati into the limelight as a potential political challenger to Mr Berlusconi.

Emotions were further heightened by the Red Brigades' killing last month of Marco Biagi, the architect of the proposed changes.

Many Italian journalists, worried by Mr Berlusconi's extensive media influence, backed the strike, preventing the publication of most newspapers yesterday and drastically reducing radio and television coverage of the general strike. Among the few newspapers that did publish were *Il Giornale*, owned by Mr Berlusconi's brother, and *Il Foglio*, controlled by his wife.

Mr Berlusconi had said he hoped all sides could return to the negotiating table once the unions had used their opportunity to let off steam. The success of the strike, however, will make it very difficult for either side to give ground.

(Philip Willan in Rome - The Guardian, April 17, 2002)

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

The International Conference of oil and refineries trade unions will be held in Kolkata in the month of February or March 2003. The last conference was held in October 1999 in Paris. The Kolkata conference next year is expected to draw wider participation of around 100 outstation delegates from the oil sector trade unions from about 40 countries, besides the delegates from Indian oil sector. The meeting of the Coordination Committee of Oil & Petroleum Workers (CITU) held on 12-13 April 2002 at Kolkata has discussed on the preparatory steps and also fund raising programmes.

For the first time such conference is going to be held outside Europe, particularly in Asia.

The Conference of the International Energy and Mines Organisation (IEMO), the biggest international trade union centre of the energy & mines workers, will also be held around October/November early next year at Cochin for which also preparatory steps are being planned. Both the international meets are slated to discuss various burning issues related to oil, energy and mining sector and the trade union movement in the face of mounting offensives of globalisation policies.

Bt cotton: OF CAT AND PIGEONS

Devinder Sharma

What happens when you let a cat into a pigeon cage? The pigeons close their eyes thinking that since they cannot see, the cat also cannot see them. What happens thereafter is a foregone conclusion. This is exactly what the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) — the highest regulatory authority in India for the genetically modified crops - did. It simply closed its eyes to the threat Bt cotton's commercial approval will unleash on human health, environment and the survival of the cotton farmers.

With the cat - the private seed industry — prowling around, the GEAC preferred to turn a blind eye to the dangers that lie ahead. In what appears to be the biggest scandal to have hit Indian science, the GEAC circumvented scientific norms to hastily approve the commercial introduction of India's first genetically modified crop. In the bargain, it also opened the floodgates for future introduction of GM technologies and products that have been rejected by the European Union. ...

SOME QUESTIONS

Let us try to understand the various aspects of the Bt cotton controversy by looking at the frequently asked questions (FAQs):

Were the research trials conducted scientifically? No, not at all. In fact, scientific norms were thrown to wind and for obvious reasons. And this is certainly scandalous. This is in reality the greatest scientific fraud to have hit Indian science.

For the first three years, the crop trials were conducted by Mahyco-Monsanto. The data so compiled was never made public. Why? What is so secretive about it?..... Secondly, the data was never scrutinised by an independent team of experts and representatives from the civil society.... The GEAC has no representation from the civil society.

There are norms that are clearly laid out for agricultural experiments. For the first three years of research trials, the crop was not even sown on time. For instance, it was sown as late as two to three months last year.... How can the research data from such trials be accepted?

Actually, when the crop is sown late, it escapes the insect attack, which is at its peak in the first two months. With no insect attack, the crop losses are minimal. Does that give a real picture? Isn't it a scientific scam?

The GEAC was completely wrong when it asked the company Mahyco-Monsanto to repeat the research trials for one year. In fact, as per scientific norms the research trials should be re-conducted for another three years considering that the data so far collected is not correct. Even the ICAR had asked for two years of more research trials but ultimately a Mahyco-Monsanto compromise for one year was reached. Since when have we started compromising in science?...

How about the environmental and health risks?... No research is conclusive without a minimum of three years data....

We still don't know what will be the impact on human health once the genetically modified seed goes into the food chain. Unlike China, where Bt cotton does not go into the food chain, cottonseed oil is used as edible oil and the oil cake goes for cattle consumption. So why take a calculated risk when there is no cause for desperation? And will the GEAC be held accountable for any subsequent damage to the environment and human health? ...

GROWERS SUFFER

Cotton consumes more than 50 per cent of the pesticides sprayed in the country. It is also true that agricultural scientists had all these years said that there was no escape for cotton farmers but to use more potent pesticides. These scientists were actually promoting the pesticides industry's interest all these years... The same class of agricultural scientists are now backing the genetically modified cotton.... This time they are promoting the biotechnology industry's commercial interests, which have more money to sponsor research and other activities.

In the bargain, cotton farmers are being asked to get in addition to the 'pesticides treadmill' into a hitherto unknown and more dangerous 'biological treadmill', the consequences of which can be

disastrous. The scientific community will not suffer for its faulty decisions. It will be the cotton growers again who will have to pay the price.

ARE FARMERS HAPPY?

But let's face it, farmers are visibly happy with Bt cotton as the recent illegal plantings in Gujarat shows, so what's your problem? This is exactly what had happened when the fourth generation pesticides synthetic pyrethroids were introduced in the country less than 20 years ago. And since then over 10,000 cotton growers have committed suicide. Synthetic pyrethroids are fourth generation pesticides, which were introduced in India sometimes in mid-1980s as the answer to the bollworm pest problem in cotton.... The scientists as well as the farmers were very happy with the results for the first two to three years and then the insect started developing resistance. The pest-host relationship became so hostile that farmers were a dismayed lot and then began the spate of suicides.

Were the suicides spurred by the cotton pest? The suicides actually began when farmers were unable to control the American bollworm pest, which in turn devoured the crop. With crops failing as a result and with the farmers under heavy debt the only option for nearly 10,000 of the estimated 15,000 farmers in the past few years was to take the fatal route to escape the humiliation that comes along with indebtedness.

Who is accountable for these deaths? Now again, what will happen when the insect develops resistance to Bt cotton? What will happen when farmers once again start committing suicides? ... Already the pest has started developing resistance to Bt gene in Australia and China.

BAN IT!

But isn't there a viable alternative, you will ask? The only viable alternative is to ban the use of pesticides on cotton. But this will not happen... for obvious reasons. First, it requires a political will since the pesticides industry is a strong lobby. Secondly, this will mean that agri-Scientists spend more time in the crop fields than in airconditioned laboratories. American ballworm, the dreaded pest in the cotton field, actually has 27 natural enemies or predators in the same crop field. They are the first one to get knocked down by pesticides sprays. By the time the ballworm

appears on the scene, the field is bereft of its natural enemies. It then multiplies and merrily devours the crop and in the process develops immunity against the chemicals.

The Planning Commission has suggested an integrated pest management practice on cotton in its mid-term review of the 9th Plan. It has quoted from a study done by the National Centre for Integrated Pest Management, which tried the IPM approach in 200 hectares, involving 124 farmers in Nander district of Maharashtra. The average yield recorded under these experiments was 1,000 kg per hectare, three times the national average. And let's not forget, this was without the use of pesticides and GM crops. Such technologies will not be promoted simply because there is no industry behind it.

Low productivity of cotton is often cited as the reason for the introduction of Bt cotton.... Bt cotton does not increase yield. In China, where Bt cotton is grown in 700,000 hectares, there is no difference in the yield of Bt cotton and non-Bt cotton.

Even now, while on the one hand we find that the biotechnology industry as well as the DBT uses the same argument, the Government on the other has allowed the import of cotton into the country. In the years to come, it will not be because of low yields but because of heavy imports of cheap and highly subsidised cotton into the country that the cotton farmers will be faced with an unprecedented crisis of protecting their livelihoods. The introduction of Bt cotton will in addition rob the cotton farmers of whatever little they could benefit from. We will see more and more cotton farmers getting into the spiral suicide dance.

(Slightly abridged version of a write-up by Devinder Sharma, a New Delhi-based food and trade policy analyst.)

A 3-member delegation from the Construction Workers Federation of India (CWFI) consisting of Debanjan Chakraborti, General Secretary CWFI, Nogen Chandra Chutia and R. Singaravelu attended the 13th Congress of UITBB at Larnaka Cyprus from April 4-6, 2002 to attend (Cyprus)

REPORTS & EVENTS

AP STATE WORKSHOP ON ORGANISATION

The Andhra Pradesh State Workshop on Organisation to discuss the implementation of the 'Bhubaneswar Document' on Organisation was held on 31st March and 1st April 2002 at Hyderabad. Participants were selected on the basis of one for each 2000 membership, in addition to the State Committee members of CITU. Out of the 220 comrades invited 212 from all the districts in the State participated in the Workshop. 22 of them were women. WR Varada Rajan inaugurated the workshop. Hemalata also participated from the Centre.

S Veeraiah, General Secretary, AP State Committee of CITU, presented the report on organisation, which was already sent to the districts to enable the participants to study it in advance and come prepared for discussion. The report presented elaborate district wise and sector wise details of membership, cadre allotment, etc, which were collected through questionnaires sent to the districts from the State Centre. The report noted that due to the various struggles launched in the State, the prestige of CITU and its influence among the various sections of workers has gone up. Now CITU has members in 651 mandals against 555 mandals and to 223 industrial centres from the 169 industrial centres in 1999. Its contacts have increased from 597

to 778 mandals. But this is not reflected in the membership, which has been fluctuating since the last 4-5 years. In fact the membership registered a sharp decline from 2,14,163 in 1997 to 1,23,134 in 1998 and though there is some increase in later years, it remained only 1,58,014 in 2000. This, in spite of continuous struggles in almost all the major sectors in the State. After discussing various aspects of organisation like democratic functioning, cadre allotment and development, education and training etc, the report identified the district centre functioning as the most important weak spot, which needed immediate correction.

Representatives of the district committees and the different sectors participated in the discussions in two rounds, first on the report presented by the General Secretary and then on 'expansion and membership'. A total of comrades participated in the discussions. Later the report was unanimously adopted by the workshop.

Hemalata spoke on the necessity of improving the democratic functioning, involving the ordinary workers in the decision making and day-to-day functioning of the unions. She also emphasised the need to develop workingwomen cadre by forming women's sub committees in unions with a large number of women. It was also necessary to involve working

women cadre in the work of unions in industries with a large women workforce. Varada Rajan exhorted the cadres to learn the skills of doing several things at the same time, to develop themselves through self-education, and maintain regular contact with the workers. He also emphasised the importance of continuous struggles on the issues of workers and against the anti worker policies of the Government, on worker peasant alliance, and on the necessity of addressing the problems of the unemployed etc. BV Raghavulu, Vice President of the State Committee of CITU also spoke on the importance of organising regular militant struggles on the issues of the workers.

The workshop decided to make the joint industrial strike in the State on 16th April, a big success. It has also decided to conduct a membership campaign for a week in June. Several other immediate tasks were also taken in the workshop.

Tasks:

1. 16th April Strike: District level conventions in the first week of April and area wise and industry wise joint conventions and demonstrations, for the success of the General Industrial Strike on 16th April. Joint leaflets and posters to be brought out. Exhibition and sale on a wide scale of the video on the Public Sector 'Wheels of Progress'. To sell the

REPORTS & EVENTS

special issue of 'Prajasakti' on 16th April, particularly among the Public Sector workers, and those in heavy and medium industries.

2. **May Day:** To observe May Day in all the mandals in the State. To conduct meetings of mandal level activists and others in the third week of April and make the necessary preparations for May Day. The office bearers of the District Committees and the cadres at the District Centres to be given responsibility for different mandals

3. **Electricity tariff and Reforms:** To print and widely distribute the leaflet against the power tariff hike and power sector reforms. The draft would be sent from the State Centre.

4. **Chalo Hyderabad Programme of the Anganwadi Employees:** To extend all help to the union to make the AIFAWH programme of rally at the State capital a success

5. **Circulation of 'Karmika Lokam':** All the District Committees to prepare a concrete plan for the campaign for enrolling subscribers to the 'Karmika Lokam'

6. **Campaign on the problems of Unorganised Workers and Dharnas at District Headquarters:** Wide distribution of leaflets on the problems of the unorganised sector workers, industry wise, from 16th to 30th May. Mass dharnas in front of the District Collectorates on 27th May.

7. **Membership Campaign:** State wide membership campaign

from 1st to 20th June. The industries in which the scope for a large increase in membership - like Road Transport Corporation, anganwadi employees, Coal, Work charged employees, Village Panchayat workers, Municipal employees, Beedi workers, Contract workers, RTC Contract workers, Shop employees, Private transport workers, Construction etc - should be made the priorities in the campaign. In some industries, workers do not have the money during this part of the month. In such industries, membership campaign should be conducted in such periods, when workers have money.

8. **All the District Committees** should meet to finalise the plan for the campaigns among the unorganised sector workers and the membership campaign.

9. **Classes:**

5 day Classes for new activists will be held in July at Warangal and Tirupati. The fees will be Rs. 150/-. The dates will be intimated later. The names of the selected comrades should be intimated to the State Centre immediately. The comrades from Telangana region should attend the classes at Warangal and those from Andhra and Rayalaseema areas should attend the classes at Tirupati.

3 day mass classes for village chowkidars: Dates, venue, and fees will be intimated later, after discussing with their committee

10. **Fund:** All the district committees should pay the fund as

per the quota decided in the State Committee meeting in January.

11. **Medical Representatives' Strike:** The medical representatives have decided to go on for one-month relay strike on their 27 demands from 9th April to 8th May. In our State, the strike will take place for 3 days on April 23-25. The district committees should help in their strike.

12. **Elections Medical and Health:** For the first time elections for the recognition are being held in our State in Medical and Health on 15th May. We have our union in both the medical and health sectors. We must utilise the elections for our expansion. Particularly we must concentrate on the Primary Health Centres in the health sector. In districts where we do not have cadres in the union, the CITU must take the responsibility for conducting an effective campaign. Our symbol is "Red Cross in a Star".

13. **Conferences:** Our unions in the Road Transport, anganwadi, Private Transport sectors will be having their State Conferences. The respective unions will inform the dates, venues etc.

14. **Joint Workshop on 'Working Women':** The All India Workshop on Workingwomen will be held in Vijayawada. The details will be informed later.

15. **Annual Returns:** The annual returns for the year 2001 as well as those for the earlier years must be submitted to the State Centre by 30th April.

REPORTS & EVENTS

HANDLOOM WORKERS PLAN AGITATION

A meeting of the handloom Sub-Committee of the Textiles Coordinating Committee of CITU was held at Chennai on March 26. Recently, the Government of India had imposed an Excise Duty of 9.2 per cent on Hank Yarn used in handloom industry, as per the Union Budget proposals. This is for the first time that Excise Duty on Hank Yarn has been imposed. There was Handloom industry bandh in Tamilnadu on March 22. The weavers in Andhra Pradesh, Bengal, Karnataka etc. also launched agitations. The Chennai meeting reviewed these developments and decided to

intensify the agitations. The meeting decided that meetings of Handloom should be held separately and not tagged with the Coordination Committee meetings. A Statement was issued demanding withdrawal of the Excise Duty and other specific demands. The meeting decided to observe All India Protest Day on May 13, preceded by District level and State level rallies, hunger strike, etc. The meeting also decided to mobilise the Handloom workers for a demonstration at Delhi tentatively during the Monsoon Session, with the slogan, "Save the Handloom Industry,

Save the Handloom Workers".

The meeting also discussed the organizational position. It was noted with serious concern that although Handloom industry is there in all the states, yet, our unions are concentrated still in Tamilnadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal and Tripura only. Handloom being the biggest sector after agriculture in the unorganised sector, with over 10 million workers in the industry living under poverty line, all our State Committees must plan to form our unions in handloom sector to build up movement to resist the onslaught.

MONTH LONG STRIKE BY MEDICAL REPRESENTATIVES

All the major central trade union organizations like the AITUC, BMS, CIUT, HMS, INTUC, AICCTU, TUCC, UTUC and UTUC-LS have welcomed the decision of the sales promotion employees of the country to go on a month-long relay strike from April 9 to May 8, 2002. The strike is to take place at the call of the belonging to the Federation of Medical and Sales Representatives Associations of India (FMRAI). It is against the policy of the drug companies, mostly the multinationals, to recruit non-bargaining and non-unionised categories of employees such as sales officers and appoint franchisees with an intention to

deprive the employees of their legal rights.

Some of the 27-point charter of demands of the striking employees are as below:

1) Stop to hostile and repressive policies; stop to dismissals and transfers and other forms of victimization and harassment on sales grounds, while ignoring the economic recession, lack of industrial growth, the managements' failures and market failures. 2) Fixation and enforcement of minimum wages, ensuring proper working facilities and adherence to labour laws. 3) Holding industry-wise discussions with the industry associations, to stop unfair labour

practices and unethical means of selling by various managements, leading to black-marketing of medicines, etc.

The demands to be pressed by the strike also include people-oriented demands such as no change in India's Patent Act 1970, reduction in drug prices, availability of essential and life-saving drugs, and saving the public sector in the interests of the country's people. The said central trade union organisations have extended full support to the demands and the relay strike programme of the medical and sales representatives. They have also asked the workers of other categories to stage to stage solidarity actions.

REPORTS & EVENTS

ANGANWADI: MASSIVE RALLIES ON 8TH APRIL

Massive rallies of anganwadi employees were held in several State Capitals on the 8th of April, as per the call given by the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers. The major demands included regularisation, payment of Rs 2000/- pm for workers and Rs. 1200/- for helpers pending regularisation, and to stop privatisation or handing of the anganwadi centres to the panchayats. Besides, several local level problems were also focussed in the rallies.

Andhra Pradesh

An impressive procession was held from Indira Park to Sundarayya Park in Hyderabad, in which around 6,000 anganwadi employees from all the districts in the State participated, in spite of the scorching Sun. They shouted slogans demanding regular payment of honorarium, and reservation in the posts of Village Secretaries and implementation of all the directions of the Government of India, like provision of Group Insurance, Welfare Fund etc. The procession was led by Hemalata, General Secretary of the All India Federation, and Roja, General Secretary and Lalitamma, President of Andhra Pradesh Anganwadi Workers' and Helpers' Union. The procession culminated into a rally at Sundarayya Park. Hemalata, Roja, Veeraiah, General Secretary, AP

State Committee of CITU, Narasimhayya, MLA, and Jyoti, Secretary, AP Beedi and Cigar Workers' Union addressed the gathering.

Haryana

More than 3000 anganwadi employees from different districts of Haryana, held a rally in Chandigarh. AR Sindhu, Secretary, AIFAWH, addressed the rally, which was presided over by Jagmati Mallik, President Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union Haryana. Several leaders of the Haryana State Committee of CITU and the leaders of the SKS also addressed the rally. The principal Secretary to the chief Minister came to the rally to receive the memorandum.

Karnataka

Around 5000 anganwadi employees participated in the rally held in Bangalore on 8th April. S Varalakshmi, General Secretary, Karnataka Anganwadi Rajya Noukarara Sangha, and other CITU leaders led the procession. The anganwadi workers and helpers demanded immediate Uttaranchal, Kerala, Jharkhand, and several other States also witnessed massive rallies on the day. payment of the enhanced honorarium as announced by the Women Welfare Minister of Government of India. The State Women Welfare Minister

Motamma, had to cut short her visit in a near by district and come to the rally, to receive the memorandum, at the insistence of the anganwadi employees who sat in a dharna from morning to evening refusing to leave till she came and hear their grievances. But they were disappointed at her failure to give any concrete assurance on their demands.

Madhya Pradesh

A dharna of anganwadi employees was held in the capital city of Bhopal. Around 650 anganwadi employees from different districts participated in the dharna, which was led by Manyata Saroj and Kishori Varma, President and General Secretary of the Madhya Pradesh Anganwadi Sevik Sahayika Ekta Union. Sandhya Shaily, State Committee member of CITU and other CITU leaders also participated in the dharna. Besides the national demands, they were demanding implementation of all the benefits to which they were entitled to and withdrawal of the anganwadi centres from the management of the Panchayats. Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Uttaranchal, Kerala, Jharkhand and several other States also witnessed massive rallies on the day.

(Representatives of CITU, AITUC, IFTU, and some independent unions went to Ahmedabad to find out the impact of the communal violence on the working class. Mahesh Upadhyay of the Solidarity Centre and Meena Patel of the IUF coordinated the programme. S.B. Bharadwaj and K.Hemalata, Secretaries, represented CITU. Arun Mehta, General Secretary, Gujarat State Committee of CITU also joined them. They met representatives of the 'Gujarat Trade Union Federation', Jan Sang harsh Manch, and some local unions like the construction workers' union and the 'Manhole Workers' Union' etc, and visited some of the affected areas and one 'Muslim' camp and one 'Hindu' camp. Here is a report by Hemalata. - Editor)

"WE WILL NOT ALLOW ANYONE TO DIE LIKE THIS"

A ten-year-old girl claps with glee on hearing that 10 Muslims have been killed. Her teacher has told her that Muslims were vermin; they must be eliminated. One State level leader of an all India Federation wants to distribute the relief material taken by the national leadership to people belonging to only one community; some members of a big all India association take exception to the photographs of the affected Muslim community being published in their journal. These are the disturbing aspects of Gujarat today, which show that a not so small section of the working class has become divided in communal lines. The Sangh Parivar and the BJP have been successful in their divisive experiments in the Hindutva laboratory that is Gujarat. The roads separating the Muslim and Hindu areas are called 'Borders'. Many employees of Public Sector Undertakings, Banks, Insurance, and Central Government etc, belonging to the minority community have requested to be transferred to any place outside Gujarat. Nearly seven weeks after the communal violence has started, life remains uncertain for the thousands affected by it. Though

Narendra Modi claims that normalcy has returned and wants to close down the camps, facts speak otherwise. The busy streets of Lal Darwaja, near the Main Bus stand wear a deserted look. Very few people venture outside after 8pm; it is like an unofficial curfew. Fear and anxiety are writ large on the faces of those who had to come out. Swapan Ganguly, a member of the trade union delegation, which visited Ahmedabad recently, was stopped on the street by some persons, who wanted to find out if he was a Muslim as he sported a beard. It was not easy to get a vehicle to visit the places, which have witnessed violence. That people from outside still do not feel confident to go to Gujarat was evident from the almost empty train, which left to Ahmedabad from Delhi, while its counterpart from Ahmedabad was fully occupied.

PLANNED ATTACKS

All the local trade union leaders were unanimous that planned one sided attacks were carried out by trained VHP activists, who came in groups, looted the shops or houses, and burnt everything using petrol spraying machines or LPG cylinders and finished their work effectively

within minutes. The intention was clear. They looted and burnt the shops and other commercial establishments of the well to do Muslims to ruin them economically and burnt and killed the poor among them to eliminate them physically. They were allowed 72 full hours to complete their task. The police was directly involved. It was a common sight to see the VHP and Bajrang Dal activists carrying swords and other weapons and shouting 'Jai Sriram', sitting on the back of scooters, while the police drove the vehicles. Several MLAs and ministers were actively involved giving step-by-step instructions, some even directly participating and leading the murderers. Field level Police Officers were told how to act and what types of FIRs to file etc. When people went to complain, they were told that Police Inspectors already filed FIRs and that they could not be changed. Military arrived on the evening of 1st March and the action scenario gradually shifted to the rural areas.

TRIBALS MOBILISED

One distinct feature this time was the involvement of large number of tribal people in the riot this time. It was reported that the tribal people were encouraged

to occupy the burnt shops of the Muslims and promised that they would be supplied the goods for the shops. The workers' representatives felt that this phenomenon was a result of the economic reforms.

The adivasis had no work or income for more than a month due to the declining jobs in the rural areas. The RSS utilised the situation and lured them to be in the forefront in the attacks.

Mukul Sinha of the Gujarat Trade Union Federation, who is also an advocate, told that there remained many doubts on what exactly happened in Godhra, which is said to have led to the violence in other parts of Gujarat. There were several versions doing the rounds. While some say that it was a planned attack, others, including some Hindus, who claimed to be travelling in the same train, told that it was due to the provocation by the 'ram sevaks'. But what was clear was that the State Government had miserably failed in preventing the incidents and protecting the lives of the people both at Godhra and later in all of Gujarat.

The scene at Salaat Nagar, opposite the closed Ambika Mills

was like a graveyard. It was once a small slum of around 250 houses of workers - painters, construction workers, shutter repairers, mill workers, transport workers, cart pullers, rickshaw

hoodlums carrying swords, trishuls etc and 'Bisleri' bottles full of diesel, and shouting 'Jai Sriram' started to come in groups since the morning of 28th from three sides. The

police stood watching on the fourth side. 8-10 attacks were carried out during the day. The workers resisted till the night and then unable to resist further left their homes, which were all burnt down. Even now, the VHP and Bajrang Dal activists come daily brandishing swords and shouting slogans.

STORY OF TWO CAMPS

The camp at Aman Chowk initially accommodated around 7-8 thousand people, mostly from Akbar Nagar, where all the houses belonging to the Muslims were burnt. Almost all of them were informal

sector workers - brick kiln workers, construction workers, beedi rollers, agarbatti workers, garment workers, rag pickers, vendors, nawkers etc. The camp is crowded. It was erected by just putting up a shamiana in the open. There were very few toilets some of which were constructed by the Manhole Workers' Union. They were

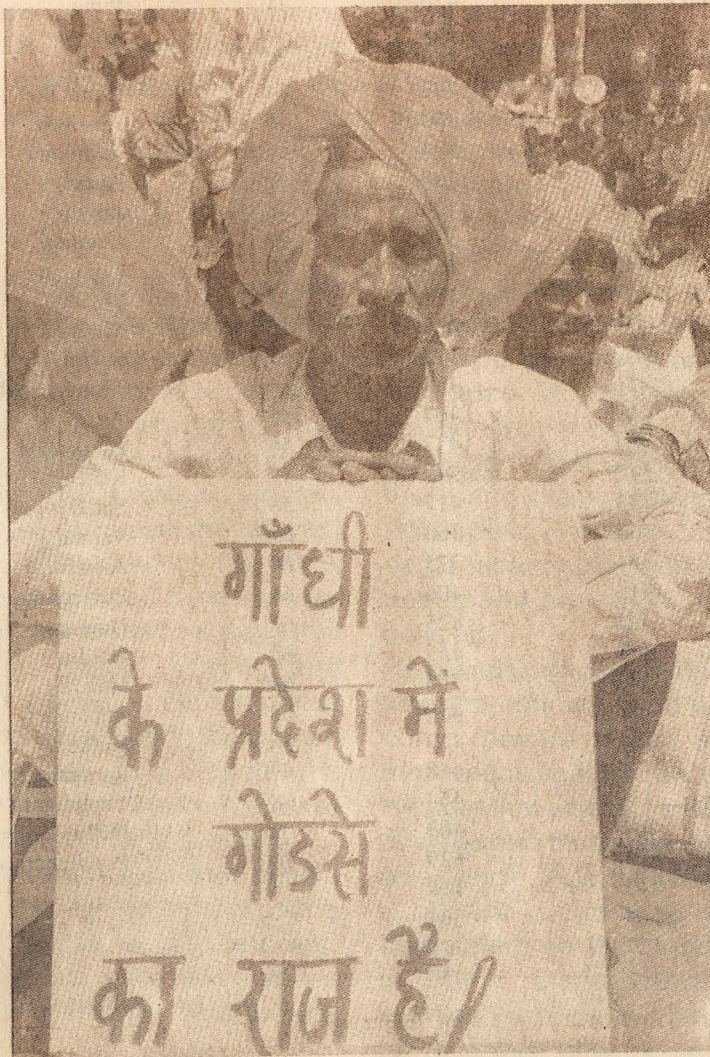


Photo Courtesy: The Hindustan Times
pullers, beedi rollers etc. 90% of the population are Muslims and the rest Hindus. Both the communities together used to observe 'Navarathri'. The Muslims of Salaat Nagar openly condemned the Godhra incident on the 27th. Now, except 2-3 houses carrying the letters 'Om' and the Swastika mark all have been completely ravaged. The

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX NUMBERS FOR INDUSTRIAL WORKERS ON BASE 1982=100

Sr. No.	Centre	Month		Sr. No.	Centre	Month	
		Jan'2002	Feb'2002			Jan'2002	Feb'2002
1	Gudur	447	438	38	Mumbai	543	550
2	Guntur	466	465	39	Nagpur	486	489
3	Hyderabad	460	459	40	Nasik	511	507
4	Visakhapatnam	460	456	41	Pune	514	517
5	Warangal	496	489	42	Solapur	481	479
6	D.D.Tinsukia	396	389	43	Barbil	423	419
7	Guwahati	479	472	44	Rourkela	418	404
8	Labac-Silchar	364	360	45	Amritsar	404	404
9	Mariani-Jorhat	411	404	46	Ludhiana	419	416
10	Rangapara-Tezpur	416	408	47	Ajmer	460	461
11	Monghyr	431	428	48	Jaipur	435	434
12	Bhillai	400	396	49	Chennai	500	503
13	Ahmedabad	462	464	50	Coimbatore	449	451
14	Bhavnagar	478	475	51	Coonoor	458	458
15	Rajkot	430	428	52	Madurai	454	451
16	Surat	473	472	53	Salem	454	454
17	Vadodra	456	454	54	Tiruchirapally	515	512
18	Faridabad	469	464	55	Agra	422	423
19	Yamunanagar	431	427	56	Ghaziabad	463	459
20	Srinagar	542	540	57	Kanpur	444	452
21	Jamshedpur	423	417	58	Saharanpur	428	432
22	Jharia	368	360	59	Varanasi	474	474
23	Kodarma	381	375	60	Asansol	449	443
24	Noamundi	415	406	61	Darjeeling	394	387
25	Ranchi-Hatia	428	425	62	Durgapur	540	536
26	Bangalore	448	445	63	Haldia	573	571
27	Belgaum	502	503	64	Howrah	526	528
28	Hubli-Dharwar	462	459	65	Jalpaiguri	413	406
29	Mercara	453	452	66	Kolkata	517	514
30	Alwaye	471	468	67	Raniganj	402	404
31	Mundakayam	456	454	68	Chandigarh	513	513
32	Quilon	464	463	69	Delhi	530	529
33	Thiruvananthapuram	523	529	70	Pondicherry	494	493
34	Balaghat	412	408				
35	Bhopal	507	501				
36	Indore	477	475				
37	Jabalpur	461	459				
						ALL-INDIA	467
							466

Additional Series of Labour Bureau			
State	Centre	December 2001	January 2002
Andhra Pradesh	1 Kethgudem	475	476
Himachal Pradesh	2 Himachal Pradesh	449	445
Rajasthan	3 Bhilwara	470	467
Madhya Pradesh	4 Chhindwara	441	432
Tripura	5 Tripura	443	424
Goa	6 Goa	568	569

SECOND VIMAL RANADIVE MEMORIAL LECTURE

N.M.Sundaram, General Secretary, All India Insurance Employees Association, delivered the Second Vimal Ranadive Memorial Lecture, on "Labour Market Reforms and Working Women" in a packed auditorium at B.T.Ranadive Bhawan, New Delhi. The lecture was organised by the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) to commemorate its leader and the former Secretary of CITU and All India Coordination Committee of Working Women on her 87th Birth Anniversary on 10th April 2002.

M.K.Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU presided over the meeting. K.Hemalata, Secretary, All India Coordination Committee of Working Women and CITU, gave the welcome speech. M.K. Pandhe, in his inaugural address, remembered, how Vimaldi dedicated her whole life towards the cause of the toiling people, particularly working women. He stressed the need to organise the women workers in trade unions without which their fight cannot be successful. He explained the measures taken by the CITU at various levels to ensure that women are brought in, given training and promoted to leadership positions. He explained that the economic reforms are affecting the women the most and that is why the CITU thought it is relevant to have the subject, "Labour market reforms" and Working Women for the lecture.

At the start, N M Sundaram stated that capital continuously abrogates the rights of the working class, but the present "labour market reforms" come in the specific context of a concerted attack not only by the Indian capitalist system but backed by international capital.

Speaking about the attack on the rights of working women specifically, he said that managements talk about the "cost" of providing maternity benefit, thereby equating cost with the whole social issue of child bearing and raising. Creche facilities are not provided even in factories, let alone in offices. The Minimum Wages Act is not implemented properly and women, who are not supposed to work in the night shift, are forced to do so. There are so many legal rights that the working class has won after long struggles, but these are observed more in the breach.

Whereas development should be associated with growth of employment, in the situation today, growth is accompanied by a reduction in the work force and wages, etc. The Finance Minister says that the economy is doing well, but simultaneously there are massive job cuts. When you talk of development, the stakeholders are the people in the community, not the shareholders. But globalisation sees only shareholders as stakeholders. It is therefore necessary for us to intervene, to change this pattern of development, not only as workers but also as people and citizens. The rule of international capital on the rampage has to be tackled not only in developing countries but also in developed countries, where permanency of tenure of job is a thing of the past. Now there is a situation there where there are more and more working homeless, not welfare homeless. There have been massive demonstrations by workers and employees in the developed countries to protest against these policies.

He called upon the women in the organised sector, who are educated and a capacity to organise, to come forward to join the struggles and wider movement against the policies of globalisation. He said that what is required is not only the unity of white and blue collar workers but of all workers and people. And the working women should play a catalytic role to bring all of them together.

Elaborating on the colonial context in which the Industrial Disputes Act was enacted, with the express purpose of providing a legalistic channel for redressal of workers grievances which would otherwise take to more revolutionary channels, now the government, in independent, democratic India, is trying to take away even the minimum rights provided by colonial laws.

He concluded with the enormity of the communal carnage in Gujarat, which is the most dangerous threat to the secular fabric of our society. He urged all to beware of falling into the trap of allowing religious sentiments to divide us and disrupt out unity, when the need of the hour is to use our power not only as workers but as citizens of the country, to overthrow this anti-people government.

PROTEST AGAINST PRIVATISATION

Banks, PSUs hit by strike

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 18. The biggest-ever industrial action to protest privatisation and the Central Government's "anti-labour policies" virtually brought the economy to a standstill today and caused a loss of Rs.100 crores. However, the one-day countrywide strike — involving public sector units and insurance and banking — was more or less peaceful. The coal and port sectors too were badly hit.

As the workers responding to the call given by all the major central trade unions — including the Sangh Parivar's Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh — joined the strike in a massive display of resentment, the public and private sector banks, including the Reserve Bank, wore a deserted look as did the insurance companies and the PSUs, and many state-Government run corporate entities.

Six States — the Left's pockets of influence — including



Striking bank employees outside the Reserve Bank of India headquarters in New Delhi on Tuesday. — Photo: Sandeep Saxena

Countrywide strike paralyses

10 million in 20 states skip work, Bengal, Jharkhand the worst hit

NS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 16

None of the largest countrywide strikes against the

ing and unloading operations also ground to a halt in most major ports as over 25,000 port workers also joined in the strike.

Work at the country's oil rigs and refineries, however, was not disrupted. While the entire country was badly affected by the bandh call, in States like West Bengal and Jharkhand the bandh was total.

All-India Trade Union Con-

situation of their 'struggle' if the government policies were not changed. Claiming hundred percent response to the strike call, leaders of the unions will meet in the first week of May to chalk out the next phase of the action programme.

Apart from the huge



Strikers Bay For Sinha Head As Govt

OUR BUREAU/UNI

New Delhi/Mumbai/
Kolkata/Chennai, April 16

Public sector unions, including those of banks and insurance companies, claimed complete success of their country-wide one-day strike called on Tuesday. A government statement also admitted that the agitation, which passed off peacefully, was near total nationwide as 15 million employees kept off their workplaces. Strikers cutting party lines, including Sangh Parivar affiliate Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, called for finance minister Yashwant Sinha's head.

employees and officers of public sector banks, regional rural banks, cooperative banks, etc, took part.

The Northern Zone Insurance Employees' Association claimed "almost 100 per cent" strike action "to save the economy and sovereignty being indentured to imperialist interests by the government".

Reports from Mumbai said the strike was complete in Maharashtra. The interbank forex market wore a deserted look, said dealers, adding clearing house operations were also hit. Dealers said attendance in dealing rooms also was thin and only scattered deals took place. In the call



Deserted counter of a bank in New Delhi bearing witness to one-day strike on Tuesday by about 15 million bank, FI and PSU workers in protest against government policies on labour reforms and privatisation