

Presidential Address

**CITU General Council Meeting
Calcutta, March 31—April 2, 1986**

Comrades,

At the outset on behalf of all of you I wish to pay homage to the memory of Olof Palme, Prime Minister of Sweden who fell a victim to the assassin's bullets. In his death the world has lost a valiant fighter in the cause of peace, a fighter who made significant contribution to the struggle against war and preservation of peace.

On behalf of all of you I offer my greetings to Nelson Mandela, the courageous fighter against apartheid, fighter for the freedom of the African people. His incarceration in the prison for two decades has not daunted his spirit and from the jail itself he has become a source of inspiration to hundreds of thousands fighting against the racist fascist regime of Botha. His voice has broken through the jail walls and prison bars and rings continuously with the challenge to his oppressors who are now openly and clandestinely supported by the imperialist powers. None is so shameful and outrageous in its support as Reagan's US Government which all of us must denounce with anger and indignation. I also wish to convey our greetings to the courageous wife to convey our greetings to the courageous wife of Nelson Mandela who carries forward the task of fighting those who enchain her people.

Left-Front Governments—Advanced Outpost of Democracy

Before I turn to other subject let me on your behalf congratulate the Left Front Government of West Bengal headed by our Vice President Com. Jyoti Basu on its successful defence of the demo-

cratic rights of the people of West Bengal and safeguarding their economic interests in the midst of a very perilous economic situation. For more than 8 years since the installation of the Left Front ministry democratic liberties have been completely protected in the State in contrast to what is taking place in Congress(I) ruled States where lathi charge, firing on striking workers and harijan killings go on uninterrupted. Besides, all Cong(I) ruled States are affected by the virus of communalism and the attack of divisive force, with the administration standing paralysed before them. But in the left front ruled state of West Bengal the divisive forces are checked by growing unity of the people, and the policies of the left front government protect this unity and strengthen national unity. The two left front ministries of West Bengal and Tripura stand as advanced outposts of democracy protecting the unity of the people, the country and the vital interests of the workers, peasants, the adivasis, and harijans—all down trodden sections, throwing their weight against the vested interests, using the administration as an instrument of popular will. In these two states the Governments stand committed to protect the rights of Muslim minority and fight communalism coming from the majority or minority community. The working class and its organisations highly appreciate this policy and lend their full support to the ministries against which the Central Government and Cong(I) ruling party continue to conspire with a view to destabilising them.

Comrades on behalf of all of you I greet our valiant working class of West Bengal, our strongest base. I greet the jute workers who recently waged a successful struggle for their demands and whose union, the Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union is the biggest union affiliated to the CITU. The working class of Bengal has successfully waged many heroic battles in recent months, organised protest actions and has been able to defend its interests in the most adverse circumstances. In all its activities it is helped by the Left Front Government which ensures complete freedom for its movement.

The working class of Bengal led the great protest against the price hike imposed by the Central Government. Its strike of 11th February became a signal for the rest of the country to take up the fight against price rise.

Hail The Peace Proposal

An outstanding event of recent months in the international

world is the successfully concluded 27th Congress of the Communist Party of Soviet Union. In the midst of a capitalist world badly affected by unemployment and unable to reap the fruits of industrial technical revolution for the benefit of society, the CPSU Congress announced the complete superiority of the socialist system which is now embarking upon a new plan of accelerated economic development to raise the living standard of the people to still a higher level. This was being accomplished when huge resources had to be diverted for the purpose of defence because of the war situation created by US imperialism and its allies. The Congress expressed firm confidence in achieving its economic goals and at the same time strengthening the defence capacity of the Soviet Union. Firmly adhering to the laws of development of socialist society the Congress mapped out further successes for its planning and took steps to bring the relations of production in conformity with the huge development of productive forces achieved under the rapid growth of industrial technical revolution. It meant heightening the efficiency of centralised guidance of the country, strengthening the role of the centre, in implementing the main goals of the party's economic strategy and in determining the rate and proportions of national economic growth, and its balanced development. At the same time it meant the practice of interfering by the centre in the daily activities of the lower economic links must be overcome.

Uphold Revolutionary Traditions of May Day

Comrades, the May Day centenary will be observed within a few weeks all over the world. This great day of international solidarity must be observed fittingly by all our trade unions, all our state committees honouring the memories of those who fell victims to the Chicago massacre, those who were sent to the gallows by an enraged capitalist class because they dared to demand 8 hour day and called for a curb on the unbridled exploitation of the working class. The day must recall the great advances the international working class movement has made during the last hundred years with one third of the world going socialist with the old colonial system smashed and the enslaved countries of Asia and Africa emerging as free countries, free from foreign domination.

On this day our unions must remember the revolutionary traditions of May Day following which one third of the world marched to socialism and neglect of which kept the workers of advanced

countries enchained to capitalist slavery.

Revolutionary content of May Day consists of raising such partial demands on the Day as have (1) revolutionary consequences; (2) expressing firm determination to end the capitalist system, establish working class power and socialism; (3) defence of proletarian internationalism and international unity of the working class. Confining May Day activities only to raising some partial demands and neglecting the other two aspects takes away the revolutionary content of this historic day. The working class on this day cannot neglect the immediate political task facing it, if it wants to achieve socialism. It also cannot forget its international duty and foil all efforts of the capitalist class to split it.

On all occasions the danger to international unity arises from the wars organised by ruling capitalist classes. It has been the tradition of May Day to oppose all such wars and proclaim the unity of the international movement in the battle to end the world capitalist system.

International Solidarity Against War

Today protection of international solidarity and unity of the working class, has assumed supreme importance. The international situation is marked by US imperialist drive for nuclear war against the socialist Soviet Union. The war that is being planned is the war of imperialism against socialism, against the working class conquests and achievements over the last hundred years. It is also a war for re-establishing the global domination of US imperialism over the newly liberated countries. The ideological and the military strength of the Socialist camp stands as a deterrent to the imperialist plans of domination and therefore US imperialism is attempting to secure military superiority over the Soviet Union to launch a war against it. The Star War Project of Reagan is part of the offensive preparations.

In contrast to these plans of the USA, the Soviet Union and Comrade Gorbachev have made several proposals to stop the progress towards war and gradually eliminate all nuclear weapons. But the US imperialists refuse to respond.

In these circumstances international unity of the working class demands constant opposition to war and full support to Gorbachev's proposals for peace. On May Day it must be our endeavour to carry the message of peace to the workers and expose US plans for war. The defence of the socialist camp against imperialist war plans

constitutes the essence of internationalism.

Respond to AUCCTU Appeal

Comrades the situation is serious as can be seen from the appeal of the AUCCTU to the working people and the trade unions of the world. The appeal which was sent to our organisation also calls for support to the proposals made by Comrade M.S. Gorbachov for advancing a programme of complete and world wide elimination of nuclear arms before the year 2000. It says "on behalf of one hundred & thirty seven (137) million Soviet trade union members the AUCCTU appeals to the working people of all countries to all trade union organisations to give their all around support to the Soviet Union's large scale programme for the complete elimination of nuclear arms."

It says "It is only through concerted efforts that the edifice of lasting peace can be erected. Further development depends to a considerable extent on how much united the battle front will be in fighting against the danger of war. Extensive opportunities for working people to take joint action in defence of peace are offered by the campaign "Trade Unions and Working People for Peace and Jobs" launched at the initiative of the World Federation of Trade Unions.

The appeal further adds "we are sure that the trade unions must put aside all differences and reject all that divides them when it comes to the struggle for safeguarding peace, against the threat of a new war. In this we must be united just in matters relating to common vital interests of those whom the trade unions are called upon to protect. The Soviet trade unions adhere exactly to these view points.

"Any delay is intolerable. In order to enter the third millenium without the weapons of mass annihilation it is necessary to act today. May 1986 designated by the UNO as an international year of peace must become a turning point in resolving the most pressing issue of our times—that of preventing a nuclear holocaust."

Comrades, we all must fully respond to this appeal for international unity from the people and the working class which only four decades back sacrificed 20 million lives to save humanity from fascist domination. The appeal should spur us to overcome our weaknesses in regard to the peace movement and urge us forward to to move the working class and the people against the danger of nuclear war created by the US imperialism and for maintenance of

peace.

Welcome Initiative

Comrades the initiative recently taken by the INTUC leadership to call a meeting of several trade union centres to develop common understanding on the question of war, fight against divisive forces and express protest against apartheid constitute a sign of growing awareness of wider and vital problems facing the working class and the trade union movement. It is a welcome step and every effort should be made to create common consciousness and a sense of urgency among the workers regarding these problems.

Denounce Divisive Forces

Comrades, you all are aware that there is a rapid deterioration in the political situation with divisive forces on the offensive, the Cong(I) Government a helpless spectator unable to combat them and often compromising with them and the mass of people unable to intervene and stop the rot. The deterioration of the situation in Punjab is marked by a growing offensive of the confrontation and their surrender before these forces and the complete inability of the Cong(I) party which still wields considerable influence on the people of Punjab to intervene on behalf of national unity. In Assam the new ministry pursues separatist and secessionist aims and its followers run a campaign of intimidation and murder of opponents. The ministry is also preparing for steps which may lead to expulsion of thousands of Indian citizens from Assam dubbing them a foreign nationals. The Cong(I) Government at the Centre and in the States compromises with these elements and in its own selfish interests take steps which help and encourage the communal and divisive forces. The unlocking of the Ram Janma Bhoomi temple in the midst of the present critical situation can be described only as an act of unmitigated provocation to the Muslim masses which is now being fully utilised by fanatical communal leaders. Simultaneously the Cong(I) government to protect its muslim electoral base compromises with the worst section of Muslim communalists, on the question of the right of Muslim divorcee woman to secure maintenance from her husband. The legislative measure which it has placed before the Parliament is a shameful and treacherous piece surrendering the rights of Muslim women to the jackals of obscurantism. No previous Central Govt. had degraded itself so much and prostrated itself in such a manner before

religious bigotry and orthodoxy as the Rajiv Government. The explanation offered by the Prime Minister in justification of the measures is on par with that offered by many Shankaracharyas in defence of untouchability.

As a result the divisive forces are on the attack everywhere and the unity of the toiling people and the working class is being directly affected. The trade union movement and the working class must take a common stand to combat these anti-national forces and defeat the game of the imperialists who are supporting them from behind. It is the immediate duty of the National Campaign Committee, all Central Trade Unions and all Industrial Federations to enter the battle to defeat the forces of communalism and casteism and assert the class unity for the working class and protect the unity of the country.

As I have already mentioned, the initiative taken by the INTUC should help the trade union movement to unite for this offensive.

Fight Against all Pervading Corruption

The crisis is affecting all aspects of our national life and in State after state, in city after city, law and administration is crumbling down and is openly used in the defence of vested interest. The stench of corruption pervades the entire social life. From Chief Minister of states to ordinary police officers and jail officials are caught in this web of corruption. In Delhi notorious convicts flushed with money are able to run the jail administration, and escape with the direct help of jail officials. Is it any wonder that in this atmosphere bribery and corruption, foreign espionage should thrive in the country and its tentacles spread far and wide. The recent exposure of CIA net work in Delhi must be taken seriously by all patriotic people. It also shows the danger created by the present administration of the security of our country.

This situation itself is the result of the process of the undermining of our economy that has been going on for the last few years.

People's Answer To Price Rise

Comrades, you all know that the Rajiv Government announced last year its New Economic policy which now reveals itself as continuous depredations on the incomes and living standards of the people and growing attacks on their jobs in the name of modernisation of economy. The last budget saw the first phase of this policy. It gave concessions amounting more than 1000 crores of rupees to the private capitalists and businessmen while just before the budget

it levied new burdens of more than 1000 crores of rupees on the common people.

This year again a new burden of not less than thousand crores of rupees was imposed through the hike in administered prices of vital commodities and necessities of life. There have been widespread protests and bandhs against this fleecing of the people. The battle must be carried on and the CITU unions must continue to mobilise people's protest against the new imposts. The widespread bandh in many states show that the people are ready to move into action if a call comes from several organisations.

The New Policy however goes much beyond giving concession to big capital and addition of burden on the common man.

It is a retreat from the earlier position which considered the public sector as important and accepted the need of control over private sector. The national planning inspite of its defects and class bias was intended to serve the need of protecting Indian economy against subjugation to foreign capital and western interests.

The postulates of the new policy are removal of controls, freedom for the private sector, denigration and growing disbandment of the public sector, denigration of national planning, and opening the Indian market to the multinationals. In short the entire country is being exposed to the uncontrolled exploitation of the private sector and foreign multinationals with government control day by day removed.

Danger from Multi-Nationals

The free entry of multinationals into the Indian market will not only mean unbridled exploitation of the workers and the people but it will lead to the danger of undermining our economic independence. The multinationals are not satisfied with capturing economic market but conspire to bring down governments and establish their economic and political domination over countries. The restriction that hitherto operated against the entry of multinationals are being removed and the people of our country are being exposed to great political danger.

Stop Denigration of Public Sector

Large sections of workers and many trade unions have acted in the past as if the way the public sector functioned or what the government did with it was no concern of theirs. But this was a wrong attitude of the working class of a newly liberated country. The public sector in India cannot be compared with the public sector of

Britain. For instance, their both the public and private sector are instruments of imperialism and function under state monopoly capitalism.

But in newly liberated countries a well managed public sector based on strategic industry is an instrument of defending the economy against imperialist depredations and dependence on imperialism. It does serve the interests of indigenous capitalism. But it obstructs the penetration of imperialism into the economy. This is why in India when the public sector started its activities in strategic industries it was largely supported by the advanced trade union movement and all progressive forces. In spite of a great deal of mismanagement the public sector contributed to defending the independence of our economy to a great extent. It has been so because in a large number of cases it was directly helped by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. In fact, we would not have been able to build our strategic industries if help from socialist countries were not available.

This aspect of the public sector has not been properly put before the workers by the trade unions. Today it is all the more necessary to do so because under the pressure of the imperialists, the World Bank and the IMF the official policy is denigrating the public sector and giving more encouragement to the private sector. But the matter does not end here. The denigration of the public sector is further intended to invite the foreign multinational companies to help India in her technological advance.

Comrades, the New Policy of Rajiv Gandhi not only contains proposals for the denigration of the public sector. It may also end in placing the public sector undertakings under the technological and managerial control of foreign companies. In fact it seems a process of penetration into the public sector by foreign multinationals is already starting if we are to believe reports appearing in the press. The penetration is taking place in the name of technological agreements with non-residential Indian capital which is often a sign board for foreign multinationals.

Comrades, the officers of the public sector undertakings recently entered a strong protest against the way they were treated by the authorities. They observed an all India protest day on the 13th March voicing following demands: 1. Uniform dearness allowance neutralisation. 2. Amendment of Payment of Bonus Act for abolishing bonus eligibility ceiling limit 3. Implementation of Interna-

tional Labour Organisation Compendium on good practices for professional workers specifically in relation to right to form association and collective bargaining and role in decision making. 4. Pension scheme for public sector employees in addition to present retirement benefits. 5. Definition of legal status of officers in public sector. 6. White paper on government policies relating to public sector particularly with reference to (1) capacity utilisation of existing investment in technology manufacturing facilities and man power, (2) import liberation and (3) participative management.

The CITU supports these demands some of which are not only in the interest of the officers but in the interest of the country as a whole.

Machination of the Multinationals

Guided by the spirit of patriotism the Officers' Association exposes the claims of the Government to justify its present policies of denigration of the public sector. They say, "yet another attack on the public sector is that it is not competitive and an exposure to international competition would streamline such enterprises. This policy is merely an attempt to hide the vital truth that several multinationals in the capital goods industry are badly hit by recession and would resort to anything to get the Indian market." They further say, "Is it not amazing that when the Indian shipyards are starved with orders, the government of India under the SAFAUN scheme provides subsidies for the Indian merchant navy to import ships? Similarly, while no country allows the import of electrical equipment if they indigenously manufacture electrical power equipment, the world imports are allowed while BHEL starves. The Chairman of BHEL is reported in the press as having stated, "No country kills its own indigenous industry. We are concerned that if orders went outside, BHEL's capacity utilisation would be reduced. We will fight for the orders".

"It must be clearly understood that there are no short cuts in technological development. Technology imports in a close market are in essence an alternative route for penetration into the market that too on a preferential basis. Indian scientists and technologists are quite capable of meeting a substantial requirement of industrial technology. What is lacking is the political will to ensure self reliance. We the representatives of the public sector officers warn the public that the present policies of down grading the public

sector and of liberalising import both of equipment and technology will prove disastrous in the long run."

Our apprehensions about the New Economic Policy are now fully supported by the officer's association. They also realise that under the guise of opening the public sector to competition, penetration of multinationals is bound to take place endangering the interests and economic independence of the nation.

Introduce Democratic Management

Under these conditions it is absolutely essential that the public sector is opened to democratic management by the full participation on equal terms of workers, officers and the management. Instead of opening the public sector to foreign competition it should be opened to democratic and participate management to increase its efficiency to serve the interest of the country.

Workers' Participation on Equal Status

Comrades, the CITU is repeatedly demanding workers' participation in management on the basis of full equality and on the basis of representation through a secret ballot of the entire workers of the factory or concern. Both elements, equal status and representation on the basis of ballot, are necessary if the entire mass of workers are to be involved in running the concerns and inspired to make its effective contribution to efficiency to serve the interest of the country. But the government refuses to accept either of these conditions and proposes a farcical form of workers' participation. It does not guarantee or accept status of equality for the workers. It refuses to accept that workers' representatives should be chosen by secret ballot. It does not propose to go beyond the vote of trade union membership and that too based on check off system. This necessity leaves out of account a major section of the workers who are thus deprived of all interest in promoting the efficiency of production.

One can easily understand the opposition of the Government to the demand for secret ballot. But it appears very strange that some trade union organisations also should side with the government on this issue and decline to support the demand for ballot under this or that specious excuse. It shows utter lack of confidence in the mass of workers and resistance to draw the entire mass of workers into the task of running the concern.

Growing Industrial Sickness

Comrades, notwithstanding the official claims of higher rate of

industrial production the number of sick concerns continues to increase. Now more than 500 big industrial units and more than 90 thousand small units are sick. This has imposed untold sufferings on the lakhs of working class families with no sign of relief in the near future.

On the other hand there are indications that conditions are going to be more difficult and more concerns will go sick or be closed as a result of the import liberalisation policy of the government. Many industries are threatened with closure with the liberal import of materials, components and other products. Only certain big industries and monopolists are taking advantage of the situation and their employment capacity is much less because of the import of sophisticated machinery and computers.

Monopolists Thrive

The beneficiaries of the new policy can be clearly identified from a review of Indian economy made by Shri R.P. Goenka, President-elect of the FICCI appearing in the Economic Times dated March 22. According to Mr. Goenka, "Industry has responded well to the new opportunities.... by the end of the December 1985 about 1196 registrations had taken place in the 25 broad industry groups delicensed, totalling approximately Rs. 4000 crores...Seventeen MRTP and 27 non MRTP companies have availed of the broad basing facilities. MRTP companies in industries exempted from section 21 and 22 of the MRTP Act also invested more specially in electronic etc., total investment being of the order of Rs. 2889 crores."

Such is the situation facing us and our trade union movement is called upon to resist the effect of the new policy. This calls for greater unity and greater concerted action and not weary calls for symbolic protest or anaemic dharnas.

While Workers are Ruined

The textile and jute workers continue to face a difficult situation. More textile mills are being closed. Recently the NTC ordered four more mills to be closed throwing thousands of workers out of job. We must therefore urgently pursue our demands for the nationalisation of jute and textile industries and create sanction for it. The trade union movement is fully prepared to meet its responsibility in any nationalised concern and discuss all problems including the problem of more efficient production and modernisation of industry in the interest of nation the people and the working class.

Growing Unemployment

Comrades, there is nothing more heart rending, nothing which makes us more indignant than the mounting increase in both urban and rural unemployment. The figure of registered unemployed has now reached 3 crores and this does not bother to get registered. No one really knows the number of rural unemployed. The figure may vary between four and five crores and even more.

Year by year young men and women full of vigour, youthfull hope and a robust outlook on life enter the labour market from schools, colleges, peasants and working class families only to meet with denial of opportunities to contribute to social wealth. Unable to earn a living they undergo the humiliation of living all the expenses of relatives and others or from a chance job which may come in their way. Crores of India's young citizens see no prospect before them except this degraded existence. Forty years of Congress rule is resulting in the social killing of a whole generation.

The trade union movement of our country, the CITU and its unions must be severely indicted for neglecting this young section of the working class and confining itself defending the emolument of those on permanent jobs. In this way the trade union movement becomes a partner of the capitalist class to make the younger generation the scape goat of the crisis of the capitalist path.

Fight for Right to Work

It seems hardly any State Committee can boast of any significant steps to mobilise the unemployed to call their conference and agitate for immediate relief. Barring citing figures of increasing unemployment, the trade union movement has done very little. Hunger Marches, raising the direct demands for immediate relief under the guidance of organised trade union movement will rouse this vital section of the working class to fight for its right and strengthen the untiy of the class.

The West Bengal Government has provided unemployment relief to the unemployed but the Cong(I) government has done nothing in this direction. Some of them or at least some Cong(I) leaders try to solve the problem by inciting one section of workers against another on the slogan of jobs for the sons of the soil.

In the May Day centenary celebration a special day should be assigned for raising the demands of the unemployed and calling for right to work to be embodied in the Constitution a as fundamental right. The workers must be told that the right work is not just a

dream but is concretely embodied in the Constitutions of all Socialist countries. To secure it, political power must be in the hands of working class and the people.

The General Council should direct the State Committees to take effective steps to organise the unemployed, call their conferences, ventilate their grievances and rally the organised workers in defence of their demands.

The organised movement must rouse the entire working class against the steps and plans of the government which are leading to further unemployment. Apart from the computerisation drive the public sector authorities, the Central Government and a number of State Governments have stopped further recruitment and refused to fill vacancies that arise due to natural wastage. Tens of thousands of posts remain vacant. Besides both in public sector and government departments authorities are imposing compulsory or the so-called voluntary retirement on a number of employees and workers. In the banks also the same procedure is axeing nearly 20 thousand workers of the Food Corporation of India. And according to press reports the Coal authorities have considered that nearly one lakh workers are surplus in the coal industry.

Give up Feudal Outlook Towards Working Women

In this retrenchment offensive the women employees and women workers are the first victims and they have to bear the brunt of the offensive. Very few trade unions attach importance to defending the jobs of women workers. The neglect of working women by the trade unions constitutes an intractable disease which will have to be dealt with by uprooting the cause, namely the survival of feudal outlook towards women.

These plans of the Government and the authorities must be fought continously and a demand must be made to fill in the vacancies created during the last so many years. The CITU unions should lend their full support to the employees' unions and champion their cause. Simultaneously similar plans which are hatched in the private sector have been to be fought. A large number of private concerns are replacing permanent labour by casual or contract labour to escape payment of dearness allowance and contribution to ESI and the provident funds. These malpractices must be fought vigorously and unitedly.

Fight Against Arbitrary Powers

Comrades we all must congratulate the State Government employees and their federation on their magnificent strike to protest against sections 310 and 311 (a) (b) of the Constitution. More than 4 million employees participated in this gigantic protest showing extraordinary unity. They had to launch this protest because the two sections, as now interpreted by the Supreme Court, leave arbitrary powers of dismissal in the hands of Government. And the authorities have already taken advantage of this to dismiss a number of locomen who had gone on strike in 1981 to secure implementation of earlier agreement of reduce hours of work.

Organise the Unorganised Workers

Comrades, it is a matter of some satisfaction that at least some of our State Committees like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhar Pradesh and Delhi have been made efforts to reach the workers of unorganised sector. Several of these committees have held conventions on the question of revision of minimum wages and other demands of unorganised workers. In Karnataka 30 thousands were arrested when government offices were picketed in August 1985 and there was a strike embracing over 5 lakh of workers.

The unorganised sector forms a very important militant and most exploited section of the working class and our movement cannot be said to be completely representative movement unless it embraces and inspires this vast section.

Collapse of Labour Legislations

Comrades, we all realise that there is a virtual collapse of all labour legislations including the safety legislations deliberately organised by the authorities to attack and withdraw statutory concessions and rights. The courts also had several time observed that legislation itself was farcial and its violation could be virtually done with impunity by the employing class. Now recently the crooked ways of the government were exposed by Bajju Ban Riyan, CPI(M) M.P. in connection with an amendment to the Contract Labour Bill.

What is the purpose of this new amendment? Previously it was provided that the government of that state where the Central unit is functioning shall be the appropriate government for intervening and settling any dispute between the contract labour and the contractor. But now the power is being vested in the Central

Government. Why? Com. Bajju Ban Riyan answers why: "Sir over the last one or two years labour dispute developed in certain Central units located in West Bengal like the Burnpur Steel Project, the Durgapur Steel and Fertilizer Corporations, the Metro Railways, etc., where contract labour was working. In these cases the Labour Commissioner of the State Government of West Bengal intervened and resolved these disputes to the satisfaction of the workers. The State Government arranged for the regularisation of the workers and saw to it that their outstanding dues are also paid." This was of course not to the liking of the Central Govt. They and the Cong(I) State Governments were accustomed to use the police against the contract labourers and suppress their struggle. Bajju Ban Riyan gives instances: "About two years back the contract labour working under the Assam Oil Division agitated for the payment of their dues. They were mercilessly beaten up by the CISF and driven away without paying them their dues." Similar fate overtook the contract workers at the Panipat Fertilizer Project.

This is the secret of the new amendment. The Central Government wants to deal with contract workers directly to beat them up into submission. This is how labour legislation is being improved under the Congress(I) rule.

Indaunted Facing Repression

Comrades, the working class continues to fight its battle in the most adverse circumstances facing it. Every year more than a million workers risk their jobs, their livelihood, their wages, when they take up the fight against the employers' offensive. Since 1982 between January and November, 82 million working days were lost in disputes involving 1.4 million workers. In 1983 the corresponding figures were 40 million days lost involving 1.23 million workers. In 1984 between January and August 45 million man days were involving 1.76 million workers. In 1985 during the same period 17 million man days were lost and 2.06 million workers were involved.

In these strikes the workers had not only to undergo privations and sufferings but face police repression and goonda attacks. The workers in Himachal Pradesh, in Haryana, had to face the most illegal action of the police including kidnapping with the connivance of the police with the hired goondas of the management. But our young units are carrying on the struggle courageously and

bravely and consolidating the strength of the CITU. We must all appreciate the courage and devotion of our CITU units in Punjab which have to uphold the working class flag in the midst of a campaign of murder and terror, greet our comrades in Assam who had to face a similar situation and our comrades in Tamil Nadu who were conducting the struggle of the working class in the midst of rise chauvinistic sentiments and feelings.

It is only the working class which with all its faults continues to defend its interest and fights the employers and the government. It is our duty to harness and spirit of resistance for vigorous defence of the interests of the workers.

Fight for the Cause of Peasantry, Agricultural Labour

It is our responsibility to link this resistance with the demands of the peasantry which still continues to be neglected with the demands of agricultural workers and above all to link it with the demands of democratic struggle against authoritarianism. It is through our intervention that the scattered struggle will create a consciousness which can unitedly fight harijan baiting on the one hand and attacks on Muslim minority on the other. Only a strong working class movement continuously increasing its consciousness and spreading its influence over the rural areas will check the atrocities on harijans and inspire religious minorities to stand united with the working class.

Increase Independent Activities

Taking this responsibility into consideration it has to be admitted that our intervention has not been effective. It has not been effective even in the economic struggle considering the large number of strikes that go untouched or unled by the CITU. It is necessary to overcome this lacuna and be with the workers whenever they are in action. This means the independent activities of the CITU must increase the times and they must reach the spontaneous struggles breaking out in several places.

Without such increase in independent activities the required trade union unity to meet the economic offensive cannot be built. The habit of waiting on others before moving further in the name of trade union unity is a pernicious habit which leads to slowing the pace of trade union unity. The CITU unions and leaders must realise that the building and strengthening of trade union unity

depend on their activities and incessant effort.

Use Strength of United Movement

Comrades, while we certainly appreciate the unity built around the National Campaign committee it is necessary to remark that the momentum it earlier gave to united mass action is losing its force. In the midst of a grave economic situation if united activity is unable to go beyond symbolic protest there is something radically wrong with our ways of functioning and it must be located. Trade Union unity cannot be reduced to some kind of routine affair with no increase in the weight of mass action, on the quality of mass protest.

In reality the power of united trade union movement if it is effectively used, is a mighty power which was seen in the anti-price hike bands organised in a large number of states. The participation of working class was most enthusiastic in many states and set the pace for mass response. I congratulate our working class and our CITU unions on the massive expression of protest against the price rise.

There is no doubt that in spite of our weaknesses the net of trade union unity is widening and larger and larger section of working class is responding to its call. The participation of INTUC union in West Bengal and Kerala in joint calls on some important issues constitute an important advance for our struggle for unity. On your behalf I have already appreciated the initiative shown by the INTUC on the question of united stand of all trade unions and in defence of peace.

Fight for World Peace

Let me therefore conclude my speech on the question of world peace vital to the world working class movement and to the people of the world. The working class of our country must realise that the non-alignment policy pursued by the Government is an important factor in strengthening the world balance in favour of peace and facilitate our task to fight against the war mongering plans of US imperialism. Karl Marx had said that the maturity of a working class is seen from the interest it takes in the foreign policy of its government. It cannot be said that our movement has taken much interest in influencing, shaping and strengthening the policy of non-alignment which helps us to fight the imperialist war mongers. Today immense pressures are being exercised to change this policy taking advantage of the serious economic situation in which

the Government of India find itself. To exercise vigilance and defeat all attempts to change the foreign policy in the reactionary direction is an integral part of our task to fight war, to protect peace and protect the gains of hundred years of world working class movement.

Let our General Council in this May Day centenary year assure the working class of Soviet Union and other countries that our organisation and our working class will do everything to frustrate imperialist plans of war against the peoples of the world to protect peace and gains of socialism. Let me once again assure the AUCCTU that its appeal will be warmly responded to by our CITU unions and by the workers of India.

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