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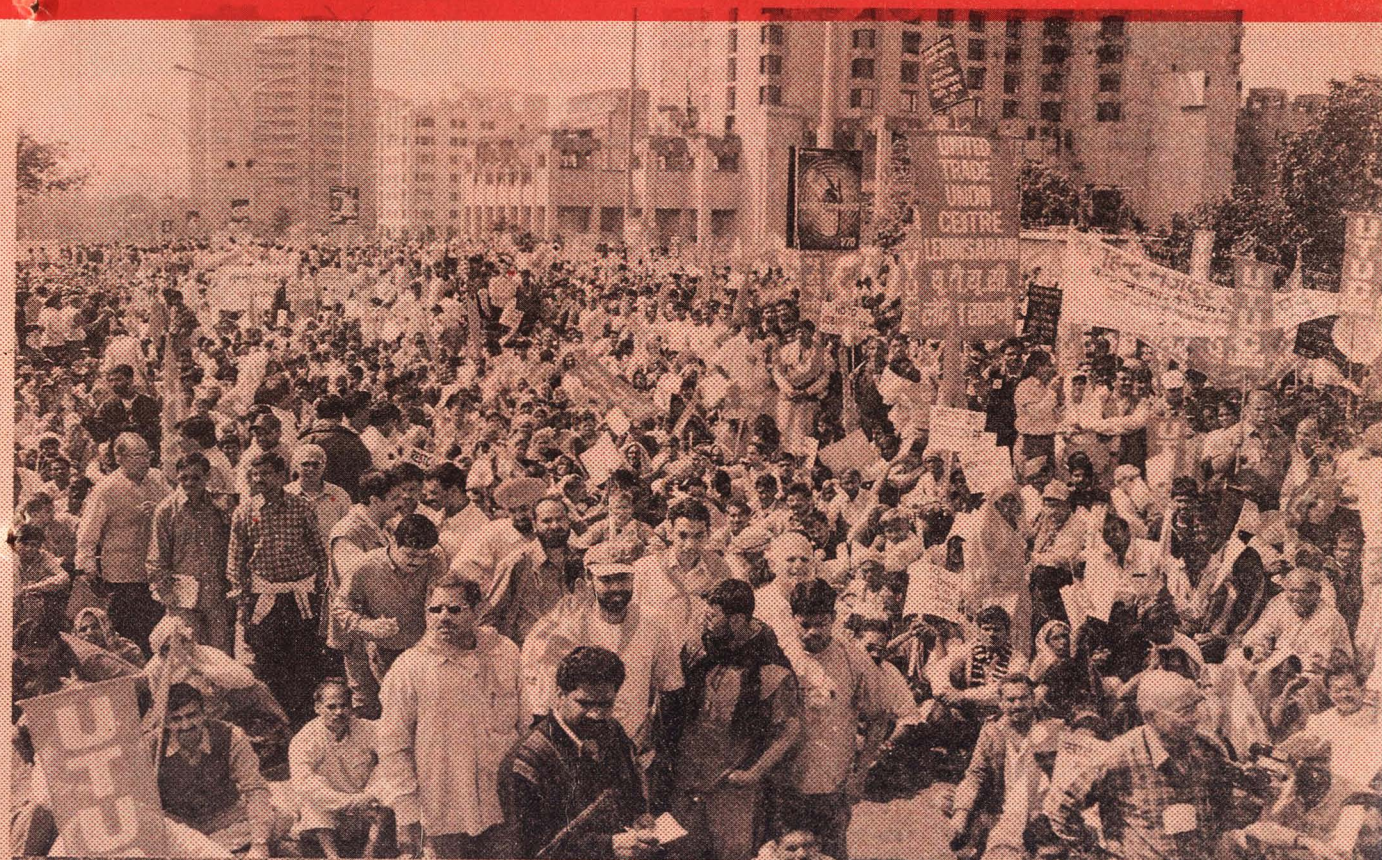
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THE WORKING CLASS

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MASSIVE MARCH TO PARLIAMENT: 26 FEBRUARY, 2003

PORTO ALEGRE: WORLD SOCIAL FORUM 2003

The 2003 World Social Forum was held in Porto Alegre from the 23rd to the 28th of January, with the resounding slogan of "Another World Is Possible" Joined by about one lakh participants, such as delegates, observers, press, professionals and activists from all over the world, the WSF recorded a total of 20.763 registered delegates, representing 717 organizations from 156 countries. 4.094 journalists from 1.423 different media networks from 51 countries registered to cover the event. 1.286 workshops were held and about 650 volunteers worked on the 2003 WSF.

Last October, the leader of the Workers Party, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, was elected president of Brazil, and after assuming office, he visited Porto Alegre to address the third World Social Forum here on Jan. 23. Lula arrived before the sea of waving flags and cheering voices and asserted that his new government was committed to reforming a "global economic system in which some people eat five times a day and others eat only once every five days."

Two days later Lula addressed the World Economic Forum, an annual gathering of

corporate executives and political leaders, where he vowed "a tough fight" against trade barriers and protectionist policies by rich and industrialised nations. "We want free trade, but a free trade that characterises itself by reciprocity," he said through a translator. "It will be useless, all the exports that we will develop, if the rich countries continue to preach free trade on one side and practise protectionism on the other side."

The WSF was marked by anti war protests by indignant masses who took on the US President Bush to pieces for his attempt to foist an unwarranted war.

The WSF concluded with Noam Chomsky and Arundati Roy addressing the gathering at the Gigantinho stadium on 27th January and the Brazilian the Organising Committee holding a press conference on 28th describing the WSF as a process for the construction of "another world, which is possible, necessary and urgent".

The International Committee (IC) of the World Social Forum, had also proposed that India will host the next WSF2004 as a step towards the construction and world spreading of the WSF.

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THE WORKING CLASS

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*The way our FM squeeze
the common man, they
reminds me of these sugar-
cane sellers!*

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EDITORIAL

TOWARDS A COUNTRYWIDE GENERAL STRIKE ...

The 26th February March to Parliament organised by almost the entire spectrum of the trade union movement in India marked yet another milestone in the resistance struggle by the working people of the country against the neo-liberal globalisation policies, vigorously pursued by the NDA Government at the Centre.

The workers and employees of different sectors, who came from far and near, unequivocally demanded that the Government should cry halt to their policies of neo-liberal globalisation at the dictates of the international financial and trade institutions. They asserted that resisting the Government move towards ushering in a hire and fire regime in industrial relations scenario, by implementing the nefarious recommendations of the Second National Commission on Labour, will be top on the agenda of the trade union movement. The declaration, unanimously adopted by over three lakh workers gathered on the occasion, has put the Government of India on notice that in the event of the Government persisting with their disastrous anti labour and anti people policies, they will stage an all India general strike before the end of the current budget session.

A wider consultation meeting to be held in New Delhi on 12th March 2003 will take steps to broad base the struggle against the Government policies and also decide the date of the all India General Strike.

The Union Labour Minister, despite the unanimous protest by the central trade unions, is repeatedly insisting that he would go ahead with the implementation of the retrograde recommendations of the Second National Commission on Labour. The central trade unions had also unanimously rejected the draft of the Unorganised Sector Workers Bill, circulated by the Labour Ministry, as it required a complete redrafting and lot more modifications, even to cover the welfare part. The Labour Minister has turned a deaf ear to the demands of the trade unions to convene the tripartite forum to discuss the issue.

The enormity of the challenges warrants the united response of the trade union movement and that urgently. The trade unions, irrespective of affiliations, should swing into action by way of mobilising the workers in all the sectors to stage a powerful countrywide strike, as soon as the call is finalised on 12th March. On to the countrywide general strike!

**MASSIVE WORKERS' MARCH TO PARLIAMENT
DEMANDS REVERSAL OF ANTI LABOUR POLICIES**

**THE WORKERS' MARCH TO PARLIAMENT
26TH FEBRUARY 2003
DECLARATION**

This mammoth march to Parliament on February 26, 2003 by millions of workers, toiling in the fields, factories and offices all over the country, is an unequivocal declaration of their unrelenting struggle against the Government of India's disastrous anti-people, anti-worker and anti-national policies. These policies have led to the surrender of the country's economic sovereignty to the international financial institutions and the multinational corporations, resulting in utter pauperisation of the masses.

This march is the culmination of the present phase of working class resistance against the reckless pursuit of the new economic policies of liberalisation, globalisation and privatisation, as a part of which lakhs of workers courted arrest on 8th of January last, staging rail roko, rasta roko and jail bhara programmes.

This march highlights the following eight point demands formulated jointly by all the central trade unions and independent unions and federations in the country:

- ◆ Halt to privatisation of profit making and potentially viable public sector undertakings
- ◆ No Change in the labour laws in favour of the employers and against the interest of the workers
- ◆ Immediate enactment of comprehensive legislation for agricultural workers
- ◆ No to policies leading to severe aggravation of joblessness and unemployment
- ◆ Widen comprehensive social security schemes for all, including workers in unorganised sector
- ◆ Restoration of quantitative restrictions on imports
- ◆ Amendment of Payment of Bonus Act by removing all ceilings
- ◆ Restoration of 12% interest rate on P F

Deposits.

This march notes with indignation that the Government has chosen to turn a deaf ear to the countrywide waves of protest and is carrying forward its retrograde policies that have failed.

Contrary to the Government's claim of having put the national economy back on rails, the economy is going down the disaster lane, with the lowering of the growth rate of GDP, per capita income and agriculture-growth. The economy is reeling under a severe demand recession due to loss of the purchasing power of the people, consequent upon proliferation of job cut, wage cut, decline in job opportunities and pauperisation of the peasantry. While the NDA Government had been making a ridiculous claim of creating one crore jobs every year, there has been an alarming decline of employment by 8 per cent in two consecutive years. Unemployment is menacingly on the rise, threatening to destroy the social fabric of the nation. Nearly two crore workers have been thrown to streets, in the course of economic reforms. The mad spree of downsizing is threatening the livelihood of the workers in all sectors.

The shift of employment to the informal sector is tremendously on the rise. Outsourcing of jobs by the employers has accentuated the process of informalisation. Workers in the unorganised sector are compelled to work without minimum wage and statutory benefits. Women are the worst victims of economic reforms - underpaid, discriminated, harassed and thrown out of job at the will of the employers.

A concerted onslaught is unleashed on the workers. Trade unions are being suppressed ruthlessly. The Government is all set to implement the recommendation of the Second National Commission on Labour dismantling all rights of the workers and facilitating hire and fire of workers,

indiscriminate out-sourcing of jobs and closure of industrial units.

The Government is moving arbitrarily to introduce the Unorganised Sector Workers Bill 2003, brushing aside the demand of the trade unions that the Bill should address issues of employment regulation, improvement in service conditions, provision of health, safety, social security and welfare of these workers, comprising over 90 per cent of the workforce in the country.

The NDA Government is in a selling spree of even blue chip and potentially viable public sector undertakings. The public sector undertakings are national assets, built over years with people's money. This precious wealth of the nation is being handed over to the greedy multinationals and private corporates for a song. Not a disinvestment/privatisation deal is free from worst corruption and scam.

The agricultural sector, the mainstay of our national economy is in shambles, due to the disastrous pursuit of policies dictated by the World

Trade Organisation (WTO). The farmers are in deep distress and suicides in Andhra, Karnataka, Orissa and even in Punjab are pointers to gravity of the situation. The trade unions have strongly deprecated the delay in bringing a comprehensive bill for agriculture workers.

This march demands total reversal of the anti-people policies and calls upon the working class and the toiling people to rise to the occasion and carry forward the united struggle till the policies are reversed. This march warns the Government that if it persists with its vengeful pursuit of these policies, the working class of the country will retaliate by staging a countrywide general strike, before the end of the budget session of the Parliament. This march resolves that the central trade unions will convene a wider consultation meeting in New Delhi on the 12th March, 2003 to decide the date and related details of the strike and exhorts the workers throughout the country to be in rapt readiness to implement the call.

AICCTU AITUC CITU HMS INTUC TUCC UTUC UTUC-LS
And INDEPENDENT UNIONS AND FEDERATIONS

RESOLUTION AGAINST US ATTACK ON IRAQ

This mammoth March of workers to Parliament on February 26, 2003 strongly condemns the US imperialists attempt to dominate the oil-empire by waging an unwarranted war on Iraq, with its dangerous consequences for the entire humanity. Although the UN Weapon Inspectors have not found any such weapons in Iraq, still the US administration is notoriously insisting on Iraq's alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction and making this as one of the pleas to impose war on Iraq. But the United States of America itself is armed to the teeth with all weapons of mass destruction and its weaponries have been swelling with newer dreaded mass-killing devices everyday.

The United States of America have arrogated itself to the position of self appointed policeman to

impose an order of complete subjugation on the entire world. By attacking Iraq and waging a devastating war, the US wants to send a message throughout the globe that all other nation states must follow the dictates of USA or else face barbaric attack and ruthless annihilation by the only super power of the world today.

It is heartening to note that the entire humanity throughout the globe have raised their powerful voice against the war on Iraq, which is getting manifested in the upsurge of massive anti-war demonstrations all over the world in all the cities and habitations across the continents, time and again during last few months.

This march calls upon the working people to rally entire masses of the country to defeat the U.S. war designs and defend world peace.

BUDGET, HARSH ON POOR, LAVISH TOWARDS RICH

Despite all the orchestrated hype built over the last couple of months, the Jaswanth Singh's Budget 2003-04 is an exercise undertaken with neither vision nor direction. But for the random pieces of sops and goodies with the elections in view, it does not address any of the concerns highlighted even in the Economic Survey presented a day before. The first year of the 10th plan has ended with a dismal growth rate of just 4.4 per cent and the budget has nothing concrete to suggest that the government is keen on targeting the Prime Minister's oft repeated assertion of eight per cent growth during the plan period. Moreover, despite lavishing praises on Kelkar Committee recommendations, the Finance Minister has simply just held over implementation for some other day, possibly after the next round of elections.

The budget, despite the claim of being innovative, has followed the self same route of dipping the direct tax revenues by Rs 2950 crore and hiking indirect tax realisations by Rs 3294 crore. The Finance Minister has chosen to please the WTO with over fulfilling the commitments of the NDA Government, with reducing the peak rate of custom duty to 25 per cent. The tinkering attempted on excise duties will have the impact of making the domestically produced items costlier and uncompetitive in the face of further reduction in customs duty level on various products. Much of the reductions announced in excise duties would benefit the high society consumers and not ordinary people. The budget has also conferred huge benefits for the privileged sections, by withdrawal of expenditure tax and tax exemptions on capital gains.

While the Finance Minister has admitted that the country is paying an interest rate ranging from 9.4 to 11 per cent on our external borrowings, he has no qualms in further depressing the administered interest rate on savings and provident funds has been further reduced to 8

per cent, depriving the small savers. This will also cast a long shadow on the interest rate on Provident Funds of the workers. The central government also continues to charge as high a rate of interest as 13 per cent on the loans extended to the States. The budget, instead of straightaway bringing this in line with the administered rate of interest, only proposes a swap of this high cost debt with new loans and small savings to be mobilised by the States, which is a tall order in the context of lowering interest rates regime.

The reduction in the subsidy on urea will make fertilizer costlier and affect the agricultural sector, already reeling under a downswing. The naïve strategy of pushing forward to horticulture and floriculture activities will be endangering our food security.

The claim of addressing the issue of poverty alleviation is not matched with any concrete measure. All that is outlined in the budget is a Rs. 50 crore outlay on insurance premium to cover 50 lakh people below the poverty line. The budget has no measures to deal with the alarming lack of fresh employment generating investments, as diagnosed by the Economic Survey. The people will have to pay for the infrastructure sector spending proposed in the budget with an added cess on petrol and diesel. In the name of infrastructure, new airports and seaports, two each, will be developed in private sector.

In totality, the present Union Budget is another hypocritical exercise by the NDA combine in the interest of the big business, both domestic and foreign. In the backdrop of accumulated tax dues of over Rs 1,00,000 crore by the big-business, the statement made by the Finance Minister that he would prefer a trust- based regime for the direct-tax administration exposes clearly whom this government represents. This deserves outright condemnation.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The 2002-03 edition of the annual Economic Survey has been released on the eve of the budget. No doubt, a very large amount of economic data has been compiled to make it bigger in volume than last year. But, it in no way signifies any improvement in so far as the growth of the economy is concerned. Rather, it could not but admit a sharp decline in overall growth to a mere 4.4% in contrast to 5.5% projected in the mid-term review. Such decline is quite consistent with trends visible during last couple of years of NDA combine, exposing the bankruptcy their economic policy regime.

Agricultural production showed an absolute decline by 11.9%, of which food grain production declined by 13.6%. The fact that the decline has taken the agricultural production below pre-2000 level has not been mentioned. The drought has been made the villain for the dismal show in agriculture and also the overall GDP growth rate. Much fuss has been made over the higher growth rate in industrial production at 5.3% (April-November 2002) terming it to be the beginning of the recovery process of industrial growth. But, even this comparatively better performance by industry this year is partially due to a lower base, consequent upon a very low growth of 2.7% last year. Another factor behind the higher industrial growth rate during April-November 2002 is the lagged or delayed impact of the stronger Rabi harvest last year, which Survey has to admit point. By the same argument this year's negative performance in agriculture is going to cast similar negative impact on the industry in the forthcoming fiscal, thoroughly belying the recovery-expectation.

The Survey also notes that the economy is suffering from severe lags in investment front and for the first time, the growth rate of domestic savings exceeded that of domestic investment rate, thereby reflecting a dampened investment perception.

It is noteworthy to recall what the last year's Economic Survey observed on the situation. It was noted that the severe demand constraint in the

economy is one of the major factors for the low investment perception and sliding industrial performance. The basic problem of severe demand constraints in the economy, due to sharply falling purchasing power of the people, has not at all been addressed by the successive budgets and policy initiatives. The FCI godowns are over flowing with food grains. The States are not lifting the stocks allocated for the BPL families. On the other hand there are several incidences of starvation deaths. This is the testimony of the utter bankruptcy of the Government policy.

Such a situation demands augmenting of public investment and developmental expenditure and spending more on improving the purchasing power of the people. But the Survey prescribes the opposite - fiscal consolidation measures through slashing down subsidies on food, fertiliser, LPG, kerosene and other essentials, which would further push down the purchasing power of the common people and dampen the demand situation. The prospect of industrial recovery forecast by the Survey will remain a pipe dream. The employment scenario noted in the Survey points to an overall decline in the growth rate of employment in the nineties along with a comparatively higher growth in GDP. The mad spree of downsizing is reflected in absolute decline in employment in the public sector and a negligible employment growth of 0.1% in private sector. In the rural economy also intensity of joblessness remained alarmingly high.

Hence, the recovery of industrial economy projected in the Survey is baseless.

But, the Survey moots yet again the prescription for labour law reforms, to facilitate 'hire and fire' and unbridled casualisation to mark the employment scenario. This can in no way be justified in the background of the finding recorded in the survey itself that the period under review witnessed a sharp increase in the man days lost due to lock-outs by 14 lakhs as against the decrease of 64 lakh man days lost due to strikes. Hence, let us decide, what should we do and where do we go from here.

(Discarding a long standing practice of holding pre budget consultations with the various groups, including the trade unions, the present Finance Minister in the Vajpayee Cabinet, Jaswant Singh, chose to address letters to the central trade unions seeking their views in writing. In response thereto, the CITU had sent in a memorandum taking exception to the departure from past practice but giving certain concrete suggestions for consideration. We reproduce here the text of CITU Memorandum. - Editor)

BUDGET-2003-04:

CITU MEMORANDUM TO FINANCE MINISTER

The pre-budget discussion is perhaps the only occasion when the Finance Minister of the Government of India provides the central trade unions with an opportunity to articulate their views on matters pertaining to the national economy. Although, this annual event has, over the years, had become just a ritual, where only a hearing takes place seldom with any positive response. This is in contrast with the practice of successive Finance Ministers - or for that matter the Prime Minister downwards almost the entire Cabinet - having frequent interactions with the industrialist lobby. Many a times, announcement of major policy decisions are even made from their platform. All these lay bare a clear bias of the Government in favour of the capitalist lobby. This year, the incumbent Finance Minister has chosen to do away with the only forum available to the trade unions representing country's workforce to have their views heard. The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) strongly deprecates this unwarranted deviation from the past practice. However, as one of the central trade unions, representing the vast multitudes of the working populace of the country, we feel it necessary to draw the attention of the Government on what we consider as matters that need to be addressed in the Union budget with due priority. The economic policies under implementation for over a decade, and reflected in the successive budgets, have turned out to be a disastrous failure in all fronts, in so far as the interests of the common people are concerned. In our perception, the policy-approach needs a total reversal for a people-centred development paradigm instead of the present corporate-centred approach. Despite the clear admission even in the successive Economic Surveys that it is the severe

demand constraint on all fronts that is the major factor for the downslide in the economy, nothing has been done to effectively address this basic problem. Rather, successive budget exercises continued to tinker with the supply side of the economy, resulting in gains only for the corporate lobby at the cost of the mass of the populace, without any tangible contribution to the creation of wealth in the country. Here lies the urgent need for re-orientation of the political will of the Govt. for a much required shift from a corporate centred approach to a people centred one.

Based on this understanding, we place the following suggestions before the Finance Minister for consideration during the ongoing exercise on the Union budget 2003-04.

1. Concrete steps should be taken for augmenting demands in the economy for which policies must be focused on employment generation and substantially augment the purchasing power of the workers and the people. This alone can generate proper climate and inducement for investment.
2. That employment generation would flow automatically by giving more incentives to the employers for investments has proved to be a myth. Such incentives should be reoriented and linked with the specified new employment generation targets.
3. Provisions should be made for widest coverage of the "Food for Work" programme with special focus on the starvation-prone areas instead of allowing the surplus food grain stocks to rot.
4. Public distribution system must be strengthened throughout the country, with the provision of more subsidy in the prices of food grains and other essential commodities.
5. Special provisions for relief for the poorest

strata of population in the drought affected areas should be made and properly implemented.

6. The privatisation exercise of the profit-making PSUs must be stopped forthwith and the Disinvestment Manual published by the Disinvestment Ministry providing for inbuilt mechanism for undervaluation/distress sale of the PSUs must be scrapped outright.

7. A pro-active policy ensuring concrete and expeditious steps towards revival of the sick PSUs, tied up with adequate financial support by the Govt. should be ensured. The repeal of SICA and provisions for liquidation oriented measures in the Companies Act should be reversed.

8. Stringent punitive measures against the corporate tax-defaulters and urgent steps for realisation of the tax-outstandings must be taken; in case of any disputes, upfront payment of the tax due as assessed by the authority should be made mandatory for the dispute to be entertained, as in the case of electricity, telephone bills and other user charges.

9. Stringent punitive measures must also be taken against the loan-defaulters in the big business lobby responsible for accumulation of huge NPA for the nationalised banks. Strict action for recovery of the unpaid loans should also be accompanied by denial of loans to any wing/unit of the defaulter corporate group and attachment of their assets in the event of their failure to pay-back within stipulated time.

10. Small scale and tiny sector industries must

be given protection against unfair competition with the larger units and MNCs. Extension of concessional credit facilities to these sectors should be ensured.

11. Custom duties should be revised upwards in general. Any reduction in custom duty in case of any particular product must be matched by suitable reduction in excise duty of the similar product domestically produced and also on the customs duty on its imported inputs. Import duty on coal must be restored to 1998 level.

12. The quantitative restriction on import of goods, particularly those produced by small scale and agricultural sectors should be re-imposed.

13. Agricultural income of big landlords should be brought under the tax-net.

14. The Recommendation of the Kelkar Committee on reduction of corporate tax, wealth tax etc, and withdrawal of tax benefit on small savings, housing etc. should be scrapped.

15. The Reddy Committee report recommendations in respect of administered rates of interests on small savings have been implemented in the Budget for the last year, dovetailing the same with the yield on Government securities, of comparable maturity, traded in the secondary market. This has led to serious drop in the return for the small savers. In the coming year this is expected to slide down further. This measure must be reversed. The interest rate on small savings instruments and on Provident Fund/ Pension Funds should be restored to 12%.

An Election Eve Railway Budget: CITU

The Railway Budget presented to the Lok Sabha by the Minister for Railways Shri Nitish Kumar is conspicuously an election eve budget. People in India have already had experience of cosmetic budgets on the eve of elections, full of proposal not backed by adequate fund allocation and supporting programmes.

While it is noted that there has not been any increase in fair and freight, there is no attempt to seriously examine the causes of the devastating accidents that have taken place in recent times and the measures proposed by the minister is only of routine nature showing criminal callousness of the rail ministry about the safety of passenger.

As usual large number of new trains are going to be introduced during this year but rolling stock programme has been slashed down which means on one hand there will be further overcrowding and on the other hand more and more over-aged coaches will be used increasing accident risks. The minister has resorted to a clever piece of jugglery when he claims that the plan outlay has increased by Rs 603 cr. He has added Rs 2,311 cr outlay on safety work through railway safety fund which has been created for expenditure on safety in addition to normal plan outlay. Thus the budget will at least usher in a year of national dis-satisfaction.

Globalisation - An Insider's View

M. R. APPAN *

Globalisation programmes and its consequences have come to the center-stage of the debate. The problems of the developing countries because of the pursuance of neo-liberal policies are enormous and deeply rooted in social, economical, political and international relationships. The advocates of globalisation claim that it is an indispensable route to economic success, although the avidness and the experiences of the people in the developing countries do not support their assertions.

Joseph E. Stiglitz, in his recent book, 'GLOBALISATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS' provides a rare and shocking glimpse of policy making at the altar of IMF and World Bank and in whose interests those policies were evolved and the effects that they have had on the economics of the developing countries. Stiglitz is the former Chief of the Economic Advisory Council for the US President Bill Clinton and Vice President and Chief Economist of the World Bank until January 2002 and a Nobel Prize winner in Economics in 2001.

SINGLE PRESCRIPTION

When crisis hits, the developing countries approach the IMF and World Bank for help. Stiglitz narrates how those institutions respond. He says: "Decisions were on the basis of what seemed a curious blend of ideology and bad economics,

dogma than solutions; without considering the effects they would have on the people in the countries, they are told to follow these policies. Rarely did I see forecasts about what the policies would do to poverty. Rarely did I see thoughtful discussions and analysis of the consequences. There was a single prescription. Alternative opinions were not sought. Open, frank discussion was discouraged; there was no room for it. Ideology guided policy prescription and countries were expected to follow the IMF guidelines without debate."

On the effects of globalisation programmes, Stiglitz says: "In the developing world globalisation has not brought the prompted economic benefits. A growing divide between the have and have-nots has left increasing numbers in the Third World in dire poverty, living on less than a dollar a day. Despite repeated promises of poverty reduction made over the last decade of the twentieth century, the actual number of people living in poverty has actually increased by an average of 2.5 per cent annually."

BARRIERS REMAIN

Stiglitz gives some of the basic reasons why this has happened. "The Western countries have pushed poor countries to eliminate the trade barriers but kept up their own barriers, preventing the developing countries from exporting their

agricultural products and so depriving them of desperately needed export income. The United States was, of course one of the prime culprits... the west has driven the globalisation agenda, ensuring that it garners a disproportionate share of the benefits, at the expense of the developing world. It was not just that the more advanced industrial countries declined to open up their markets, to the goods of developing countries - for instance, keeping their quotas on a multitude of goods from textiles to sugar while insisting that those countries open up their markets to the goods of the wealthier countries. It was not just that the more advanced industrial countries continued to subsidize agriculture, making it difficult for the developing countries to compete, while insisting that the developing countries eliminate their subsidies on industrial goods. Looking at the 'terms of trade' - the prices which developed and less developed countries get for the products they produce -after the last trade agreement in 1995 (the eighth), the net effect was to lower the prices some of the poorest countries in the world received relative to what they paid for their imports. The result was that some of the poorest countries in the world were actually worse off."

PRIVATISE FIRST

Stiglitz pinpoints the causes for

the damage of the economics of the developing world and the dangers of creating private monopolies. "The IMF vigorously pursued privatisation and liberalisation, at a pace and in a manner that often imposed very real costs on countries, ill-equipped to incur them... there are some important preconditions that have to be satisfied before privatization can contribute to an economy's growth. In addition, the way privatisation is accomplished makes a great deal of difference. ...The IMF argues that it is far more important to privatise quickly, one can deal with the issues of completion and regulation later. But the danger is that once a vested interest has been created, it has an incentive and the money to maintain its monopoly position, squelching regulation and competition and distorting the political process along the way". Privatising a monopoly before an effective competition or regulatory authority was in place might simply replace a government monopoly with a private monopoly even more ruthless exploiting the consumer. IMF's misguided policies led creation of private monopolies and to their fortunes. Stiglitz says: "The IMF chose to emphasize privatisation, giving short shrift to competition. The choice was perhaps not surprising, corporate and financial interests often oppose competition policies, or these policies restrict their ability to make profits. The consequences of IMF's mistake here were far more serious than

just high prices; privatised firms sought to establish monopolies and cartels to enhance their profits, undisciplined by effective anti-trust policies. And as so often happens, the profits of monopoly prove especially alluring to those who are willing to resort to mafia like techniques either to obtain market dominance or to enforce collusion".

It is argued that private ownership works better than government ownership and privatization is necessary to reduce the role of government in the economy. Stiglitz says: "Privatisation was supposed to eliminate the role of the State in the economy, but those who assumed that had a far too naive view of the role of the State in the modern economy. It exercises its influence in a myriad of ways at a myriad of levels".

BRIBERISATION

Despite the existence of the so-called regulatory authorities, scams, fraud and corruption are the order of the day in every sphere of activities of the capitalist economies; privatisation also cannot be an exception. Here is what Stiglitz has to say on this issue: "Perhaps the most serious concern with privatisation, as it has so often been practised is corruption. The rhetoric of market fundamentalism asserts that privatisation will reduce what economists call the 'rent seeking' activity of government officials who either skim off the profits of government enterprises or award contracts and jobs to their friends. But in

contrast to what it was supposed to do, privatization has made matters so much worse that in many countries today privatization is jokingly referred to as 'briberisation'. If a government is corrupt, there is little evidence that privatization will solve the problem. After all the same corrupt government that mismanaged the firm will also handle the privatization. In country after country, government officials have realised that privatization meant that they no longer needed to be limited to annual profit skimming. By selling a government enterprise at below market price, they could get a significant chunk of the asset value for themselves rather than leaving it for subsequent office holders. In effect they could steal today much of what would have been designed to maximize the amount government ministers could appropriate for themselves, not the amount that would accrue to the government treasury, let alone the overall efficiency of the economy."

Privatisation policies not only affected on the economy but on all society. Stiglitz's conclusions on privatisation are very clear. "In a World Bank review of the ten year history of transition economics, it became apparent that privatisation had no positive effect on growth. The Washington Consensus had again just gotten it wrong."

LESSONS OF RUSSIA

Stiglitz gives a vivid example of the lessons of Russia. "Russia had a crash course in market economics and were the

(Cont. on page 13)

Indian People's Campaign Against WTO

The Indian People's Campaign Against WTO (WTO Virodhi Bharatiya Jan Andolan) in the meeting of its Preparatory Committee held at Delhi on 18th February chalked out an action plan culminating in a massive central rally at Delhi on 27th August, 2003, as part of the campaign to derail the Ministerial meeting of the WTO, scheduled to be held at Cancun, Mexico from September 10-14, 2003.

It will be recalled that this forum against WTO was formed in 2001 prior to the Doha Ministerial meeting of the WTO. The constituents for this forum are several political parties including the left parties, trade unions and other mass organizations, and several anti-WTO NGOs and other organizations. A massive rally was organized at Delhi in October, 2001, followed by a National Convention. The rally and the Convention resolved to carry forward the struggle against WTO by broadening the base.

The 18th February meeting of the preparatory Committee was held at the residence of the former Prime Minister, V.P. Singh and attended by about 30 participants from the constituents. The CITU was represented by P.K. Ganguly. The meeting broadly discussed the situation after the Doha meeting. The Doha meeting had launched a new round of negotiations in WTO, despite

opposition and reservations of many developing countries. The Government of India acquiesced in the process. The forthcoming Cancun meeting is supposed to consolidate the achievements by the developed countries and push through the formal negotiations on issues such as Investment, Competition policy, Govt. procurement and trade facilitation and accelerate the process in general.

Regarding the Doha meeting the Govt. of India had claimed that they had "achieved" postponement of the launch of negotiations on these issues for a two-year period and that the option of preventing a consensus-decision to formally launch the negotiations on these issues was still open. It was also claimed that "implementation issues", i.e. the issues which needed to be addressed to reduce the inequity and imbalance suffered by developing countries in the WTO system, would be addressed on a priority basis in the negotiations. These included better access in textile exports, preventing misuse of anti-dumping provisions by developed countries against exports of developing countries, revising and reinterpreting certain provisions of TRIPS agreement so as to enable better access to and diffusion of technology in developing countries, making dispute settlement and appellate processes accountable to

legislative organs of WTO, etc. But none of these has shown any progress so far.

On the question of TRIPS and flexibility needed to take care of health problems of urgent and serious nature in developing countries, the progress has been stalled because of the American insistence on narrowing down of the scope of applicability and also on detailed case by case monitoring of the use of compulsory licensing procedures even in such emergency situations.

On the question of agriculture, the EU has announced that there will be no question of reducing the subsidies to agriculture till 2006, i.e. till the end of the Doha round of negotiations. The USA on the other hand has launched a programme of further increase in their support to agriculture. The magnitude of the annual domestic support to agriculture in America and the EU together is currently around 400 per cent of the entire value of our agricultural output in a year. On the other hand, there are pressures building up that high tariffs on agricultural imports in countries like ours must form the main subject matter of negotiations in agriculture. We have already lost the tool of quantitative restrictions on imports. Now the only remaining tool of protecting our agriculture from unfair import competition, viz, tariffs, will be sought to be neutralised.

Another development of concern is that under the ongoing negotiations in General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), Government has tabled the sector of Education for exchange of concessions. It is obvious that education cannot be treated simply as a tradeable service and a subject of commercial exchange. The opening of this sector for foreign service providers is also a questionable proposition. Therefore, the emerging commodification of education must be resisted. And, towards that end, the Government must be pressurised to withdraw this sector from negotiations in GATS. As education is a concurrent subject, a full fledged discussion in Parliament and State legislatures must take place and their approval must be obtained before any move is made by the Government in this regard.

Mini-Ministerial Meeting

As per the usual practice, this

time also an unofficial "Mini-Ministerial" meeting of the Trade Ministers will be held before Cancun, at Delhi in March 15-16, 2003. This meeting is being organized by the Commonwealth Business Council and the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII). Earlier such unofficial mini-ministerial meetings were held before Singapore (1996), Seattle (1999) and Doha (2001) Ministerial meetings. The Government of India has been a participant in these meetings. Countries are called selectively to attend these unofficial meetings who are expected to toe the line of the developed countries. This unofficial meeting, of-course headed by the USA and other advanced capitalist countries will shape the agenda for Cancun and beyond to further marginalise India and other developing countries.

The 18th February meeting of the Indian People's Campaign against WTO discussed all

these developments and also took cognizance of the meeting of the Asian Social Forum held at Hyderabad in the first week of January, as also of the meeting of the World Social Forum held at Porto Alegre, Brazil towards the end of January and endorsed their call to "Derail the Cancun meeting". The meeting decided to print a pamphlet on the issues to mobilise public opinion with concrete demands based on the above issues, and chalked out the following action programme:

Action Plan

1) District wise and State wise joint rallies/conventions from now on.

2) A hall convention at Delhi on 13th March, i.e. prior to the Mini-Ministerial meeting.

3) A massive central rally at Delhi on 27th August.

A memorandum will also be submitted to the Prime Minister after the rally on the Cancun meeting.

(GLOBALISATION cont. from page 11)

teachers. And what a peculiar course it was. On the one hand, they were given large doses of free market, text book economics. On the other hand, what they saw in practice from their teachers departed markedly from this ideal. They were told that trade liberalisation was necessary for a successful market economy, yet when they tried to export aluminum and uranium (and other commodities as well) to the United States, they found the door shut. Evidently, America had succeeded without trade liberalisation, or as it is sometimes put, trade is good, but imports are bad."

Finally about the dynamics of globalisation, Stiglitz says: "Globalisation today is not working for many of the world's poor. It is not working for much of the environment. It is not working for the stability of the global economy ... poverty has soared as incomes have plummeted."

In India, the ruthless adoption of market fundamentalist structural adjustment policies already laid the foundation for disruption and disaster. The proponents of globalization in India both now and in the past please listen to Stiglitz, who is not a leftist but a close insider of World Bank and IMF and a policy maker in Washington till yesterday and also a strong national Keynesian economist. Anyone reading his book can clearly understand what is in store for our country.

(*Honorary President of All India State Government Employees Federation*)

ECONOMY DERAILED

EMPLOYMENT-DEGENERATION !

...According to the International Labour office's (ILO) recent report on 'Global Employment Trends', the unemployment problems need to be fought by domestic policies...The Report says, the growth in employment in India might have slowed down during 2002....In spite of steady and robust growth since 1995, productive employment generation has not been forthcoming. Between 1993-94 and 1999-2000, the GDP grew at 6.6 percent annually, but employment growth rate was only 1 per cent. During the previous decade (1983-1993), the GDP growth rate averaged 5.4%, yet the employment growth rate was 2.1%—twice the employment growth rate of the booming

1993-94 to 1999-2000 period.

The Report further states that the employment intensity of production measured by the employment elasticity to GDP growth declined from 0.36 during 1993-94 to 0.13 during 1999-2000. "One reason for the lackluster employment growth is slower growth in industry and retrenchments in the public sector. Together, they have resulted in deterioration of urban labour market conditions" says the Report....Insufficient investments in both public and private physical infrastructure remains a major constraints to the expansion of industrial activities, points out the Report...

(The Financial Express, 03-02-2003)

EXTERNAL DEBT ON THE RISE...

India's external debt as on the quarter ending on June 2002 has increased by US\$ 3.1 billion from US\$ 98.2 billion in March 2002 to US\$ 101.3 billion in June or by 3.2 per cent.

Component wise analysis reveals that the short term debt increased by 12.6% and the long term debt increased by 2.9% besides increase in most other components....

(Reserve Bank of India Bulletin, January 2003)

THE POOR GETTING RICHER ?

...The results of the 2000-2001 official sample survey of household consumption has just been released which shows that rural poverty went down from 27.1% to 24.4% and urban poverty went up from 23.6% to 25.5%....When viewed in the backdrop of the economy's performance in that year, however, the pattern seems counter-intuitive. In 2000-2001, agricultural GDP declined by 0.2% and yet the rural poverty is stated to have gone down. On the other hand, industrial GDP grew up by 6.3% and yet the urban poverty increased !...

The poor are certainly not getting richer.

(Editorial, Business Standard, 05-02-2003)

A Study by National Institute of Rural Development

(NIRD) revealed that 20 to 25 per cent of the rice allotted to below poverty line (BPL) cardholders in Tamilnadu, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and 50 per cent of the rice allotted to above poverty line (APL) card holders is being diverted at Fair-price-Shop(FPS) level.

According to the study, 50 per cent of wheat allotted to BPL people has been diverted in Madhya Pradesh, while the APL household did not lift their ration quota. In Maharashtra the diversion is found to be more than 50 per cent....The study found that, of the several factors contributing to 'non-lifting' of their entitled quota by cardholders, the major one is the lack of purchasing power....

(Business Line, 04-02-2003)

DOWN THE DISASTER LANE

SHARP DROP IN GROWTH RATE BETWEEN 8TH-10TH PLAN PERIOD

If there is one factor that has pulled down India's growth performance during the 9th plan period, it is the efficiency (or inefficiency) in the use of capital. Recently released National Accounts Statistics show that the incremental capital output ratio (ICOR) has decelerated significantly to 5 during the 9th plan period (1997-2002) from 4 in the 8th plan period (1992-97). This factor alone explains fully the deceleration in growth from 6.6% per annum to 5.5% over these two plan periods. ICOR indicates the number of units of capital required for generating an additional unit of

output.... The deterioration in ICOR in recent years was largely due to low capacity utilization rate and failure of demand to rise in step with the capacities....

The latest data shows that the capital formation rate has slowed down for two consecutive years from 27.7% of GDP at constant rate in 1999-00 to 25.6% in 2001-02. Some sectors have taken even bigger hits. In 2001-02, gross capital formation in manufacturing declined by 7.4%, in transport by 24% and in communication by 18.3% over the previous year.

(Economic Times, 06-02-2003)

'Shourie's Bankruptcy'

An editorial in the *Loksatta* (Mumbai Edition) of January 28 savages the decision to privatise the two oil majors HPCL and BPCL. Titled "Shourie's bankruptcy" it said, "The Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has all but put India on the auction block.

The disinvestment committee has chosen Republic Day to once again announce its intention to hive off the government equity in the HPCL and BPCL, thereby putting national interest in jeopardy."

"Last year in September, this committee had decided to delay by three months its plans to disinvest in these public sector oil companies following a strong reaction by George Fernandes, Murli Manohar Joshi and Ram Naik against the divestment of these profit-making PSUs.

Shourie had then chosen to evade questions posed to him by the media about the resignation threat held out by his three Union cabinet colleagues. Will these ministers resign today since the proposal has been mooted once more?

No one would object to the Union government hiving off its stake in a loss-making PSU. However, the NDA government has not only decided to divest itself of its stake in HPCL and BPCL which are profit-making oil companies, but also prevented the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) from bidding for these two."

"The Vajpayee-led NDA has committed treason against the nation. Even the RSS and Swadeshi Jagran Manch are likely to issue muted responses to the Centre's divestment plans. Even if Shourie has won, the country has lost.

Now it would be difficult to know whom to trust as it is evident that different individuals have vested interests in the whole disinvestment process."

Business Standard, February 06, 2003

ANDHRA PRADESH STATE CONFERENCE OF CITU

The Ninth Andhra Pradesh State Conference of CITU, which concluded on the 18th February 2003, has warned the people of the growing divisive tendencies among the working class and the poor after the BJP came to power at the Centre and called upon the cadres and activists to intensify the ideological fight against communal, casteist and regional chauvinist forces. It also decided to concentrate on organising the workers at their residential areas. The Conference was held in Mahboobnagar, the district headquarters town of the chronically drought hit district by the same name, on 16-18 February 2003. The venue of the conference was named after the veteran trade union leader and former Vice President of CITU, Nanduri Prasada Rao. The programme of the Conference started with the hoisting of the CITU flag by another veteran trade union leader of the State Parsa Satyanarayana, a former Vice President of CITU, on the 16th morning.

INAUGURAL SESSION

A five member presidium consisting of MA Gaffoor, Ch Narasinga Rao, G Rambabu, N Krishnaiah and P Roja conducted the proceedings of the Conference, which was inaugurated by K Hemalata, Secretary of CITU. In her inaugural address Hemalata drew the attention of the delegates to the US threats of war on Iraq despite millions of people demonstrating against the war all over the world including the Europe and the US. She criticised the BJP Government for not firmly opposing the war in its anxiety not to be on the wrong side of US. She explained in detail the ruinous impact of the policies of globalisation, privatisation and liberalisation being pursued by the NDA Government. She observed that the recommendations of the Second National Commission on Labour would take away the hard won rights of the working class; the working class is sought to be divided on the basis of gender. She warned the delegates of the danger of the communal forces which were spreading their roots among the working class as was evident in their influence in some working class areas in the

country.

Hemalata told that the opposition to the World Bank dictated policies of globalisation was growing throughout the world. This was evident in the recently concluded Asian Social Forum at Hyderabad and World Social Forum in Porto Alegre. More and more people from different sections of society were realising that another world free of capitalist exploitation is possible. She urged the delegates to consider all these aspects while discussing on the report and develop the CITU into a strong force in the State to effectively counter the challenges ahead.

Delivering his presidential speech, Gaffoor criticised the State Government for trying to suppress the trade union movement in the State and asserted that nobody could take away the right of the trade union movement to oppose the anti working class and anti people policies of the Government.

CHRONICLE OF STRUGGLES

Veeraiah, General Secretary of the State Committee presented the report. The report illustrated the disastrous impact of the Chandra Babu Naidu Government in the State with some case studies on the rise of casual labour, the conditions of the workers in the industries which have been privatised, closures, job less growth, Post VRS conditions of the workers, conditions of the workers in the unorganised sector, exploitation in the IT sector etc. The report also elaborated on the drought situation in the State and how the migration from the villages was impacting the wages and working conditions of the workers, particularly the unorganised sector workers in the cities.

The General Secretary's report observed that the period after the last conference had been a period of intense struggles by the working class. It noted the increasing repression by the employers with the active help from the police and the administration. The employers in several instances used their hired goondas to physically attack the workers. It observed that the working class could achieve some success where it

launched militant struggles by mobilising wide support from the general public. Referring to some of the struggles in RTC, VEPZ, India Cements, etc, it noted that such struggles could influence the working class in the surrounding districts and areas if due importance was given to turn them into militant struggles, as per the preparedness of the workers concerned.

The General Secretary's report highlighted the importance of organising the workers in some form at their living places, on such issues like drainage, sanitation, water, ration cards, etc. It has advised the district committees to allot one cadre to look after these problems at least in major towns and cities. It was also suggested to form local residential area committees under the leadership of CITU to address the residential problems of the workers regularly. The importance of participating in their social and cultural lives was also emphasised.

Veeraiah told that CITU has advanced in the State after the last State Conference. The membership, influence and cadre of CITU have increased. There were immense opportunities for further growth of CITU in the State which could be utilised by ideological fight against the reformist trade unions, uniting the workers and launching militant struggles.

DISCUSSIONS IN COMMISSIONS

The Conference broke into four Commissions which discussed on the four issues of - 'Liberalisation and its impact on the Working Class', 'Unorganised Sector', 'Work in the residential areas of the working class' and 'Work among Working Women'. Around 60 participated in the discussions on the General Secretary's report and another more than 100 participated in the discussions in the Commissions and provided rich inputs.

Summing up the discussions Veeraiah noted that though the district committees were asked to ensure 20% representation to women in the delegation, based on the women membership in the State CITU, many districts did not implement this on the plea that women workers who could meet the standards were not available. He criticised this attitude and stressed the need to rectify it. The General Secretary's report was unanimously adopted.

The Conference passed resolutions supporting the 'March to Parliament' on the 26th February, opposing the recommendations of the Kelkar Committee, against US war on Iraq, for Comprehensive Law for Construction Workers, against Communalism and on the demands of the various sections of the workers.

The Conference took up the tasks of raising the anti imperialist consciousness among the working class, to intensify ideological struggle against the communal, casteist and other forces which were trying to divide the working class, to increase solidarity with the peasants, agricultural workers, artisans etc and to concentrate on organising the working class in key industries like Road Transport, Electricity, Coal etc. among others.

Jeebon Roy, Secretary, CITU emphasised the importance of ideological struggle in his concluding remarks. He told that was the only way to demarcate the CITU from the other reformist unions and strengthen the organisation. He also stressed the need for increased participation in the all India struggle programmes to build up a country wide movement.

630 delegates from 23 districts and 2 areas, representing 2, 42,536 members participated in the Conference. 84 (13.3%) of them were women. The youngest delegate was Anita Kumari (21) from Kurnool and the oldest was Parsa Satyanarayana (79). 280 were full time cadres of the CITU, 77 were part time cadres and 247 were workers. 194 of the delegates have been jailed for trade union activities; of these 170 were imprisoned for up to 1 month, 18 were imprisoned for up to 6 months, one for 1 year and 4 for more than 4 years. 45 had to go underground.

The Conference elected 19 Office Bearers, with Ch Narasinga Rao as President and Veeraiah as General Secretary. A 103 member Working Committee and 208 member General Council were also elected. 2 women (10.52%) were elected Office Bearers, 16 to the Working Committee (15.5%) and 31 to the General Council (14.9%). A colourful procession on the evening of the 18th February culminated in a massive rally, which was addressed by Jibon Roy, Hemalata, Ch Narasinga Rao, Veeraiah, Gaffoor and other leaders. Raghu, President of the District Committee of CITU presided over the rally.

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Against Privatisation

DAY-LONG HUNGER STRIKE BY SALEM STEEL WORKERS

The workers of Salem Steel Plant demonstrated remarkable all in unity with all the trade unions coming together with a firm resolve to oppose privatization of the public sector steel plant. The trade unions formed SAVE SALEM STEEL COMMITTEE and from this platform the workers have been carrying on resistance to privatization move by the SAIL management. Earlier, the workers enmasse struck work and sent back the visiting team of TATA-Usinor combine who wanted to bid for Salem Steel. The Tatas

subsequently have withdrawn themselves from the fray. But till now the Jindal Strips is in the fray and the SAIL management and the Govt of India has been making hectic move to hand over Salem Steel to Jindal on the basis of single bidding.

On February 5, 2003, the Save Salem Steel Committee staged day-long hunger strike in front of the plant gate in protest of the Govt's bid to sell-off Salem Steel without caring for its adverse implications. The hunger strike has drawn the participation of the workers and leaders of all the

unions irrespective of affiliations. Among those who participated in the hunger strike and dharna were P Paneerselvam and R Armugham (CITU), P Murugesan (ATP), A P Senthilmani (INTUC), C Palaruswamy (PTS), R Sathyamurthy (MISA), R Perumal and S Murugayan (SC/ST wing), R Arul (PMK) besides others.

Meantime in response to a public interest litigation against privatization, the Madras High Court directed the Centre and the SAIL not to finalise the bid in the next two weeks until it is heard.

STATEWIDE JATHA FOR 26 FEB PARLIAMENT MARCH

The Orissa State Committee decided to organize statewide jatha to campaign for mobilizing in the March to Parliament programme to be held on 26th February. Accordingly the Jatha flagged off from the steel city of Rourkela with a huge mobilization of thousands of workers on 8th February. Bishnu Mohanty General Secretary of the State CITU, Radharaman Sarangi, Banamali Dhupal, both Vice Presidents of State CITU and Biman Maity, Secretary addressed the rally and called upon the workers to intensify the grassroot level campaign to ensure biggest

mobilization in the anti-globalisation march to Parliament on 26th February at New Delhi.

The Jatha will move ahead to cover 30 districts and hold mass meetings at different industrial centers and subdivisional towns. The district committees are preparing to hold such meetings at different spots enroute.

Meantime the Nalco workers Coordination Committee comprising the workers and officers of Nalco have also started their jatha-campaign from Angul in a bus decorated with posters and banners against privatization policy of the Govt on 10th February and

that Jatha will also cover various districts of the State to campaign for the Parliament March against the anti-national, anti-people policies of the Govt.

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WATERFRONT WORKERS PLAN FOR STRUGGLE

The working committee meeting of the Water Transport Workers' Federation of India (WTWFI) held at Chennai on 3rd and 4th February 2003 decided to prepare for countrywide united action against the move for privatization of Indian Ports and various related services by the Govt of India.

The meeting was presided over by M M Lawrence and attended by the leaders from all the ports and docks besides the seamen's unions from all the centers. Subhas Chakraborty, General Secretary, WTWFI placed the report which dealt in detail the onslaught of the Govt of India on Ports and port related operations aimed at privatization in phases. The Ports are suffering from severe cargo-crunch owing to liberal entry of various MNCs in the field of port operations. The Govt is also moving fast to close down seamen's employment board to throw the employment and service conditions of seamen at the mercy of the private shipping companies

dominated by the MNCs. The Report also dealt on various problems being faced by the port workers and seamen like denial of bonus as per existing norms, reduction in manning etc.

Dr M K Pandhe General Secretary CITU, while addressing the working committee, explained the real face of the Govt policy being pursued as per dictates of World Bank and IMF which has also designed the Govt's policy towards port and dock operation much to the detriment of the interest of the workers, industry and the national economy. He stressed upon the urgent need of building up united countrywide militant struggle of the port workers and seamen for which the Federation must prepare itself organizationally and ideologically. Pandhe also explained the game of the imperialist forces to subjugate the developing nations both economically and politically and urged upon the workers to fight against the US design to impose war on Iraq. Fight against the

communal forces which are active in disrupting the unity of the common people and the working class is also an urgent task before the working class, Pandhe asserted. Shyamal Chakraborty, Secretary, CITU stressed upon the need for strengthening the organization of federation at port level and the Federation leadership should regularly visit all the ports and docks, he stated.

All the members present discussed threadbare the report of the secretary and put forth important suggestions for strengthening organization and also on future programmes. The Federation decided to ensure widest participation of port workers in the March To Parliament programme on 26th February 2003 at New Delhi. It was also decided to observe "Demand Day" in all the major ports on 20th March 2003 through large demonstrations and initiate dialogue with other federations for joint countrywide action against privatization and on pressing demands of the workers.

ELECTRICITY EMPLOYEES' UNIONS PLAN FOR ACTION

The National Coordination Committee of Electricity Employees & Engineers (NCCOEE) met on 8th February at Bangalore to discuss and decide on future course of countrywide united action against the disastrous

Electricity Bill 2001 aimed at privatizing the Electricity sector. The meeting was attended by most of the major federations of Electricity Employees and Engineers viz., Electricity Employees' Federation of India,

All India Federation of Electricity Employees, All India Power Engineers' Federation, All India Diploma Power Engineers' Federation, and National Confederation of Officers' Associations.

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The Coordination Committee stressed upon the urgent need for countrywide united struggle against the Electricity Bill 2001 which would be taken up for discussion in Parliament in the ensuing budget session. After long deliberation, the Committee decided to adopt following programmes to be observed in all the electricity centers throughout the country.

◆ Mass Satyagraha by the

employees and engineers in all state capitals including Delhi on 12th March 2003.

◆ Regional conventions in Kolkata, Chennai, Bhopal, Mumbai, Lucknow and Patiala during 15-31 March 2003 to be addressed by senior NCCOEE leaders.

◆ Black day to be observed through LIGHTNING WALK-OUT from workplace all over the

country by the employees and engineers (without disrupting power supply) and day-long demonstration on the day earlier to the day, the Bill will be taken up for discussion in Parliament.

NCCOEE will take initiative to coordinate with other unions for joint action along with those in telecom, financial sector and other PSUs.

CITU DENOUNCES ILLEGAL CLOSURE IN MICO ABRASIVES

The management of Ms Mico Abrasives Ltd situated at Dhampur, Bijnaur district, UP has suddenly declared closure in the factory on 5th February throwing more than 500 workers out of employment. The workers are represented by the CITU affiliated union there which is the only representative union functioning in the company. There had been absolutely no provocation from any side for such closure and the entire

game plan of the management appears to be a conspiracy to deny the workers their dues and switch over to a new venture. It is surprising that while the company was closed down from morning 5 am on 5th February, the only representative union of the workers has been handed over the notice on 5th evening with back date.

Daulat Ram, General Secretary of UP State CITU in a statement

issued immediately thereafter denounced the unlawful closure of the factory and demanded upon the State Govt to take stringent punitive action on the offender management while compelling him to reopen the factory at the earliest. Meanwhile the mass of the workers have already taken the agitational path against the illegal closure and mounting pressure on the State administration to bring the erring employer to book.

ALL INDIA CONFERENCE OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

The 5th All India Conference of Construction Workers' Federation of India was held on 30th January-2nd February at Kanyakumari, Tamilnadu. 437 delegates and 14 observers including 19 women delegates attended the conference from 12 States.

The Conference was conducted by a presidium consisting of M K Pandhe, R Singaravelu, Kotam Raju and K V Jose.

M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU and President CWFI delivered the inaugural address in the conference. In his address, Pandhe, while explaining the real

face of the anti-people policies of imperialist liberalization being followed by the Govt at the centre and its disastrous impact on the economy, industry and the working class, stated that the construction sector is the worst affected owing to the deflationary measures which is the natural fall out of the of the

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neo-liberal policies. There has been severe decline in construction activities in the economy and the Multinational Companies are being allowed to occupy the space whatever left in the construction sector and their modes of operation have resulted in large scale job losses and displacement of workers. United countrywide struggle for reversal of such anti-national policies is the way out before the working class and the construction workers must play the frontline role in the said struggle which is fast emerging in the national scenario. Pandhe asserted. Pandhe also exposed thoroughly the nefarious game of the BJP bandwagon to divide people on communal lines and create communal tension in the country in order to divert people's attention from the fall out of the anti-people policies on their life and living and dechannelise mass discontent.

The Report was placed by Debanjan Chakraborty, General Secretary, CWFI on the activities and struggles led by Federation and its various units during the intervening period since the 4th

Conference and the role played by the Federation in the united struggle of the working class. The Report also dealt in detail the onslaughts being planned by the Govt on labour rights through amendment in labour laws and denounced the anti-worker recommendations of the 2nd National Commission on Labour. The Report was debated thoroughly by the delegates present in the conference which put forward various suggestions both on the forthcoming struggles and on measures to be taken to strengthen the organization at all levels.

M K Pandhe summed up the deliberation on General Secretary's report and stressed upon the need for vigorous initiative by the Federation for proper implementation of the Central Act on Construction workers in all the States and also organize the workers in the unorganised sector producing construction materials like brick-kiln, quarries, stone-breaking etc.

The Conference was also addressed and greeted by T K

Rengarajan, Vice-President CITU and J Hemachandran, Chairman of the Reception Committee. The conference was also attended by the construction workers leaders from England, Australia, Iraq and Bangladesh. The Conference was greeted by George Brumwell, UCATT(UK), John Sutton, CFMEU, Australia, Khalil Al Mish Hadani (Iraq) representing the Arab Construction workers, and Quammarul Ahsan, Jatio Shramik Federation, Bangladesh.

The Conference elected a 77 member working committee with R Singaravelu as President and Debanjan Chakraborty as General Secretary and S B Karmakar as treasurer. The conference called upon the construction workers all over the country to join in several thousands the March to Parliament programme on 26th February.

A 30000 strong mass rally was held on 2nd February which was addressed by M K Pandhe, T K Rengarajan, J Hemachandran, P K Gurudasan, General Secretary, Kerala State CITU, Debanjan Chakraborty and R Singaravelu besides others.

HEROIC STRIKE BY SINGARENI COLLIERY WORKERS

The mass of the coal-mine workers of Singareni Collieries at Andhra Pradesh went on continuous strike from 22nd January 2003 against mass scale contractorisation and outsourcing of coal-mining operations in the

colliery. All the seven unions affiliated to CITU, AITUC, INTUC, HMS, BMS, IFTU and AIFTU etc sponsored the strike action on 10 point demands mainly against widespread deployment of private contractors and their

equipments in open cast mines and outsourcing of maintenance jobs and disconnection of company's electric supply to workers' colonies/hutment and handing over the same to private power supply company.

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The strike began after all negotiation and conciliation by the labour department failed. And despite severe repression let loose by the administration, police force and deployment of hired agents of the ruling party, the strike could not be weakened in the least and production could not be normalized. More than 2000 were arrested and the leaders of the opposition parties supporting the strike were not allowed to go near the colliery area by the police. B V Raghavulu, Secretary of the AP state CPI(M) was arrested at the outskirts of Kothagudem on his way to Singareni. But despite all these the strike could not be fizzled out.

But unfortunately owing to succumbing of the two major unions affiliated to INTUC and AITUC to the pressure of Chandrababu Naidu Govt, the heroic all in united strike of the workers for the just cause could

not continue further and strike ended practically without sorting out any of the demands. The agreement signed by the INTUC and AITUC unions practically allowed private surface minor equipment in Kothagudem open cast pit (for 8 months?), accepted vague assurance of removal of private Side Discharge Loaders(SDLs) from other mines given by the management within six months, accepted outsourcing of maintenance of Heavy Earthmoving Machinery(HEMM) and machine-making sections and allowed outsourcing of various service jobs hitherto being done departmentally with a meaningless rider that the existing permanent employees will continue to be utilized, accepted disconnection of power supply from the company source and hand over the power supply to private supplier in 57 areas out of total 62 areas of workers hutment etc. So far as the

numerous cases of harassment of workers and trade union activists are concerned including around 600 cases of demotion, reduction of increments, arbitrary transfers etc, the agreement provides that only the recognized union will submit to management not more than 20 cases of such harassment which will be examined by the management and no other commitment.

There has been serious resentment and a strong feeling of being betrayed among the mass of the workers who fought so heroically braving all odds. And the very act of succumbing to the process of outsourcing vital mining operations by some unions as revealed in the impugned agreement will have a negative impact on the united resistance struggle of the coal miners throughout the country against similar outsourcing bid by the Govt in the mines under Coal India Ltd.

Kerala State CITU Protests

The Kerala State Committee of CITU organised a series of protest actions against the World Bank, ADB (Asian Development Bank) dictated policies of the UDF Government in Kerala. As part of these programmes, lakhs of workers laid siege to the Secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram and to the district collectorates in the other 13 districts of the State on the 28th of January 2003. In a massive display of resistance to the anti-people policies, around 5

lakhs workers - men and women, old and young with their children - participated in the siege and demanded that the Government roll back these policies which have resulted in loss of employment and wages, particularly in the plantation and other traditional industries in the State. They created a human wall around the Secretariat by 6 AM on that day. Large numbers of women workers participated in the siege. While in some districts women

outnumbered men, on the whole women's participation was around 50 per cent.

The participants reached the district headquarters early in the morning and collected at the spots allotted to the various unions. Workers from coir, cashew, handloom, beedi, construction, and other traditional industries, headload workers and those in the organised and small sectors participated in large numbers.

REPORTS & EVENTS

CITU UNION WINS IN SECRET BALLOT AT TUTICORIN PORT

In the secret ballot election conducted recently in Tuticorin Port Trust for Labour Trustee and union recognition, the CITU affiliated Democratic Staff Union

has won the first place. The votes polled by the contesting unions were:

CITU—434 votes, SC/ST Union—363, HMS-358,

HMS(Worker)-143, INTUC-26, others-26.

CITU Secretariat congratulated the Tuticorin port trust workers for the support extended to CITU.

AISGEF HOLDS 11TH CONFERENCE

The eleventh national conference of the All India State Government Employees' Federation (AISGEF) was held at Chennai, Tamilnadu, from December 27 to 30, 2002. It was attended by 1,642 delegates and observers, including 166 women, from 19 states of the country. The event also witnessed the participation of 13 fraternal delegates from Vietnam, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

On December 27, the inaugural session started at Vadapalani, Chennai, in a hall named after Comrade S Sundaresan. After the welcome address by All India Insurance Employees' Association (AIIEA) general secretary and reception committee chairman N M Sundaram, World Federation of Trade Unions President K L Mahendra inaugurated the conference. Confederation of Central Government Employees General Secretary S K Vyas and CITU Secretary W .R. Varada Rajan were other speakers at the inaugural session.

In the delegates' session that started on the same day, AISGEF

General Secretary Sukomal Sen introduced his report with certain explanations and clarifications. The report itself was rich in content, and made an in depth assessment of the present international and national situation as well as of developments in different states from the viewpoint of the trade union and mass movements. The report also outlined the organisational position in the AISGEF and its movements and activities. The federation has played a significant and commendable role in fighting against the anti-worker and anti-people, IMF-World Bank-WTO policies of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation, being pursued by the NDA government in our country.

In the discussion on the General Secretary's report, that went on for 8 hours, as many as 40 delegates including some women took part. They were from all the 19 states from where delegations had come, namely, Tamilnadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh,

Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Punjab, Bihar, Tripura, Rajasthan, Assam, Jharkhand, Goa, Pondicherry, and Jammu & Kashmir.

A very significant part of the conference was an exclusive "Women's Session" held on December 29 — the first in the history of the organisation. Mythili Sivaraman, an outstanding leader of women in the country, inaugurated this session. Tamil Selvi, a women's leader of the organisation, introduced a discussion paper on the problems facing the working women as well as the common and general plight of entire Indian womanhood and the women's role in the struggle against that plight. Eighteen women delegates from 16 states discussed the paper with remarkable enthusiasm and fighting attitude, and the discussion was summed up by Sukomal Sen. The women's session added an inspiring and fighting dimension to the entire conference.

Attractive cultural functions, poster exhibitions and a film show on closure of public sector undertakings in Andhra Pradesh

REPORTS & EVENTS

were the other attractions of the conference. Professor V B Venkatesh Athreya from Bharathi Dasan University, Tiruchi, was the speaker at a seminar on "The Impact of Globalisation," while Professor Venkatakrishna of Madras University spoke at the other seminar on "Challenges of Contemporary Communalism."

Sukomal Sen summed up the discussion on the General Secretary's report on December 30 and it was adopted unanimously. The conference unanimously adopted 20 resolutions on

contemporary issues and on organisation as well.

The conference unanimously elected a committee with R G Karnik as Chairman, M R Appan as Honorary President and Sukomal Sen as General Secretary for the next term of three years.

In the context of present national situation when multi-pronged and wide-ranging attacks are taking place on the rights and interests of the working people, the conference came as an example of unity and pledge to fight against all odds. It

showed the unprecedented unity of the state government employees in the country as a whole.

The conference ended with a huge, colourful and militant procession in which, apart from the delegates and observers, employees from Tamilnadu participated in thousands, with their respective banners, festoons and flags. The procession culminated in a public meeting, which was addressed by CITU General Secretary M K Pandhe and other leaders of the AISGEF.

HPCL- BPCL WORKERS TO GO FOR THREE DAYS STRIKE ON 25-27 MARCH

Twenty six trade unions of various affiliations including INTUC and Shiv-Sena functioning in all the refineries and marketing units of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) have decided to go in for three days strike on 25-27 March 2003 (till 6am on 28th) in all the units of HPCL and BPCL spread over the entire country against the decision of the Govt to privatize these two highly profit-making companies.

The decision for strike was taken in a well attended meeting of the leadership of twenty six trade unions of HPCL and BPCL covering all the refineries and marketing divisions throughout the country and representing more

than 90% of the workers of HPCL and BPCL. About 100 representatives from these twenty six unions attended the meeting which was presided over by a presidium consisting of Swadesh Dev Roye, Secretary, CITU, Y D Sharma, Vice President AITUC and General Secretary, Petroleum Workers' Union, Dada Samant, President, Maharashtra General Kamgarh Union, Dr K S Mohan Kumar, General Secretary, Bengal Oil & Petrol Workers Union, Visakhapatnam (INTUC). Shiv Sena Unions of these two companies from Mumbai also joined the meeting and endorsed the decision for three-day strike action.

The meeting also resolved to prepare for prolonged countrywide

struggle to resist the anti-national policy of the Govt to privatize the HPCL-BPCL of which the three days strike action is the starting point. The meeting called upon the mass of the workers to make the three day strike in HPCL-BPCL a total success and be in readiness to take the resistance to further height to force a reversal of the disastrous policies.

**32nd National Safety Day/
Week Campaign
Commencing from 4th
March 2003**

National Safety Council

REPORTS & EVENTS

ANGANWADI EMPLOYEES DEMAND REGULARISATION

Thousands of anganwadi workers and helpers from all over the country sat in a dharna from 11.0AM on the 27th of February 2003 at the Jantar Mantar in New Delhi under the banner of the All India Anganwadi Workers' and Helpers' Samyukta Sangharsha Samiti, a united platform consisting of the federations of the anganwadi employees affiliated to CITU, AITUC, HMS, HMKP, and NFTU. They were demanding the Government of India to resolve their long pending demands of regularisation, payment of minimum wages pending regularisation, implementation of Social Welfare measures like Provident Fund and to stop the system of 'Take Home Ration'. They were also opposing the handing over of the anganwadi centres to the Panchayats or the Mothers' Committees. The Government of India has decided to universalise the system of 'Take Home Ration' in all the ICDS projects, which will

adversely affect the nutritional status of the beneficiaries of the ICDS. Besides, some State Governments have started collecting monetary and other types of contributions from the beneficiaries who belong to the BPL population. The management of the anganwadi centres is being handed over to the Panchayats, or the 'Mothers' Committees' in spite of the assurances by the Ministers to the contrary. The Government refuses to recognise the anganwadi workers and helpers as its employees, though many of them have been working under the Scheme since the last 15-25 years. The dharna criticised the Government for its anti worker anti anganwadi employee policies and decided to intensify the struggles on their demands. It was also decided to join the strike of the Central Trade Unions against the anti people policies of the Government, the date of which will be decided in the meeting on the 12th March. The dharna condemned the callous attitude of

the Minister of State, in charge of Women and Child Development, towards the problems of the anganwadi employees, as she was not present to receive the delegation, nor did she depute anybody to receive the memorandum, in spite of giving the appointment through J Chittaranjan, MP.

Ms Hargobind Kaur from CITU, Kiran Arora from HMS, and Kalavathy Saathe from AITUC presided over the dharna. Jeebon Roy, Gaya Singh, and Prabodh Panda, all Members of Parliament greeted the dharna and assured of their continuous support to the demands and struggles of the anganwadi workers and helpers. WR Varada Rajan, Secretary, CITU also greeted the dharna and extended solidarity. K Hemalata, Amarjeet Kaur, Kiran Arora, Usha Rani, Kishori Varma, Ramesh Chandra Dahiwade, Subhashini Sharma, Geetha Mahajan, Sarojini Jena and others addressed the dharna among others.

CITU GREETINGS

M. K. Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, in a Press release issued on 26.3.2003, congratulated the working class of the country for their massive participation in the March to Parliament programme staged today. Referring to the declaration adopted at the march, which envisaged an all India general strike before the end of the budget session, in the event of the Government persisting with their disastrous anti labour and anti people policies, he exhorted the workers and the trade union activists, returning after participation in the inspiring march, to take the message of the declaration to the mass of the workers and start hectic preparations for the strike.

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

State	Sr. Centre		Month		State	Sr. Centre		Month	
	No.		Nov.' 02	Dec.' 02		No.		Nov.' 02	Dec.' 02
Andhra Pradesh	1	Gudur	470	467	Maharashtra	38	Mumbai	565	569
	2	Guntur	490	492		39	Nagpur	504	497
	3	Hyderabad	476	478		40	Nasik	519	521
	4	Visakhapatnam	479	479		41	Pune	538	537
	5	Warangal	517	507		42	Solapur	492	489
Assam	6	D.D.Tinsukia	408	402	Orissa	43	Barbil	438	433
	7	Guwahati	492	486		44	Rourkela	425	420
	8	Labac-Silchar	382	380	Punjab	45	Amritsar	429	418
	9	Mariani-Jorhat	425	421		46	Ludhiana	444	432
	10	Rangapara-Tezpur	432	424	Rajasthan	47	Ajmer	485	477
Bihar	11	Monghyr	455	447		48	Jaipur	453	449
Chhattisgarh	12	Bhillai	430	424	Tamil Nadu	49	Chennai	528	522
Gujarat	13	Ahmedabad	483	479		50	Coimbatore	491	487
	14	Bhavnagar	497	489		51	Coonoor	490	483
	15	Rajkot	456	456		52	Madurai	476	477
	16	Surat	496	488		53	Salem	475	472
	17	Vadodra	474	464		54	Tiruchirapally	563	573
Haryana	18	Faridabad	487	482	Uttar Pradesh	55	Agra	445	437
	19	Yamunanagar	454	446		56	Ghaziabad	481	478
J & K	20	Srinagar	546	555		57	Kanpur	468	456
Jharkhand	21	Jamshedpur	441	440		58	Saharanpur	444	439
	22	Jharia	386	386		59	Varanasi	498	489
	23	Kodarma	400	392	West Bengal	60	Asansol	467	460
	24	Noamundi	421	427		61	Darjeeling	410	405
	25	Ranchi-Hatia	445	437		62	Durgapur	563	554
Karnataka	26	Bangalore	460	460		63	Haldia	590	582
	27	Belgaum	524	523		64	Howrah	556	546
	28	Hubli-Dharwar	484	480		65	Jalpaiguri	424	416
	29	Mercara	462	463		66	Kolkata	544	530
Kerala	30	Alwaye	487	487		67	Raniganj	425	414
	31	Mundakayam	482	483	Chandigarh	68	Chandigarh	520	514
	32	Quilon	503	518	Delhi	69	Delhi	561	551
	33	Thiruvananthapuram	553	554	Pondicherry	70	Pondicherry	531	531
Madhya Pradesh	34	Balaghat	444	438					
	35	Bhopal	516	509					
	36	Indore	494	492					
	37	Jabalpur	483	471					
					ALL-INDIA			489	484

Additional Series of Labour Bureau

State	Centre	November 2002		December 2002
Andhra Pradesh	1	Kethgudem	513	498
Himachal Pradesh	2	Himachal Pradesh	462	451
Rajasthan	3	Bhilwara	488	486
Madhya Pradesh	4	Chhindwara	449	443
Tripura	5	Tripura	453	438
Goa	6	Goa	583	582

(The representatives of the social movements met during the WSF 2003 in Porto Alegre and unanimously issued a joint statement titled "Call of the World Social Movements". We reproduce excerpts therefrom. - Editor)

Call of the World Social Movements

Porto Alegre, Brazil - January 27th, 2003

The United States government in its determination to launch a war on Iraq poses a grave threat to us all, and is a dramatic manifestation of the links between militarism and economic domination.

The threat of a global recession is ever present; corporate corruption scandals are daily news and expose the reality of capitalism.

Social and economic inequalities are growing, threatening the social structures of our societies and cultures, our rights and our lives.

Bio diversity, air, water, forest, soil and sea are used like commodities and are for sale. All this threatens our common future.

We oppose this!

The social movements that are fighting all around the world against neo-liberal globalisation, war, racism, castism, religious fanaticism, poverty, patriarchy and all the forms of economical, ethnical, social, political, cultural, sexual and gender discriminations and exclusions. We are all fighting for social justice, citizenship, participatory democracy, universal rights and for the right of peoples to decide their own future.

We have demonstrated in millions to say that another world is possible. This has never been more true and more urgent.

No war!

We are against the war on Iraq, the attacks on the Palestinian, Chechnya and Kurdish people, the wars on Afghanistan, Colombia, in Africa and the growing threat of war on Korea. We oppose the economic and political aggression against Venezuela and the political and economic embargo by the US government against Cuba, and elsewhere.

We also denounce the deliberate attempts made by imperialists to increase religious, ethnic, racist, tribal and other tensions and strife all over the world in order to pursue their selfish interests.

Against WTO

The World Trade Organization (WTO and a

proliferation of regional and bilateral trade agreements, are used by multinational corporations to promote their interests, to dominate and control our economies and to impose a development model which impoverishes our societies. In the name of trade liberalization, every aspect of life and nature is for sale and people are denied their basic rights.

We will organise mass protests around the world during the 5th ministerial meeting of the WTO in Cancun, Mexico, in September 2003.

Cancel the debt

The full and unconditional cancellation of Third World Debt constitutes a prerequisite condition in order to fulfill even the most basic human rights. We shall support any indebted country that would stop its external debt payment and would break its agreements with the IMF, especially the Structural Adjustment Programmes.

Women: promoting equality

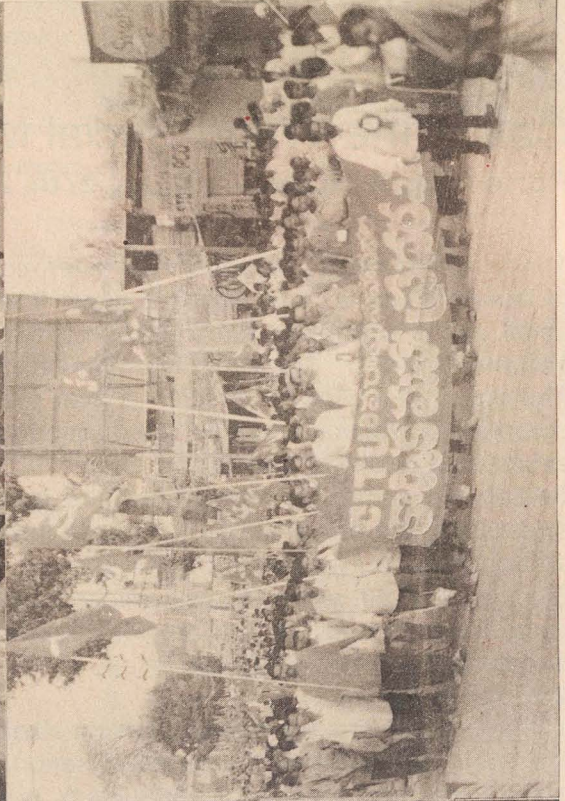
We are part of the actions promoted by women's movements on 8th March which is the International Women's Day to fight against all forms of violence and patriarchy and for social and political equality.

In solidarity

We call for solidarity from all progressive social forces, movements and organisations across the world for those peoples such as the Palestinian, Venezuelan, Bolivian, and Cuban (that fight against the US embargo) and others who are facing extreme crisis and are fighting against imperialist hegemony at this very moment in time.

• (W.R. Varada Rajan, Secretary, CITU, attended the WSF 2003, on an invitation from the Brazilian Organising Committee.)

6th CONFERENCE of
ALL INDIA COAL WORKERS FEDERATION
to be held
at
Northern Coalfields Limited
Singrauli (M.P.)
from
29 - 31 March 2003



Andhra Pradesh State Conference of CITU (report on p. 16)

Hemalata Addressing Anganwadi Employees Dharna (report on p. 25)