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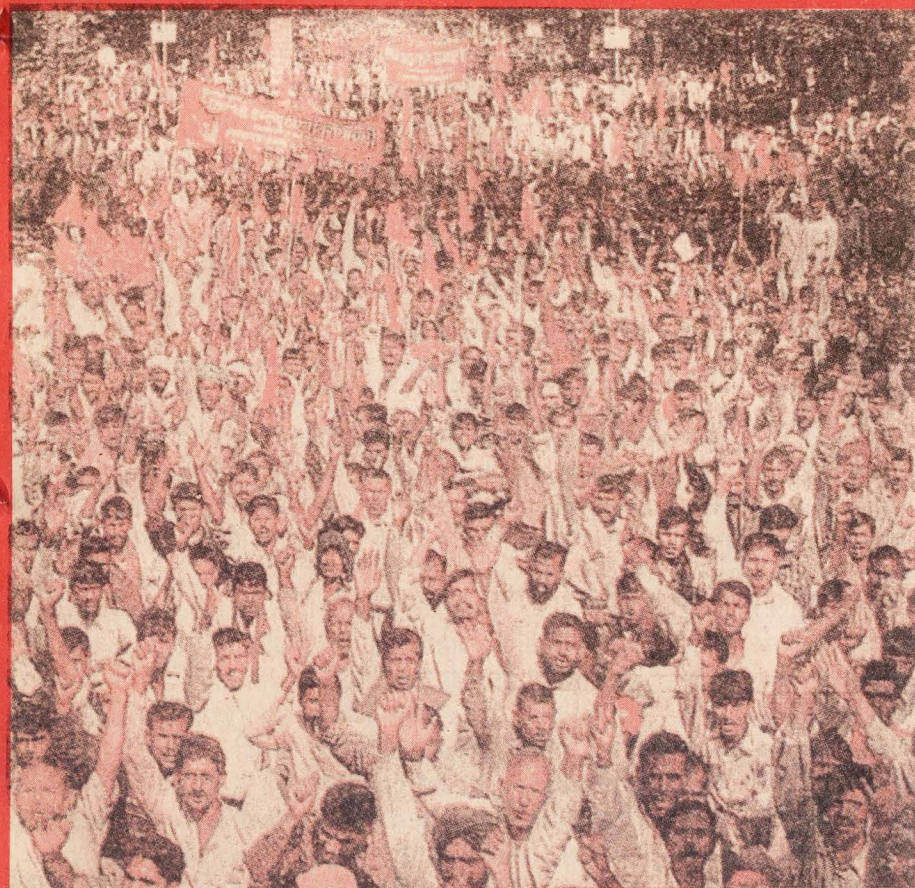
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THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITY



NOV. 9

DEMONSTRATIONS

AGAINST

GLOBALISATION



At Delhi

In Bangkok→



VIZAG EPZ: SUCCESSFUL UNITED STRUGGLE

The workers of the Synergies Doore Automotive Industries, a unit in the Visakhapatnam EPZ, went on a lightning strike on 10th of October, which continued up to 18th October and emerged victorious. This was the first strike after the establishment of the VEPZ. This was also the first victory for the workers in the zone.

Since the establishment of the unit, the management treated the workers as bonded labour. They never cared to implement any labour laws, and did not recognise the union. More than 90% of the workers did not get minimum wages; no overtime wages, no canteen facility nor any medical benefits. Any worker raising any of these issues was immediately dismissed from service. Security guards were used to prevent such workers from entering the VEPZ. The management exerted a lot of pressure not to register any union in the unit. But the workers managed to get the union registered, with great difficulty. Immediately, The President of the Union, Maheswara Rao and working president N.N. Naidu were suspended and show cause notice was issued to General Secretary and Vice Presidents and other office bearers. Medical facilities were stopped, and the probation/ training period were prolonged and other such vindictive measures were taken against the union members. Services of 12 members including 7 office bearers were terminated. These acts of oppression created a lot of resentment among the workers and no longer able to contain their anger, they resorted to an indefinite strike from 10th October morning. The management tried to prevent the workers in the previous shift to leave workplace by closing down the gate. But those workers jumped out the gate, more than 12 ft high and joined the strike. The Strike continued till 18th October braving the police repression.

The management tried its best to disrupt the strike. They telephoned to the houses of the workers and threatened them; tried to bring them to the factory by force; gave full-page advertisements in all the local newspapers against the strike, pronouncing it as illegal. But all the workers remained united as one. The repressive

measures of the management only strengthened their determination.

The Govt invoked section 144 Cr.P.C. to prevent mobilization. The management, in collaboration with the administration tried to recruit new workers and called for even walk-in-interview and get a job. But all the efforts of the management authority combine ended in smoke owing to cent per cent unity and complete strike action by the workers determined to assert their rights. Moreover, CITU organized massive solidarity actions in support of that indefinite strike action from the first day itself and could create such an atmosphere that the entire workforce of the VEPZ came forward with a threat for solidarity strike in the whole of EPZ.

On the first day of the strike, many CITU affiliated unions and working women from many industries participated in solidarity actions. This increased the confidence of the workers. They stopped the police, surrounded the CEO of the company, and did not allow him to move. It mobilised the support of the entire workforce in the VEPZ and threatened with solidarity strike in all the units.

Ultimately, the strike ended on 18th October only after a settlement with the union by which the CITU union have to be recognized and all vindictive measures have been withdrawn and workers will be paid variable dearness allowance and also medical benefits. The management also had to agree for bilateral discussion and settlement on other economic demands of the workers by March 2002.

The State Government and the VEPZ authorities brought immense pressure on the management not to recognise the union under any circumstances. Even when the management was compelled to concede the demand of the union, due to the unprecedented unity of the workers, the State Heavy Industries Minister K Vidyadhara Rao personally pressurised the management not to recognise the union.

Several forces including the INTUC tried hard to disrupt the strike. But the tactics adopted by the union in mobilising support for the strike helped to preserve the unity of the workers.

THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

DECEMBER 2001

BUSINESS AS USUAL

by UNNY



Courtesy: The Indian Express

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EDITORIAL

UNDER BJP, GOVERNANCE AT ITS LOWEST EBB

The BJP led Government at the Centre is set on harming the national interests to any extent in their shameless bid to hold on to power at any cost.

George Fernandes, who had to quit the Vajpayee cabinet after the Tehelka expose, had been re-inducted as the country's Defence Minister, even while the related judicial enquiry is still going on. The media has openly commented that the convener of the NDA was more of a threat to the ruling coalition when outside the cabinet than being inside. The Government spokesmen blatantly justify this as the 'prerogative of the Prime Minister'. No matter if all propriety and national interests in the most sensitive area like defence are thrown to the winds.

A similar gesture had been extended to the ousted President of the BJP, Bangaru Laxman, who was captured on video camera while taking money, as the Chairman of the House committee of the Rajya Sabha. Sanjay Nirupam, a Member of Parliament belonging to one of the NDA partners, had resigned from the Committee in protest.

Yet another attempt by the BJP Government to tamper with the democratic institutions to advance its self-interests is the latest move to amend the law relating to Rajya Sabha elections. Secret ballot provision will be done away with and provision will be made for any one from any State or Union territory to contest Rajya Sabha elections in any State. This is an attack on the federal set up itself. Terrorism, Afghan War, POTO are all used as levers to shore up the fortunes of the BJP in the ensuing elections in Uttar Pradesh, unmindful of the harmful portents of such a partisan approach to the country's polity.

A plethora of legislations are slated to be brought up in the Parliament, which will further ruin our crisis ridden economy and heap miseries on all sections of the people. The BJP Government is steadfast in its commitment to its masters in the USA and the international financial institutions under its hegemony.

The NDA partners are unmindful of the disastrous consequences of these moves; for them the crumbs of power sharing is more important than the nation. But, the people and the working class cannot countenance the menace of BJP misrule. Sooner they are shown the door the better for the country.

NOVEMBER 9: ACTION DAY AGAINST GLOBALISATION

November 9th, the day of commencement of WTO Ministerial meeting at Doha (Qatar), was observed as Global TU Action Day to say "No to Globalisation", throughout the world. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and the World Confederation of Labour (WCL) had jointly called for observance of this day. The main slogans of the Global day of action were:

- * No to globalisation that drives down workers' right and job security
- * No to globalisation that undermines education and healthcare
- * No to globalisation that helps the rich and hurts the poor
- * No to globalisation that stifles and denies democracy.

In India, all the central trade unions in India viz., CITU, AITUC, HMS, INTUC, BMS, UTUC, UTUC (LS), TUCC and AICCTU had, in a joint Statement, called upon the working class to observe the Global Protest Day on November 9 by holding joint demonstration and rallies all over the country. The central trade unions had also highlighted the five point demands, in pursuit of which united action programmes were already being staged in India since July last, viz.:

- * Against thoughtless privatization of profit making and potentially viable PSUs including

Defence sector industries

- * Against the move of changing labour laws in favour of the employers

- * For immediate enactment of comprehensive legislation for agricultural workers

- * Against removal of quantitative restriction on import much to the detriment of industry, agriculture and national interest as a whole

* Against the policies leading to severe aggravation of joblessness and unemployment. All the Indian trade unions issued a joint communiqué on 7th November reiterating the call for observance of the Global Protest Day and also cautioned the Government not to succumb to the pressure of the Transnational companies lobby in the WTO ministerial meeting at Doha "starting a New round" on the issues of 'multilateral agreement on investment (MAI)', 'linking labour standard with trade', 'policies relating to agricultural sector' etc., without a through review of the implementation and impact of the earlier round.

The joint call for observance of the Global Protest Day created high enthusiasm among the workers and trade unions throughout the country. In the preparatory process itself, thousands of meetings were organised in factory gates, workers' townships and industrial centers all over the country. Several millions of printed pamphlets in almost all

the Indian languages were published and distributed among the workers; tens of thousands of posters were also released.

On 9th November, countless number of joint rallies, demonstrations and processions were held in almost all the district towns of the country, amidst great enthusiasm by the workers with the slogan "No To Imperialist Globalisation" renting the air and raising voice against the machinations being planned in the WTO ministerial meeting at Doha. The huge workers assembly all over the country was made colourful by the flags and festoons of various trade unions of all affiliations.

Excerpts from the reports received so far from various States on observance of the Global Protest Day are reproduced hereunder:

WEST BENGAL

Huge processions, rallies and demonstration, participated by tens of thousands of workers and common people were reported from all the districts, subdivisions up to block level, both in rural and urban areas and in major industrial centers of the State. Demonstrations, rallies and processions were held, numbering a few thousands all over the State, where the workers, peasants, agricultural workers, teachers and other masses participated

large numbers. The Statewide rallies and mobilisations also carried on with it a mass signature campaign against the retrograde anti-national policies of the Government at the Centre and several lakhs of signatures were collected.

In Kolkata, a huge mass rally of more than twenty thousand people was held in the Esplanade area, which was also participated by the unions and associations of teachers, central and state Govt. employees, banks, insurance and other

offices and establishments, besides the unions affiliated to the central trade unions sponsoring the action programme. Several independent unions and the 12th July Committee also took a leading role in the Statewide protest programmes.

KERALA

Massive demonstrations took place in at least 100 centres throughout the State. The huge demonstrations held in all districts have drawn the

participation of not only the workers but also common people, agricultural workers and others from all walks of life.

In the State capital at Thiruvananthapuram, protest rally with the participation of several thousands workers took place at 12 centres. In Quilon district nearly 10,000 workers participated in the programmes conducted at 12 Taluk centres. In Pathanamthitta district, about 8000 workers participated in 5 centres; In Alappuzha district 8000 workers participated in 6

Globalisation Promotes Monopolies: Chomsky

The new world economic order is loaded heavily in favour of multinational corporations (MNCs) and big corporates and allows them to accumulate huge profits by adopting monopolistic practices, according to Noam Chomsky, the linguist and acclaimed critic of global liberalisation.

Delivering a lecture on 'Threats to human survival' here on Tuesday, Chomsky said the economic yardsticks adopted by developed nations and international agencies to measure economic progress and development were "highly selective." The promised land of liberalisation, too, was just a "mirage."

According to him, the present system of globalisation had failed to combat the problem of inequality among societies. Instead, it has facilitated the hegemony of the rich and powerful over the masses. "Liberalism can also be shaped into an instrument of power and destruction," he said.

He described MNCs and international financial institutions - where decision-making was biased in favour of what the rich and powerful nations have to say - as "masters of mankind" who only look at their own interests. These "private tyrannies" often extract special benefits in foreign countries that are out of bounds for local companies.

For example, General Motors can go to Mexico and demand national treatment but a Mexican cannot do so. Further, a few agro-business experts from powerful nations move farmers out of their own land for a pittance. "Such policies and their human consequences are of serious concern."

Stating that the best period in the US economy was under a semi-command system after World War II, Chomsky said the flaws in the liberalisation process had resulted in a profound dilemma for those left behind in the march towards "economic progress." The convergence of global markets had not taken place even as inequality of income - both globally and within countries - had gone up.

Along with investment of MNC funds in less-developed countries, global corporations were increasingly having a more profound say in government policies in these countries. "These Governments now have to face dual constituencies." As such, socio-economic decisions were shifting to "unaccountable sources." Chomsky regretted that the media had not taken up issues concerning labour and unfair labour practices adopted by MNCs appropriately. At times, there were "conscious and deliberate efforts towards media submission," he observed.

Pic.: The West Bengal Chief Minister, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, talking to Noam Chomsky and his wife Carol Chomsky, during a programme where Chomsky delivered a lecture on '11th September and its aftermath: where is the world heading?', in Kolkata on Tuesday.

(Businessline, November 21, 2001)

centers; In Kottayam district programmes were conducted in 5 centres; In Idukki district programmes were conducted in 3 centres. In Ernakulam district a total of 10350 workers participated in 7 centres. In Trichur district head quarters 2500 workers participated; In Palakkad district programmes were conducted in 14 centres; In Malappuram district, 3500 workers participated in 6 centers; In Kozhikode district, about 12000 workers participated in 9 centres; In Kannur district 25000 workers participated in 9 centres; In Kasaragode 9000 workers participated district in 2 centres. In all the places, leaders of all the central trade unions addressed and militant anti-WTO demonstrations were organised jointly by all trade unions. In all centers, the State and Central Govt. employees, Insurance, Bank sector employees also participated. In all the centres, demonstration and public meetings were conducted.

TAMILNADU

In more than 50 centres in the State, covering all districts and industrial locations, massive demonstrations and rallies took place, braving inclement weather and rains throughout the day. Besides the sponsoring central trade unions, the trade unions affiliated to the AIADMK, TMTUC and MDMK also took active part in the programmes in some places. In the State capital at Chennai, a huge rally of the industrial workers and employees of Bank, Insurance,

State and Central Govt. offices and other services was held near the Central Railway Station. In the early hours of the day, gate meetings took place in almost all the offices and factories, which were participated by the workers enmasse.

ANDHRA PRADESH

In Visakhapatnam, thousands of workers staged a twelve hour-long dharna. Workers of Steel plant, Bharat Heavy Plates & Vessels Ltd, Hindustan Zync and Shipyard workers took part along with their families. In the State capital at Hyderabad, a centralised dharna was organised, where all the sponsoring central trade unions along with the Govt employees and other independent organizations participated. In Srikakulam and Vijaywada, AP Agricultural Workers Union and AP RYATU Sangam joined the protest demonstrations. In the demonstrations organised at Guntur, Prakasam, Nalgonda and Karnool districts, effigies of World Bank/IMF/WTO were burnt.

DELHI

In the county's capital Delhi a day long dharna was staged at Jantar-Mantar (near Parliament Street), participated by several hundreds of workers which was addressed by the leaders of all the nine central trade unions. Preceding this, a massive protest was also held on 6th November, under the banner of a platform of resistance to globalisation offensive.

KARNATAKA

Thousands of workers demonstrated in several places in the districts of Mangalore, Tumkur, Mysore, Hassan, Belarry and, Raichur, besides other centers in the State. In the State capital at Bangalore, a 9000 strong workers' procession marched through the main roads of the city and converged in a mass rally before the State Governor's residence. A memorandum was submitted to the Governor, highlighting the opposition of the working class to the policies of imperialist globalisation. Besides the sponsoring central trade union organisations, HMKP and the Joint Action Front of the Bangalore based public sector workers also took active part in the programme.

RAJASTHAN

Massive processions and demonstration were organised in Sriganganagar, Hanumangarh, Churu, Bikaner, Jhunujhunu, Sikar, Alwar, Bharatpur, Kota, Udaypur, Kankroli, Bhilwara, Chitorgarh, Jodhpur, Bhopalsagar and Rawatbhatta. In the State capital at Jaipur, a huge procession of several thousands of workers culminated in a mass demonstration before the State Govt. Secretariat, which was addressed by the leaders of all the national trade union centers and also the leaders of the independent unions of the employees of Bank, insurance, state and central Govt. employees etc.

PUNJAB

Demonstrations, dharnas and rallies were staged in Amritsar, Hoshiarpur, Asron, Ropar, Patiala, Sangrur, Ludhiana and Malout and in other districts, where thousands of workers had participated. In the State capital at Chandigarh, a big public rally was held, addressed by leaders of various trade union centres.

HARYANA

Massive joint demonstrations were held in all the district headquarters in the State, where workers, both rural and urban, cutting across affiliations participated in huge numbers. People from all walks of life were mobilised particularly at Hissar, Zind, Bhiwani and Rohtak. Besides the unions affiliated to all the central trade unions, the Sarva Karmachari Sangh, representing the State Govt. employees took a frontline role in mobilising the employees all over the State. Participation of the employees of bank and insurance sector was also noteworthy. In the demonstration slogans were also raised against the repressive and anti-people rule of the Haryana State Govt.

ORISSA

The State capital Bhubaneswar witnessed a huge procession by several thousand workers, which after marching through the main roads of the city, gathered before the State legislature to hold a big public rally. The leaders of all the sponsoring trade union centres addressed the mass meeting.

TRIPURA

Demonstrations and rallies by

tens of thousands of workers were reported from 72 different places in the State covering industrial centers, tea gardens, rubber-plantations, fisheries, transport sector and office establishments and services in the State. People from all walks of life participated. In the State capital at Agartala, a huge mass meeting was held at Kaman Chowmuhani, which was addressed by the leaders of various central trade unions.

ASSAM

In the State capital at Guwahati, a huge rally was held in the judges-field ground, which drew several thousands of people from all walks of life.

UTTAR PRADESH

Demonstrations and rallies were reported from Bareilly, Varanasi, Agra and Kanpur. In Kanpur, while a huge rally of thousands of workers was organised in the evening, several gate meetings took place in the morning hours in all major factories. In the State capital at Lucknow, a demonstration before the State legislature was organised in a big way.

MADHYA PRADESH

Demonstrations and rallies participated by thousands of workers were reported from Jabalpur, Indore, Gwalior, and Ujjain. In the State capital at Bhopal, a huge mass rally was held. Leaders of all the sponsoring organisations addressed the rally. Reports of dharna and demonstration have come in from all the coalmines in the State. At Singrauli, a massive daylong dharna was

organised by the coal miners before the headquarters of the Northern Coal Fields Ltd.

CHATTISGARH

A huge demonstration participated by thousands of workers was held in the State capital at Raipur. Reports of demonstration were also received from Bhilai Steel Township, Rajhara Iron Ore Mine, NTPC and Balco township at Korba and the colliery areas of South Eastern Coal Fields Ltd.

UTTARANCHAL

Reports of massive joint demonstration was received from the State capital Dehradun. In Hardwar BHEL Township, joint demonstration by all the major trade unions was held.

MAHARASTRA

Joint demonstrations and rallies were held in Aurangabad, Nagpur, Nasik, Solapur, Pune, Kolhapur and Ichhalkaranji where workers from all affiliations took part in a big way. In the State capital at Mumbai, a big public rally was held under the banner of Trade Union Joint Action Committee comprising AITUC, CITU, HMS, UTUC, TUCI, HMKP, Kamgarh Aghadi, and the federations of state and central govt employees, bank, insurance and railways. BMS and Bharatiya Kamgarh Sena also joined the rally at Mumbai. Reports have also come in from Gujarat, Bihar, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh and other places, where the action programmes have successfully been staged from the State capital down to the block/sub-division level.

MOCKERY OF EXPENDITURE REFORMS - II

M K Pandhe

The anti-working class and anti-people character of the Expenditure Reforms Commission is becoming more and more ferocious with its every new report. The Commission did not touch the dramatically growing expenditure due to undue expansion of Ministry by the Central and the State governments, frequent trips abroad by Ministers and top heavy bureaucrats, substantial increase in perks granted to those in upper echelons, huge advertisement expenditure etc.

The recent additions to the perks and benefits for the Members of Parliament has burdened the public exchequer heavily. Hundreds of crores of rupees given in the form of grants to various agencies controlled by the ruling coalition in order to keep the block of 24 parties together are just examples, which show utter lack of concern for managing the Central finances efficiently.

LIQUIDATION OF HEAVY INDUSTRIES

The Department of Heavy Industries controls 48 public undertakings. The budgetary allocation to this Department is about Rs.460 crore, which the Commission wants to be stopped by the process of strategic sale of profit making undertakings and closing down the sick and loss making ones. Those PSUs, which can be sold in the market, are being restructured with monetary assistance so that they can be made profitable and then sold out gradually.

The Commission wants the whole public sector network to be wiped out from the industrial map of the country in 3 to 4 years.

The Commission noted: "With the policy of liberalisation leading to competition from private sector and from imports, most of these PSEs are finding it difficult to survive. Even otherwise, there is no justification to continue to retain most of them in the public sector". Hence the Commission concludes: "Any significant saving in expenditure is possible only through early disposal of the PSEs".

The Commission recommended that the amount for VRS payment could be raised by loans with Government guarantee to be repaid by the

undertakings by sale of assets. It thus visualises that the Government does not get involved with guaranteeing past loans when, according to the Commission, they may be, in most of the cases, Non-Performing Assets (NPA) of financial institutions and banks.

COSTLY POSTAL SERVICES

The Commission proposes to run postal services on commercial lines and not as public utility service. This would lead to withdrawal all subsidies and enormous rise in the tariff for the postal services.

It has recommended corporatisation of the postal department as a step towards gradual privatisation of postal services.

The Commission advocates the freezing of the present extra-departmental employees who are paid much less than the regular employees. However, it has recommended that jobs done by these extra department employees should be outsourced so that they can be handed over to contractors in a phased manner. According to the Commission it would reduce the cost of operation of the postal services.

Geethakrishnan Commission wants to abolish Mail Motor service since its "cost of operation is high". To begin with, the places where less than 10 workers are working these services should be abolished and later on steps can be taken to abolish others. This will lead to job losses to a substantial section of the workforce.

The Commission noted that a large number of private courier services have taken away a good proportion of high revenue yielding traffic and further suggested that it should be given a legal shape so that the interests of those private service operator are protected, even at the cost of departmental postal services.

It further recommends that all services like chowkidars waterman, sweepers and gardeners should be given to contractors so that money can be saved. Further, "Basic postal services like sale of stamps and stationary and registration should be outsourced to licensee postal agents on the basis of revenue sharing as has been done for

public call offices.

The Commission advocates privatisation of the collection of mail from the letterboxes as well as delivery of ordinary letters. Thus, one by one the entire postal services will be contractorised, handing over to the private operators-particularly all the profit making centres.

Perhaps the massacre of jobs in postal department will be the largest if the policy package of Geethakrishnan Commission is fully implemented.

AUTONOMOUS INSTITUTIONS

Several autonomous bodies in the country are doing welfare work in a limited capacity though the autonomy exists on paper.

According to available information there are 495 autonomous institutions. However, the Commission could trace only 433 autonomous institutions through various Ministries. The budgetary outgo for these institutions is estimated at over Rs.10,000 crores!

In his Budget(2000-2001) speech, the Union Finance Minister announced that no new autonomous institution would be created without the approval of the Cabinet. The Commission, therefore, has proposed that the budgetary support to those autonomous bodies who would not get approval of the Cabinet within three months, would be stopped from 1st October 2001. The Commission further proposed that there should be review by the Government whether the autonomous bodies were fulfilling the objectives for which they were created. It should also be reviewed whether there was any justification for continuation of these autonomous institutions which do not fall within the framework of new liberalisation policies and those are to be dismantled at an early date.

All these autonomous bodies have been directed by the Commission to maximise internal resource generation in the organisation so that "the dependence upon Government budgetary support could be kept at a maximum". This can be done by levying new charges or enhancing the existing charges on the beneficiaries covered by the autonomous institutions. Hence the Commission has proposed that, "The budget support extended now should serve as a ceiling for the year 2002-03 and should be progressively reduced thereafter". Even the welfare

organisations must function like commercial organisations.

Thus, several autonomous bodies are likely to face closure. Already a number of welfare departments have been closed down on the plea of reducing budgetary deficit. Loss of jobs for a large number of employees in these autonomous institutions will also be a direct result.

WATER DOWN THE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE

The main thrust of the Geetha Krishnan Commission is to water down the role of the Government in economic affairs. The entire economic activity should be handed over to the private sector and the Government has to help in every way to augment the profitability of the private sector including foreign companies.

Downsizing of manpower and imposition of workload on the remaining workers has become the hallmark of the basic approach of the Commission. The limited concept of welfare state advocated by capitalism itself is being openly given up by reducing subsidy to the vulnerable sections of the society by abolishing public spending on various welfare schemes.

The commission has proposed abolition of several Government departments or merging some of them with others.

With regard to the profit yielding tourism industry it has observed: "The task of making large investments for creation of facilities at established centres should be left to the private sector. Following this criterion the proposal for disinvestments of ITDC should be expedited."

The Commission however has asked the Government to spend money to create infrastructure for adding profitability of tourism industry by selling the public sector. The report states, "There is case for stepping up the allocations for augmenting "promising tourist infrastructure," the benefit of which will be reaped by the private operators.

ATTACK ON EMPLOYEES

The GeethaKrishnan Commission has prepared a blue print for opening the floodgates of unemployment in Central Government services and public sector undertakings.

The trade union movement must unite and oppose the recommendations of the Commission.

CPSTU MEET CALLS FOR COUNTRYWIDE ACTION

An extended meeting of the Committee of Public Sector Trade Unions (CPSTU) held at Bangalore, on 17-18 November, 2001 called upon the public sector workers all over the country to prepare for countrywide strike action against the anti-national anti-worker policies of the Govt of India. 130 delegates, from various public sector units all over the country, attended the meeting. The meeting was conducted by a presidium comprising H Mahadevan (AITUC), S Dev Roye (CITU), Michael Fernandes (JAF, Bangalore) and Y Adinarayana (PSU TU Coordination Committee, Hyderabad). A background paper detailing various facets of the disastrous policy of the Govt. regarding public sector and the tasks before the trade union movement was circulated among the participants. M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, introduced the background paper. The meeting adopted unanimously as below:

The Extended session of CPSTU being held on 17-18 November at Bangalore expressed grave concern over hectic move of the Govt of India to sell-out the PSUs without any consideration of the utterly negative fall out of their move on the economy of the country and the people and the PSU workers in particular. Each and every event of either sale of shares or outright sale of the PSU exposed gross irregularity and corruption. The CAG and also the Parliamentary Standing Committee pointed to such irregularities and loss to exchequer time and again.

The meeting noted with anguish that the Modern Food, Balco, CMC and Hindustan Teleprinters have already been sold in a scandalous manner and the PSUs in almost all vital strategic sector of the economy like Airlines, Coal, Oil, Power, Telecom, Metal and Heavy Engineering etc have already been targeted for sell-out to garner Rs.80,000 crore during the tenth five year plan while the target for the current financial is Rs 12,000 crore. Move is also afoot to privatize the

Government Department and the Departmental Undertakings as well. The Rakesh Mohan Committee has recommended virtual privatisation of Indian Railways in phases and drastic pruning of the workforce by 20% or more. Again the Telecom Department has already been corporatised and the Port & Docks and Defence Production units are also targeted for corporatisation to facilitate early privatization. All these moves of strategic sale of PSUs are against the basic spirit of the Indian Constitution and in line with World Bank/IMF/WTO prescriptions. Irony is that while in recent WTO meet at Doha, the Govt of India tried to demonstrate a dissenting posture in respect of some of the policy issues pressed for by the rich nations and the FUND/Bank duo, in respect of the PSUs, the Govt is pursuing the same retrograde policies.

The Govt have also been taking steps to close down many sick and loss making but potentially viable PSUs. Besides the BIFR route, the Govt of the day has also been trying to hasten up the closure-process of many PSUs

by way of granting liberal permission for closing down through the Labour Ministry in exercise of the provisions in the Industrial Disputes Act, without even consulting the concerned State Governments. PSUs referred to BIFR have been denied wage revision, in some cases for two rounds. The workers of many sick and loss making PSUs are not getting wages for months together, in some cases for more than 15 months. Now the SICA is being repealed and the Companies Act is being amended to facilitate fast track liquidation of PSUs.

The 'Manual on Procedures on Disinvestment' published by the Ministry of Disinvestment, has drawn the blue print of the methods and procedures to keep the PSUs undervalued without any consideration of their asset base, only to suit the interest of the prospective buyers in the foreign and Indian Corporates. This is in contravention with the observations of the CAG.

Maligning campaign is being carried against the performance of the PSUs to justify their outright sale. But in reality,

during the year 1999-2000 the net profit earned by the PSUs was Rs.14,555 crore which is 17.66 per cent of equity share capital and 14. per cent of return on capital employed which is no way inferior to private sector, if not superior in many cases. Compared to the previous year the net profit has increased by 10.24 per cent. The total contribution of the PSUs to the exchequer on account of corporate tax, excise duty, customs duty and other duties, dividend and interest on loan etc. for the year 1999-2000 was Rs.56,433 crore, whereas in the same year, the unpaid outstanding from their most favoured private sector on account of corporate tax, income tax, customs duty etc was more than Rs 60,000 crore. In the same year the PSUs also generated internal resources to the tune of Rs.35,891 crore. The heinous attack on trade union right is clear from the declaration of the Central

Government to make changes in Industrial Disputes Act to facilitate downsizing/ retrenchment/dismissal/closure without any restriction. The Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act is going to be thoroughly changed to allow contract system in all types of work. Other labour related statutes are also being changed to give the boundless powers to the employers. The Govt appointed Committees like the Ahluwalia Committee, Geethakrishnan Committee have all made recommendations in the same direction. Side by side, onslaughts on the workers legitimate rights and facilities like denial of bonus, withdrawal of LTC and heavier income tax-burden etc are increasing every day.

CPSTU notes with satisfaction that during last one year or so, all the trade unions in the country including INTUC and BMS have taken a stand of opposition against the anti-

national, anti-public sector and anti-people policies of the Govt. The CPSTU welcomes the united decision of most of the trade unions in the Coal industry to go in for three days strike against privatisation and non-payment of dues on 3-5 December 2001, and also the decision for Bank strike in December 2001 and similar exercises going on in various other sectors.

The need of the hour is to convert such opposition and integrate all sectoral struggles into countrywide united action against those policies. All constituents of CPSTU must take up the initiative to unite the public sector workers irrespective of affiliations and rally them into countrywide struggle to defend the public sector. CPSTU must also strive to mobilise the support of the common people in defence of the public sector which is synonymous with the country's economic sovereignty.

ACTION PROGRAMME

- * CPSTU calls upon and appeals to the public sector workers irrespective of affiliations and all the PSU trade unions to prepare for countrywide strike action against the anti-people, anti-PSU policies of the Govt of India.
 - * Further, any move to amend the labour laws in favour of the employers in the forthcoming session of Parliament would be opposed to by the PSU workers through countrywide strike action at short notice to be called by the Central Trade Unions.
 - * The CPSTU calls upon the all the public sector unions to express solidarity with the three-day strike action by the Coal Workers through demonstration and by sending telegram to Coal Minister on 3rd December, 2001.
 - * Massive regional joint convention under the banner of CPSTU against the privatisation and closure of PSUs, non-payment of wages and onslaught on workers rights and facilities in all the major public sector and industrial centres like Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta, Bhopal, Lucknow, Baroda, Ahmedabad, Kanpur, Calcutta, Durgapur, Rourkela, Chennai, Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, Bangalore, Cochin, Thiruvananthapuram, Guwahati and other places, to be attended by the CPSTU leaders. (to be completed by 15th January, 2002)
 - * Massive all India convention of all public sector workers on the Sunday immediately preceding the commencement of the forthcoming Budget session of Parliament to decide further programmes of movement including the date of nation wide public sector STRIKE.
 - * Massive Dharna before Parliament on the next day.
- CPSTU calls upon the public sector workers irrespective of affiliations to make all out preparation to make the programmes a total success.

POTO : DESCENT TO A POLICE STATE ?

The Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance 2001 (POTO), was promulgated by the President of India, on October 24, 2001. It is to be presented for approval in the winter session of Parliament, which is underway. POTO (Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance), which seeks to replace TADA (Terrorist and Disruptive Activities {Prevention} Act), makes TADA look a miature in comparison. POTO has rightly been described as the harbinger of India's descent into a police state.

Anti-democratic provisions as in POTO make a deadly combination with police inefficiency, barbarity and criminality, traits so evident in Indian police set-up. The censure of police has not come from any human rights or civil liberties organisation, but from the Home Secretary, Government of India, Kamal Pande himself.

'LAWLESS POLICE'

Speaking at the Valedictory session of an all India criminology conference in New Delhi on November 3, Pande observed: "If the rising tide of indifference and corruption in the police force is not checked, we may soon find ourselves moving towards the lawless stage". If we look at records of crimes committed by men in Khaki, we would know that the "lawless stage", warned of by Pande, has already arrived.

The Home Secretary expressed "concern over crimes committed by the police" and remarked that "instances of custodial deaths, rape and torture are on an increase and there has been growing criticism of police for violation of human rights" (The statesman, Nov. 4, 2001). Giving laws like POTO to such police force will amount to giving a thermonuclear bomb to terrorists. Sadly, this is what the BJP-led Government at the Centre is intent on doing.

Centrists, leftists, liberals, human rights and civil liberties groups across the country are deeply worried by this anti-democratic move by the hardcore Sangh Parivar ideologues in the Government. This law is going to take away whatever little accountability is left in the police, exposing common people to the gravest risk of police excesses, extortion and blackmail.

EXPERIENCE WITH TADA

The NDA Government, particularly its Home Minister, L.K. Advani swears that the POTO, would not be misused. But, experience confirms that POTO's previous version TADA itself was misused to the hilt.

It was the same L.K. Advani who was in the forefront to campaign for disbanding TADA and his BJP had first of all charged the Congress Government led by Chimanbhai Patel in Gujarat in 1990-92 for misusing TADA.

TADA remained in force for 10 years (1985-95). It was allowed to lapse on 23rd May 1995 following a nation-wide protest. During this period 77,500 persons were arrested. According to a report of the National Human Rights Commission, Gujarat with no militant activity at all once accounted for as many as 19,000 out of a total of 65,000 TADA cases at that time. In other States like Punjab, Maharashtra, Kashmir and Andhra Pradesh, tens of thousands were lying without even once appearing before the court. The TADA review committee had come up with the clinching evidence of its rampant misuse against the minorities.

Six years after TADA lapsed, it still causes shiver under the spines of those who suffered under it. Out of a total of 77,500 persons arrested under TADA, only 8,000 were tried, 725 (0.81%) convicted and 3,000 are still believed to be in jails.

APPREHENSIONS ABOUT POTO

POTO has to be opposed by all right thinking people because it is not going to curb terrorism, as claimed by its advocates. All it seeks to do is to confer complete immunity on the police, allowing it to do as it pleases. That is a bad omen for India's democracy. A perusal of its draconian clauses is an eye opener. That is why some of our greatest jurists and legal minds have expressed serious apprehensions about it.

The new ordinance inverts a basic premise of criminal justice. The law presumes a person innocent till proven guilty. But POTO implies the onus is on the accused to prove his innocence. The accused is presumed guilty till proven innocent! And if the accused refuses to give

samples of fingerprints, blood and saliva, "the court shall draw adverse inference."

The NDA Government had earlier introduced in Parliament the Prevention of Terrorism Bill, POTO's predecessor, last year itself. It was voted down. Then the National Human Rights Commission observed that the main problem facing the country was related to proper investigation of crimes, efficient prosecution of criminal trials and delays in adjudication and punishment in the courts. Even now the NHRC had raised serious objections to POTO.

However, none of these problems nor the problems of terrorism could not be solved by enacting laws that do away with the legal safeguards to prevent innocent persons from being prosecuted and punished. Nor can the problem be solved by providing for a different and more drastic procedure for prosecution of certain crimes, for making confessions before the police admissible in evidence contrary to the provisions to the Evidence Act, for raising the presumption of guilt as set out in the Bill, and creating special courts. These would seriously affect human rights guaranteed under the Constitution and violate the basic principles of criminal jurisprudence as internationally understood. Legal luminaries and rights-activists have pointed out that POTO could be used to curb press freedom and to harass the minorities and liberals.

FOR ELECTORAL GAINS

BJP has now already declared to make POTO and terrorism its main election agenda in the ensuing elections in UP. It has come as a part of a series of measures adopted by the BJP to polarise the State's electorate. First, they tried to fudge the electoral rolls, then they defiled the Taj Mahal, then came the storming of the disputed site at Ayodhya in complete disrespect of the Supreme Court's order, and now we have POTO. For defenders of democracy and civil liberties in India, the future of this country is more important than BJP's electoral calculations.

So far as the prevention of terrorism is concerned, no body is opposed to it, therefore, who are opposing the present Government move, are also not against the prevention of terrorism. Actually what have led the common citizen to go against POTO are the draconian provisions of arbitrary

powers in the hands of police, and also the past experiences with the other preventive measures, including TADA, questions about the ruling NDA's intentions, and apprehensions regarding new ordinance's misuse.

We already have a plethora of laws to curb terrorist and disruptive activities. We have the NSA (National Security Act), ESMA (Essential Service Maintenance Act), the DAA (Disturbed Areas Act) and Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, besides the large panoply of IPC (Indian Penal Code) and Cr.PC (Criminal Procedures Code). Proper policing and meticulous implementation of the available laws is enough to curb all criminal and terrorist activities.

The Union Home Minister L K Advani, Arun Shourie and Arun Jaitley have repeatedly been asserting that all those who oppose the POTO, would wittingly or unwittingly be appeasing terrorists. LK Advani in his address at the recent national executive meeting of the BJP, it would be a "win-win" situation for his party either way if the anti-terror bills is passed or defeated in Parliament. Arun Jaitley says if Parliament does not pass the bill, it would only leave a smile on the face of the terrorists. He even accused Congress leader Kapil Sibal of being "terrorist-friendly". The new Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi is also on record to say that "all Muslims are not terrorists but all terrorists appear to be Muslims".

All this is nothing but echoing what the US President Bush said after the September 11 incidents - "either be with US or with the terrorists". As voices world over proclaimed then 'we will be neither with the USA nor with the terrorists', the mass of Indian people will declare: "We will support neither the terrorists nor the POTO"

Even if the ordinance is not passed, it will be in effect for at least six months and those who get locked up in that time will be under trials for the next eight years.

The working class and the trade union movement have been the first targets of all the detention laws of the past over five decades. As the crisis deepens with the insane pursuit of the 'reforms agenda' by the ruling polity, the resistance to these policies are bound to intensify. POTO, will become a virtual 'Democle's sword' over the head of the trade union and democratic movement. It is the foremost task of the working class and the trade union movement to rally to defeat the POTO!

ECONOMY DERAILED !

Business confidence down: NCAER

The Business Confidence Index (BCI) being tracked and periodically reported by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) has dropped further by 11 per cent over the last quarter....

The Council said decline in business confidence is widespread across sectors and regions.... Insufficient domestic demand is the single most important factor in all the segments of the industrial

sector inhibiting growth in production. Producers of consumer non- durable goods attach greater importance to the shortage of semi-finished goods and raw materials than the other sectors. This reflects reduced availability of raw materials supplied by the rural sector, following the poor crop output in the last two years, it said.... According to the Council survey, economic slowdown is now biting employment plans.

(Business Line, 5-11-2001)

DECLINE IN AGRICULTURE...

Despite ten consecutive favourable monsoons, there has been a sharp deceleration in the contribution of agriculture to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at constant prices during the last two years...

According to a study by Associated Chambers of Commerce (ASSOCHAM)... the production of rice, wheat, coarse cereals and pulses during the rabi season ending June 2001-01 declined by 6.9 per

cent, 9.4 per cent, 14 per cent and 24.4 per cent over the corresponding season of the previous year.

Among commercial crops, oilseeds and cotton registered a negative growth rate of 22.6 per cent and 19.3 per cent respectively during the rabi of 2000-01, while sugarcane registered a marginal positive growth of 0.4% in production during 2000-2001.

(Financial Express, 6-11-2001)

GLOOM, DOOM AND.....BOOM !

Has business confidence bottomed out? Is the worst behind us?

From a high of 122 points in April 2000, the NCAER's Business Confidence Index (BCI) has fallen to a 24-month low of 82.5. Save for a brief period in April this year,.... confidence has been falling steadily. Manufacturing is the worst affected.

The weighted BCI - where each sector is weighted in accordance with its share in overall industrial output - is down much more sharply and is now the lowest in the last 60 months. The bad news doesn't end there. The decline is across all sectors and regions with the exception of consumer durables and services.

Durables have, perhaps, bucked the trend thanks to liberal financing schemes that are available for

a whole host of consumer durables.

Faced with mounting stocks, many manufacturers of consumer durables are now coming out with their own schemes or are tying up with financiers to extend credit to consumers. As far as services are concerned, the optimism is more likely a reflection of higher prices for a wide range of services, especially medical and educational services, rather than increased demand per se.

How else can one reconcile the optimism of service providers with the reality of an economy that seems to have few macroeconomic indicators going for it? Exports are down, as is the rate of growth in industrial production and, more alarmingly, of capital goods...

(Editorial, Economic Times, 7-11-2001)

DISASTERS AHEAD !

INDUSTRIAL GROWTH SLIPS TO 1.6% IN SEPTEMBER

Deceleration in industrial production continued in September, slipping to 1.6% during the month pulling down the six months' industrial growth (April-September) to 2.3% against 5.7% recorded in the first half of the last fiscal.....Manufacturing sector witnessed a sluggish growth rate of just 1.1% in September(against 6.4% in last Sept).

During the first six month of this fiscal(April-Sept)

the cumulative growth rate in mining sector was negative 0.2%, capital goods sector a negative 8.6%, the basic goods segment only 2%(against 4.6% last year), consumer non durable only 3.1%(against 4.3% last year). Only consumer durables witnessed a double digit growth 11.9% which was also lower than the 19.7% recorded in the corresponding period last period.

(The Financial Express, 13-11-2001)

RETHINKING PRIVATISATION ?

Privatisation is often touted as the answer to the problems facing the public sector banks in the country.

But as the Reserve Bank of India's just released 'Report on Trends and Progress in Banking 2000-01' makes clear, privatisation is no guarantee of banking health. Consider the new private sector banks, set up with much fanfare in the mid 90s. In their haste to grow they have over-reached themselves.

The result is that while their balance sheets have grown at a much faster pace than for the industry as a whole, so have their bad debts. According to the RBI report, non-performing assets (NPAs) of these banks have risen from Rs 946 crore in 1999-2000 to Rs 1,619 crore in 2000-01, an

increase of over 71%.

Consequently, while these banks account for just 5.6 per cent of the total loan portfolio of banks, they account for a disproportionately high share - 20%-of incremental NPAs in the industry.

This is not surprising.... Privatised entities do not necessarily perform better....Indeed during the same period that NPAs at the new private banks recorded such a phenomenal increase, NPAs of public sector banks (PSBs) grew at a much slower rate of 3.3 per cent..... It is equally undeniable is that privatisation is not a panacea for all ills in the banking sector. It must go hand in hand with prudent lending policies and efficient supervision if we want banks to be in the pink of health.

(Editorial, The Economic Times, 19-11-2001)

Reforms Disappointment

Whatever the reason, neither economic reforms nor globalisation has helped India

This disastrous situation has come about because the foreigners have extracted the maximum advantage but given little in return. It was argued that if India wanted foreign investment in capital goods, it must first allow consumer goods such as cold drinks, hamburgers or chocolates to come in. So far nothing has come in except consumer goods.

With the war clouds gathering on the world horizon, there is no likelihood of any foreign

investor coming in. India will have to fend for itself. The old hated world "self-sufficiency" is already in use. It will come back with a vengeance.

Ultimately, it will be realised that there is no alternative to self-dependence.

When economic reforms were introduced, there was no discussion in Parliament, let alone the country. The nation should be taken into confidence now. What are the measures being contemplated to do away with the ills of economic reforms and globalisation?

(Kuldip Nayar in Business Line, 28 September 2001 - Excerpts)

SIGTUR CONGRESS IN SEOUL

The Sixth Congress of Southern Initiative on Globalisation and for T.U. Rights (SIGTUR) was held in Seoul (South Korea) from 5th to 9th November 2001. The Congress while condemning the terrorist attack in New York on 11th September 2001 resolutely opposed the U.S. war against Afghanistan and demanded its immediate halt. It condemned the civilian casualties and demanded steps by United Nations to improve the working and living conditions in the world, which alone can effectively address the problem of terrorism. The Congress also opposed the statement of U.S. President George Bush to equate fight against terrorism with support to U.S. war.

About 200 delegates from South Korea, India, South Africa, Brazil, Australia, Philippines, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Hong Kong and Malaysia reviewed the "damaging impact of neo-liberal global restructuring on the lives of working men and women in the region" and stressed the need to "develop more effective resistance struggles. The deliberations pointed out how globalisation led to "the drastic decline of permanent full time workers who were at the heart of union membership" and how the expansion of casual and temporary workers" have posed new challenges before the working class all over the world.

The Congress noted how in the white goods industry the economic deregulation has accelerated the process of concentration through buyouts and mergers. "This has led to the dominance in world markets of only a few economically powerful transnational corporations (TNC). The white goods industry is dominated by only 10 TNCs; they control 52% of the global market; five of these control 40%. The strategic implications of all these for workers and their unions are serious. Several speakers pointed out how the trade union movement is sought to be marginalised by the MNCs all over the world.

There was a special session on privatisation. The experience of Australia, South Korea and South Africa was highlighted during the discussion. M.K.

Pandhe, spoke on the struggle of the power and PSU workers against privatisation. Tarakeshwar Chakarborty highlighted the growing attacks on the financial sector in India. The session emphasised the need for ideological struggle against the policies of privatisation so as to prepare the working class for resistance struggle. In a session on anti-globalisation movement, while the growth of the worldwide movement was appreciated, an attempt was made to widen the links with NGO. The delegation from India while appreciating good work done by some NGOs pointed out how several foreign funded NGOs have been trying to malign the central trade unions and serve the interests for foreign donor agencies. The Indian delegation emphasised the need for more emphasis to be given by central trade unions to strengthen the united anti-globalisation struggle. The session could not draw any definite conclusion on the issue of NGOs.

The Congress welcomed the remarkable unity achieved by the working class all over the world for organising Anti-globalisation Action Day on 9th November 2001, when Ministerial level meeting was being held at Doha (Qatar) in the Middle East. On 9th November 2001, Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) organised the protest rally in Seoul, which was participated by all the delegates participating in the SIGTUR Congress. The rally was addressed among others by the representatives of KCTU, COSATU (South Africa) CUT (Brazil) and M.K. Pandhe (India). One woman demonstrator was manhandled by the police, which evoked strong protests from the demonstrators.

INDIAN DELEGATION

Out of the 99 delegates attending the Congress from outside South Korea 30 were from India. CITU, AITUC, ACEU, AIBEA, AISGEA sent delegates to attend the Congress. WFTU and TUI Public Employees were represented by Sukomal Sen in the Congress. Indian delegation played an important role in the debates and effectively resisted every attempt to water down the struggle against globalisation and for T.U. rights. Two

cultural delegates sang revolutionary songs during the cultural programmes, which received enthusiastic support from the delegates.

WORKING WOMEN SESSION

22 women delegates participated in the Congress. A Special Session on working women was presided over by Neera Thakur which was addressed by speakers from South Korea, Australia, Philippines, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

The speakers noted about the increasing casualisation of employment of women through part time, contracting, outsourcing and home-based work arrangements and perpetuation of low wages of women as a way of attracting foreign investors. The women delegates underlined the increasing vulnerability of working women to sexual harassment from both management and colleagues and also the intimidatory tactics used by the employers and the Governments to deter women workers from unionising.

The delegates spoke very strongly about the inhuman exploitation of working women in Export Processing Zones in India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Philippines etc. where national laws are not implemented and trade union rights are denied. The participants in the debate stressed the need for educating the women activists so that they can reach the level of leadership in the union and play an important role in decision-making process.

ALTERNATIVE TO GLOBALISATION

There was a heated debate on the paper presented by Prof. Robert O'Brien from Canada. He gave some 6 alternative proposals, which were essentially within the framework of globalisation. For instance, proposal to change the mandate of World Bank, IMF and WTO are totally unrealistic, since these institutions themselves are products of imperialist globalisation and they decide their own mandate. The talk of democratising the international financial institutions is also meaningless since then basic character is undemocratic and against the interest of the developing countries.

The CITU opposed these proposals and demanded a worldwide debate on the question of alternative to globalisation itself. The CITU

representatives raised the issue of cancellation of debt payment, implementation of the decision of the World Development Summit, transfer of technology to the developing countries at cheaper prices, increasing the share of the developing countries in the world trade, reduction in global inequalities, etc., which found support among several delegates. It was agreed that there should be further in-depth debate on this subject.

IMPRISONMENT OF KCTU PRESIDENT

The Government of South Korea has put the KCTU President Dan Byungho behind bars from 2nd August 2001, following series of concerted strike and demonstration campaigns organised by the KCTU in June 2001. The SIGTUR Congress condemned his arrest and demanded his immediate release.

The Congress also condemned the arrest of Tian Chua, a Malaysian labour activists, imprisoned under Internal Security Act for his T.U. activities. It was agreed to have campaign in all countries demanding release of both these leaders.

The Government has put several other trade union leaders in South Korea behind bars. KCTU, with a membership of six and a half lakh, is at the forefront of the struggle against globalisation and it is continuously engaged in a series of struggles. During the SIGTUR Congress the delegates had occasion to attend the rallies of public employees, striking FedEx workers (Cargo transport) and teachers and telecom workers. All these rallies were massive and colourful. Participation of foreign delegates enthused the workers in their struggles. On 11th November a powerful demonstration was organised before South Korean Parliament, in which all the delegates participated.

The concluding session of the Congress was presided over by H. Mahadevan Dy. General Secretary of the AITUC. He emphasised the need for more debate with a view to come to a common understanding. Sukomal Sen was on the resolution committee.

During the Congress the leadership of CITU and KCTU decided to strengthen the ties of friendship in the struggle against globalisation and hegemony of U.S. imperialism.

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Andhra Pradesh:

TRANSPORT WORKERS' VICTORIOUS STRIKE

Glorious 24 days APSRTC strike ended on 7th November, 2001. It is a set back to reform process and privatisation policies of the Chandra Babu Naidu govt. The Govt, which has refused to even start negotiations, had to succumb to the united force of striking workers.

Unprecedented unity of 1,25,000 RTC workers and their determination to fight braving arrests, dismissals and suspensions and also unprecedented solidarity by working class irrespective of affiliations led to the success of the striking workers. Almost all in unity among the trade unions in the State along with the left parties had its reflections on the political scenario as well, as all the major non-left political parties except the ruling TDP had to lend their support to the striking workers. In spite of bad propaganda against the workers, the public opinion was in favour of the issues raised by the workers.

The Govt ultimately had to settle the workers' issues, after the central trade unions and the

independent federations have called for a general strike on 8th November. Left parties and congress too have called for a bandh, independently, on the same day.

The Govt. agreed to reduce M.V. Tax on city services to 10% and on other to 12.5% from unique 15%. Total reduction comes to 75 crores of Rupees. Reimbursement on account of concessions will be 100 crores and 125 crores were agreed for wage package. In future, if govt gives new concessions for people, in RTC buses, same will be reimbursed to RTC. A committee will be constituted for curbing illicit operations. Special squads for enforcing M.V. Act provisions & conditions will be organised.

The agreement contains many positive issues but some weaknesses are also there which could have been avoided if all the trade unions remained firm to take care of those issues. There was no commitment with regard to victimizations. No specific understanding with regard to

service conditions to be changed in favour of suffering workers. Due to these limitations, APSRTC staff & workers federation (CITU affiliated) expressed reservations on the settlement and has not signed it.

The agreement contains many positive issues but some weaknesses are also there. There is no specific understanding with regard to service conditions to be changed in favour of suffering workers. And there was nothing with regard to victimisations. Due to these limitations, APSRTC Staff & Workers Federation (CITU affiliated) expressed reservations over the settlement and has not signed it.

Just before conducting negotiations, the two other leaders of the JAC Mr. B. Rama Rao (AITUC) Mr. Rammohan Rao (independent union) had separate talks with the Ministers, excluding R. Laxmaiah (CITU) has led to many doubts.

RTC strike has given confidence to the working class that the reform process can be opposed unitedly.

Against judgment on contract labour

DEMONSTRATION BEFORE SUPREME COURT

Hundreds of workers from various industrial sectors in Delhi demonstrated before the Supreme Court on 31st October 2001 demanding review of its

recent judgment on contract labour overruling its own earlier judgment on earlier occasion in Air India's case. The judgment of Supreme Court in Air India's case had

earlier upheld the right of the contract workers deployed in permanent nature of work in any establishment to get regularised and set a proper direction for

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implementation of the Contract Labour(Regulation & Abolition) Act 1970 in true spirit. The recent judgment of Supreme Court, while overruling the same, has practically taken away the same right of the contract workers.

Various central Trade Unions and federations organised the demonstration jointly. From the demonstration a memorandum was submitted to Chief Justice of India

urging for review of the above-referred judgment by constituting a special bench. The memorandum also mentioned that, "the Apex Court's judgment overruling its own judgment in Air India case tantamount to legitimization of the violations of the Contract Labour(Regulation & Abolition) Act by various employers besides encouraging the said exploitative device of

contract system in the entire workplace in general."

The demonstration was addressed by K.L. Mahendra, General Secretary, AITUC, Tapan Sen, Secretary, CITU, Premchand (UTUC-LS), .S.N Sharma (AITUC) Mohanlal(CITU), Ramanand (AIBEA) and SR Saini (AIIEA). The meeting was conducted by SB Bharadwaj, President, Delhi State CITU.

Against judgment on contract labour

MASSIVE DEMONSTRATION IN MUMBAI

A Three thousand strong demonstration was held at Mumbai on 20th September protesting the judgment of special bench on contract labour nullifying the earlier judgment of the Apex court. The workers moved in procession towards flora fountain denouncing the judgment ignoring rain and inclement weather and defying prohibitory orders. Theekadary Pratha Virodhi Manch, consisting of various trade unions representing different

sectors, had called the programme. The procession reached the Hutatma Chawk despite obstruction by police and held militant demonstration there.

After a brief meeting, the workers started burning the copy of the judgment amidst denouncing slogans by three thousand workers. Then the police force already gathered at the spot started arresting and thousands courted arrests. Among those who were arrested were K.L. Bajaj, Vivek

Monterio, PR Krishnan (CITU), Vasant Gupte (HMS), Dada Samant(Kamgarh Aghadi), Sukumar Damble, A.D. Golandaz(AITUC), M.A. Patil, Milind Ranade (Sarva Sramik Sangh), Jayant Chavan (Sramik Sanghathana), Deepti Gopinath (Indian Airport Employees Union), Sanjay Singhvi (TUCI), S Abhaynkar (Hindustan Lever Employees Union) MrVidhate (INTUC), Ravi Joshi (IFTU) and others.

NATIONAL RAILWAY MAZDOOR UNION

The annual general council meeting of the National Railway Mazdoor Union (NRMU) was held at Mathura (UP) from 22nd to 25th November, 2001. Y.G. Joshi, President, NRMU, presided. J.P. Choubey, General Secretary, All India Railwaymen's Federation inaugurated. W.R.

Varada Rajan, Secretary, CITU greeted the meeting on 22nd November. K.L. Mahendra, General Secretary, AITUC and R.A. Mital, Secretary, HMS were among others who addressed the meeting. P.R. Menon, General Secretary, NRMU, presented the report of activities of the union

since the last conference held at Kalyan during November, 2000. The meeting adopted several resolutions including the one on the threat to Railway industry and railwaymen, emanating from the Rakesh Mohan Committee report, and resolved to wage a sustained and relentless struggle.

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GLOBAL JOBS CRISIS

Juan Somavia, Director General of ILO, has cited "rising unemployment and poverty" as the "biggest threats to human security affecting the largest number of people". The situation has been aggravated by looming recession and the economic fall out from the events of September 11.

ILO estimates that 24 million extra jobs will be lost next year, plus nearly nine million in the hotel and tourism industry, if the slump continues. Even before these events, the world faced a situation where about one billion people are unemployed, under employed or working poor and 80% of people

of working age have no access to social protection.

"All this together represents a major crisis of human security. Too many people feel they have lost control of their own destiny", he added.

(ILO Press Release)

COAL INDUSTRY: COUNTRYWIDE THREE-DAY STRIKE

All the trade unions affiliated to the CITU, AITUC, HMS, BMS have jointly decided to go for three-day countrywide strike in coal industry on 3-5 December 2001 in a joint meeting held at Nagpur on 30th September. The INTUC leaders who were also present in the meeting, though supporting the strike programme stated that they would give their final consent after talking to their central leaders. The unions will serve the strike notice on 15th November.

The anti-Coal industry and anti-worker policy of the BJP-led NDA Govt is the major issue before the 6 lakh coal workers in the country which led all the major trade union federations in the coal industry to decide on three day strike as a preparatory stage for going in for a long-drawn struggle.

The Govt of India has been recklessly allowing coal import by drastically slashing down the import duty even on ordinary coal which has adversely affected the

domestic production. And simultaneously, the Govt, with a deceptive plea of increasing coal production capacity, has decided to allow private sector and MNCs in coal-mining and it has already brought before the Parliament the Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill as an enabling provision for such misdeed of theirs. It is noteworthy that on earlier occasions of the Govt's move to press for such privatization bill in Parliament, the united move by the Coal trade unions had compelled the then Govt to backtrack. The Federations, while declaring the 3-day strike action demanded immediate withdrawal of the retrograde Bill and also restoration of the import duty on coal to 1989-90 levels.

Bringing all the coal companies under Coal India as subsidiaries is also one of the major demands before the striking workers. Besides the coal workers all over the country will also press for

concrete measures and assistance for early revival and revamping of Eastern Coalfields Ltd(ECL) and Bharat Coking Coal Ltd(BCCL) by their strike action. Moreover, long overdue wage arrears following the National Coal Wage Agreement (NCWA-VI) have not yet been paid to the coal workers and many provisions of the agreement are still not implemented despite the fact that the concerned agreement is going to expire within a couple of months. Despite repeated persuasion, the Coal India Management is yet to agree for full payment of such arrears at the earliest for which they are agreement bound. The Federations have demanded immediate total implementation of the NCWA-VI including full payment of the arrears, besides other demands.

CITU, while welcoming the joint decisions for strike, appeals to all the coal unions all over the country to carry the message of struggle to the grass-root level through

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intensive campaign and preparation for the united strike action and calls upon the coal

workers to join the 3 day strike in coal industry on 3-5 December with a firm determination pressing

for fulfillment of all the just demands of the workers and in defence of the public sector coal industry defeating all vacillations.

M.P.KOILA SHRAMIK SANGH CONFERENCE

The 14th conference of Madhya Pradesh Koila Shramik Sangh(MPKSS) was held on 30-31 October and 1st November at Gebra coal township.

The conference was preceded by a huge mass rally by the coal workers and the working people of the area on 30th November which was addressed by M K Pandhe, General Secretary CITU, Samar Mukherjee, Vice President CITU, S Sudevan, President MPKSS, M K Nandy, General Secretary, Chhattisgarh State CITU, Dharmraj Mahapatra among others.

260 delegates from all the coal mines and offices in MP and Chhattisgarh State attended the conference. The conference was conducted by a presidium consisting of S Sudevan, Kameshwar Singh, P K Mukherjee, Amritlal Biswakarma and Johar Ablekar.

The conference was inaugurated by Samar Mukherjee, Vice President CITU. He dealt in detail the fast changing international and national situation and the stupendous task before the working class movement in the country. While addressing the conference, M K Pandhe, General Secretary CITU and President, All

India Coal Workers' Federation pointed to the all in unity emerging in the trade union movement in the face of mounting attack on the working people by the policies of liberalization, globalisation and privatization being vigorously pursued by the BJP-led NDA Govt. It is in this background the CITU unions in the coal industry must make serious effort to strengthen the urge for united action among the grass root level workers against the policies of the Govt and the management. He also dealt at length on the wage negotiation and shortcomings in the 6th wage settlement of the coal workers and also on non payment of arrears by the management. He also called upon the coal workers to make the three day strike in coal industry on 3-5 December against privatization, and demanding immediate action for revival of ECL and BCCL, and immediate payment of overdue wage arrears, a total success.

S Kumar, the outgoing General Secretary of MPKSS placed the General Secretary's report in the conference. 25 delegates took active part in the deliberation on the reports and activities of the union and made valuable suggestions.

The conference, in view of the separation of the State and formation of Chhattisgarh, took important decision on restructuring the organization. It was decided that the MPKSS be renamed as Koila Shramik Sangh to represent the workers of South Eastern Coalfields Ltd(SECL) spread over both in MP and Chhattisgarh. For Northern Coal fields Ltd already a separate CITU union is functioning. The CITU units in Patahrkheda and Chhindwara will be merged with the CITU union in Western Coalfields Ltd(WCL).

Among others who addressed the conference were Jibon Roy, MP AND Ardhendu Dakshi, both Secretaries of CITU, Badal Saroj and MK Nandy, both General Secretaries of MP and Chhattisgarh State CITU respectively. The Conference unanimously elected a 28 member Secretariat and a 61 member working committee with S Sudevan as President, Kameshwar Singh as General Secretary, SC Jain as Working President, M K Chanda, JS Sodhi and Amritlal Biswakarma as Assistant General Secretaries and Ramraj as treasurer.

REPORTS & EVENTS

DEMONSTRATION AGAINST POWER TARIFF HIKE

Several hundreds of workers staged massive dharna and demonstration in front of the office of DM Shimla in protest against steep rise in the electricity tariff. To facilitate privatization, the BJP led State Govt at Himachal Pradesh have been moving fast to dismantle and corporatise the State Electricity Board and already Electricity Regulatory Authority was formed. CITU has already voiced its organized opposition to such moves and warned about steep rise in electricity tariff. Now the Govt has come out with

its true colour and notified steep rise in electricity charges. Given the weather prevailing in HP, average electricity consumption of household is ranging from 150 to 300 units a month. For these category, the electricity tariff has been doubled which will hit hardest the mass of the common people. On the other hand, huge concessions was granted to the industry lobby by reducing the electricity charge by almost 35%. The daylong dharna and demonstration was addressed by Jagat Ram, the Secretariat

member of State CITU and General Secretary of Himachal Hotel Mazdoor Llakjhanda Union, Ramdayal, President of Hotel Mazdoor Laljahanda Union, besides Balak Ram, Kishorilal from the same Union, Chunilal of Bishop Cotton workers union, Bihari Seogi of Kisan Sabha and Tikender from DYFI. The speakers also referred to the move of the BJP Govt of HP to increase the charges of all public utilities such as hospital, education etc against which call was given to build up statewide struggle.

ASSAM: CONFERENCE OF TEA WORKERS

The first Conference of the Assam State Tea Workers Coordination Committee was held on 29-30 September 2001 at Namrup.

Seven CITU unions functioning in various tea gardens in Assam viz., Kachhar Cha Mazdoor Samity, Kachhar Cha Karmi Sangha, Dibrugarh Zilla Cha Mazdoor Sangha, Zorhat Zilla Cha Shramik Union, Nogaon Zilla Cha Mazdoor Sangha, Rangapara Cha Mazdoor Sangha and Namoni Assam Cha Mazdoor Sangha (Kokrajhar) joined together to hold the conference for building effective state level coordination and movement of the tea plantation workers. 113 delegates from all the tea gardens of Assam

participated in the conference.

The Conference was conducted by a presidium comprising of Amal Ghosh Dastidar, President Assam State CITU, Sashakamal Hondiqui and Michael Logun. Bhaba Gogoi welcomed the delegates on behalf of the Reception Committee. Amal Ghosh Dastidar inaugurated the conference.

Asit Dutta, Convenor of the Coordination Committee placed the Report before the conference which made a thorough appraisal of the activities and various aspects of tea plantation workers' movement in the State braving severe repression by the State Administration and the gangsters hired by the garden owners. The

Report also dealt on the crisis being faced by the industry owing to the policies of liberalization and globalisation and its impact on the life and living of the workers.

29 delegates including three women workers took part in deliberation on the report and made valuable suggestions. The Conference was also addressed by Swadesh Debroye, K Hemlata, both Secretaries of CITU, Deben Bhattacharya, General Secretary, Assam State CITU, P Lalaji Babu, General Secretary, All India Plantation Workers' Federation, besides others.

The conference elected a 23 member committee with Asit Dutta as President and Michael Logun as Secretary.

REPORTS & EVENTS

The conference ended with the open session at Namrup where several thousands of workers and common people gathered to hold

a big procession throughout the town and converging into a mass meeting at the end. Sasha Kamal Hondiqui presided over the mass

meeting. Among the speakers were Michael Logun, Sashakamal Hondiqui, Amal Ghosh Dastidar, Deben Bhattacharya and P Lalaji Babu.

Andhra Pradesh: FISHERIES WORKERS CONVENTION

The State level Convention of fishermen's organizations was held at Hyderabad on 21st October 2001 to discuss on the serious problems being faced by the fishermen community in the State despite their huge contribution to the State's economy. The Andhra Pradesh Fishermen's Coordination Committee has organised the convention. Besides the organizations working among the fishermen in the State, many intellectuals and social workers closely related to the fishermen community were also invited in the convention. 405 representatives from 12 districts attended the convention.

The convention discussed at length the situation before the fishing industry and the impact of the anti-worker and anti-industry policy of the State Govt and also the task before the trade union movement. The fisheries industry employs lakhs of people including a large section of women workers, engaged in fishing and related jobs and yields a huge earning for the State Government of around Rs. 1000/- Crores only from export of fish from the State. But not even 10% of this amount is spent for the welfare of fishermen.

Despite huge potential, the fisheries industry is being neglected by the State Government. With the entry of big corporate houses and middlemen in to the industry, the real self employed fishermen are becoming wage workers.

The fishermen who had traditional rights over the natural water resources like the sea, rivers, ponds etc. are losing their rights due to the policies being pursued by the Governments in the State and the Centre. The Government does not care to implement the Murari Committee recommendations, to ban foreign trawlers in our seas. As a result, the country is losing hundreds of crores of rupees.

At present around 5 lakhs tonnes of fish and prawns are produced in the State. In its Vision 2020 document, the State Government has targeted this to be increased to 10 lakhs. But, instead of providing financial assistance to the fishermen's cooperative society, the State Government is trying to create divisions among fishermen's cooperatives, through the water users' societies. The offices of the Fisheries' Federation and the Lower Tank Bund Seed Centre, worth crores of rupees have been handed over to the

Tourism Department to promote tourism. The huts and houses of the fishermen are being demolished and the sites are being given to national and multinational corporations to be developed as five star hotels and parks, for the tourists. The State Government, denying the fishermen their rights on seeds, is auctioning the seed centres. Thousands of ponds throughout the State, of which around 500 in Hyderabad itself, are being occupied by land grabbers with the active backing of the ruling party leaders and the administration. The Government has formed a few fisherwomen's cooperative societies, but has not provided any loans to any one of them.

The Andhra Pradesh Fishermen's Coordination Committee has been working on the issues of fishermen since the last few years. It has supported the State wide strike of the fishermen and small mechanised boat owners in August and organised State wide dharnas, protest demonstrations etc., mobilising thousands of fishermen. In this background, it was felt that there was an immediate necessity to organise the fishermen and fisheries workers throughout the State.

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The Convention was presided by Lellela Balakrishna, State Convenor of the Fishermen's Coordination Committee. Pitabasan Das, Convenor of the All India Fishermen and Fisheries Workers' Federation and Mahaboob Zahidi, MP and member of the AIFFWF,

addressed the convention besides Rama Chandra Rao, convenor of the Andhra Pradesh Artisan's Coordination Committee. A Charter of Demands was unanimously adopted at the convention; it was decided to meet the Fisheries Minister of the State and place the demands before him.

The convention decided to form an organisation 'Andhra Pradesh Fishermen and Fisheries Workers' Union' and affiliate it to the AIFFWF. A 27 member State committee with Balakrishna as the convenor was elected in the convention.

Indefinite strike by transport and civil supply workers

STATEWIDE GENERAL STRIKE IN TAMILNADU

1.25 lakh State transport workers and 30000 workers of the Civil Supplies Corporations of Tamilnadu had been on continuous strike since 10th and 12th November respectively demanding bonus for all the workers. The strike turned out to be massive despite all efforts of the Govt to break the strike. Even after ten days of the strike, the State Govt has not yet come forward for meaningful discussion with the striking workers. Along with the strike action, the striking workers have been staging regular demonstration and courting arrests everyday. Till date more than 15000 transport workers courted arrest and the state jails are

overcrowded.

The strike of the transport and civil supply workers has drawn unique solidarity from all sections of workers and trade unions. A joint Action Committee comprising CITU, LPF, INTUC, HMS, MLF, Ambedkar Union, Pattali Trade Union (PMK) was formed with A Soundarrajan (CITU) as Convener to conduct the indefinite strike action. A Solidarity Committee consisting of almost all the Central Trade Unions in the State was formed with TK Rengarajan, General Secretary, TN state CITU as convenor to organize state-wide solidarity action in support of the strike action.

On 17th November a massive rally was held at Chennai defying the prohibitory order and more than 1000 were arrested including TK Rengarajan, A Sounadarajan (CITU), C K Kuppaswamy MP (LPF), SS Theyagarajan (AITUC) and other leaders.

The Solidarity Committee of all Trade Unions in a meeting held on 18th November has given a call for General Strike throughout the State on 23rd November and appealed to all the political parties to support the strike and pressurize the State Govt to shun arrogance and concede to the just demand of the workers.

(Report from A.K.Padmanabhan)

AICCTU HOLDS 5th CONFERENCE

The Fifth national conference of the AICCTU was held at Dhanbad in Jharkhand State from 8th to 10th October, 2001. The open session of the conference was held at Com. Jagdeo Sharma Hall on 9th October. Yogeshwar

Gope, President, AICCTU hoisted the flag. S. Kumarasamy, Working President formally opened the conference. Swapan Mukherjee, General Secretary, presented the report. Those who greeted the conference included Kanai

Banerjee, Secretary, CITU, S.M. Thakur, Secretary, AITUC and others. The conference re-elected Yogeshwar Gope, S. Kumaraswamy and Swapan Mukherji as President, Vice-President and General Secretary.

REPORTS & EVENTS

UNORGANISED SECTOR WORKERS' CONVENTION

The Orissa State Committee of CITU organised a State level Convention of Unorganised Sector Workers at Rourkela on 7th October. Over 500 delegates from different districts of Orissa attended the Convention, representing different manufacturing and non-manufacturing sections in the unorganised sector, like Beedi industry, mining, contract workers, construction labour, etc. Majority of the workers however, were

women from the Beedi industry. The Convention was presided over by Lambodar Naik, President, Orissa State CITU and inaugurated by P.K. Ganguly, Secretary, CITU. Bishnu Mohanty, General Secretary of the State CITU placed the main resolution. Speakers included other State and district leaders of the CITU and a number of delegates. The Convention discussed at length the growing problems of the workers in the unorganised sector, which

were being accentuated under a globalised economy with the entry of the multinationals. The resolution made a number of specific demands including minimum wage, labour laws and social security measures, security of jobs, etc. and drew out a phase wise action programmes.

A State level coordination Committee in the Unorganised Sector with Biman Maity as the Convenor was also formed.

CITU - ILO CHILD LABOUR PROJECT

West Bengal State Workshop
18 comrades from 3 districts and different trade unions participated in the West Bengal State workshop of the CITU-ILO Programme on Child Labour held on the 7th of November 2001 at Kolkata. Mrinal Das, Secretary, West Bengal State Committee of CITU presided. K. Hemalata, National Project Coordinator also participated in the workshop.

Arati Dasgupta, State Project Coordinator, and Secretary of the West Bengal State Committee of CITU, explained the purpose of the workshop.

Mrinal Das, who was the State Project Coordinator for the earlier CITU-ILO programme on Child Labour, explained the activities undertaken under that project. He told that after that programme, several CITU affiliated unions

have started Non Formal Education Centres; 25 such centres were started in different districts of the State, but now only 5 centres were continuing. The unions could not provide sustained attention and finances for running these centres.

Hemalata reported about the decisions of the National Round Table held at Delhi, and explained the different activities to be undertaken under the present programme. She also reported about the different State workshops held so far, and the experiences.

The participants from Bankura and Siliguri, told that they have made a survey, identified, and enrolled child labour in the beedi and plantation industries respectively in the nonformal education centres. They have reported that they have

started the centres also as was decided by the CITU State Secretariat, on the 1st of November, though the workshop could not be held on the 31st of October as decided earlier and had to be postponed. They told that they have received good response from the parents and the child labour to their efforts and were confident to mainstream most of the children into regular schools.

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REPORTS & EVENTS

SALEM: STEEL WORKERS' RESIST PRIVATISATION

The workers of the Salem Steel Plant (SAIL) have been unitedly fighting against the move of the SAIL management and the Govt to sell the Salem Steel Plant to private parties. About a year back, hundred per cent workers of the plant went on spontaneous strike action on the day, the Govt had announced its intention to privatize the Salem Steel Plant. All

are now trying to make the public sector SSP a joint venture and the Tata Company in collaboration with a foreign company has been in the race.

On 1st November 2001, on the day of proposed inspection visit by TATA-Usinor combine, again the hundred percent workers of Salem Steel Plant struck work and picketed before all the entry points

to enter the plant during the period. The Save Salem Steel Committee comprising all the unions functioning in the plant have led the resistance struggle. The picketing and strike was called off on 2nd November after a huge rally and the leadership called upon the workers to keep vigil and remain prepared for similar mass action at any time in the event of any



the unions of the plant have been united on this issue.

Despite the total opposition of the workers, the Govt and the SAIL management have been pursuing to sell the SSP to private parties and a number of foreign companies is in the fray. In the face of stiff resistance by the workers, the SAIL management and the Govt

of the plant blocking the entry of the representatives of TATA Usinor Combine. The picketing by the workers enmasse continued throughout the night extending to next day on 2nd November, till the management ensured the return of the inspecting team of the prospective buyer combine. Not even a single officer was allowed

retrograde move to sell out the plant or entertain any private bidders.

Steel Plant Employees Union(CITU) took a frontline role in the said militant resistance action. CITU congratulated the Salem workers for their heroic struggle.

DOHA: DEVELOPING COUNTRIES LOSE THE BATTLE

W R Varada Rajan

After the last Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation at Seattle in 1999 ended in a fiasco, there was much hype during the run up to the Doha Conference, 9-14 November, 2001.

The debate at Doha also opened up on expected lines. The North-South divide, the tussle between the European Union and the USA, the precarious lot of the least developed countries, etc.- all found a very articulate expression.

But, as the high voltage debate at the WTO Ministerial Conference at Doha spilled over to the extended sixth day, the developing countries have finally been out-manoeuvred. The resistance to the opening of a new round of negotiations with several of non-trade issues incorporated in the agenda ultimately collapsed. In a tricky move the developed countries of the Quad Group comprising the USA, Canada, European Union and Japan forced the other member countries into submission. The only consolation offered was a change in name-from a "new round" to a "broad and balanced work programme". The declaration adopted defines the 'work programme' as one that 'incorporates both an expanded negotiating agenda and other important decisions and activities necessary to address the challenges facing the multilateral trading system.

The Doha meeting had spelt out the 'Work Programme' in two declarations and one decision. All the new issues listed in the draft declaration presented at the aborted Seattle Conference in December 1999 are now included with only some verbal changes in the Work Programme outlined. They include issues like Agriculture, Access for Non-Agricultural Products, Investment, Competition Policy, Government Procurement, Trade Facilitation, Environment, etc.

The Doha Work Programme has prescribed a time-bound schedule and lays down that "negotiations to be pursued under the terms of this Declaration shall be concluded not later than 1 January 2005." The Fifth Session of the Ministerial Conference-due two years from now-will take stock of the progress in the negotiations and take decisions

as necessary." A special session will also be held to decide on adoption and implementation of "the results of the negotiations in all areas." Thus, it is a far more tight and rigorous exercise than an otherwise loose ended 'new round'. The only consolation for the developing countries is a separate declaration on TRIPs and public health, which provides for exhaustion of intellectual property rights in the event of a national health emergency.

But, the most pressing issue of concern to India and other developing countries, viz. the review of TRIPs agreement with its dangerous fall out by way of genetic engineering and threat to biodiversity that is ruining our agriculture and the farmers' right to protect their seeds, had regrettably been relegated to the background.

India, which spearheaded a much hyped opposition to inclusion of new issues in WTO negotiations and mounted pressure for clinching the implementation issues had once again succumbed to pressure from the USA and its allies. The Commerce Minister, Murasoli Maran, had put up a brave fight only to compromise at the end. He was high on rhetoric but low on results. This capitulation on the part of the Indian side was the corollary of the servile attitude of the Vajpayee led NDA Government towards the USA. The USA and its allies had capitalised the September 11 terrorist attack and the subsequent events to blackmail the developing countries. The declaration unequivocally asserts, "We shall continue to work with the Bretton Woods institutions for greater coherence in global economic policy making." Thus the Doha outcome will surely lead to a further intensification of the attacks against the developing countries, whose economies are enmeshed in the deepest crisis. This underscores the need to carry forward the message of Nov 9, when the workers and trade unions all over the world had observed a global day of action against globalisation. All sections of workers and the trade union movement must unitedly counter the challenge of post-Doha dispensation.

Without Comments

WORLD BANK: India pays out more; gets less assistance

It may sound paradoxical that a poor country like India pays out a little more to the World Bank than it gets by way of assistance from it.

This multilateral lending agency's remit has been recently redesigned to help countries attack poverty effectively through a development partnership with it. Yet browsing through the recently released first volume of this year's Annual Report of the World Bank, one gets the impression that this is no paradox but a harsh reality.

The country had to make do for its past loans and persistent inability to draw more from its undisbursed portions through well-designed economic reform policies the Bank insists on the aid recipients.

A perusal of the Bank's commitments, disbursements and net transfer in South Asia in general, and India in particular, makes a quite interesting reading. In the fiscal 2001 (July 2000 to June 2001), the commitments by the World Bank group, both IBRD and its soft lending window International Development Association (IDA), to India amounted to \$2,555 million, while the gross disbursements amounted to \$1,644 million. Considering the repayments which amounted to \$1,109 million, the net disbursements to India in fiscal 2001 from the World Bank group amounted to \$535 million.

But against this net disbursements, India had to shell out interest and charges amounting to another \$539 million, leaving India with a net transfer of \$-4 million.

It is not that only in the fiscal 2001 the country ended up paying out of its kitty to the Bank than it got. A synoptic profile of the Bank's portfolio of assistance for 1996-2001 shows that the combined World Bank group (IBRD and IDA) amounted to \$11,160 million with gross disbursements at \$9,027 million. Out of this, repayments amounted to \$7,133 million, leaving net disbursements of the order of \$1,894 million during the five-year span.

As interest and charges cost \$4,237 million during the five-year period, the country ended up paying out \$2,342 million to the World Bank Group.

What is particularly disquieting is that even as the country has been paying more to the Bank, the undisbursed balance from the World Bank till fiscal 2001 amounted to a staggering \$8,046 million as these loans were held up because of various policy-related inadequacies from Indian side and its inability to get matching resources from the sectors or States to get the multilateral assistance. Unless the ratio between commitment and disbursement improves through conscious efforts on the part of the Indian authorities, India's undrawn balance from the World Bank group would remain substantial, analysts contend.

A comparison with our neighbours reveals that both Pakistan and Bangladesh had a better net transfer from the World Bank group; Bangladesh had a net transfer of \$155 million in the fiscal 2001 and \$1,297 million in the five-year period 1996-2001 from the World Bank Group, while Pakistan had a net transfer of \$157 million in fiscal 2001 and \$481 million in the five-year period under review.

China, a country with which New Delhi is keen on drawing parallel, has demonstrated better awareness in utilising assistance from the multilateral lending agency as its net transfer from the World Bank group during fiscal 2001 was \$289 million and its five-year (1996-2001) net transfer amounted to \$5,264 million.

It is also revealing that the Bank said in its annual report that South Asia's poverty continues to present a development challenge.

Half a billion people live on less than \$1 a day, accounting for 44 per cent of the world's poor.

It claims that the Bank's central goal in South Asia is reduction of poverty and vulnerability, which it pursues by promoting country and community ownership of development efforts, responding to crises and supporting increased investment in human development, especially for marginalized and impoverished group and encouraging private sector-led and equitably shared economic growth.

(Business Line, November 16, 2001)