

THE VOICE

OF

THE WORKING WOMAN

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Re 1.00

A Scene in
the Concentration camp
during
Second
World War



Even small
children
Not Spared



Down
with
Fascism



Uphold
the Right
to LIVE



Defeat
Imperialist
Conspiracies



Strengthen
Unity to
Avert War

We Pledge to Continue the Struggle

THE All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women greets the fighting women all over the world on March 8, the International Women's Day, which, this year, marks the 75th Anniversary of International Women's year. It is significant that this day is being observed in the midst of the end of the women's decade coming to an end in July 1985. We take this opportunity to greet all our sisters in Socialist countries who have emancipated themselves and are progressing rapidly in all the fields. Women in Soviet Union, who know very well what Peace means, are today in the forefront of the struggle for peace. The men and women in Soviet Union have braved the terror of Hitler's regime in the 2nd World War, sacrificing everything to save their country from Fascism. They lost their dear and near ones, their children being victims of bombs and arson. The victory at Stalingrad and Moscow from which the soldiers of Hitler were driven back to Berlin changed the whole map of the Europe, the Eastern Europe coming under Socialist system. It is quite appropriate that the World International Democratic Women's Federation has called upon women throughout the world to celebrate the memorable 40th Anniversary of the victory over German Fascism.

Women in our country are proud of the Vietnamese women who hurled back the strong French and mighty American imperialism with their meagre resources but with the strong will to liberate their country once for all from the imperialist menace. Women in China are taking big strides in the construction of their country, surpassing all records in the production of food while our country still lags behind.

We greet on this occasion our fighting women in El Salvador, Nicaragua and other countries in Latin America, very small countries, but virtually liberating their countries by taking up arms against American imperialism who are helping the reactionaries in their countries for continuing exploitation.

Women in South Africa, celebrated last year 1984 as the year of the women. Their

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continuous fight against the Apartheid thrust upon them by racists South Africa, a minority white Government rule over the Black majority people. Their fight continues unabated, drawing sympathy among the democratic people all over the world voicing the demand "Hands off South Africa" with anger.

AIWWCC greets our sisters in neighbouring countries especially the brave women in Pakistan. In protest against the despotic, fundamentalist misrule of General Zia, women teachers, lawyers, employees, housewives etc. are coming out in an increasing number fighting against the blatant inequality meted in every sphere, sending women back to houses making them "Sex symbols" only. Under the joint leadership of co-ordinating committee consisting of more than 14 women's organisations, they continue to face the Military regime of Pakistan. Women in Iran have to put

(Contd. on page 24)

ASI Makes Labour Law Archaic for Women

OVER the years, the Archaeological Survey of India has been systematically flouting labour laws, and treating its daily wage staff in the most casual manner possible.

It has a large army of casual workers many of whom have not been regularized even after they have put in 20 to 25 years of service, although under the labour laws anyone who has worked for 240 days in a year becomes eligible for a regular job. Many of them are women, whose only source of income is the daily wage that they get from ASI.

Sarjo, who has seven small children, has been working in the monuments section of ASI as a casual worker for nearly 20 years but she has not been regularized despite several representations to the authorities. "I don't remember the exact year when I started working there but I know that the daily wage then was Rs. 1.50 a day and now it is Rs. 13.60 a day-so you can imagine how long ago it must have been. I have given several applications, and also pleaded my case verbally but nobody seems to bother", she says.

In fact the monuments section seems to be particularly casual towards its daily wage staff. According to Mr J.S. Dara, president of the Indian Trade Union Congress and its affiliate the Archaeological Survey of India Mazdoor Union "not a single daily wage worker in this section has been regularized for a long time". "Some people have been regularized in the garden section, and some more are likely to be regularized, but none in the monuments section. This despite the fact that the Home Ministry issued a circular as far back as 1979 that all those who have been working on daily wages for these years should be regularized", he points out.

Ram Kali, who has been working for over 15 years says that about six years ago she even called for an interview for a regular job, but after that she did not hear anything further from the bosses. "I was not even told how I had fared in the interview, and meanwhile I have been continuing as a casual worker."

The case of Chandro, who joined as a daily wage worker in 1958, is even more amazing. She says that she was offered a regular appointment in 1971 and asked to produce certain documents. I completed all the formalities, yet it took them 10 years to give me an appointment letter. It was only in 1981 that I was regularized", she says.

She carries with her an old, tattered file containing the documents that she had been asked to produce and among the papers is a letter from the Superintendent of Police (South Delhi) to the Station House Officer of Lajpat Nagar police station dated February 19, 1974 regarding her police verification. "The delay in giving me a regular job even after I had completed all formalities has cost me a great deal in terms of gratuity, provident fund and other benefits".

Lachho, who joined the gardens section in 1956, was regularized in 1983 after a long drawn out battle with the authorities. But very cleverly they managed to raise my age by three years with the result that I will retire early, and lose several benefits". Moved by the plight of her co-workers, she began to mobilize women workers, and has been instrumental in getting some of them a better deal.

Speaking on behalf of other women workers, she says that they are an exploited lot. "There are many women who are being used as domestic servants by their bosses, although they get their wages from the government", she alleges. She mentions the case of Nihali, who has been working at Red Fort as a casual worker for 25 years "In the mornings she works in the office, and in the afternoon she runs domestic errands for her boss. There is a similar case of a woman who is officially posted at Jantar Mantar but actually works in the house of one of the officials".

There are roughly 300 daily wage workers and half of them are women. In some cases, even the casual work is interrupted by long "breaks". "I have been working since 1960 at the Humayun's Tomb, but every now and then I am told that there is no work for me. With

no other earning member in the family I find it very difficult to run my family", says Chameli.

Mr. Dara says that his union has been pursuing the matter for several years, but its efforts have not yielded any concrete results. "We took up the issue with Mr. S.B. Chavan when he was the Education Minister, and he was very sympathetic. In fact, some workers were regularized after he intervened but then it stopped there. We also demonstrated outside Mrs Shiela Kaul's residence, and had several meetings with the representatives of the Education Ministry and the Archaeological Survey of India. At every meeting we are assured that things will be sorted out soon, but then nothing happens", says Mr. Dara.

On January 25, he met a senior official and was assured that the problem would be solved soon.

Meanwhile, some women also complained that they have not been getting their uniforms regularly. "We are entitled to two woolen jerseys once in three years, but I have not got them for more than four years", says Chandro. Some do not get even their daily wages regularly, she complained.

Working Women must be Protected

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions is shocked by the report in the press that two drunk businessmen of Bhubaneshwar trespassed into the Working Women's Hostel, and misbehaved with the residents on 17th February, 1985. It is even more shocking that some officials of the State Social Welfare Board and the Hostel Authorities are trying to hush up the matter, in collusion with the police. Previously also, an MLA trespassed into the hostel several times but no action was taken against him by the authorities or police. If true, the incident coming at the end of the "Women's Decade" would put the whole country to shame.

The CITU strongly condemns this attitude of the authorities, who while ostensibly being committed to provide safe shelter for working women, in fact expose them to the nefarious designs of influential unscrupulous men.

The CITU demands an immediate enquiry into the incident and the security set up of the hostel. Sternest action must be taken against the trespassing industrialists, erring officials of the state Social Welfare Board and hostel authorities, and the police. Furthermore, the residents of the hostel must be given full protection so that they may not be subjected to any such harassment in future.

NEWS FROM KERALA

NFPTE Mahil Camp in Kerala

A State level study camp was conducted for the active lady comrades of NFPTE in Kerala on 12th and 13th January 1985 at Trichur by the Circle Coordinating Committee of P&T Unions, Kerala. 100 ladies representing the Postal, Telephone, Telegraphs and RMS wings of the Department from all parts of Kerala participated in the Camp. Good number of them have the rich experiences of struggles, arrests and other forms of victimisation since the strike in July 1960.

Com. P. Govinda Pillai spoke on International and National political situation. Dr. Thomas Issac of the Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum explained the fundamental principles of Political Economy and analysed the present economic situation. Com Ushakumari took a class on the history of the Womens movement while Com. Prasanna-kumari spoke on the task of NFPTE Mahila Sub committee. Com. P.S. Ramankutty, Convenor, Circle Coordinating Committee talked about the history of P&T Trade Union Movement in India.

Vietnamese Women March Ahead After Liberation

ON 2nd February, Professors Le Thi and Le Thi Nham Tuyet visited the Janawadi Mahila Samiti office at Delhi and shared their experience with the activists present. The two Vietnamese writers, Professors in Social Science and Ethnology, respectively were in Delhi to attend a Conference on "Women and the Household". The visiting friends were, however not just academicians; they had both been active participants in the anti-imperialist wars against French and American colonialism, and continue to be active today, in the Vietnam Women's Union.

Speaking on this occasion, Prof. Le Thi recalled how Vietnamese women participated in large numbers in the anti-imperialist struggle from 1945 to 1975. While women's situation was extremely backward at the beginning of their period, the liberation struggle and the subsequent phase of social reconstruction changed all this. On the one hand many women came forward to participate in the armed struggle; on the other hand, those who stayed on in the villages took on the responsibility for producing the necessities through agricultural activity and in other spheres as well. Women's increasing participation in agriculture and industry, i.e., their significant contribution to the social and economic development of the country forced a change in the attitudes towards women. This change was facilitated by the active support of the state to the cause of women. The Communist leadership of Vietnam from the beginning laid stress on equal rights for women,

Prof. Li Thi spoke at length about the role of women in agriculture in Vietnam. Vietnamese women were given land by the first Vietnamese constitution promulgated in 1945, she said. And today women constitute 65 per cent of the peasantry, and consequently are the majority in co-operatives, taking decisions about all aspects of agricultural production.

Of special interest to the Janawadi Mahila Samiti (JMS) activists present were the comments Prof. Li Thi made on the social status of Vietnamese women. The visitors recalled how, in the colonial period women were the victims of a combination of Confucian ideology and imperialist decadent culture. But in the course

of the liberation struggle these attitudes began to be opposed. With increased participation in the social production, advance of education and greater awareness of the new rights granted them by the socialist state, old feudal ideas and social oppression are fast disappearing. The custom of giving dowry has totally disappeared and parents no longer see the birth of a daughter as a curse, rather she said, the birth of a girl is an occasion of great happiness in the family. Women no longer face restriction in terms of movement and can fully avail of all opportunities to develop their talent and skills. The government take special care to provide for training facilities for women. Prof. Li Thi described in some detail how creche and kindergarten facilities, common kitchens and other such public services reduce the burden of housework for women, and even stated that housework is shared by men and women. Prof. Nham Tuyet however added that a large part of women's work in this sphere is still 'invisible'.

The visitors pointed out that although all problems have not been solved yet, the support given by the state to the cause of women's equality and the continuous dialogue with their organisation the Vietnam Women's Union has brought remarkable change in the position of Vietnamese women. This is specially noticeable in the sphere of family law, which no longer has reactionary confucian thought, as its basis. Women's right in terms of marriage, divorce, custody of children in cases of divorce etc. are fully recognised. For those requiring pre-natal/ante-natal care, the recent law granting six month's maternity leave with full pay is remarkable. And today the Vietnam Women's Union is deeply involved in getting this recent amendment implemented in all industries and organisation. The visitors were eager to point out that these were all rights that women had unitedly struggled for. They also emphasised that the willingness and firm support given by the state had made such remarkable change possible, and at such speed too. This had given considerable confidence to Vietnamese women.

Earlier, welcoming the Vietnamese friends, JMS President pointed out how we in India continue to draw inspiration from the heroic

struggle of the Vietnamese people, especially the women, in the anti-imperialist struggle. Concluding the discussion Vimal Ranadive, Vice-President of AIDWA, thanked the Vietnamese friends for the time they spent with us and the insights gained from their experience. JMS General Secretary Rita Karat gave the Vietnamese friends small gifts as token of friendship.

Women's Progress in Vietnam

* Women form 51.7% of Vietnam's total population of 56 million; and in some areas as much as 58%.

* Average life expectancy in Vietnam has increased to 63 for men, and 67 for Women.

* Decline in death rate among mothers to 0.4% in 1982 and among new-borns from 1.7% in 1976 to 0.7% in 1982.

* Free medical care for all adults and children.

* Women's participation in labour force has gone up from 1% in 1945 to 45% today.

* Women constitute: 60% to 70% of rural work force.

65.5% of workers in food industry.

45.5% in foodgrain collection and distribution.

18.5% in transport communication.

* Womens' education:

Before Liberation—90% illiteracy

After Liberation. —58% have had secondary education

—51.7% in vocational schools

—31% have gone through higher education.

* Childcare Facilities:

44,196 Kindergartens covering 1,135,000 children. subsidized by the state, factories and cooperatives.

Janwadi Mahila Samiti Bihar, Holds Dharna

Sudha Bindu Mitra

THERE are eighteen thousand labourers in the Hatia Factory of Ranchi District who went on strike from 4th to 26th August. Bihar State Democratic Women Association participated and helped the workers to win the strike. There are six lakhs teachers and workers of Bihar who went on strike for fourteen points demands from 4th September, to 28th September. The Bihar State Democratic Women Association launched a campaign to support the strike on 22nd September. In twelve hours Dharna five hundred to one thousand women with their children participated in front of the District Judge in support of strike.

A mass meeting was held by AIDWA in the Insulary factory of Ranchi where there are maximum number of women workers, in protest against the retrenchment of women workers, low wages and bad behaviour against them. A programme was fixed for Dharna to intensify the struggle. A district conference of Ranchi Janawadi Mahila Samiti AIDWA was held in Ranchi, with participation of one hundred fifty delegates. Five hundred women participated in open rally on that occasion. After the murder of the Prime Minister, Srimathi Indira Gandhi, number of innocent people all over India were murdered by anti-social elements. The members of the State Democratic Women's Association visited the camps, talked with widown and children inquiring about their problems. One hundred Sarees and blouses etc. along with Sweaters, Shawls trousers, Shirts, with one hundred rupees were distributed to the affected people.

Abuse of the Constitution

Eighty thousand bidi workers in Bihar will be benefited by the increase in their daily wage, according to reports from Congress (I) cell. While the male workers would get Rs. 9.50, the female workers Rs. 6.10. The decision to this effect was taken at a meeting of the bidi workers and godown owners at Calcutta on January 22. The male and female workers are now getting Rs. 8 and Rs. 4.85 per day respectively. Will the Ministry for "Women and Labour Welfare" look into it?

Punjab AIDWA Marches Ahead

THE law and order situation of the Punjab has been at a low ebb for the last three years or so. Prohibitory orders have been promulgated under section 144. The people feel perturbed at heart due to terroristic atmosphere. It is not safe to journey by bus or train, when passengers belonging to a particular community are being picked up for loot and murder. Such happenings are on the increase. Under these circumstances, it was quite difficult to carry on the normal activities of the Punjab Janwadi Istri Sabha. Still some of tasks accomplished, during the hard times are detailed below:—

The Punjab Janwadi Istri Sabha rallied its ranks to carry on the propaganda campaign in the rural area. The decisions arrived at during the state level meetings were propagated in every district. The Punjab State Working Committee decided in its meeting held on 5-8-84 that General Body meetings would be held in all districts, where women shall be enlightened about the Punjab situation and the anti-dowry legislation. It was also decided that the President and the General Secretary shall participate in such meetings.

1. District Sangrur: A general body meeting was held at Sangrur under the Chairmanship of Bibi Gursewak Kaur. The participants numbered 60. Bibi Shaminder Kaur, the State president addressed the meeting. She related how the Congress(I) proped up Bhindranwala and used him for its narrow partisan interests. The speaker held the Akalis also guilty for having succumbed to the pressure of the extremists. Bibi Gursewak Kaur gave the audience a call to close up their ranks and to propagate the various provisions of the Anti-Dowry Bill.

2. District Amritsar: A meeting of the Istri Sabha was held at Amritsar on 19-8-84. Twenty women took part in the meeting. The participants represented 19 villages. The meeting was addressed by Rajinder Kaur Chaukha, the State General Secretary, who stressed the need of mobilisation in the interests of women's rights, which are under great strain. She related how reactionary elements, abetted

by imperialist forces were up in arms against the unity and integrity of India in the name of religion, language and castes and airing up feelings of separatism. She said that innocent people were being massacred day in and day out. The peace-loving people and democratic forces were threatened to be eliminated. Bihar, UP, Maharashtra (Bhiwandi) and other states have undergone horrible violence and majority of victims were women. She appealed to the women to put up a strong fight against communalism which threatens the harmonious relations between different communities.

3. Gurdaspur: The General Body meeting of the District was held on 18-8-84 in the Labour Colony. 175 women took part in the meeting. They represented 20 villages. Bibi Gurmej Kaur, District General Secretary Bibi Surjit Kumari, the State Vice-President had arranged village level meetings to make the G.B. meetings a success.

4. Jalandhar: Forty women participated in the meeting. They represented eight villages. The meeting was addressed by the State Joint Secretary Bibi Nirmal Kumar who exhorted the participants to strengthen the organisation.

5. Hosiarpur: A meeting was held on 20th August. Seventy women took part in the meeting. They represented 20 villages. Previous to it, tehsil-level meetings were held at Garhashankar, Dasya, Hoshiarpur, preparatory meetings were held in seven villages. Bibi Nirmal Kumari Veenewal and Bibi Balwant Kaur took a great interest in making the meetings a success.

6. Bhatinda: The General Body meeting was held at Mansa. Two hundred women participated in the meeting. The meeting was addressed by Bibi Kulwant Kaur member of the State Executive, who dwelt upon the current situation. She said that the District unit would complete the allotted quota of membership by the 31st December. This meeting was attended by 250 women. Bibi Shaminder Kaur called upon the participating women to strengthen the organisation.

7. Ferozepur: Meetings held in five villages of Abohar Tehsil were attended by 25 to 100 women. The meetings were addressed by Bibi Kamwaljit Kaur the State Joint Secretary and Bibi Nasib Karu, the District President.

8. Ludhiana: A meeting was held at Ludhiana on the 21st August and Shaminder Kaur and Bibi Kulwant Karu, the District President addressed the meeting.

9. Amritsar: A meeting was held at Taran on 9-12-84. The meeting was attended by 100 women, representing 15 villages and addressed by Bibi Rajinder Kaur, the state General Secretary. She dwelt upon the present political situation at length and explained the violent happenings after the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Bibi Kanwaljit Kaur the state joint secretary called upon

the participants to propagate the provisions of the Anti-Dowry Bill among the rank and file.

A tehsil level meeting of Bab Bakala was held at Rayya and attended by 75 women. Bibi Kanwaljit Kaur exhorted the participants to raise units in all villages.

10. Hoshiarpur: Village level meetings were held in three tehsils in Dayya Tehsil, these covered 6 villages, in Garhshankar-5 in Hoshiarpur also 5. The participants numbered 25 to 80. The speakers dwelt upon Mrs. Indira Gandhi's assassination and the violence that rocked Delhi and other places afterwards and called upon the participants to forge unity and uphold communal amity. They were asked to be vigilant about their rights and raise units at every village. 100 Anti-Dowry pamphlets were also sold.

Struggle Launched by Istri Sabha

In Amritsar a women suspect was kept under illegal police custody at changawon for eight days. The Istri Sabha successfully agitated for her release. Another case of illegal police custody of a young boy was taken up by the Istri Sabha, which secured his release. 70-80 women took part in the agitation. In Bhatinda a dowry death took place at Mansa. A group of 90 led by the Istri Sabha took to agitation in violation of section 144 and succeeded in getting the culprits arrested.

In Hoshiarpur a notorious bad character of village 'Khurdan' indulged in a criminal assault on a village women and was being sheltered by the police. The Istri Sabha took up the case, got the women medically examined and got the case registered despite the police resistance.

Co-ordination with Fraternal Organisation

The Janwadi Istri Sabha co-ordinated with the fraternal organisations, like Kisan Sabha, Dehati Mazdoor Sabha, Democratic Youth Federation of India and students Federation of India. More than 150 women took part in the Dehati Mazdoor Sabha rally, held at Ludhiana on 22nd January, 1985.

Literature Sale: 2000 additional copies of the pamphlet got printed, the previous lot having been exhausted. An article under the heading, October Revolution the emancipation of women was published in the daily Lok Lehar, dated 7th November 1984 and sold in thousands.

The Sabha responded to the call of AIDWA for aid to those affected during the violent happenings after the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Amritsar unit collected Rs. 1647.

The Tasks Ahead: It was decided to observe 8th March, 1985 as women's day and to invite articles relating to women from All India state leadership for publication in the Punjabi daily 'Lok Lahar' and to sell the same in large numbers as a propaganda measure. It was also proposed to hold meetings, rallies and cultural programmes on the date of the celebration. The programme shall include agitation for acceptance of the demands of the Janwadi Istri Sabha and the campaign for instant negotiated settlement of the Punjab problem. Memoranda concerning the same shall be handed over to the S.D.M. concerned.

Tamilnadu AIDWA to Observe 8th March

Mythily Shivraman

WE have already planned to observe March 8th in the following manner:— 1. State-wide street corner meetings on March 7 focusing on the issues of threats to the nation's unity from divisive forces and imperialist machinations, war danger and the need to mobilise women against these dangers.

March 8th: Processions and presentation of demands relating to atrocities against women to district collectors and to the Minister for Social Welfare in Madras. We want to mobilise on a big scale and to bring pressure on the Govt to take firm action relating to such atrocities. We plan to emphasise the demands: 1. Setting up state and national level commissions of women. 2. Film publicity censorship committee with 50 per cent women on it. 3. Every police station should keep a big poster with guidelines on police treatment of women (for interrogation or arrest etc) written on it public display of these guidelines prominently. 4. Special cell to deal with atrocities against women in the Govt. 5. Requiring Govt to publish number of cases of complaints made, action taken by the Government and the judicial verdict every 3 months relating to harassment of women. 6. Transit hostels in all districts for women in distress. 7. Strict implementation of the recent amendments to the Criminal Amendment Act '83.

A number of women cabin crew, working in Indian Airlines, have refused to wear the recent-supplied blouses as, according to them, they are almost "see through".

Many of them said a few hostesses at Delhi Airport on Tuesday, had brought their own blouses of the same shade and colour, as supplied to them by the Indian Airlines, with a view to maintaining their self-respect as also image of the airline. "We feel ashamed to walk around passengers with see-through blouses", echoed a number of hostesses. The Bombay chief hostess, it is learnt, has directed her staff not to wear these blouse, if they do not wish to. The hostesses have been supplied sarees—one orange and blue shade and another navy blue and green. The blouses don't match them. "The quality of the sarees are so poor

that we don't feel like wearing them at all", said hostesses.

"What is the point of supplying us uniform which holds us in poor light instead of enhancing our personality?" asked a hostess who feels that the performance of the airline is deteriorating instead of improving despite years of experience and greater revenue. After a lapse of three years, according to hostesses, they got a pair of chappals. "We get an ordinary 'V' shape cardigan even when we fly to Kabul, Srinagar, Leh and other places in winter, said hostesses.

A new batch of pursers — 15 for Delhi and 15 for Madras undergoing training here were supplied suit length. But contrary to usual practice, they were asked to get their suit stitched from a particular tailor whose brother said to be a personal secretary of the senior-most official of the airlines! The tailor, however, made a mistake in the position of pocket of the jacket, which had to be re-done. But the trainee-pursers were made to shell out Rs. 257 each for additional cloth and alteration.

Excerpt from the letter received by AICCCWW from Ms. Flora, Soviet Women's Committee, Moscow

"...We have been receiving your magazine, The Voice of the Working Women regularly. Thank you very much for it. I must say I like your magazine. It is very important that it covers not only domestic events, but problems of an international nature, reports about the activities of other women's organisations, and accounts of your delegations' visits abroad. I should think that by reading your magazine, Indian women expand their outlook and obtain full information on the state of the world-wide women's movement. And, of course, it is exceptionally important that the magazine pays due attention to the efforts for peace. It is a very nice thing that your magazine carries photographs illustrating the most important information of the issue...."

Com. Kanak Mukherjee in Rajya Sabha on 22-1-'85

"SIR, the Presidential Address has dealt with many aspects and has presented a more or less rosy picture that we are all along a strong administration, correct in international and national policies and that we are advancing very fast. But the hard truths have all along been evaded. So, I would like to mention about only some points here.

Take the question of price rise and taxation. Ninety per cent of our people are growing under heavy price rise and taxation, but there is no hint of any solution in the President's Address.

The Presidential Address says that public distribution system has played a key role in maintaining the price stability. I would like to say that it is not at all true. During the last 5 years, the Central Government only through its administrative orders has increased the price of rice on 4 occasions, price of wheat on 3 occasions, price of levy sugar on 4 occasions, price of cement on 20 occasions, price of kerosene on 5 occasions, price of petrol on 4 occasions, price of diesel on 4 occasions, and price of coal on 5 occasions. Everybody knows about the increase in railway fares. You have never accepted our demand about the distribution of 14 essential commodities throughout India at the same controlled price. Is this your price stability?

My next point is about employment. We have repeatedly asked that you include the right to work in the Constitution. In all the capitalist countries such as U.K., U.S.A., France and even in Japan, they have the right to work or the minimum employment allowance.

We are talking much about the developmental work, regarding youth and women. But the crux of the problem is employment. Unless there is generation of employment, the problem of women or youth can never be solved. The unemployment figures are rising every year. In 1973, 70 lakh unemployed persons were registered. In one decade i.e. in 1984 (upto June) there are 2,28,69,000 persons registered. It is needless to mention that the actual figures are much higher. Where is the scope for employment generation? There is no hint of land

reform programme in the Presidential Address. At least 500 big and 2,60,000 small and medium industries have been closed all over India. What is your policy about the nationalisation of jute industry? Where is the scope and proposal for employment generation? Sir, you know that you have even denied West Bengal the electronic and petro-chemical industries also. And you are talking about the improvement of youth and women. Sir, we have passed many laws regarding women. We have passed anti-dowry laws and laws prohibiting atrocities on women and all those things. That is good. The crux of the problem is the economic independence of women. Unless the women are economically independent, there cannot be any equality between men and women. The prestige, status and honour of women cannot be maintained unless they are independent economically and they can stand on their own feet.

My next point is about education and culture. Our Constitutional promise was that within ten years we will have free elementary compulsory education. And it still remains a paper promise. You say about girls' education, boys' education and all sorts of tall talks are there. Unity in diversity is our motto. And education should be a State subject so that all sections of the people may develop their own language and culture and mould the system of education according to their needs. But the Union Government is trying to concentrate power most mechanically, ignoring the basic human needs of the citizens.

By the name of developing the national culture, what is the ruling party doing? They are using the media most shamelessly and illegally for the narrow interest of their party politics. I quote a few lines from the 'Statesman' dated 1-12-'84.

"The previous evening, with less than ten hours to go for balloting, Doordarshan viewers were regaled with an evocative Hindi interview that ended on what sounded suspiciously like a note of calculated prophecy: the Late Prime Minister told the interviewer that she had taken the

country as far as she could and that it was for her successor to continue the journey."

Is it not illegal, Sir, to show this on Door-darshan just ten hours before the balloting? Even when the voting was going on the 24th December '84, on the very same day in the morning, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's speech in Andhra Pradesh was being broadcast on the Calcutta radio station. Is it not partial, is it not partisan, is it not illegal?

My last point is about the preservation and strengthening of national unity and integrity. But, in the President's Address, there is no clear directive regarding this. The key to this question is the re-alignment of Centre-State relations, decentralisation of power and money. If the States, districts, block get the power and money to plan and implement the necessary development, the regional imbalances can be removed. You have kept the States and the regions backward. You have not spent money on them. You have not allowed them to develop. The regional imbalances are at the very root of encouraging the divisive forces and have not been given proper stress in the Presidential Address here. Moreover, the Congress (I) party most conveniently aligned and connived with all the divisive forces in the States; they did it even in the last election. They aligned with Tripura Upa-Jati Samity, RSS and other divisive forces and took advantage of the situation ... (Interruptions). I beg your protection, Sir. The Government has even denied the funds allotted to the States by the Eighth Finance Commission. This is not only improper and unjust; it is also illegal, because it is for the first time that while the Finance Commission recommended Rs. 15,000 crores to be given to the states, the West Bengal Government has been denied an amount of Rs. 325 crores. Our Chief Minister pointed out to the Hon. Prime Minister also only last week that if the West Bengal Government could get this sum of Rs. 325 crores, then it would be able to wipe out all the backlog and the overdrafts and we could have made some advancement on the 32-point programme in West Bengal. ...

The President's Address has tried to give us only a superficial picture of the situation, without going deep into the most burning problems of the country.

Discrimination against Women in Women's Decade

The following letter was addressed to the Union Minister for women and Social welfare, Mrs. M. Chandrashekar on the blatant discrimination of women Railway workers in Vijaywada by the Secretary AICCWW on 2nd February, 1985.

"I would like to bring to your notice the blatant discrimination meted out to women railway mazdoor in Vijaywada Division, South Central Raiiway since many years. There are nearly 120 women who are drawing A.P. scales since a decade. During 1983 screening of these casual labourers has taken place when both men and women casual labourers have appealed before the screening committee.

The basic principle that guides screening of casual labourers is based on the seniority of these labour reckoned on number of days they have put in. Women casual labourers have expected that they would be confirmed on the basis of their services. Unfortunately their hopes were belied when the confirmation orders were not issued to these casual labourers in April 1984 as all women were excluded completely. This discrimination is based only on sex. It is to be noted that those women casual labourers were senior to those labourers who were confirmed.

It is a welcome feature that a special Ministry for "Women and Social Welfare" is created in the new administration to look into such injustice. Therefore, we hope, that the discrimination based on sex with regard to these women will be looked into so that they get justice.

For your information I am enclosing the list of a few women, and in which year they were employed, from which it will be seen since how many years they have been working as casual".

Library—A Medium of Mass Education

The library, a powerful medium of mass education — was not given till recently the attention it deserved. The Left Front Government brought it under the comprehensive education policy and introduced a number of measures to strengthen the movement for library services.

In course of last seven years, the total number of Government and sponsored Libraries in West Bengal increased from 776 to 2416. With the introduction of Library Act, 1979 and its subsequent modifications, the libraries are now administered more efficiently and effectively. A new library Directorate and a state-level library Council have been set up for proper management and development of libraries in West Bengal.

Library facilities have been extended even to the people of remote rural areas through a network of libraries. This has been a major step towards formulation of a better-informed public opinion. Separate children's sections have been opened in 837 libraries, creating a precedence in India.

A special programme of non-formal education was taken for 9-14 year old students who had to leave school in search of a livelihood. More than 11.75 lakh students were trained from 16,660 non-formal education centres during last 4 years. Adult education scheme included in the 34-point programme of the Government, was instrumental in teaching more than 6 lakh adults in 22 thousand centres. Libraries play a vital role in educating these students.

Books are our never-failing friends. Let us make an effort with the help of conscious members of the society to make book available to the mass through an organised library system.

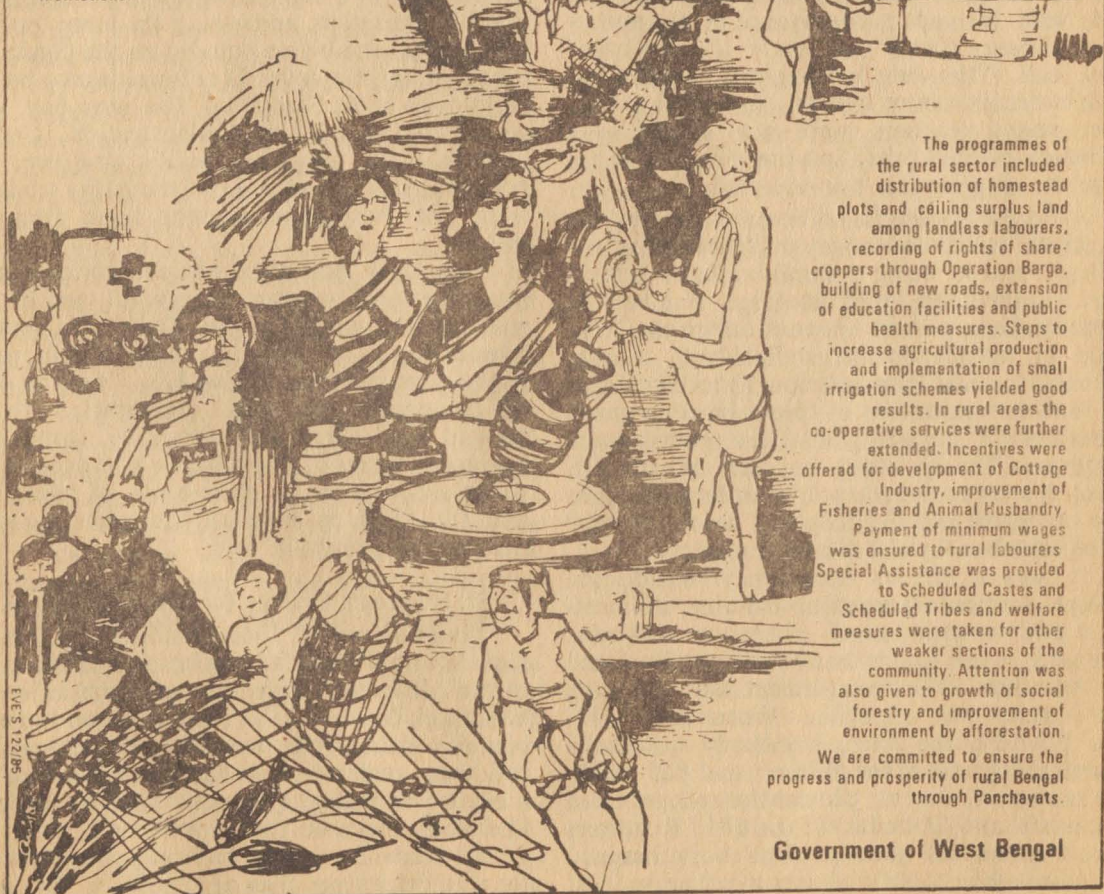
GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

PANCHAYAT PAVES PATH TO PROGRESS IN RURAL BENGAL

At the time of independence, our objective was to achieve democratic decentralisation of power, by forming a Panchayat organisation. But this cherished goal remains yet to be achieved in India.

This bleak picture was altered in West Bengal when the Left Front Government came into power in 1977. A state-wide Panchayat Organisation with people's representatives, was established—driving administrative system down to the village level.

The rural life in West Bengal was regenerated through different plans and programmes of Panchayat institutions.



The programmes of the rural sector included distribution of homestead plots and ceiling surplus land among landless labourers, recording of rights of sharecroppers through Operation Barga, building of new roads, extension of education facilities and public health measures. Steps to increase agricultural production and implementation of small irrigation schemes yielded good results. In rural areas the co-operative services were further extended. Incentives were offered for development of Cottage Industry, improvement of Fisheries and Animal Husbandry. Payment of minimum wages was ensured to rural labourers. Special Assistance was provided to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and welfare measures were taken for other weaker sections of the community. Attention was also given to growth of social forestry and improvement of environment by afforestation.

We are committed to ensure the progress and prosperity of rural Bengal through Panchayats.

Government of West Bengal

St. Stephen's: A College Outraged

THE university community was aghast and a wave of indignation swept the campus, as it came to light, that a few students of St. Stephen's College had gone on a rampage on the night of January 31st — breaking into the Girls common Room, prying open personal lockers, scribbling obscene slogans on the walls and in a depraved frenzy stringing up undergarments of girl students on the college tower, for the world to see.

St. Stephens' College which zealously maintains the facade of being exclusive and above the normal run of hooliganism that is so 'common' in Delhi University, was rudely shaken out of its complacency, with the realisation that all was not so well 'Inside'. Among other things, it has been for quite sometime that 'chickcharts' have been coming out regularly with the open connivance of the authorities. These 'charts' blatantly list out what they call, "the best looking girls", complete with statistics about figures, and all the rest. Even young teachers were not spared — a reflection of the limits, that our elite can go to, in terms of aping the 'pop-culture'.

As soon as the issue became public, the Principal raised the bogey of 'Prestige' of the college, and it being a 'family affair'. It was most unfortunate that a large number of students were, moved into action on this non-issue of 'outsiders' versus 'insiders'. Consequently, the real issue was sought to be sidelined and the initiation of procedural measures necessary for action against the guilty, were forgotten. The primary concern became to block the press and the public at large to have any say in the matter. Stephens' was too 'chic' to be criticized by the common man.

It was a virtual 'emergency' inside the college. Notices were put up banning all meetings and even, a kind of section 144 was imposed — not more than two people could get together. The punishment for breaking these rules was expulsion. When the CRPF was posted at the gates, somebody asked the Principal the need for all that and pat came the answer, it was to protect the college from 'feminists' and 'goondas' of the SFI! Reporters were manhandled and 'patrotic' boys manned the gates against SFI 'terrorism'. The saddest part, was the reaction of some of the girls who had figured in the 'chickcharts' — they

did not see this as degrading or insulting. It becomes obvious, how deep rooted are our biases and how gigantic our task.

As students were terrorised, minimum democratic rights denied and the culprits left scot-free, St. Stephens' stood as a mute witness to its impotency, bred by years of cultivated elitism and isolation from the broad democratic movement. Students — both girls and boys — who refused to be cowed down on college loyalist lines, were stifled by the threat of expulsion, over their heads.

To protest against such degrading acts and to demand immediate action against the culprits, and for the restoration of the democratic rights of the students, the SFI and the JMS organised a campaign in the university, which culminated in a demonstration at St. Stephens. The SFI President, addressing the large gathering placed the blame equally on the conscious propagation of a colonial cultural legacy by the authorities of St. Stephens. The next day witnessed another massive demonstration. Consequently, with mounting public pressure, the Principal was forced to expel the guilty students from the hostel and suspend them from the college.

This does not close the chapter on sexual harassment of women in general and of girl students in particular, in Delhi University. Eve-teasing is a rampant evil which gains frightful proportions during Holi. It is the duty of democratic students' organisation to be vigilant and carry out extensive campaigns against all forms of sexist biases and decadence, which see women as mere-tools of pleasures and fun. For as long as the women are not free, people cannot be free.

St. Stephen's College Incident Condemned

Vimal Ranadive, Vice-President of All India Democratic Women's Association and Secretary of the All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women in a statement on the ugly incident said "No words were enough to condemn such unruly behaviour, outraging the modesty of the girl students in the college. She demanded of the Government that the guilty students should be brought to book by the authorities and they apologise to the girls students and such sad episodes should be stopped.

Bhopal, Aftermath and Woman

Vimal Ranadive

THE Bhopal tragedy, a 'death chamber' where about 10,000 people died due to leakage of MIC from Union Carbide plant has now become an international issue. The after effects of the leakage are still pouring in the daily press in India and also abroad. This has brought the inhuman profit motive of the multinational companies in open as well as machinations of U.S. imperialist to use our country as fodder ground for their dubious experiments on chemical warfare.

International Conference Against Chemical Weapons

An International trade union conference "against Chemical and Bacteriological Weapons" held in Ho Chi Minh City in May 1983 threw sufficient light on the production of chemical weapons, the purpose and object of U.S. imperialist to use them. It was significant that this particular venue was chosen for the conference because these toxins were used on a massive scale by U.S. troops during the war in Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchia.

The delegates to the conference visited the areas, hospitals and the exhibition in the city to see the terrible effects of the Chemical Warfare on people during the war. They met the women who had given birth to deformed babies due to exposure to the "Agent Orange" and "dioxin". They met young women suffering from cancer of the uterus. They saw still born babies with stunted growth of arms and legs, infants with two heads or without eyes and ears. The delegates were shocked to see such happening and havoc caused by the chemical warfare used by the American troops.

Effect of Bhopal Aftermath on Women

The report published in Times of India dated 24th January 1985 notes the harmful after effects of Bhopal Union Carbide disaster on women which remind the same effects on women in Vietnam after the war was over. The report says so many fresh complaints in the last two weeks "has led medical circles to fear that the worst is far from over for the survivor of MIC exposed population". It was found that the gas affected people in the localities have formed cysts around their neck

and rashes on the body. A survey was made of over 1900 households in six of the worst affected localities and it was found that most vulnerable among the survivors were women in the reproductive age group including pregnant women. A number of women reported disturbing menstrual problems such as untimely discharges, acidic secretions and abdominal pain. Over 100 cases of abortions and 22 cases of still births in the recent week have been reported, in Sultania Zanana Hospital a sizeable section of nursing mothers referred to a substantial decrease in breast milk.

Dr. D.K. Verma, professor of Pharmacology at Mc Gill University in Montreal expressed the view that the possibility of serious adverse effects on pregnant women and their offspring was "very real". He expressed surprise at the statements made by U.S. specialists that most of the survivors were likely to recover fully and suffer no long term ill effects. He advised the authorities to watch the possible damage to the liver, nervous system of those affected and also for any adverse reaction on the reproductive system of women during the course of pregnancy.

People Must Act

The International Trade Union Conference, women participants including, was a great significance for women particularly. The Conference has appealed to all the trade unions and women after what they saw in Vietnam that "It is the duty of trade unions to organise struggle committees against these bacteriological weapons, to mobilise health workers, common people in scientific fields to act now before it is too late".

Who is responsible for these crimes? None else but the U.S. imperialists and the multinationals. They want to continue with their war policies, with production of nuclear and chemical weapons. The Bhopal chemical holocaust has sounded the warning bell in India. The U.S. imperialists want to use our country as their experimental ground when common people die with no fault of theirs. All women's organisations and the trade unions must gear up movements jointly against such sinister role of the multinationals and the policy of the Government to woo them.

Women's Role and Rights

THE following Resolutions were adopted at the Regional Conference on Women and Household (New Delhi, January 27-31, 1985):

1. The Regional Conference for Asia on Women and Household affirms its support for the Delhi Declaration of the Six-Nation Summit calling for nuclear disarmament and a people's movement to ensure humanity's right to life and calls on the women's movement in all countries to actively participate in this crucial struggle.

2. In the wake of increasing threat of nuclear war which affects all humanity, we the participants of this Conference, support the call of the peace movement all over the world for total disarmament. We resolve to carry with us and spread the message of this resolution in our own countries and places.

3. As revealed by the report of the various sub-themes, several significant findings have emerged from the Conference deliberations regarding the impact of development policies in their multi-faceted aspects (nationally and internationally) need re-consideration.

In view of this, it is resolved that the organisers of the Conference be requested to prepare a brief report on the major findings and forward the same to the forthcoming Non-aligned Conference, on the Role of Women in Developing Countries, to be held in April in New Delhi, and the UN Conference in Nairobi in July 1985.

It is further resolved that the organisers of the NAM Conference be requested to include this document on the Conference agenda.

4. We express our feeling of deep shock and sorrow at the disaster at the multinational Union Carbide's Agricultural Products Division at Bhopal, the worst-ever industrial accident in history, which has resulted in the death of nearly 5,000 people, mostly poor. The accident has affected nearly a quarter of the population of the city, and more than 80,000 people await a slow death. The disaster can be traced to the criminal negligence and violation of safety norms due to corporate greed and search of

multinationals for profits.

As in any such disaster, the plight of women is the worst. Pregnant women face the twin danger of the effects of the gas on their physiological system as well as the side effects of the drugs administered. They also face the trauma of giving birth to malformed babies and other permanent deleterious effects on their reproductive system. The toxic exposure can also result in the birth of babies with cerebral damage. Thus women will have to carry the additional burden of looking after children with all sorts of abnormalities.

We demand adequate relief including interim relief by way of cash payment, rehabilitation and alternate employment for those incapacitated to perform their jobs in their present occupations, provision of support for the widows and medical care at the doorsteps of those affected by the accident which must also include proper follow up by those responsible for the tragedy. We also call upon the Government of India and other Third World governments to take adequate measures to control the multinationals so as to prevent the occurrence of more Bhopals.

5. We believe that the right to safe abortion and contraception are fundamental to people's ability to exercise control over their lives. However, in many countries in Asia and the rest of the world men and women have been made victims of neo-Malthusian theories and used as guineapigs in testing of contraceptive technology. We do not accept that any government has the right to decide how many or how few children we have or what form of reproductive control should be made available. We call for social services, including day-care, safe contraception that serve the needs of the poor, but recognise that these are only acceptable in the context of economic justice and democratic rights.

6. This Conference condemns the use of oppressive fundamentalism in countries such as Iran and Pakistan to deny women equal rights in the political, economic, educational and social spheres. The Conference demands that women in these countries be given an equal status in all these aspects.

Intensify Trade Union Actions to Defend Working Women—WFTU

THE 36th session of the General Council of the WFTU warmly greets the working women in all countries and acclaims the united actions and struggles carried on by the trade unions, women's organizations and other progressive forces the world over during the UN Decade for Women and for basic aims of the Decade — for Equality, Development and Peace. These struggles have made a positive contribution to advancing social development. In many countries, the active participation of women has raised the peace movement to unprecedented levels.

The Right to Live is Threatened

Recalling the discussions and decisions taken at the various international, regional and national level conference on the formulation of appropriate programmes of action in accordance with the aims of the UN Decade for Women, the General Council notes that the trade unions and various non-governmental organisations have immensely contributed to those efforts. At the trade union level, the 4th World Trade Union Conference of problems of Working Women organized by the WFTU in 1979 was an important international action, focusing special attention on the crucial social aspects. All these also contributed to the growing participation of working women in trade union actions at all levels.

The struggles for women's rights and the human dignity of women are, however, continuing in many countries, where the economic and social situation of working women remains precarious. Women's rights are, in these cases, brutally suppressed at the places of work, in the family and in social and political life by reactionary ideologies, rightwing extremist groups and parties, etc. These conditions are aggravated by the economic and social impact of the unprecedented arms race. Even the right to live for millions of families and around the world is in danger.

Some of the WFTU's Suggestions

The WFTU welcomes the decision of the UN General Assembly to hold a "World Con-

ference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the UN Decade for Women—Equality, Development and Peace" in Nairobi (Kenya) from 15 to 26 July 1985. The General Council considers it extremely important that preparations for the Nairobi Conference should take into account the following aspects:

a. the UN must ensure that international non-governmental organizations with special competence on the problems of women as worker and mothers, such as the trade union and mothers, such as the trade union and women's organizations, are fully involved in the organization of the Nairobi Conference and are given due facilities for their active participation;

b. the member States of the United Nations should include representatives of trade union organisations in national delegations to the Nairobi Conference, to ensure that the interests of working women are adequately represented in national delegations;

c. the member States of the United Nations, while compiling the "Review" and appraising the "Achievements of the UN Decade for Women" in their respective countries, take into account the views of the trade union movement and involve trade union representatives in preparing this Report;

d. the member States of the United Nations, in all cases where they have not done so, as yet, take positive action, including legislation to enforce the international documents adopted during the UN Decade for Women — in particular, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and relevant ILO Conventions and respect the Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Cooperation;

e. special attention should be given to the problems faced by women workers in agriculture and rural women and to review national action taken on the Programme of Action

adopted by the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (Rome 1975) concerning integration of women in rural development, including equality of legal status women's access to rural services, Women's organization and participation, educational and employment opportunities for women and provision of child care for women in rural employment;

f. the mounting problems of urbanization and the chaotic growth of big cities and how these factors influence the lives of working women and families need to be analysed and urgent measures adopted;

g. special attention needs to be given to the problem of political activation of women, to resist the offensive of reactionary ideologies and attacks on the right of life itself which come from the protagonists of the nuclear arms race.

There is Still a Lot Left to Achieve

The General Council reiterates that the promotion of women's rights is inseparable from the whole question of social justice for all workers — both men and women. Working women fight together with their male colleagues in the trade union for all general demands of the workers and for social progress.

The General Council notes that although certain progress has been achieved as far as recruiting women into trade unions is concerned and their promotion to all levels of the trade union movement, there is still much to be done for women to fulfil their just role within the trade union movement and for special attention to be placed on the specific problems of working women in the workers as a whole.

The General Council notes that while in certain cases, aspects of women's rights have been formally recognized, as a result of the struggles and united action by the progressive forces, the major problem is the non-implementation and virtual denial of these rights by governments, employers and reactionary groups in many countries. This concerns especially

the right to work, equality in wages, access to training and promotion, social security, working conditions, etc. Provisions of national legislation where adopted, are often violated in practice by private employers and transnational corporations. The conditions of working women in the modern high technology sectors such as micro-electronic controlled by the TNCs are particularly deplorable. This is all the more so in the so-called "export processing zones" where international and national labour standards are often violated.

Contributing to the Success of the Nairobi Conference

These unacceptable conditions are not inevitable. The aims and objective of the UN decade for women — Equality, Development and Peace — are entirely realistic and can be successfully pursued through national action. The experience of socialist countries proves this and the national laws upholding women's rights enforced in these countries are supplemented by extensive social benefits. In the formulation of the legislation and the enforcement of laws as well as in the measures to actively involve women in all aspects of social development, the trade unions and women's organizations in socialist countries play a vital role. These positive achievements and experience inspire united action by all the forces concerned in promoting the aims of the UN Decade for Women.

The General Council of the WFTU invites the attention of the affiliated national trade union centres and all sections of the world trade union movement to reinforce their activities in support of the struggles of working women and effectively contribute to the success of the Nairobi Conference reviewing the UN Decade for Women. The council decides that in addition to the activities planned by the WFTU in this regard, the issues concerned be examined at the 33rd session of the WFTU Bureau in 1985 and that the conclusions of the Bureau be presented to the 37th session of the General Council.

Democratic Women in Pakistan Continue to Fight against Zia Regime

FROM the available reports from Pakistan, the different sections of women, including working women are launching various struggles despite the inhuman repression let loose on the people by the military regime of Pakistan. Different Women's bodies planned boycott of the activities of the Government. The Co-ordination Committee of 10 women's organisations had resolved to start a campaign of boycotting government-sponsored activities related to women and called upon the members of the Commission on the Status of Women to resign en bloc, in protest against a number of steps by the Government "to degrade women in Pakistan".

In a Press statement, the Co-ordinating Committee, representing the Punjab Women Lawyers Association, Tehrike Bhawateen, Women Action Forum (both Democratic and National groups), Anjuman Behboode Khata-teen, All Pakistan Women's Association, Anjuman Jamhooriyat Pasand Khawateen, Young Women Christians Association, Business and Professional Women's Club, and Tehrike Niswan, said the promulgation of the Law of Evidence was clear evidence that the Government was bent upon suppressing the just aspirations of women in Pakistan.

The Committee condemned the one-sided use of the media by a certain group for propaganda in favour of the Qanoone Shahadat, 1984, and demanded that it should be stopped forthwith, or its opponents also given an opportunity to express their views on Radio and Television. The Committee also described certain bodies set up by the Government "ostensibly for the welfare of women" as an eyewash.

The Association, in a Press release alleging CII bias against womenfolk, said any review of or amendments in the existing laws will not be acceptable to the women of Pakistan except those which come after consultation with non-governmental women's organisations, who have in the past been vigilant and vocal about their rights and enjoy the support of the silent majority of the women.

It further stated that it was strange that the government on the one hand was anxious to get the support of women to endorse their past policies, while on the other hand prejudices against women were blatantly being encouraged. Family laws and legislations affecting women were crucial and important issues for women. Any amendments made without the consultation of the Co-ordination Committee of women's organisations would result in strong resistance.

Sexist Bias Seen in CII Questionnaire

Most questions in a questionnaire circulated by the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) have a strong sexist bias and have been framed in a manner highly prejudicial to women.

Some begin with an anti-feminist observation followed by a question. One question has been put as follows: "To satisfy their own lusts, westernised individuals in Pakistan want to bring women out of their homes and make them the centre of attraction on society in negation of Islamic instructions. They wish to thrust on women economic responsibilities in addition to her family responsibilities. In your opinions, what weaknesses will result in an Islamic society because of this unnatural approach".

The first question goes: "What are the roles of men and women in society in view of their natural qualities and compulsions? In recognition of the law of nature, how do the Quran and Sunnah separate women's role from that of man? When does an imbalance occur in this division of roles, and because of this disequilibrium to what weaknesses does society fall prey?"

Another says: "When we speak of men and women shouldering responsibility together, what do we mean? In your opinion, from what weaknesses does a society suffer when men and women work together? When a woman abandons her role and assumes a man's role, upsetting the pattern of division of labour, what problems does society face?" The last

question seeks suggestions for segregating women's role from Men's in every sphere of life.

In another question, the propriety of girl guides and paramilitary forces for women has been questioned. How can such institutions be reconciled with the Islamic law regarding purdah (such as prevention of contact with male strangers)", the questionnaire seeks to know.

Women's Action Forum Decries CII Questionnaire: As Hoax

The women's Action Forum (National) has in a resolution expressed grave concern over various legislations and those in the offing purporting to curtail the rights of women.

Criticising the comment for Islamic Ideology, the resolution said the CII had taken upon itself the role of priesthood and forced upon the nation, particularly women, its own distorted view of Islam.

Although the CII questionnaire on women supposedly sought to elicit objective opinion, the questions also contained the answers which were discriminatory, prejudicial and anti-women. This was a distortion of social science methods, as the questionnaire begins with the assumption that women are inferior. It was also a distortion of the realities of life. The main thrust of the questionnaire was that women can only be seen as sexual objects.

If such elements were allowed to continue propagating and enforcing their own notions of Islam, the resolution said, women's status would be further reduced to sub-human level subservient to man in all spheres of life.

Women's Action Forum Memorandum to Zia

The Women's Action Forum has addressed a representation to President Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq for his consideration in view of the referendum of December 19.

The memorandum contains a declaration of the rights of women in an Islamic society and has been signed by the founder-president of APWA, Begum Ranna Liaquat Ali Khan, and the president of Pakistan Women Lawyers

Association, Begum Rashida Patel. Following are the points made in the representation:

- Education and training for women shall be on a scale and dimension equal to that for men without any discrimination on the basis of sex.
- Women shall continue to have access to all institutions of higher training and education as presently available, especially to all the universities in Pakistan. Separate universities for women (though not supported) will not in any way affect the right of women to study at any other university.
- Women shall have rights equal to those of men to enter each and every profession and area of work or gainful employment.
- The right to vote and stand for elected office available to women under the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, will not in any way be changed.
- The fundamental rights of women under the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, among them equality before law, non-discrimination on the basis of sex, etc, shall not in any way be amended.
- The Family Law Courts Act, 1964, and the Family Laws Ordinance, 1961, will not be abrogated.
- The right of maintenance of divorced women, which is a Quranic injunction, shall be legally recognised.
- The right of 'Khula' by women on the same basis as 'talaq' by the male should be legally recognised, being an Islamic right presently denied to women.
- No law shall be proposed or adopted which discriminate against women shall be reviewed in the light of the Quran and Sunnah.
- Enlightened women, on the recommendation of women's organisation, shall be appointed to the Council of Islamic Ideology and policy-making bodies.
- Action oriented programme and policies for the uplift, advancement and development of women all over Pakistan should be undertaken on an accelerated basis.
- Effective steps should be taken to ensure free movement and security of women in all parts of Pakistan.

NEWS FROM AFRICA

African Women Determined to Integrate in African Development

African women vowed to turn the end of the United Nations decade for women in 1985 into a beginning of more serious efforts in advancing women and integrating them in African development process.

Getrude Mongela, chairperson of the Africa regional preparatory meeting for the world conference on the UN decade for women closing today in the northern Tanzania city of Arusha, said that the end of the decade should be a new starting point for the long lasting endeavours in realizing women's role in the development of the continent.

Mongela, who is Tanzanian Minister of State in the Prime Minister's office, said that the decade for women, which was declared by the U.S. in 1975, had served a very useful purpose in preparing the ground for future action.

The meeting opened by Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere on October 8, was organized by the U.N. economic commission for Africa and attended by more than 300 delegates from African countries, U.N. headquarters and special agencies as well as the organisation of African unity.

Focusing on "equality" development and peace" the meeting reviewed the progress achieved in attaining the goals and objectives of the decade and obstacles it had encountered.

The meeting adopted strategies on agriculture and food production, industrial development, education and training, health, employment, mass media, the apartheid issues and the refugee problems.

Mongela said that these strategies had provided the framework for the future action of the African women.

Africa will be proud to demonstrate to the world community at the World conference that African women have their own strategies for

the advancement of women and their integration in the development process of African countries.

Conference of Zambian Women's League Ends

A five day conference of the Zambian women's league approved a ten-point programme of action, calling upon Zambian women to participate more actively in social activities to acquire equal rights with their fellow men. The Conference ended on 7th December, 1985.

The programme of action for the decade 1985-95 adopted at the closing session also stressed the need to train women leaders and to turn the league into a social force for raising women's income.

International Seminar on African Women Held in Morocco in Oct, 1985

An International seminar on the theme of African women opened on October 1 in Tanger, Morocco.

Twenty-four African countries including Morocco, Egypt, Mali and Tunisia as well as some International organisations are attending the six-day seminar organized by the international women's council.

Opening the meeting, Morocco Minister of Cultural affairs Belbachir pointed out that economic and social development is dependent on women's contribution because it would be difficult to conceive such development in a society in which half of the members were idle. He stressed that African countries should make all efforts in integrating women into the realization of development plans.

The main task of the seminar is to work out a "global strategy for Africa" taking into account the importance of women's role in the social, economic and political life of the African continent.

Prevent Repetition of the Horrors of War and Fascism

Soviet Women's Committee on March 8th

"WE call upon women in all countries and on all continents to mark the 75th Anniversary of International Women's Day on March 8 in this signal year under the same slogan. This is the day which is inseparably linked with the struggle of working women for equal rights and social justice, against militarism and wars of aggression. ...

This year all progressive people around the world will mark a memorable anniversary — 40 years since the Victory over German fascism and Japanese militarism.

For a long six years Europe, Asia and Africa were engulfed by the fires of the Second World War. Blood was shed on the territory of 40 countries. Four-fifths of the world's population was involved in the war, which was unmatched in history in the number of casualties and the scale of destruction. It carried off 50 million lives.

Nor did history know schemes more sinister than those hatched by Hitler's Reich and its allies — the extermination of peoples they considered inferior, and the turning of vast territories into dead wasteland for their subsequent "development" and the setting-up of a fascist "new order."

By joint efforts and at the cost of tremendous losses, the nations managed to save civilisation and prevent the dark night of fascism from descending on the planet.

A decisive contribution to defeating the aggressors was made by the Soviet people and their armed forces. This was not only because almost half of the death toll of the Second World War consisted of the names of Soviet people: soldiers, women and children.

It was not only because among the theatres of war from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the Soviet-German front was the vastest, with the battles fought here involving the greatest numbers of troops and material.

This was the main front because the tide of the world war was reversed here. History will always name the birthplace of the Victory as Moscow and Stalingrad.

In this heroic fight the Soviet people upheld the freedom and independence of their own country and brought liberation and salvation from the fascist yoke to many countries of the East and West.

Fascism and the war it unleashed were a tragedy. From this tragedy the people emerged with experience of collective opposition to a common enemy, experience of solidarity in fighting against violence and injustice.

The operations of the liberation armies and the courageous struggle by the heroes of the Resistance and anti-fascist underground were effective because they united the efforts of all peoples whose life and freedom were infringed upon by the aggressor.

Yet another lesson of the war is of everlasting importance. By bringing untold suffering to the world, German fascism and Japanese militarism plunged their own peoples into a sea of misfortune and blood. Nowadays there can be less security than even for a country whose government should risk a new act of world tragedy, on earth or in space.

The Soviet people experienced all the bitterness and suffering of the war. Both men and women. We, women, shared in full measure the fate of our father, husbands and brothers. We, too, were soldiers and tillers of the land. We knew how to rise into battle and how to raise ruined cities from ashes. We learned to hold back the tears over the graves of our dead and to hide away our grief from the orphans in our widowed homes.

We understood the simplest truth: war must be fought before it has broken out. This battle requires courage as well. It calls for the courage and unity of all those who cherish the life of the living and succeeding generations of people on earth.

The forces of imperialism and aggression are again nurturing monstrous plans — both a "crusade" against socialism and democracy, and claims to world domination, and the revival of Nazism. The peace forces have but one task, that of safeguarding world peace and preventing nuclear war.

First International Films Festival on Women's Problems

AN International Festival of Women's Films, the first of its kind with women's role in the film industry as the dominating feature today, was held in Toronto on December 2, 1985. The festival was aimed at generating interest in women's films and encouraging women to work in the film industry.

Women directors from 18 countries, including Canada, China, France, Ireland, Norway and the United States, took part in the festival and brought along with them 60 films. These films reflected the social life of women in various countries, from different angles, such as family planning, conflicts between profession and home-making, kids-caring and struggle for equal rights with equal opportunities.

One of the characteristic features of the festival was the direct communication between the film directors and the audience. When a

film was shown, there was a question-and-answer period. The audience could also attend the directors' discussion on women's role in film industry.

Asian Maids for Sale?

Advertisements portraying Asian house maids as commodities for sale and exchange on the Kuwaiti market have been banned by the government of West Asian country, KUWAIT.

The ban was clamped by the department of humanity and mercy at the ministry of education and morality following a rash of newspaper advertisements offering "imported" maids at bargain prices, the Kuwaiti press said yesterday.

The newspaper "Al-Qabas" cited the following examples of the ads: "We trade your old maid for a new one within a single week for only 50 dinars (\$ 166)...Muslim, Sri Lankan maids for 175 dinars (\$ 580)...thirty per cent discount on Christian maids...three month guarantee.... Filipino maids also available at bargain prices for owners."

Prices for male househelp were lower, with one ad offering "a combination chauffeur-servant-farmer" for 55 dinars (\$ 183).

The ads were placed by house help agencies which operate throughout the Gulf, recruiting jobless Asian in return for commissions from both employer and employee.

FORM IV

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I, Vimal Ranadive, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Sd/-

Dated: 1st, March, 1985. Vimal Ranadive, Publisher.

Hiroshima Victims Still Suffer

Sixty South Koreans suffering from the effect of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are scheduled to come to Japan this year to receive treatment, city report said on 28th Jan. '85. Treatment of South Koreans suffering from disease related to the atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 has been under way since November 1980.

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up a stiff fight to keep the gains they achieved after the revolution as the Khomeni Government is using religion as a weapon to send them back to the Kitchen.

The last two years have been tremendous enthusiasm and concern among women including those in USA, France, Germany, Australia in the fight for peace. The women in Greenham common in England made a history while resisting the cruise missiles to the last minute, entering in the barbed fences to break the police cordon. They faught the police, braved the icy wind in cold December weather. Women in the world fighting for peace got inspiration from the women in Greenham common. All over the world women are coming in the forefront to fight for peace, against the nuclear and chemical war unleashed by the USA demanding "No Nuclear War" and our country too join them to defend our country against the warmongers.

The women in Britain, wives and the families of coal miners is another example, as to how the women are making a common cause with the trade union movement for their demands.

While turning to the situation of women in our country on this day, especially when we review our work in the last year of the decade, one cannot but conclude that the Indian women have to go still a long way to achieve their objective. The women job seekers have increased from 22 lakhs in 1981 to 30 lakhs in 1982. Lakhs of women in unorganised sector have no means of livelihood. The minimum wages Act does not apply to these women. Mechanisation in the industries which traditionally employed majority of women, has thrown thousands of women jobless facing starvation. Equal remuneration is not being implemented. Women in the services for more than 30 years are not made permanent even after their screening while the men are made permanent. The International Women's Day will be observed in our country in the midst of increasing crimes against women, atrocities against Harijan and tribal, and dowry burning.

After the tragic assassination of the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi women have voted enmass in the Farliamentary elections for the Congress(I). The Congress rulers have promised to look after the interests of women, give employment, training for which a special ministry has been set up. The 7th five year

plan has allocated Rs.1800 crores for social welfare sector. Protective homes for women, working women's hostels are promised. The Union Education Minister promised free education for girls upto 10+2 standard. Vice-President Shri R. Venkatraman promised equal pay for equal work to be enforced through stringent administrative action.

Learn a skill and earn money' schemes for rural women are launched in Delhi in the settlement colonies who are supposed to help the family. With the help of UNICEF, women are promised to be given training in Book binding, tailoring, Brick Kiln, assembly of electronics and so on. Women's development corporations are to start in every state to assist women in projects. To carry out these tasks the women Ministry promises that the existing women's Bureau will work and help women.

It is a fact that with women voting in such large number for the ruling party, it had to think and create a special Ministry for women, and it is welcome. It is expected if some projects are taken, some relief for women, whatever little it may be, should come forward. The suffering of women in social, economic field should be lessened by all step, which the Government can take.

But there is a difference between promise and practice. During last 30 years and more promises were galore, but never implemented. The position of women in our country remains almost the same, while women in Socialist countries have gone much forward under the Socialist system. The Ministry for women and Welfare have to give account how far the women in our country have progressed in economic, social or political field, in Nairobi Conference to be held in July this year. The ruling party is quite aware that nothing substantial has been done and laws concerning women which had to be passed under the pressure of women's movement are not being implemented. Whatever little had been done is just a drop in the ocean.

The experience of the International movement all over the world tells us, that without unity and struggle nothing is achieved. On the occasion of International Women's Day, on the 8th March 1985 we again reiterate, to fight for equal status and equality for our women. At the same time we would fight for Peace which has become essential for the survival of mankind and for our own development.