

Presidential Address

6th Conferences at Bombay, May 18-22

Comrades,

The years that have passed since our last Conference in Kanpur have been years of rapid change in our country and the world. They have also witnessed the loss of valuable comrades and important leaders of the international movement. I offer my homage to the memory of those who are no longer with us and who left the world fulfilling their duty in the cause of working class movement.

I honour the memory of those from our country and elsewhere whose precious lives were cut short by the bullets of the oppressors.

Comrades, we all are aware of our irreparable loss of the common movement by the passing away of Comrade P. Sundarayya, leader of the CPI(M) who was also a leading figure in the armed struggle of the Telengana peasants.

Comrades, you will miss at this session the dynamic figure of Comrade P.K. Kurane who undertook the responsibility of organising our session when we met here in 1975. Our CITU in Maharashtra has suffered a big blow with the passing away of Comrade Kurane. The loss is no less to the all India CITU movement because Comrade Kurane was one of the leading figures.

I welcome on your behalf the presence in our midst of fraternal delegates from the trade union organisations of Soviet Union, People's China, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan and the representatives of the COSATU and WFTU. Their presence should strengthen international solidarity and impel us to discharge our

international responsibility with greater vigour.

On behalf of all the assembled delegates let me express my warm appreciations of the State Committee of the Maharashtra CITU and its indefeatable President Comrade Sanzgiri for undertaking this arduous task of organising the All India Conference under very difficult conditions.

Rapid Changes in the World

Comrades, rapid changes have taken place in the international world since our last All India Conference in Kanpur. The dominant feature of these years has been the relentless struggle for peace waged by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and irrepressible struggle of people from all continents against US imperialists' plans of global domination. From South Africa to Nicaragua, from Chile to Angola, the flame of freedom continues to blaze with US imperialism unable to extinguish it. On your behalf I send our warm greetings to the heroic anti-apartheid warrior Nelson Mandela who has become symbol of African freedom.

The persistent refusal of the US administration to respond to the peace proposals of the USSR and exposure of its deals with Iran to fund counter-revolutionaries in Nicaragua have brought down the credibility of Reagan and his policy makers. The Soviet Union's peace proposals continue to impress the world and strengthen the peace movement. At its 27th Congress, the CPSU raised the question, must the inevitability of war between the two social systems be accepted? If so, it meant without nuclear war there is no possibility to advance, i.e. there is no escape from destruction of world. It came to the conclusion that the world can be saved from this destruction if all endeavour for security for all countries. The Soviet foreign policy is now based on ensuring an all-embracing system of international security. Its core is the Soviet proposals for elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. The acceptance of these proposals by the US and other imperialist will change the face of the world. But US continues to build its 'Star War' project.

Nonetheless the efforts to set the world on the path of nuclear disarmament are vigorously pursued. The February proposals of the USSR to remove medium range missiles from both sides of Europe have again impressed the world. They are hailed all over Europe and elsewhere. They offer assurance to the people of

Europe that peace can be maintained and security ensured. This will lead to proportionate reduction of MRaMS of both sides in Asia ensuring security and peace for the Asian-Pacific region. If accepted by the US they will initiate process of reduction of nuclear weapons and open the way for further progress.

The year 1986 was declared International Year of Peace by the United Nations and many anti-war activities in the year were held under its aegis. Naturally, therefore, the peace consciousness and peace movement of the year were dominated by Soviet moratorium on nuclear tests which attested to the seriousness with which the socialist country treated the call for International Year of Peace. No imperialist Government showed any response to the UN call and the US went on with new tests and building up its 'Star Wars' project. More than a year ago the Soviet Union advanced a plan for destroying the stockpiles of nuclear weapons in stages and suggested a moratorium on all nuclear tests. This was a concrete step appreciated by the people of all countries, but the imperialists refused to respond.

Important Peace Initiatives

Three important events of the year in the struggle for peace were (1) Soviet proposals for a nuclear free world (2) Reykjavik Summit (3) the joint Indo-Soviet Delhi Declaration. They showed the new initiative of the USSR to prevent nuclear war; the refusal of the US to respond to any genuine proposal to check the drive towards nuclear war and the close understanding between non-aligned India and the Socialist Soviet Union on the question of peace. The Delhi Declaration expressed the will of the non-aligned nations to co-operate with the Socialist world to save peace, freedom and check aggression and war.

This persistent struggle for peace, this exposure of the imperialist war mongering designs is producing results, changing opinions, attracting new organisations and new sections to demarcate themselves from their former stand and overcome their hesitations to support peace proposals of the Soviet Union.

Changes in Socialist Countries

Along with these are the outstanding developments within the Socialist countries which are reaching a new stage of development and ushering in striking changes to expand socialist democracy, activate socialist economy and introduce radical changes in management and planning to take full advantage of the socialist

system of production combined with the advantages of the industrial technological revolution. The 27th Congress of the CPSU and the February Plenum following it have given a new dimension to the development of socialist society and have revealed the outstanding possibilities of development in economy and democracy which the socialist system has.

Socialist China with its new economic reforms has set a new course of rapid development of productive forces hitherto hampered by rigid and fixed outlook. It is also expanding the democratic rights of the people and advancing Socialist democracy along with the success of its planning efforts. While doing this it is aware of bourgeois liberal tendencies which in the guise of expanding democracy attempt to derail the economic and the proletarian democratic system.

Strengthen Peace Movement

The continuing war danger, the great efforts of the Soviet Union to counter it, the massive peace movement in the world—all urge the working class of India to participate in this great battle of world peace and strengthen the peace movement in our country. Our trade unions have of late been active in conveying the message of peace but much more has to be done. The major part of the Indian trade union movement and India's working class are far from realising the dangers of the nuclear war, so weak has been the peace movement in our country patronised by international organisations. It is a matter of great satisfaction that steps are being taken to widen and deepen the peace movement and involve the mass organisations of the workers, peasant and other sections in the activities. The CITU will definitely play its part in this urgent endeavour to carry the message of peace to the mass of our people, to all sections of our countrymen. Our Conference must call upon all our Trade Unions to address themselves to this important task of making the peace movement a vibrant militant and all inclusive movement in our country.

Fight the Drought

Comrades, before I turn to the problems facing us I must refer to the drought conditions in Maharashtra. Lakhs of peasants are victims of famine and drought and are forced to leave their homes. The visitation of drought and famine has become almost an endemic feature in the state inflicting utter starvation on the rural masses. There are reports that peasants are forced to sell their

children for paltry sum. In Orissa also there are reports about deaths due to starvation.

In Maharashtra part of the drought and famine is class made: The people have no drinking water because of the continuous robbery of water resources by the capitalist sugar cane farmers who also own the so-called co-operative sugar factories. Here you find not only the monopolisation of money and capital but also of underground water resources.

On behalf of you I offer sympathies to the affected peasants and express solidarity with them. Our Conference must demand adequate relief to the famine stricken peasants of Maharashtra and Orissa from the Central and State Government. The drought and economic distress expose the false claims of Cong(I) Govt., which is often given a good bill abroad by ignorant foreign correspondents.

False Claims of Growth

The recent Economic Survey of the Govt. of India makes claims of healthy industrial growth but it is unable to conceal the realities. Industrial sickness has now become endemic affecting both traditional industries and big units and modern concerns. According to Survey, industrial sickness is a major area of concern. No wonder, because at the end of December 1985 itself sick units in the portfolio of commercial banks stood at 1,19,606 involving a outstanding bank credit of Rs 4207.93 crores. Between March and November 1986 the Consumer Price Index Number for industrial workers increased by 7.8 per cent. The annual rate of inflation which declined to 4 per cent upto August 1986 went up to 7.1 per cent by Oct. 1986 and 6.1 per cent in January 1987. The survey considers the price situation a matter of grave concern. It also notes that debt service burden of past borrowings is also increasing.

The food grain production during 1986-87 according to the Survey is expected to increase by a mere 0.6 per cent over the previous year. Though the foodgrain production for 1986-87 is estimated at 151.50 million tonnes, that is one million tonnes higher than the figure for 1985-86, it is lower than the figure of 152.37 million tonnes for 1983-84.

Further Attack on People

The recent budget of Rajiv Gandhi foreshadows further attacks on the living standard of the people. The provision for 8000 crores of deficit financing is bound to lead to fleecing of the

common man through rapidly rising price level. The import liberalisation policy and the free entry of multinationals are going to further ruin a number of Indian industries including the capital goods industry which is already threatened. The problem of unemployment is going to be extremely acute this year and larger and larger masses of the rural population are going to be reduced to utter destitution notwithstanding the claims of Government of India that they have succeeded in raising millions above the poverty line.

Shadow of World Bank Diktat

Rajiv Gandhi's New Economic Policy of destabilising the public sector, free competition from abroad and import liberalisation is not only adding the distress of the people but undermining self reliance of the economy, national planning and opening the economy to continuous depredation of private monopolists' capital. But the World Bank not fully satisfied and it is demanding complete de-regularisation of the economy, lifting of controls, complete freedom for monopolists and ruin of small concerns and freedom to retrench. Its reports on India published in December 1986 concerning industrial regulatory studies demands the following: Immediate removal of licensing barriers for capacity growth considerably narrowing the number of industries subject to capacity licensing and simplifying the procedure for technology and foreign investment license and increasing focus on firm conduct with individual firm size and some of the structural features of the industrial market. A shift away from reservation policies for the small scale industries and towards the promotion of growth and modernisation of small firms, increased expediency of shedding activities, the transfer of assets and the redeployment of labour (with mandatory compensation) in the context of stricter lending guidelines and a fully implemented Govt. commitment to avoid taking over sick units, and the progressive control of industrial prices and greater focus on the impact price regulation upto investment innovation and competitive behaviour. In addition, improvements are needed in trade and fiscal policy to stimulate export activities and to allow greater import competition."

It is quite evident that the economic policies pursued by the Rajiv Govt are developing more and more in conformity with these demands of the world Bank which are intended to make Indian economy helplessly dependent on western aids and subject to the shackles of private monopoly capitalists.

Rajiv Gandhi's statement before a gathering of international capitalists held in February in New Delhi made it clear that the earlier caution concerning import of technology is being given up and foreign equity capital is being sought in the name of using advanced technology.

Fight the New Economic Policy

The CITU and the working class had to carry on their economic battle and at the same time fight this new economic policy which endanger the self reliance of our economy. It is known that it was the CITU that took the lead in uncovering Rajiv's policy regarding the Public Sector. Its effective exposure led to the organisation of the Public Sector workers' strike on January 21, a strike in which two million workers participated demanding withdrawal of Government's reactionary policies. By this strike the working class warned the people about the dangerous character of the new economic policy and called on them to defend the independence of our national economy.

Innumerable battles have been fought by our heroic working class against the attacks on their jobs and their livelihood. Big battles have been fought by middle class employees against the computerisation threats. Lakhs of State Govt. employees of several states waged successful strike struggle to raise their wages. In these three years the industrial workers and the workers of unorganised sectors had to undergo a heavy load of repression and face jail, lathi charge and bullets. In a large number of cases the brunt of retrenchment offensive has been borne by women workers. Hundreds of them in coal mining, tobacco industries and others have been retrenched. Factory workers have faced lockouts extending over months. And in the city of Bombay itself more than 50 thousand textile workers are roaming the streets rendered jobless after the last strike. The trade union struggle of this period have been an extremely harsh battle and the workers and their families have undergone intense sufferings.

Menacing Unemployment Problem

Comrades, the problem of unemployment has reached menacing proportions during the last three years and unless the trade union movement takes it seriously and organise the unemployed both in the rural and industrial areas incalculable harm will be done to the working class splitting its unity.

Today according to official statistics, the number of those reg-

istered on employment exchanges in the cities has reached nearly 3 crores. No one has really calculated the extent of joblessness in the rural areas which may be anywhere between 5 to 7 crores, notwithstanding Government's claims of providing jobs through programmes like Rural Employment Guarantee schemes and other measures. Here is a country where the productive capacities of more than 10 crores of people cannot be used for the advance of the people, for the advancement of the economy and they are thrown out as waste of society, deprived of a decent standard of life.

The Seventh Plan does not offer any viable policy to control and lessen the unemployment. It pursued the same line as advocated in the 6th Plan, that is reliance on finding more employment in the agricultural section, reliance on traditional industries which are getting ruined. Once more the main source of employment is to be the overcrowded agriculture. This is nothing but necessary to draw large sections from agriculture to industry and the industrial growth must take place at a rapid rate. This is not possible under the plan. The so-called National Rural Employment Programme has hardly achieved anything to lessen the rigours of rural unemployment.

The planners claim that they will not only provide jobs to all new entrants to the labour market but absorb the backlog also, which they place at 9.3 millions though the number of registered unemployed in the cities has reached nearly 3 crores. They claim that they will provide jobs for 38 million new entrants to the labour force and also provide 9 million jobs to absorb the backlog from the 6th plan. This is based on an anticipated annual growth rate of 5 per cent GDP for five years, a growth rate which has not been achieved in the past. There is nothing in this promise except the statistic fantasy. The unreality of the claims is already witnessed in the last couple of years which have seen the growth of large scale unemployment.

Increase in Educated Unemployment

Unemployment for the educated classes is also increasing and will continue to increase under the plan. According to its conservative estimates, "during 85-90 addition to the economically active persons of the educated categories would be nearly 10.6 millions. The backlog of educated unemployment at the beginning of 1985 works out at 4.7 millions—3.5 millions metric and higher secondary and 1.2 millions graduate and above. The Commission ob-

serves, it would imply the need for creation of 9.4 million jobs for the educated over the plan period if unemployment rate is not to deteriorate. Is there any possibility of achieving this restricted objective of controlling the unemployment rate—no. For the planners rely on doubtful sources of job creation. The Commission observed, "while the job opportunity for the metric, higher secondary passed and engineering diploma holders would emanate from the organised, unorganised sections, those of the higher categories would be generated primarily in industries, banking, transport, communication and public service". It will be seen that for the educated the collapsing old industries, modernised new industries which restrict jobs by thousands and banking and communication which are adopting computerisation to kill tens of thousands of jobs are to be the main source of unemployment. They are supposed to create 9 million additional jobs. Besides the new education policy with its informal and long distance education delinking of education from jobs and its discouragement for higher education is going to deprive thousands of jobs.

Grave Situation

The gravity of situation can be seen from the fact that between 1975 and 1981 when the economic situation was not as serious as it is today, the growth rate in public and private sector was only a 2.3 per cent year. In contrast there was 14 per cent growth in registered unemployment in one year alone from August 1981 to Aug. 1982. In that year the number of unemployed increased from 17.2 millions to 19 millions. The proportion between the rate of employment and growth rate of unemployment has very much deteriorated since then.

Face the Challenge

Comrades, the massive challenge of unemployment is not yet properly seen by our trade unions. They often confine their understanding to unemployment created by closure and retrenchment. What we do not see is that millions of new entrants to the labour market are denied any productive work. These people have never seen inside of a factory or a concern. They have no tradition of working class unity and solidarity. In this situation unless the trade union movement forges links with them they can be easily used to break working class unity and its resistance during the struggle.

Those at work do not realise the grim prospects facing a young

man from working class, peasant or middle class family. His youthful urge to do productive work for society is killed and he is told that he is no use for society. He is faced with the bleak prospects of eking out his existence on the starvation salaries of his aged parents. Should we wonder if these younger elements become the victims of communal and caste forces or embark upon criminals activities to maintain themselves. Ruling classes are exploiting this situation and organising strife between the sections of working class and rousing regional feelings or caste feelings. The easiest way to divert attention from the serious problem of unemployment is to play reservation and go on widening its hope. If the working class movement remains indifferent to the problem of unemployment it will remain only the movement of the permanently employed workers and lose its credentials to represent all sections of the class and in the end facilitate the game of the ruling classes to split its class unity.

March Against Unemployment

Our conference must call on all our trade unions to intervene vigorously against the growing unemployment and organise solidarity meetings and actions for the unemployed. The entire trade union movement must demand immediate unemployment relief for the unemployed in the industrial and rural areas and put in the forefront the right to work for inclusion in the Constitution as a fundamental right. The entire trade union movement irrespective of difference can be mobilised in defence of right to work and right to relief. I think CITU should think of giving a call for a joint meeting of our Working Committee and the Working Committee of the agricultural workers' organisation to decide upon a massive unemployment march from all capitals of the states and converging on the Capital of India. This joint call will have to be given by the National Campaign Committee and other interested organisations so that the unity of the entire working class, of the entire rural poor, of the employed and unemployed is reflected in the march demanding right to work and immediate relief.

Reorientation Very Much Needed

Comrades, the period since our Kanpur Conference has to be examined and our activities have to be assessed not only in terms of the struggle we have led but also whether the required orientation to our movement was given us, by our state committees and leaders of trade unions. It is a fact that inspite of the tremendous

upsurge of working class resistance and the great struggles we have led, the harrowing conditions of workers under the impact of crisis, growth in membership of our organisation very rarely corresponds to the work we have done, the sacrifices we have made and the weaker areas there are instances where the reformist leaders are able to lead big mass actions leaving us high and dry. All this is due to the fact that we have not yet succeeded in getting out of the traditional rut of conducting the affairs of the trade unions. These weaknesses have been repeatedly pointed out, but we are moving in a very slow manner and we are not yet able to get out of the old habits. The weaknesses relate to lack of sufficient democratic functioning of the unions which prevents the active and vigorous participation of the rank and file workers in the policy decisions. This has its consequences in the inability of the unions to be in contact with the mass all the time and results in restricted membership of the unions. The other weaknesses are failure to take into consideration the demands and plight of the non-permanent workers, of women workers, and confine union activities mainly to the defence of the interest of the permanent workers. a very dangerous lacuna in our functioning relates to the total absence of consideration of the special problems of the muslim minority and oppressed caste workers. We all know that without special attention to them and drawing these section into the common struggle, a real blow cannot be given to the divisive forces. Yet, we hardly find any mention of this activity in any of our report.

Similarly there is neglect of work among workers of unorganised industries and also of working women. It is because of this that we are holding a half day session at this conference to consider the question and problems of working women. I hope all delegates will take effective action in this regard.

New Attacks on Trade Unions

Comrades, it seems the ruling class and the government are not satisfied with the repressive machinery at their disposal to curb the trade union movement. The Central Govt. is planning a new offensive with a new legislation to control and ban the growth of militant trade unions, to create conditions for promoting unions favoured by employers, to restrict the workers' right to strike and deny the workers the right to choose their representative union. Demand made by the CITU that recognition of trade union should

be decided by secret ballot of workers in factories is rejected by the government. The reason is obvious. A management favoured union is not likely to get the confidence of mass of workers. The trade unions and National Campaign Committee have protested against this proposed legislation. Every effort should be made to see that Govt. is pressurised to drop this obnoxious piece of legislation.

Fake Workers' Participation Scheme

Comrades, the trade union movement and workers are often being charged with self centredness when they defend their rights and living standard. This is propaganda to demoralise the workers and set other sections against them. Because only the working class and their trade union movement have been able to give a stiff resistance to the attacks of the employers and the Government, their struggle and organisation have created greater confidence among the democratic masses. So far as the working class is concerned it has always shown its preparedness to do its social duty towards production. The CITU has repeatedly expressed its desire and its willingness to accept responsibility for organising production and participating in production management provided the workers are given equal status along with the management and provided all documents concerning purchase of raw materials, finances, credit are placed before the workers. Neither the Govt nor the employes have shown any willingness to accept this offer. The Govt. on its part prepared a fake scheme of workers' participation in management which the CITU has rejected.

Growing Trade Union Unity

Comrades, I congratulate all our state committees and our unions on the persistent struggle they have carried on for achieving trade union unity often under very difficult and provocative circumstances. Reports from various states and unions reaching our Central office show how our unions had to overcome obstacles at many places and build unity despite them. But on the whole in the last three years because of our persistent efforts, because of the growing sense of unity among our partners and workers, trade union unity has grown, it has been strengthened and it is on the eve of reaching to wider sections.

Comrades, while we are satisfied that the consciousness of unity has grown and trade union unity is strengthened, there is no reason whatsoever to be self complacent. The fact has to be recog-

nised that inspite of our endeavours and growing cooperation from our partners the united strength of the working class has not succeeded in stemming the tide of economic offensive. Most of our actions including the very important public sector workers' strike have been protest actions unable to affect the policies of the government. On vital questions like unemployment, discrimination against working women, virtual collapse of labour legislations and the pitiable and pathetic conditions of the unorganised sections, we could not go beyond some protest actions. Through our united actions we are expected to develop that power and strength which the ruling classes in the government must respect and take into consideration when deciding their policies. We are far from achieving this objective therefore to overcome our present limitations and adopt steps to ensure widening and strengthening of trade union movement.

We must therefore study the changes that have taken place in recent months and plan new organisational measures embody the widening sense of unity.

Problem of Trade Union Unity

The National Campaign Committee during its existence last few years has played a very important role in organising and strengthening trade union movement. But its unity mainly hinges on the initiative and leadership of five or six central trade union centres. The big federations some of whom are far bigger than many members of National Campaign Committee. They are not full fledged partners. That is why some of the recent massive battles have taken place dependently of the National Campaign Committee that the Committee hardly having any role to play in it. The big strikes of NGO's of Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar in which millions of workers participated were conducted and fought independently of National Campaign Committee. The common organisations to which these employees belong also attend the meetings of National Campaign Committee but only as an invitee. This means the with the represent organisational structure National Campaign Committee is unable to coordinate and guide mass activities embracing millions of peoples. It is time that thought is given to create an organisational structure which places the Committee at the head of all the growing struggles.

It will be unrealistic to think that these mass organisations which at present have only the status of invitees will continue to be

satisfied with it for all time. Murmurs are arising in some of these organisations against the invidious status given to them and questions are asked why they should respond to the call of National Campaign Committee when they do not share participation in decision making. In any case monopolisation of the main decision making in the hands of few organisations will be injurious to the developing sense of trade union movement.

It is therefore necessary to make the National Campaign Committee organisation more responsive to the needs of the situation.

The problem before the Indian trade union movement is really how to gather together all trade union centres and federations with their different political outlooks and background, with their different international perception and their different outlook on trade union movement itself. This is the hang over of the old colonial period and also of the bourgeois influence on the trade union movement which seeks to confine the movement only to economic questions. It is a fact to be noted that there is hardly any common organisation for the factory workers and middle class employees. It is also to be noted that various sections of middle class employees also do not have a common organisation.

Call to Form Confederation

Taking into consideration the existing situation in the trade union movement, the inevitable differences on certain matters because of different political outlook, the CITU long ago suggested the formation of a Confederation of all Central Trade Union Centres and Federations where decisions can be taken unanimously and where all issues concerning labour and the economic policy can be discussed freely. It is time that we again reiterate our proposal for a Confederation and decide to pursue it with greater vigour. Steps for immediate expansion and certain re-organisation of the National Campaign Committee and a determined effort to include all trade unions and federations in a single Confederation is absolutely essential for not only protecting the immediate interests of the workers but also for defending national economy, its independence and self reliance against the corrosive economic policy of the Congress(I) Government. Signs are not wanting that day by day more and more massive resistance is coming from the employees and workers. Situation is heading towards a united massive action of the entire working class of India, if the trade union movement discharge its initial responsibility to unite the rising

discontent. The CITU must assiduously work for this grand unity of the working class which alone will enable to fight the challenge of anti-national divisive forces, the new economic policy of the Government and serve the cause of our people and national unity.

Solidarity with the Peasants

Comrades, the CITU and its unions must again recognise a major weakness of our trade union movement, not only its indifference but its callousness towards the peasantry and agricultural workers. Excepting one or two states the questions of the peasantry, solidarity action with them hardly occupies the attention of any union. This is a deviation which cuts off the trade unions from the basic support of the peasantry and enables the ruling class to drive a wedge between the two. The innumerable atrocities against sections of the peasantry, the untouchables, the adivasis, hardly attract the attention of the organised workers. Very rarely strike action is resorted to in protest against these atrocities. It must be recognised that all talks of socialism, democracy and working class advance will end in sheer words if working class movement does not work in close alliance with the peasantry and does not defend it against repressive attacks.

Defend the Minority

Comrades, our weakness regarding the defence of Muslim minority has been revealed in many places. In Maharashtra and many other states, in Delhi during the anti-Sikh riots after the assassination of Smt Gandhi, the working class was unable to intervene. The counter-revolutionaries had a field day. Only in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura and in Orissa you find the actual intervention of our movement keeping the communalists at bay. Because of our weakness new communal forces have arisen like Shiv Sena in Bombay whose activities evoked protests from all parties in the State Assembly. It serves the interests of the imperialists to divide the working class and the people on communal lines. It is the minimum duty of our trade union movement to fight this poisonous communalism and assure by word and deeds that the working class movement with its completely secular outlook stands guarantee by the rights of the minorities and for its protection against all injustice.

Fight the Divisive Forces

Comrades, the three years since Kanpur have witnessed great intensification of imperialist conspiracy in our country. The assas-

sination of Indira Gandhi was followed by an intensive offensive of divisive and communal forces against national unity, an offensive which is financed and organised in many cases by direct agencies of imperialism. It is part of imperialist plot to divide the country and enslave it. The happenings in Punjab, Assam, Mizoram and finally in Darjeeling District of West Bengal—all point in the direction of a sinister plot to disintegrate Indian union. The bankruptcy of the ruling party in dealing with this critical situation stands exposed before all. Unable to isolate the secessionists by means of political struggle the ruling party makes the question of national unity a law and order question. And finally compromises with the divisive forces endangering the unity of India. The bourgeois-landlord government finds no other way because its politics are unable to solve problems of backwardness, unemployment and economic distress. More and more it is being revealed that the capitalist path chosen by India's ruling classes will not only solve the economic problem but will end in disrupting the national unity.

That is why while addressing ourselves to the immediate needs of the national situation the working class must wage a continuous fight for ending the capitalist path and taking the nation to the alternative path.

In these three years the consciousness of some of our working class contingents was put to serve test and we are all proud that they fully passed the test standing by the people and by the flag of national unity. They are all proud of the great fight carried on by our Punjab comrades and CITU workers in the fight against the Khalistanis, by our Assam comrades and workers against the divisive anti-national elements, by Tripura comrades and workers against the disruptive anti-national activities of TNV and by our Nepali speaking tea garden workers' fight against the Gorkhaland disruptive agitation.

Comrades, in all these three states many of our comrades had to sacrifice their lives, many got wounded and hurt, but the fight continues. In the Darjeeling District of West Bengal more than 200 houses of our workers have been burnt but they are courageously holding aloft the banner of unity. We all must salute the memories of those who have laid down their lives and express our high appreciation for those who had suffered and continues the fight.

Defeat Communalism, Casteism

In these three years the working class and the left movement

had not only to fight the divisive forces, they had also to combat the challenge of communal forces, Muslim and Hindu fundamentalism. The compromising policies of Rajiv Government on the Shah Bano judgement case and Babri Masjid/Ram Janam Bhoomi issue intensified the communal atmosphere all over the country and many cities and localities have become a power keg ready for explosion. The working class and the trade union movement must reckon with this situation and fight back the booming offensive. In contrast to all other states, in West Bengal dominated by Left Front Government headed by Com. Jyoti Basu Vice President of CITU and leader of the CPI(M), these three years have been completely free of communal riots with the Muslim minority completely assured protection of its democratic rights. This is the success of working class and left politics. The CITU has the strongest unit in West Bengal and it is no surprise with the class ideology preached by it, the mass of working class is able to fight fundamentalist appeal and keep itself united.

Hail the Left Victory

Comrades, these last three years the working class and left parties have been consistently fighting the challenge of divisive forces. The most outstanding result of this struggle together with the growing consolidation of mass discontent under the working class and left forces was the spectacular victory of the left front in the elections in West Bengal and Kerala. It is beyond doubt that in these two big victories the working class of West Bengal and Kerala played an important role. The West Bengal elections were fought under very difficult circumstances because the industrial areas of Calcutta saw closure of large number of jute mills and increased unemployment due to the result of Government of India's policy. But the CITU and its following knew that the economic policies of the Rajiv Government were responsible for their plight and they stood solidly by the left Front Government. They along with the peasantry knew that the Left Front Government headed by the CPI(M) was doing everything to protect the interests of the common people. Therefore, they succeeded in maintaining their unity and fighting back the slander campaign of Congress(I). The battle in both states, West Bengal and Kerala also involved important issues of deep concern to the people. The CITU and the CPI(M) have been fighting against communal and divisive forces all along and this became a major issue in the electoral fight. In Kerala

especially there were direct confrontation between the left and democratic forces and communal forces in alliance with Congress(I). That is why the victory in these elections has been hailed by all sections of people from other states. It has added great strength to the forces of democratic opposition to the Congress (I) regime. This electoral victory of the working class and the left parties surpasses the importance of all other achievements in the last year. It indicates the growing political weight that the left parties led by the CPI(M) and the organised trade union movement is achieving in the course of its united actions and struggle.

Support Left-Front Governments

It is the duty of all the CITU trade unions and the trade union movement to consolidate this achievement by strengthening trade union unity carrying the lessons of this victory to the mass of workers and organising support for the three left front Governments. It is the duty of all our unions to lend support to the CPI(M) and left parties in their struggle for unity and advances.

Improve Neighbourly Relations

Comrades, the CITU session must take note of the developments in neighbouring states and the deterioration in the relations between India and her neighbours.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that both India and China are committed to settle the border dispute peacefully. But the relations with other neighbours have rapidly deteriorated. The grim happenings in Sri Lanka and the massacre of Tamil militants have already created a situation of alienation and bitterness between the people and the Government of Sri Lanka and the people and the Government of India. The CITU had repeatedly stated that the solution of the Tamil problem can be solved within the frame work of sovereignty and unity of Sri Lanka and justice to the Tamil minority. This also has been the position of the government of India. But some where the diplomacy have failed and hawks in Sri Lanka are determined to seek military elimination of Tamil resistance. In Lanka itself contingents of Israeli, British and South African mercenaries are already there. All have it eye on the Trincomali harbour. Unless quick steps are taken to restore friendly relations between the two countries it will lead to further alienation helping imperialist conspiracies against the freedom of the sub-continent.

Comrades, the situation on the Indo-Pakistani border is still

more serious. The continuous arming of Pakistan by the US, the possession or near possession of nuclear weapons by Pakistan, the promise of AWACS and other sophisticated weaponries to the military regime create constant danger to the security of our country, asking our working class and our people to be vigilant. The massing of troops by both sides on the borders on the Republic Day was a warning about the growing seriousness of the situation. The gravity gets strengthened when it remembered that on the Republic Day the Muslim communalists were to organise the boycott of the Republic Day celebration and Khalistan was to be pronounced from the Golden Temple. This was a warning that the enemies from outside and inside were organising concerted action to endanger the security and integrity of the country. Tensions between the two countries, any conflict between them will imperil the freedom and liberty of both and this danger has to be jointly fought by the working class and people of Pakistan and the working class and people of India. On behalf of our Conference I send greetings to the working class and trade unions of Pakistan and its heroic people who are waging a determined struggle of restore democracy in their country. May their efforts succeed in liquidating domination of the military regime so that the two people can unitedly fight the efforts of US imperialism to subjugate both. The CITU warmly appreciate the struggle of advanced forces of Pakistan against the growing domination of US over the economy and country.

Defeat Imperialist Machinations

Comrades, in the meanwhile it is our duty to be vigilant against imperialist machinations and fight all imperialist devices to create conflict, war and tension. It is our duty to support all genuine efforts to defend the country against external offensive. We cannot but remember that the Indo-Soviet treaty of friendship and alliance has been a great factor in stabilising the situation in the subcontinent and strengthen our security. The CITU and its union must continuously work for strengthening Indo-Soviet friendship which has been consolidated over last four decades.

The November visit of Com. Gorbachev and the Joint Declaration have further strengthened this friendship based on mutual respect and assistance.

Strengthen Non-Aligned Movement

Comrades, you are all aware that the policy of non-alignment

to which our country has been committed since independence, has been a great source of strength to maintain our independent foreign policy, our freedom in international affairs and our free initiative to support people fighting for their liberty and freedom. It has enabled us to maintain our independence in all matters and kept us away from becoming a hanger on of any power. Those who have given up non-alignment and have entered into pacts with the imperialists have reduced themselves to an appendages of other powers as is the case of some of our neighbours. The CITU, its trade unions and the entire trade union movement must guard and strengthen non-alignment and protect it against internal assaults from reactionary political parties. Till now the mass of workers has not been enlightened about the importance of non-alignment in maintaining our self reliance, about the importance of our friendships with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. It is high time that the working class takes an active interest in strengthening the policy of non-alignment and fights any vacillation on the part of the Government and assaults of reactionary parties who talk of two super powers and of genuine non-alignment by which they mean a tilt towards US imperialism.

Rally Behind Left Forces

Comrades, the three year since Kanpur have witnessed big advance of the forces of left unity supported by the working class. To consolidate these forces and expand them further in all the states is an important task of the CITU and its trade unions. The Conference must give a special call to all our unions to see they growingly rally behind the forces of left unity and ensure further retreat on the ruling party.

The same process of consolidation of working class unity and rise of its political consciousness and confidence born out of united mass activities has shaken the stability and overweening confidence of the ruling party. During these year the ruling party showed scant regard for the democratic rights of the people and got itself further isolated from them. The authoritarian tendencies in the administration have virtually led to collapse of all democratic norms at the bottom. This has accelerated the process of Congress(I) isolation. No previous leader of Congress(I) party secured such an overwhelming majority in the Lok Sabha as Rajiv. Even Jawahar Lal Nehru was unable to win such a huge majority in the first election of independent India. But within a couple of years Rajiv

Gandhi has growingly lost the support of the people and its parliamentary majority today is becoming a majority which is fast losing its popular support. The bankruptcy of Congress(I) ruling party in tackling the issue of Punjab, Assam, Mizoram and Gorkhaland and its compromise with divisive forces have all created a growing gulf between the aspiration of the people their urgent desire of national unity and the opportunist compromise of Congress(I) policy. Its disgusting and revolting compromise on the Ram Janam Bhoomi/ Babri Masjid and the Shah Bano case and its alliance with the forces of communalism in Kerala have isolated the parliamentary majority from the people.

Corruption Unbounded

And that is why the Rajiv Government is now rocked with one scandal after another corruptions and scandals concerning bourgeois parties and bourgeois administration are not only not rare but are the constant accompaniment of all bourgeois administration. But they lead to a critical situation, to crisis in the ruling party, to resignation of ministers only when the parliamentary majority and the Government represented by it get thoroughly isolated from the people and lose their credibility. This is what has happened to the Rajiv Government. Fairfax German Sub-marines, and the Bofor's deal scandal have all created a critical situation for the Government which is now unable to defend itself convincingly and resorts to all kinds of devices to escape truth. This however is not simply the result of corruption scandals but reflects the crisis of the parliamentary system.

Developing Crisis of the System

This crisis is further reflected in the differences between the Prime Minister and the President. There is no doubt that the Prime Minister failed to conform to Constitutional propriety when he failed to keep the President informed about the activities of his Government. In addition he made a misleading statement before the Parliament saying that the President was duly informed. They brought out the differences between the two in the open and has now led to lot of speculations and controversies. It will be wrong to think that these differences arose out of a wrong personal equation between the two. They are part of the developing crisis of the Parliamentary system. The Congress(I) party with its anti-people policies is unable to observe all the norms of the Constitution and rides rough shod over them. The indifference towards

the President, the refusal to keep him informed was part of this policy of subordinating Constitutional norms to its own requirements.

It has also to be noted that both the President and Prime Minister have to observe these norms and none can override the supremacy of the Constitution and the Parliament. There were alarming reports that the President was being advised to intervene and dismiss the Parliament. Leading papers had to comment on these developments and warn against the consequences. This would have been nothing but a coup against the constitution.

Guard Against Destabilisation

While the working class notes this important feature of the present situation, while it notes that its organisational consciousness is growing and the ruling party is collapsing, it also notes that other forces are busy trying to fish in troubled waters. The isolation of Congress(I) from the people is often exploited by reactionary and communal forces and does not automatically lead to consolidation of the left forces. The working class also seen that in the situation created by the corruption scandals, it is not only the democratic and left forces that are active but are also certain foreign and reactionary forces. The working class is always conscious that every critical situation in the country will be utilised by the imperialists and their agents to their own advantage to disrupt the unity of India and erode faith in democracy and democratic advance. That is why it is very vigilant against the attack of the force of destabilisation. The working class is also aware that corrupt elements which pilfer people's money, which even endanger the country's security to satisfy their lust for money must be thoroughly exposed and hounded from the public life. These elements cannot be relied upon to defend national interests. They are most likely to be utilised by inimical forces against the interests of the country.

The Congress(I) Working Committee's appeal and warning against the forces of destabilisation therefore cannot be taken seriously unless the ruling party and its Government has the courage to expose every corrupt element and gains its confidence of the democratic forces. In the present situation a large number of honest people think and rightly so that the Working Committee's appeal and warning against destabilisation forces is a device to protect the corrupt. The working class like some other parties does not pooh

pooh the idea of danger from abroad. These bourgeois parties belittle imperialist machination against our country and think that the imperialist danger is an invention of the Congress(I) to keep itself in power. Such an outlook is extremely dangerous for the country and has to be fought.

Comrades, I urge on all of you to take into consideration the complicated political situation in our country and conduct the trade union struggle in a way which meets its immediate needs as well as the national needs of our people.