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THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU



MASSIVE MARCH TO PARLIAMENT • 24 JULY

CENTRE OF INDIAN TRADE UNIONS

ALL INDIA WORKING COMMITTEE MEETING

NOTICE

Date: 26.6.2001

A meeting of the Working Committee of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions will be held at Bangalore, from the 24th to 26th August, 2001, to transact the following

AGENDA

1. Review of action programmes against the economic policies and the tasks ahead.
2. Special discussion on the functioning of Industrywise Federations.
3. BTR Memorial Fund.
4. Audited Statement of Accounts for the year 2000.
5. Miscellaneous.

All members of the Working Committee are requested to ensure their participation.

M.K. Pandhe
General Secretary

PLEASE NOTE:

- 1) Venue of the Meeting:

ARASOJI RAO CHOWLTRY
No.9 R.V. ROAD,
V.V.PURAM, BANGALORE-560 004

- 2) The meeting will commence at 10 a.m. on 24th August and conclude by 5 p.m. ON 26th August, 2001. Comrades should plan their journeys accordingly.
- 3) Rs.500 is to be paid by each comrade towards boarding and lodging expences.
- 4) Comrades may please book their journeys, bothways, at their respective stations. The arrival/ departure information may please be advised to the committee.
- 5) In case any comrade needs return journey reservation to be arranged at Bangalore, the Reception Committee may be advised, along with Demand Draft for the journey fare. DD should be in favour of "CITU Karnataka State Committee, Bangalore".
- 6) Address for communication:

Com. E.K.N.Rajan,
General Secretary,
Reception Committee,
CITU Karnataka State Committee Office,
Second Floor, V.G. Gopal Building,
20/1 Lalbagh Fort Road,
Bangalore - 560 004
Phone cum fax : (080) 6703852

- 7) The Reception Committee has advised that they will provide accommodation and other arrangements for the members of the Working Committee, for the duration of the meeting. Extra days of stay or extra family members will have to bear their additional expenses for accommodation and boarding.

THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

AUGUST 2001

ALL IN THE GAME



Courtesy: The Hindu

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EDITORIAL

BROADEN UNITY, INTENSIFY ACTION !

The unprecedented unity among the trade unions witnessed during the Indian Labour Conference held during April last, where the Prime Minister's attempt to market the 'second generation reforms' to the tripartite forum was aborted, has crystallised in a more focussed resistance to the 'reforms' agenda.

The joint call of all the central trade unions across the political spectrum, to carry out an intensive campaign against the disastrous 'reforms' package, and popularise the common issues and prepare for a countrywide strike action, received massive enthusiastic support from the rank and file workers of all unions. Ordinary workers, irrespective of their trade union affiliations or political loyalties have realised that these policies are set to ruin their lives and are increasingly coming forward for united resistance against these policies. This was overwhelmingly evident at the State-wise joint conventions held throughout the country. We are carrying a detailed report thereof in the 'Reports & Events' feature in this issue. The united resolve of the workers of all the Defence production establishments, under the banner of the three all India Federations to embark on a two days strike on 23-24 July, 200, forced the Defence Minister to invite them for a discussion. With the reported assurance by the Minister to review the Government decision to permit Foreign Direct Investment in this sensitive sector has led to deferment of the slated strike for 90 days.

The 80 lakh State Government employees and 15 lakh Central Government employees staged a nationwide strike on 25th July, against corporatisation, privatisation, contractualisation, downsizing and anti-worker changes in labour laws. This strike is yet another milestone in the united trade union offensive against the 'reforms' agenda of the Government.

The workers of Delhi and adjoining areas staged a massive march to Parliament on 24th July, with the flags, festoons and banners of all trade unions fluttering. The rally firmly put the Government on notice that the working class of the country will not countenance the atrocious pursuit of the 'reforms'. Reports of similar demonstrations in the States, participated in thousands by mass of workers, cutting across affiliations, is a pointer to the growing urge among the workers to carry forward this unity to its logical destination - **intensified direct action, a countrywide strike action.**

The political class ruling the country is set on a dangerous course of mortgaging the country, lock stock and barrel, to the international financial institutions and their imperialist masters. The patriotic task of saving the country, its economy and the people has devolved on the working class at this critical juncture in the history of independent India. Let us rise to the occasion. The need of the hour is to consolidate and broaden the unity and to intensify the struggles.

TRADE UNION UNITY - SOME ISSUES

W. R. VARADA RAJAN

The 37th Indian Labour Conference (ILC), held on 18th-19th May, 2001 ended unceremoniously without any conclusions being drawn up because of the united resistance of all the trade unions. Immediately thereafter, I.P. Anand, a senior representative of the employers' side, patronisingly advised the leadership of the Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) to rethink on the wisdom of a BJP affiliate joining hands with the Left trade unions, in opposing the ongoing reforms measures of the NDA Government at the Centre.

V. Krishna Ananth, writing in 'The Hindu' on 25th June, 2001, had deplored that 'the pro-Left trade unions, which had managed, on their own strength, to dampen the spirits of the market enthusiasts', have agreed to "build" a stronger opposition to the reforms package together with the BMS and the INTUC. He also referred to the developments at the ILC as 'the pro-Left trade unions seem to have allowed themselves to concede the leading role to the BMS.'

The reaction of Mr. I.P. Anand was understandable but not that of Krishna Ananth. Thankfully, these two voices lamenting over this development do not have the same concern. The former was getting frightened at the prospects of the reforms process slowing down. The latter, however, is not in any way disturbed by that prospect. Rather, he (Krishna Ananth) was getting worrisome because in his perception, the Left unions were seen to have 'given up whatever was left of their political agenda and agreed to reduce the trade union movement to mere bargaining over wages'.

ILC Developments Hailed

Firstly, it should be noted that the forum was a Government convened meet and the question of anyone conceding the lead to BMS does not arise. Even as Krishna Ananth had averred 'after all, the BMS is today the largest central trade union (in terms of membership figures)'. It is the scribes of the likes of Krishna, who behaved like the uninitiated and floated stories in the national media, as though it was a first ever event of a

trade union to have come out in the open to charge the Government.

In fact, no one in the spectrum of Left unions was disturbed by the BMS leading the charge against the Government at the Indian Labour Conference. All the trade unions viz. AITUC, BMS, CITU, HMS, INTUC, UTUC, UTUC (LS), TUCC, AICCTU and NFITU, in their joint meetings held on 20th and 24th May at New Delhi, had hailed the united position of firm opposition to the Govt. policies, taken by the workers' side, at the ILC.

But, is there any basis for anyone to surmise that 'the unions will be reduced to mere mercenaries fighting for economic issues, pushing the political agenda completely under the carpet'? The 'reforms' package itself is a politics driven agenda. Opposition to it is the biggest political fight in the present day dispensation. Furthermore, a mere glance at the specific issues identified for the countrywide united movement will testify to the contrary. The struggle is against thoughtless privatisation and changing the labour laws in favour of the employers, for immediate enactment of comprehensive legislation for agricultural workers, and against removal of quantitative restrictions on import, much to the detriment of industry, agriculture and the national interest as a whole, and the policies leading to severe aggravation of joblessness and unemployment. Can these be termed as mere economic issues? Are these bereft of any political agenda? If that were so, why the employers and the ruling polity are getting disturbed over this unity? These questions cannot be parried.

Efforts for TU Unity

Then, is it for the first time the pro-Left unions are seen on the same platform with the BMS and the INTUC? During late seventies, all the trade unions joined together to defeat the infamous 'Industrial Relations Bill' and the Boothalingam Committee Report, which doled out a recipe for wage-freeze under the guise of an 'Incomes, Prices and Profits Policy'. What is strange now, if all the unions cutting across spectrum come

together to fight the reforms agenda of the Government.

Krishna Ananth had also misread the developments on the trade union front when he asserted that the pro-Left unions had refused all these years to coordinate with the BMS. This is, according to him, because the BMS was then not opposed to the idea of reforms as such but only expressed opposition to the way they were being implemented.

It would do well to put the records straight.

The CITU, for over two decades, had been pursuing a proposal for formation of a Confederation, by under which all the trade unions can come together under one umbrella to pursue issues of common interest to the workers. That the same has not materialised is another matter. After the collapse of the Janata Government experiment in the late seventies and resurrection of the Congress regime under Indira Gandhi, the Government unleashed fresh attacks on the working people. At that time, the CITU took initiative to form the National Campaign Committee of Trade Unions. All trade unions, except the INTUC, joined the NCC. During the eighties, the NCC became the springboard of powerful working class actions, including several marches to Parliament and all India General strikes against the price rise, unemployment, ban on recruitment, attacks on trade union and democratic rights, etc.

Post-reforms Period

The policies of economic reforms ushered in the last decade of the 20th century have been implemented by the successive regimes, viz., the Congress, United Front and the NDA. During this period, the leadership of the BMS also was disinclined to join the common movement. The sponsoring committee of Trade Unions, comprising all Central Trade Unions, excepting INTUC and BMS, came into existence to carry on the resistance movement against the reforms policies. Even at that time it was not the case that the pro-Left trade unions wanted the BMS to be kept out. Side by side with the activities of the Steering Committee, the five major trade unions viz. AITUC, BMS, CITU, HMS and INTUC were meeting periodically to coordinate their actions on issues over which consensus could be reached. At the trade union level the pro-Left

unions had never been adopting a 'touch me not' attitude towards either the BMS or the INTUC.

Secular-Democratic Issues

It is true that a rightward tilt in the economic policy will eventually lead to a rightward tilt in the political canvas as well. The pro-Left unions have all along been conscious of this and had fought this rightward tilt. They have also pointed out that the NDA Government has been moving fast towards the right wing political slide. At the same time, they have not refused to join hands with the BMS on trade union issues, as Krishna Ananth would believe it to be. This can not be decried as sheer economism, as the fight was not limited to wage related issues alone. The latest example is the struggle against BALCO sell-off. Mass of workers mobilised in the fight against right wing economic policies can be won over to the left political discourse, if conscious efforts are undertaken. One does not expect the pro-Left unions to demand the workers to swear by anti-right politics, as a pre-condition to join the common trade union struggle. This has been the experience of the working class worldwide.

Trade Unions are conscious of the differences among themselves, not only on the political agenda but even on the approach to the 'reforms process'. But they are all united because an avalanche is coming on, which just seeks to jettison the trade union movement lock stock and barrel. If the trade unions together cannot save the day for themselves now, nothing will remain of the agenda of individual unions.

Krishna Ananth had accused the Left unions of not internalising democratic and secular ideas into the day-to-day agenda of the unions. He visualised that the BMS-inclusive unity will further dilute their secular and democratic political agenda. If only he and his likes would bother to acquaint themselves with the debates and organisational exercises including the fight against communal and casteist forces, that the Left unions, particularly the CITU, had zealously been pursuing, they would realise that such fears are unfounded. This is not to suggest that all that is needed is already being done and that the Left unions can stray into complacency.

Sectarianism?

The last decade of market oriented economic

SPECIAL TRIPARTITE MEETING

The five central trade unions viz. AITUC, BMS, CITU, HMS and INTUC have jointly suggested the following as the agenda items for the proposed special tripartite meeting to be called by the Govt. of India:

1. Growing industrial sickness and closure and need to take effective steps to overcome the same;
2. Reckless privatisation of profit making Public Sector Undertakings causing great loss to public exchequer and
3. Announcement by finance Minister about amendment to labour laws and position of Labour Ministry in the matter.

reforms has had many fathers. The BJP, sitting in the opposition in the beginning of nineties, accused the Congress of hijacking their economic agenda. The United Front, with all its nimble fingers, tried to push through the reforms agenda as fast as it could, despite the innumerable rumblers and speed-breakers placed by the Left, politically and on the trade union front. Those who are presently at the helm of affairs in the country's governance, seek to roll over the indignant fury of protest, not only of the workers but also of all sections of the people, fancying a political consensus on 'reforms'. The fact that workers,

including those owing allegiance to the saffron or tri-colour brands, are coming into the arena of struggle is sure to make the disastrous 'reforms package' an orphan, sooner than later. But, this cannot become a reality, if the pro-Left unions renege on the task of building broader and broader class unity. It will be the worst sectarianism and not an act of pushing under the carpet all kinds of sectarianism, as Krishna Ananth would imagine.

It seems that Krishna Ananth is not that much bitter over the 'unity' of pro-Left and non-Left unions against the reforms, but only takes exception to the 'celebration' of it. When common ground is identified and action plans are drawn up for the oncoming struggle, nobody would expect a mourning to be declared! It is not the 'celebration' that Krishna Ananth had derisively commented that should worry anyone who fraternises with the pro-Left unions, even from a distance. The real cause for worry is the unholy, albeit unintentional, united front that is emerging from the constituencies, which I.P. Anand and Krishna Ananth seek to represent, to scuttle the united offensive against the reforms package.

SHRI G. RAMANUJAM

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions is shocked to learn the passing away of Shri G. Ramanujam, a veteran trade union leader of India on 26th June 2001 at Chennai. He was not keeping well for quite some time.

Ramanujam, a well known Gandhian Trade Union leader, played a key role in building the Indian National Trade Union Congress. Several writings of Ramanujam vividly explain his thinking on the problems of the working class which have great historical value even to-day.

As a Chairman of the bipartite committee of Industrial Relations Law, popularly known as Ramanujam Committee, he played an important role in drawing some common conclusions on certain issues of significance. His contributions in bipartite and tripartite committees in India was of great importance, since he was always emphasising the need for common approach by the entire T.U. Movement.

Even after his retirement from the trade union movement, Ramanujam was showing keen interest in keeping a close contact with the current developments in the trade union movement.

The working class of India has lost a great champion of their cause at the passing away of Ramanujam. His simple living and unassuming behaviour made him close to all the central trade unions in India.

The passing away of G. Ramanujam will create a big void in the trade union movement in India, which is difficult to fill in.

The CITU and 'The Working Class' pay homage to the memory of this great warrior of the working class and express its heartfelt condolences to all the INTUC workers and bereaved members of his family.

COMRADE NIREN GHOSH

The veteran freedom fighter and a stalwart of the communist and working class movement in India, Comrade Niren Ghosh breathed his last on 1st July 2001 at Calcutta. He was 87.

Till the last day of his almost seven decades long public life, he was in the midst of work and movement. Even on 30th June, he took part in the meeting of the West Bengal State Committee of CPI (M). Next day a massive heart attack had snatched him away from all of us.

He was one of the founder Secretaries of CITU and a member of the Central Committee and West Bengal State Secretariat of the CPI (M). Till his death he was the President of the West Bengal State CITU.

Comrade Niren Ghosh was one of the architects of the trade union movement in Bengal. His contribution was immense in building up the Jute workers' movement from its early days. He was

the Communist Party in 1936.

From 1943, he came to Calcutta and started working amongst the Jute workers. He dedicated himself to building up the working class movement in the country with unflinching determination. He was imprisoned many times and had to remain underground for long spell.

Com. Niren Ghosh played a frontline role in upholding the revolutionary line of class struggle as against reformist class collaborationist approach. He contributed immensely in shaping the CITU line of 'unity and struggle' in the trade union movement. He was an ardent advocate of more active initiative by the trade union movement in championing the cause of the peasantry and agricultural workers and more pro-active workers-peasants alliance in action.

He played important role as parliamentarian as well. He was a member of Rajya Sabha in two terms

CONDOLENCE MEETING IN B.T.R. BHAWAN

A condolence meeting for Com. Niren Ghosh was held at the auditorium of B T Ranadive Bhawan, New Delhi, on July 10, 2001. Workers in and around Delhi attended the meeting. The meeting was presided over by E Balanandan, President, CITU.

In his address offering homage to the departed leader, Balanandan said that comrade Niren Ghosh was always forthright in expressing his opinion in all the forums with firm conviction and steadfastness. M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, recalling his long association with Com Niren Ghosh, said that his life was a symbol of simplicity and dedication for the cause of the toiling class. He played an important role in formulating the CITU line and approach on organisation and struggle and never failed to stress on the importance of developing political consciousness of the mass of the workers and concrete programmes to be adopted for that. He had practically nothing personal in his life and dedicated himself to the movement and organisation. N K Shukla, Secretary, All India Kisan Sabha, Shakti Roy Chowdhury, Secretary, DYFI and Krishna Prasad, President, SFI, also spoke in the meeting offering homage to Com. Niren Ghosh.

President of All India Jute Workers Federation and led countrywide strike of the jute workers.

Born in 1915 in Barishal district of present Bangladesh, Com. Niren Ghosh joined the revolutionary freedom movement from his student days. Despite brilliant academic record, he joined the Yugantar group of freedom fighters risking his life and career and was drawn towards Marxism from his college days. The British Police arrested him in 1933. During internment he joined the Marxist group Ghabani and became a member of

in 1962 and 1969, and of during 1980-84. While in Parliament, he played an important role in defence of the rights and struggles of the working class, peasantry and the common people.

Com. Niren Ghosh was a symbol simplicity. While remaining in the highest position in the organization, he was accessible to all, down to the commonest workers.

The CITU and 'The Working Class' pay respectful homage to the memory of Com. Niren Ghosh.

SETTING RIGHT 'THE TRADE UNION RECORD'

M K Pandhe

The official organ of the AITUC,—“Trade Union Record” (TUR) published an article entitled “Does it help Trade Union Unity?”. Written by it “A commentator”, criticised CITU for its role in some of the wage negotiations in public sector undertakings. The article was reproduced in the ‘HMS Bulletin’ in its July 2001 issue and contents of it found place in the columns of “The Telegraph”, a daily from Calcutta.

The article contains several untruths and distortion which gives a wrong impression about the policies of the CITU and it is necessary to reply to the points raised by the article.

COAL STRIKE

The MOU in respect of wage revision for the coal mine workers signed by INTUC, AITUC, HMS and BMS was not signed by CITU, since it gave paltry wage rise to the workers. The CITU gave its viewpoints in writing to the management. There was a strong resentment among the coal workers. The 4 trade unions issued a joint statement appreciating the MOU. The CITU gave a call for 3 days strike against the MOU on 20-22 November 2001. There was a very good response to the strike call all over the country, when the coal workers - even those affiliated to all other unions - took part *enmasse*. It is strange that the AITUC

organ reported that “as a protest there were spontaneous strike in several mines on the question of DA. It conveniently did not mention that such “spontaneous strike by coal workers” took place precisely on those three days (20-22 November), when CITU gave a call for three-day strike.

The article earlier mentioned that “the CITU refused to sign the terms of MOU and there was no mention of DA”. It should be noted that all the unions who signed the MOU did not support the call.

Seeing the success of the strike, the other trade unions had to give a call for six days strike demanding change in the MOU signed by themselves.

Then came the second MOU. The CITU gave in writing its comments on the second MOU and pointed out its shortcomings.

In the interest of unity, CITU proposed some modifications in the draft of the agreement and inclusion of its comments on the two MOUs. It was only when this was agreed to by all others, CITU agreed to sign the settlement. However, after signing of the settlement, AITUC opposed inclusion of CITU's comments in the agreement. The CITU clarified that without the inclusion of the CITU's comments the CITU's signature cannot be taken into consideration.

However, the TUR without

verifying the actual happenings and record stated: “The JBCCI then resolved the issue and an agreement was signed. CITU wanted to sign the agreement other unions insisted that the CITU could sign the agreement: provided it signed the MOU as well. The CITU signed the MOU and the agreement”. This is far from truth.

We would only request the AITUC to produce the copy of the first MOU with CITU's signature on it. Even the official document published by CIL mentioned about CITU's note of dissent, though it was not included in the agreement as was decided earlier. Falsehood cannot be substitute to the factual position!

IN STEEL ...

The situation in steel industry also highlights AITUC's erroneous policies. The All India Convention of all trade unions held in Bhilai in February 2001 was a good success. It gave a clarion call for two-day strike on 28th and 29th March 2001. It is strange that the AITUC journal states: “the CITU persuaded others to withdraw the strike notice as they had earlier given assurance to the Steel Minister and the strike was postponed.” This is totally incorrect. The Government of India as well as the SAIL management is fully aware that in a meeting on 25th February 2001 held with the Steel Minister, CITU was the last to agree the deferment of the

strike. CITU agreed to defer the joint strike call only when all other unions committed that if the next meeting of the NJCS does not settle the issue, then all would go on strike together. Next meeting of NJCS, however, could not settle the dispute and CITU's frantic efforts to discuss the matter of fixing the date of joint strike as agreed earlier could not materialise. Immediately thereafter, CITU wrote to all other trade unions in steel industry urging for fixing the date of joint strike, but that also received no positive response. Gaya Singh's (AITUC) reply to Pandhe's letter was only an attempt to defer the action.

The CITU had, therefore, no alternative but to give a call for strike for 17th April 2001. The meeting of the steel trade unions called by Gaya Singh on, 6th April (much after CITU had given the call for strike) was not attended by any one from the plant level steel leadership. Still, in that meeting CITU expressed its readiness to change the date of the strike, provided all the trade unions jointly decide for a strike date in the steel industry. An earlier attempt by CITU to convene a meeting could not materialise since no one attended. Thus, AITUC's allegations in the TUR are totally baseless.

The proposal of the AITUC to postpone the strike till the meeting of NJCS on 12th and 13th April 2001 was not agreed to by the CITU. Immediately after the meeting convened by Gaya Singh, the steel management postponed the meeting of NJCS.

However, the TUR noted, "The CITU did not agree and wrote to the management to postpone the meeting on 12th April as they were busy organising the strike". This is utter falsehood and we would request AITUC to show us any copy of the CITU letter to the management to this effect. The CITU actually proposed that if the agreement is settled on 12th and 13th then there would be no need for the strike action. Yet the TUR states, "The meeting was postponed and the management announced that the delay was due to CITU."

This was also the propaganda made by the AITUC. For delay in settlement of the agreement, the AITUC was not blaming the management but pointing finger to CITU, which only highlights to role of the AITUC in steel industry.

The AITUC's attempt to ridicule the impact of CITU's strike call cannot succeed.

The steel agreement was ultimately settled only when the management was forced to agree to a reasonable proposal.

IN BALCO...

In case of BALCO agreement, the CITU did not sign the agreement since the CITU was opposing privatisation of the unit and wanted no recognition to the dubious Sterlite management. However, to strengthen the point of Sterlite management the TUR states "In BALCO the CITU is of no consequence and their following joined the duty". When all the trade unions joined the duty, the CITU has no alternative; but it refused to sign the agreement with Sterlite, though the working president of

the CITU union was served termination order. It should be noted that HMS union also did not sign the settlement along with CITU. This, however, is conveniently ignored by AITUC commentator.

NTPC AGREEMENT

In NTPC wage negotiations, CITU unions refused to accept management offer, as it was discriminatory to the workers vis-à-vis the wage rise granted to NTPC executives. AITUC conveniently suppressed the fact that on the day the MOU was signed in NTPC, (25-26 January, 2001), not only CITU unions, but also four recognised unions from different projects, including one INTUC affiliated union from Farakka project, did not sign the MOU. In this background, strike call was given in NTPC by CITU and other independent unions. Subsequently management managed to get the sanction of the INTUC union at Farakka and some other independent unions on the MOU, which also affected the strike to some extent. But still the strike was to the tune of eighty percent in both Farakka and the Vindhyachal Project and partial in other places. The AITUC commentator while describing strike performance in NTPC blindly quotes management's figure. The stand of the CITU in NTPC has been fully vindicated by the subsequent wage agreement in the Power Grid Corporation of India. There, the CITU unions have successfully achieved higher fitment benefit and better fringe benefits than the NTPC.

Cont. on page 23

ARGENTINES SLIP DOWN THE LADDER

Poverty hits the Middle Class

In a dusty colonial quarter of south Buenos Aires, Eduardo Medina takes a deep breath before lifting the receiver of a public phone for a weekly call to his elderly parents in the countryside. Then the 38-year-old unemployed law clerk starts to lie.

He lies about the new job he never found, the one in a posh law office that does not exist. About the apartment he no longer has. He says anything but the truth: that he has found himself reduced to living in a dingy, overcrowded homeless shelter. "The truth would kill them," said Medina, still dressed impeccably in a woolen sweater and preppy pinstriped shirt, five months after moving to the municipal shelter filled with the economic refugees of the world's 10th largest metropolis.

The truth is that Medina lost his \$2,500 a month job at the Justice Ministry during Government layoffs in 1999. And six months ago, he lost a part time job as a waiter. He faced eviction from his apartment across town before resorting to the shelter to keep a roof over his head.

"If I tell my parents, it would force me to accept it as well," he said. "I've told myself this is just a brief setback. But then I look at the other guys here, and I wonder if I'm not lying to myself, too."

MASSIVE JOB LOSSES

Medina's story is emblematic of a tide of homelessness sweeping Latin America's showcase city. Massive unemployment from a 33-month recession and large scale downsizings during a decade of US backed free market reforms have wreaked havoc on the lives of residents here, especially as the once large middle class tumbles down the ladder of prosperity.

Although its grand boulevards and belle époque neighborhoods have long given Buenos Aires pretensions as "the Paris of Latin America". The city today recalls New York during the Great Depression.

The number of indigents in greater Buenos Aires - the poorest of the poor who live on less than a \$1.60 a day in a metropolitan area of 12 million people — rose to 921,000 people in 2000 from

324,810 in 1991, the year that former President Carlos Menem embraced the free market reforms that swept across much of Latin America in the 1990s.

"We have never had to cope with a homeless population this large and diverse before," said Silvia Coralini, head of the city's Program for Families in Crisis, begun in 1997 to deal with the swelling tide. "And it's not like you can just go tell these people to get up and find a job. There are no jobs."

Two Government surveys on the homeless, taken in 1997 and 2000, show that the population living in city shelters or on the streets has almost doubled in three years, to 5,718 from 3,172 within city boundaries, where 3 million live. Aid groups place the actual figure far higher, arguing that the Government does not count people living in shanty towns called "misery villages."

At the same time, thousands of "afternoon homeless" pour into the city each day on boxcars attached to commuter trains from poor suburbs and the interior of the country. Most stay on the streets for a few nights, some standing in employment lines that snake for blocks. Others come to scour trashcans in search of aluminum cans and discarded morsels.

The genteel middle class neighbourhoods that were the city's heart and soul - and which long separated Buenos Aires from most other Latin American capitals, where island of wealth sit among seas of poverty - are rapidly being transformed into pockets of dilapidated buildings, empty storefronts, rising crime and increasing numbers of beggars. Meanwhile, the very rich have retreated to gated communities, exiting for work in high rise office buildings and shopping in designer boutiques in upscale parts of town.

SOCIAL BREAK DOWN

In other words, Buenos Aires is starting to look like the rest of Latin America. This is taking a toll on the psyche of a city that has always fancied itself a First World enclave in the developing world. "We are facing a social breakdown in Argentina,

and though we are trying to cope with the problem, Buenos Aires is reflecting the national crisis," said Daniel Figueroa, the city's secretary of social services. "The middle class is slipping badly, sometimes slipping straight to the bottom. Buenos Aires has become like a boat taking on water. We are helping as many homeless as we can; but there are more and more. We keep on bailing, but the boat is sinking."

Argentina, a country of 36 million, has suddenly become the new focus of Wall Street jitters following the financial meltdown in Turkey. As a result, President Fernando de la Rúa is being pressured to cut the deficit by slashing expenses. At the same time, foreign creditors are encouraging Argentina to further embrace reforms, privatising some of the last remaining state-run institutions.

DIFFERING PERCEPTIONS

The 1991 reforms at first helped stabilise the economy, eliminating runaway inflation and generating growth spurts. They also sparked badly needed modernisation, eliminating most government dinosaurs and making utilities such as telephone and electricity service more efficient. But privatisation and the collapse of local businesses unable to compete in a global marketplace have kept unemployment above 15 per cent for almost a decade. Underemployment has hovered between 40 per cent and 50 per cent. Many here blame what they call US style

"Darwinian economics". But others contend that it is Argentina, and not the reforms, that is to blame. For some economists, the country has become a case study on how the benefits of the free market can veer off course because of corruption, weak government and a failure to overhaul labour laws and enforce tax collection on the rich. Whatever the reason, the effect on Buenos Aires has been severe.

NO JOB, NO MEDICARE

Hector Aguilera, 40, leaned on a metal cane as he limped to the back of Monteagudo homeless shelter in a downwardly mobile middle class neighbourhood. Aguilera, formerly a phone company worker, was transferred to a subcontractor in 1994, a job that did not offer health benefits.

His bone cancer was diagnosed in 1998. By then, the public health system in the city was so overwhelmed that Aguilera feared his sickness would advance, while he sat on waiting lists for treatment. He spent his \$35,000 savings on chemotherapy at a private hospital, becoming so ill during the treatment that he lost his job.

Aguilera was evicted from his three-room apartment in 1999. He moved into a boarding house, supporting himself on borrowed money and odd jobs until last year.

"I'm 40 years old and defeated," he said, "You try applying for a job in Buenos Aires these days with a bald head and a limp from cancer. You don't get very far."

(International Herald Tribune)

AMENDMENT TO PENSION SCHEME

The Government of India, following amendments to the E.P.F. Act, have also amended the Employees' Pension Scheme 1995, substituting the words "rupees six thousand five hundred" for the words "rupees five thousand", in the proviso to sub-paragraph (2) of paragraph 3, occurring at two places.

As a result of this amendment, the maximum pay-limit for the purpose of deciding the contribution to the EPS '95 has been increased from Rs.5000 to Rs.6000 per month.

By another notification, the Government of India, has also raised the pay-limit in respect of the Employees' Deposit Linked Insurance Scheme, 1976(EDLI), from Rs.5000 to Rs.6500 per month. The amendments in respect of the EPF, Act, EDLI 1976 and the EPS'95 shall come into effect from 1st June, 2001.

A mixed record for industry

R. Nagaraj

IN 1990-91, industry (manufacturing) grew by about nine per cent. This came at the end of a sustained annual growth of about eight per cent since 1980-81. Ten years later, in 2000-01, growth was barely six per cent, with the average for the decade at best seven per cent. The manufacturing sector contributes 16 per cent of GDP, employing about a tenth of the labour force. It consists of two parts: organised sector, producing two-thirds of output (value-added) by employing a fifth of industrial workers and the unorganised (informal) sector the rest. Organised industry is largely in the private corporate sector, potentially competing with imports. The unorganised sector consists of small workshops and petty production, in partnership and proprietary forms of organisation, producing labour-intensive manufactures that contribute most of India's merchandise exports.

PERVERSE STRATEGY

Though modest in size, the industrial sector has been central to India's economic policy. In the planning era, development of heavy industry was considered vital for maximising long-term economic growth, and for retaining autonomy in shaping the nation's destiny. However, this strategy was severely criticised for being highly inefficient, and for not using the abundant labour resources for growth

record was widely seen as evidence of the mistaken development path. Vijay Joshi and Ian Little, in their influential work a few years ago, sharply stated, "India's strategy... was not only micro-economically inefficient, but macro-economically perverse".

RECORD OF REFORMS

The 1991 reforms sought to address these shortcomings. Therefore, it is reasonable to ask, ten years after the reforms, whether and to what extent they have helped overcome the "inefficiencies and perversities". In 1991-92, the crisis year, the industrial growth rate expectedly fell to near zero. But, contrary to many serious apprehensions, it quickly rebounded in the next four years (1993-96). In fact, in 1995-96, organised manufacturing recorded the highest growth ever, at 15 per cent. But the momentum was soon lost in the second half of the 1990s. Overall, there is no evidence of a sustained improvement in output growth after the reforms - the record, if anything, seems poorer.

A comparison of pre (1980-91) and post (1991-00) reforms years suggests: 1) The slowdown in the growth rate after the reforms is entirely in the unorganised sector. 2) In manufacturing, growth rates of food products, rubber, metal products, electrical machinery and repair services declined, but the leather industry's

performance improved. 3) Consumer durable goods grew the fastest after the reforms, as in the previous decade, but their share in industrial output is only five per cent. 4) Capital goods industries' growth has probably remained the same, though perhaps the composition shifted towards electronics. Reportedly, machinery manufacturing has been affected badly - with the machine tool industry worst hit - as the tariffs came down sharply. 5) Contrary to popular belief, there is no improvement in the performance of the organised industry after the reforms in any major State.

INVESTMENT BOOM?

But, industrial investment boomed. Compared to the 1980s, fixed investment growth nearly doubled to about 15 per cent a year. Capital goods imports and import intensity of investment rose steeply. Domestic resources mostly financed the investment, as foreign direct investment (FDI) was modest. In any case, much of FDI probably went more into raising foreign partners' equity holding in the existing firms, and for mergers and acquisitions, than for capital formation.

However, the boom is entirely in the organised sector, with investment growth declining in unorganised manufacturing. Organised employment also expanded by about three per cent annually; but it fell in the unorganised sector, as also the

number of enterprises - at least as per one set of national estimates.

What explains these trends? Clearly, the organised sector seized the investment opportunity. Perhaps a good bit of it was defensive, to ward off the potential competition in the domestic market, under the changed policy regime. As controls on capital issues were abolished, the private corporate sector quickly raised low cost resources in the booming primary stock market in the first half of the 1990s. But, small firms and unorganised manufacturing suffered as interest rates soared, and credit availability fell with financial sector reform. Commercial banks found the risk-free option of investing in treasury bonds. Sure, the investment boom and liberal imports increased domestic competition in many industries and this has vastly improved consumer choice. Fixed investment has become more productive as, for the first time, the relative prices of capital goods have steadily fallen. With a sharp reduction in tariffs on computer hardware, India was able to seize the opportunity for software services.

EXCESS CAPACITIES

But much of the investment ended up in excess capacities, as demand remained subdued. Large investments in consumer durables - automobiles, for instance - were made on the dubious assumption of "200 million middle class consumers". Similarly, rural demand was overestimated. Investments in a capital-intensive industry such

as steel - made without adequate appraisal of technology, location, scale and the demand pattern - remained infructuous; reportedly saddling IDBI with dud loans worth Rs. 20,000 crores.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

What went wrong? The reforms assumed that it was the industrial policy - the 'license-permit raj' - that was holding up the supply response, and hence the growth. True, there was a case for reform.

But, was industrial policy the binding constraint? Probably not. Then, what determines industrial growth in an agrarian economy?

Agriculture productivity and exports, as Sir Arthur Lewis had suggested long ago. Since exports form a small part of the output in large economies, public capital expenditure plays a powerful role in augmenting agriculture productivity and relieving the infrastructure constraint. Off late, both these factors have not performed well. Agriculture output growth, in quantity terms, has reportedly slowed down in the 1990s, and public investment has declined steeply over a decade now. This makes the disappointing industrial performance understandable.

Sure, exports could have picked up some of the slack in the domestic demand. But unorganised manufacturing - the main supplier of exportables - suffered in the 1990s as investment growth fell. The software boom in the last few years provides a silver lining to India's exports. But, net of imports, they are probably more

modest. Moreover, in invisible earnings, the net export earnings of other services - such as tourism - have declined in the last five years.

WAY AHEAD

What should be done now?

Many believe the reforms have not been given a fair trial, as they were not pursued far enough. Experience suggests the outcome of reforms depend not on "how far" they have gone, but on how well they are calibrated, sequenced and executed in a non-dogmatic fashion. Contrary to popular wisdom, neo-liberal reforms and economic growth are not positively related - either in principle or in practice. Moreover, no economy ever unilaterally reduced tariffs as rapidly as India did in the 1990s. We then have to rediscover that, in the long haul, Indian industry - and the economy in general - runs on the twin engines of agriculture productivity and public investment, with exports lubricating them. Sure, there are dangers to macro-economic stability, if public spending severely damages fiscal balance. But as long as public borrowing is invested productively (not for current consumption, as we have done since the mid-1980s), there is every reason to commend such a strategy.

(The writer is Associate Professor, Indira Gandhi Institute for Development Research, Mumbai.)

(The Hindu, 17 July, 2001)

ECONOMY ON RAIL !

Steep fall in Pvt. investment

MUMBAI: Projects investment by the Indian private sector has shown an unprecedented decline in the first quarter of 2001-02. The three major industrial sectors, manufacturing, mining and electricity, recorded a negative growth. The service sector was the only one to buck this trend. The overall decline was to some extent offset by the sharp rise in projects investment by the public and foreign private sectors, according to Economic Research India Ltd, a private research agency. According to its study, the Central Government has been the major growth drivers in the economy. Projects investment by the Public sector companies has gone up by 14 per cent during the first quarter compared to 4.4 per cent during the preceding period. The share of public sector investments in the overall investments has increased to 55 per cent during the quarter from 50 per cent in the preceding quarter.

Projects investment by the private sector has showed a negative growth. The total investment by private Indian sector dipped by 12 per cent, indicating an unwillingness to take on exposure to new projects. The service sector was the only sector to buck the trend. In contrast to the decline witnessed in the manufacturing, mining and electricity sectors, the outstanding projects investment in the service sector witnessed a 14.6 per cent growth, over the 21.7 per cent growth witnessed in the preceding period.

Contrary to general belief the foreign private sector has been more aggressive than its Indian counterpart. Additional commitment of Rs 27,000 crore were made during the quarter, the agency said in a release. The study covered 6,065 live projects entailing an aggregate investment of Rs 16,30,350 crore, the release added.

(Businessline, 19 July, 2001)

Coal confusion

The recommendation of the Expenditure Reforms Commission that Coal India Ltd should be wound up in three stages over two years appears to have been made in haste. This is not to suggest that structural changes in the public sector coal set-up, compatible with the reforms regime, should not be brought about.

Given the industry's geographical spread, coal's share of over 60 per cent in the total commercial energy consumption and the 88 per cent share that CIL has in the total production, any attempt to implement ERC's recommendation within just two years, without putting in place sound alternative arrangements, is bound to have a destabilising effect on the existing supply arrangements. A study needs to be undertaken in the light of the experience of running the public sector coal industry in the last 30 years since the two-phase nationalisation in the early 1970s.

What is the situation like now? Three of CIL's seven production subsidiaries — Eastern Coalfields Ltd, Central Coalfields Ltd and Bharat Coking Coal Ltd which together have a workforce of over 200,000 — are in a financial mess. Of the three again, the condition of ECL and BCCL is critical. New Delhi's attempts to open a parallel production front involving the private sector have so far drawn a blank; the only exception being the handful of small mines that have come up as captive coal sources for a few thermal power stations. Also, so far there has been no taker for the provision of foreign equity under FEMA 1999 in this sector, including setting up of coal processing facilities, either under the RBI's automatic route or via the FIPB. With seven production subsidiaries and one for mine planning and design, a high degree of coordination is a must in all spheres; be it production, foreign

HEADING WHERE ?

collaboration, import of capital-intensive equipment, external funding or raising resources internally. Without CIL as the holding company, the production subsidiaries will be competing with one another in areas where CIL is much better placed for bargain. In land acquisition, compensation for land and employment for land-losers, an integrated approach in dealing with the State governments is best made by a body like CIL.

As is evident, the holding company concept in the case of CIL is different from the one for Steel Authority of India Ltd, or for that matter, National Thermal Power Corporation or Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd, which operate on the division concept. CIL's subsidiaries have regular boards with representatives also of the Railways and respective State governments. Which means there are in-built arrangements to allow considerable autonomy to the subsidiaries. In recent years, with the Centre relaxing its control on the coal sector, CIL subsidiaries have, as a

result, earned more autonomy. The ERC has not cared to list the benefits that would accrue to the cross-section of coal consuming industries when CIL is wound up; nor has it quantified the consequential saving in costs.

If despite the failure of the limited privatisation policy the country has not seen a shortage of coal, it is because independent power producers are yet to emerge to the extent envisaged by the planners. The power sector accounts for 70 per cent of the total domestic coal consumption. Ideally, therefore, New Delhi should ask one of the Indian Institutes of Management to study the coal set-up and recommend a viable organisational structure that would hold good even when the private sector is a reality in coal. And, meanwhile, all-out efforts must be made to bring back on rails ECL, CCL and BCCL which meet the coal requirements of a large number of industrial consumers. Neither the Centre nor CIL can escape this responsibility.

(Businessline, 19 July, 2001)

The undoing of the economy

A leading news magazine recently announced, after a detailed investigation, that in 1999-2000 a million people in the organised sector of the economy had lost their jobs because of systematic downsizing, presumably through the voluntary retirement route. Only days after it hit the news stands, the Unit Trust of India 'suspended' repurchasing its extremely popular US-64 units for six months. A few days earlier, the Central Statistical Organisation had released 'quick' estimates indicating that the GDP growth in 2000-01 had not been 6 per cent but 5.2 per cent. Its preliminary data also showed that industrial production had grown by only 2.7 per cent in April. Finally, on July 2, the weekly inflation data showed that inflation year-on-year had declined marginally to just over 5 per cent.

Each of these statistics tells, in its own bloodless way, a story of onrushing catastrophe. The loss of jobs so far has been caused by a prolonged

industrial recession that began in November 1996 and is still deepening. This squeezed profits and made managers desperate to find a way of shoring them up. Downsizing was one answer. But that loss of jobs took place within a protected economy. Since April 1, India is no longer a protected economy. And every single indicator in the news points to a massive acceleration in the loss of jobs in the near future, as India gets swamped by Chinese and Southeast Asian goods that are both cheaper and better in quality than anything that our undersized and overprotected consumer goods industry produces.

... while total imports actually shrank in April, the first month of WTO/GATT import liberalisation, the increase of 'other' imports, a once residual category that contains all consumer goods bought on private account, went up by 332 per cent in that one month alone!

(Prem Shankar Jha in 'The Hindu', 17 July, 2001)

WE ARE ON THE SAME BOAT

Chittabrata Majumdar

Recently, I had the opportunity to meet a number of Trade Union leaders from various countries around the world, who assembled in Athens, Greece in connection with an international meeting. During discussion with them it transpired that the impact of imperialist globalisation on the people in general and the working class in particular is almost the same everywhere around the world. From developed countries to the developing countries, everywhere the process of de-nationalisation of industries and services, closure of domestic industries, drastic cut in work force, increase of unemployment and poverty, price rise etc. are predominant. The situation in developing countries is worse. Liberalisation of import has created havoc in most of the developing countries and has turned those countries towards de-industrialisation. In some regions of some developing countries, the unemployment is as high as 70 percent.

ATTACKS ON TUs

Everywhere the trade union rights are being attacked. Withdrawal of existing facilities is common feature everywhere. In many countries, feature of wage cut, casualisation and contractualisation of permanent job with fewer wages and without social benefits etc. are predominant. Labour laws are being changed in favour of the employers. Nationally everywhere the leadership of the Government-sponsored trade unions are creating problem in conducting genuine struggles of the working class.

The situation in the erstwhile socialist countries in Europe is more deplorable. With the return to capitalism, the central planning has gone. With a ban on political activity in public enterprises and organisations as well as other limitations, persecution and discrimination against Communist parties are going on. Workers are not retrenched, but keeping the permanent workers idle, the casual and contract labour is doing the work at a much lower wages. New government sponsored TUs are coming up to divert the working class from right direction.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES

On the other hand popular reactions both nationally and internationally to all these adverse impacts on the people and mobilisation against the policies of the imperialist governments and monopoly capital through international organisations like IMF, World Bank and WTO are developing fast. All are of the opinion that new opportunities have been opened up by these demonstrations for the class forces in the labour and the trade union movement to develop and strengthened further. Need to co-ordinate the struggle of the trade union movements against capitalist restructuring and the offensive against labour rights, the fight against the international monopolies and the onslaught against working people were stressed by every one.

The situation is to some extent different in the Socialist countries. Representative from Cuba informed that 2 million Workers' Council were involved in the decision making process. They discuss in the given situation what policy they should follow to achieve maximum benefit at minimum cost. The Government is implementing those policies to protect the national interest of Cuba.

IN GREECE...

I had the opportunity to have some detailed discussion with some of the trade union leaders in Greece. According to them, in the name of fighting the US attack, the European Union is implementing the same anti people and anti working class policies as is being dictated by the World Bank and IMF. As a result of which the unemployment in Greece is developing fast. Employment has been reduced by 20%. Many small businesses have also closed down. Export of agricultural product from Greece has been reduced by the EU, as a result of which the peasants are facing crisis. Rights of the working class are also under attack by the Government. Workers are being forced to work at lower wages. Withdrawal of social security measures also is in the agenda of the Government. The Government

is proposing ban on demonstration by the workers. Discontents among the workers are increasing, but the Government influence is still powerful in Greece. Even then, the struggles are developing. They expressed their desire to establish more fraternal relations with CITU.

During my return from Greece, I visited Cyprus for a day. The Pancyprian Federation of Labour (PEO) extended me local hospitality there. There was a meeting in the evening of 26th June at Larnaca with the leadership of PEO. Comrade Chrystalla Tsoutsouki, Secretary for International Relations and Christos Alekou, Central Organising Secretary of PEO, and Com. Fanis Christodoulou of AKEL was in the meeting. We discussed at length about the situation in both the countries and the struggles of the working people. Tourism is the major industry in Cyprus. Sea and sun is the major attraction for the tourists. But, this industry also is not crisis free.

COMMON UNDERSTANDINGS

Considering the volume, population, vastness of Industries, etc. both the countries can not be

compared. Despite difference in some respects, there is commonness in the understanding of the situation and approach towards struggles of the working class. This has provided the scope for further strengthening of relations between CITU and PEO. They are also interested to know more about us through mutual exchanges. They expressed their desire for another visit of longer duration.

In this connection, it may be mentioned that they have many political problems in Cyprus. But, being all along with the people, AKEL of Cyprus (Communist Party of Cyprus) has become the first party in the recently held Parliamentary election. They secured 34.7% of votes. Despite support from media, the Rightists have been reduced to the second position. Cyprus has the presidential form of Government. AKEL is now preparing for the election of Local Administration, to be held in the next year and for the presidential election, to be held two years later. PEO is also organising the working class in support of a Left Administration in Cyprus.

RESIST JETTISONING OF LABOUR LAWS

V.R.Krishna Iyer

The world is whirling forward holding the standard of advance as industrialisation. Industry, be it in the public, private or joint sector, involves employer and employee, and progress postulates harmony and justice in industrial relations. Whether the system is capitalist or socialist or other, if friction and break-down affect the smooth working of the industry, flames of strike or lock-out will spoil or stall production and victimise society, which is the ultimate beneficiary of satisfactory industrial discipline and consequent flow of goods and services. These are basics but legal problems arise, where a clash or brush breaks out, the management takes disciplinary action against workers or the workers go on lightning strike and paralysis in the factory creates a crisis. The function of the law is to intervene and, by a justice process, resolve the dispute. "Hire and fire" is not our jurisprudence. Even so, lawlessness is anathema.

Industrial law is rapidly (though wrongly) under mutation. The sound system we have will soon be surrendered when foreign corporations fall foul on them. MNCs are allergic to industrial justice. Gargantuan institutions, hungry for huge profits, find human justice anathematic impediments. The Indian rulers these days are often ruled by corporate power from abroad and sacrifice socio-economic justice of the Indian working class to tempt the appetite of trans-national big business. When our laws regulating labour and its rights are jettisoned, as part of the package inviting powerful corporates, the people of India, judges, jurists and lawyers must resist the operation.

Therefore, it is the task of Indian labour to begin the struggle against operation industrial injustice. Labour law apart, we cannot consent to the dollarophilic chaos in the Indian cosmos - a proposition which applies to "Swaraj jurisprudence" as a whole.

(Reviewing a book on Industrial Discipline and Natural Justice by D.V.S.R.Prabhakara Rao, in 'The Hindu', 10 July, 2001.)

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JOINT TU CONVENTIONS IN THE STATES

(All the Central Trade Unions jointly decided to hold State level united conventions during June- July 2001, as a preparatory programme for the joint countrywide demonstration on 24th July and for the forthcoming countrywide joint strike action against the disastrous economic policies of the Govt. of India. Accordingly several conventions have been held in many States. These conventions have drawn all the Central trade unions in the country, on a common platform of opposition to the anti-national policies of the Govt. They have also drawn various independent industrial federations and State level trade unions on the platform of united struggle, thus symbolising the all-in unity of the working class. All these conventions endorsed the five major issues of struggle against economic policy, jointly identified by the central trade unions. They also endorsed wholeheartedly the clarion call for preparing for countrywide strike action. The participation by the mass of the common workers in these State level conventions also reflected the enthusiasm at the grass root level generated by the united stance by all the central trade unions against the so called economic reforms. Hereunder we give the State-wise reports received. - Editor)

Himachal Pradesh

The convention was held on 30th June 2001 at Shimla and was attended by about 300 workers. The State units of INTUC, AITUC and CITU organised the convention. The convention was addressed by Tapan Sen, Secretary, CITU, Kashmir Singh Thakur and Rakesh Singha, General Secretary and President of Himachal State CITU, besides the leaders of AITUC, INTUC, Bank, Insurance and other employees organisations. The leaders of SFI and DYFI also addressed the convention. The convention decided to hold joint district level rallies on 24th July and endorsed, amidst loud cheers, the call for countrywide strike action in the coming future. After the convention, a procession of workers moved round the town shouting slogans against the policies of the State and Central Govt.

Rajasthan

The convention was held on 1st July at Jaipur. All the central trade unions, including INTUC and BMS, joined the convention. Delegates came from all the districts of the State. S Devroye, Secretary, CITU, Ravindra Shukla, B.L.Bafna, Harilal Sharma (Rajsthan CITU), D.K.Changani (AITUC), Ojha (HMS), Babu Lal Sharma, Shyam Lal Mathur (INTUC), Shyam Sunder Sharma (BMS) and other leaders addressed the convention. The

convention endorsed the call for preparation for countrywide strike and demonstration before Parliament on 24th July.

Kerala

The joint trade union convention held at Kochi on July 3, 2001 called for a strong united action against the anti-people economic policies of the BJP-led Government at the Centre. Several central trade unions and State Govt. and other service organisations, cutting across political affiliations, attended the convention.

The convention was inaugurated by M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU.

The convention formed a 17-member committee comprising 12 central trade unions and other independent trade union organisations to conduct the agitational programmes. As a part of the workers rally to be held on July 23 at New Delhi, massive rallies will be held at district centres in the State. The convention condemned reckless privatisation drive by the Central Government and the move to amend the labour laws. The convention urged the working class to resist all these attempts by all means.

The convention also decided to hold district level conventions. The convention was participated by AITUC, BMS, CITU, HMS, INTUC, INLC, NLO, UTUC, UTUC (LS) and other State and Central Govt. service

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organisations. K N Ravindranath and P K Gurudasan, President and General Secretary of the Kerala State represented the CITU.

Delhi

The convention was held on 4th July at Pyarelal Bhawan, where more than five hundred workers' and leaders from various trade unions were present. The convention was conducted by a presidium consisting of S.B. Bhadraraj (CITU), M.S. Gope (AITUC), B.K. Jaggi (BMS), Harbhajan Singh (HMS), N.S. Thomas (AICCTU), Jasbir Singh (UTUC-LS), M.K. Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, Y.D. Sharma (AITUC), Rajendra Singh (BMS), A.D. Nagpal (HMS), Swapan Mukherjee (AICCTU), Satyaban (UTUC-LS), Shibgopal Mishra (AIRF) Amitabha Mukherjee (BEFI) and S.K. Neogi (BPMS) addressed the convention. The convention unanimously passed the resolution calling for demonstrations before the Parliament on 24th July, in preparation of the countrywide strike action in the coming days.

Uttaranchal

The convention, sponsored by AITUC, INTUC, CITU and BMS besides other independent organisations of Bank, Insurance and Defence sector employees, was held on 6th July at Dehradun. Around 200 delegates from various trade unions attended. The convention was addressed by Tapan Sen, Secretary, CITU, besides leaders from the other central trade unions, from

Defence employees federation, transport, bank, insurance, water supply and other sectors. The convention welcomed the call for demonstration before the Parliament on 24th July and also the countrywide strike action to be announced by the central leaders in the coming days. The convention also extended support to the two days strike action by the defence sector employees on 23-24 July and also the strike call by the Central and State Govt Employees organisations on 25th July. The convention further decided to hold State level action programmes jointly against the anti-people policies of the State Govt. Virendra Bhandari, General Secretary, Uttaranchal State CITU, conducted the proceeding of the convention.

West Bengal

The convention was held on 6th July at the Netaji Indoor Stadium at Calcutta, participated by several thousands representatives drawn from various trade unions and federations. The convention was sponsored by the central trade unions viz., CITU, AITUC, INTUC, BMS, HMS, UTUC, UTUC-LS, TUCC, AICCTU, NFITU. Various independent trade union federations in industrial and service sector, all India federations of the Central and State Govt. employees, bank, insurance, defence, telecom and other sectors joined the convention in a big way. The deliberations of the convention was conducted by a presidium comprising Shanti

Ghatak (CITU), Nandadulal Shrimani (AITUC), Shankar Saha (UTUC-LS), Milan Chowdhury (INTUC), Ashok Ghosh (UTUC), Nabarun Chakraborty, Shailen Dey, Ashok Dutta, Shanti Bhattacharya and Sudarshan Basu.

The main resolution welcoming the call for the demonstration before Parliament on 24th July and countrywide strike in the coming months, against the anti-national economic policies of the Govt. of India, was placed by Chittabrata Mazumder, General Secretary, West Bengal State CITU.

M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, while addressing the convention, called for widening the unity further at the grassroots level for a militant united struggle against the disastrous policies. Others who addressed the convention were Lalbahadur Singh (INTUC), Gurudas Dasgupta (AITUC), Samir Roy (HMS), Saral Dev (TUCC), Upendra Singh (AICCTU) Tarakeshwar Chakraborty (AIBEA), Ashutosh Banerjee (UTUC-LS), Chunilal Dasgupta (12th July Committee) and Samir Mustafi (Mercantile Federation). The convention also extended support to Defence Employees' Strike on 23-24 July and the strike of the Central State Govt. employees on 25th July. It also decided to hold demonstration in all district headquarters and industrial centres in the State on 24th July.

Haryana

The convention, held on 8th July

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at Panipat, was conducted by a presidium comprising the representatives from BMS, INTUC, AITUC, CITU, HMS and UTUC-LS. S.N. Solanki, President, Haryana State CITU was in the Presidium. The Convention was addressed by Tapan Sen, Secretary CITU, D.L. Sachadeva, Secretary, AITUC, and Satveer Singh, General Secretary, Haryana State CITU among others. The convention was attended by over 500 delegates from all over the State and unanimously decided to make the countrywide strike a total success in Haryana, whenever the call comes from the national centres. The convention also decided to organise joint trade union action in the State against the anti-people policies and repressive measures of the State Govt.

Madhya Pradesh

The convention was held on 8th July at Bhopal, which was joined by all the central trade unions in

the State, including BMS and INTUC. Around 600 delegates attended the convention, which unanimously welcomed the call for countrywide strike action against the anti-national policies of the Govt. in the coming days. P.K. Ganguly, Secretary, CITU, addressed the convention.

Tamilnadu

Trade unions in Tamilnadu are preparing for the National Strike action. The Campaigns had begun from 1st July.

A state level convention was held in Chennai, on 14th July, in which all the central Trade unions and many of the State Level TUs participated.

Nearly 1000 representatives attended the convention, which was addressed by leaders of CITU, AITUC, BMS, INTUC, HMS, AICTU, UTUC(LS), NLO, TNTUC and MLF. The General Secretary of ATP, the T.U wing of AIADMK could not attend the convention but is a

signatory to the joint statement. Thus, it was an all TU convention, except LPF, the TU wing of DMK. All the speakers, including P.K. Ganguly, Secretary, CITU, S.S. Thiagrajan, General Secretary, AITUC State Council, N.M. Sugmaran, BMS, criticised the economic policies of the Central Govt and called for united actions in the State, as called upon by the National Trade Unions.

A resolution adopted in the convention called for continuance of the campaign, rallies and demonstrations in all district centres on 24th July. The resolution called upon all the trade unions and workers to make the national level strike a great success.

Representatives of Industrial Federations of Insurance, Banks, Defence and other employees also attended the convention.

The successful convention has given a fillip to the preparation for the national level movement in the



Joint TU Convention at Calcutta

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State.

Meanwhile, defence employees and the Central and State Govt. employees are also preparing for their strikes with conventions, seminars and meetings. Preparations are also going on in all the districts and in Pondichery for the rallies on 24th July. Preparatory meetings with the representatives of various unions have been held in all the districts.

Karnataka

The convention was held on 12th July at Bangalore. Around 1200 delegates from the unions affiliated to CITU, AITUC, BMS, HMS, HMKP, INTUC, TUCC, UTUC-LS, besides many independent unions and the unions of bank, insurance, central and State Govt. employees attended the convention. All in unity of the trade union movement reflected in the convention created great enthusiasm among the workers and delegates. MK Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU, addressing the convention, called for consolidation of the unity in the

trade union movement at the grass root level. This would make our struggle more powerful and stronger against the Govt. attacks on the country's economy and the working class. Sheshadri (BMS), H. Mahadevan (AITUC), Chandrasekhar (INTUC), V.J.K. Nair (CITU), H.V. Ananthasubbarao (AITUC), Michael Fernandes (HMKP) and G.R. Shivshankar (TUCC), among others, addressed the convention. The convention was conducted by a presidium consisting of S Suryanarayana Rao (CITU), M.C. Naraimhan (AITUC), P.S. Chandrasekhar (INTUC), H.M. Harish (HMS), G.R. Shivsankar (TUCC), Michael Fernandes (HMKP), R.N. Godbole (PWTUC) and K. Somsekharan (UTUC-LS).

The convention unanimously adopted a declaration to hold joint protest rallies in all districts on 24th July and get ready for the all India general strike.

Maharashtra

The convention was held on 14th

July at Mumbai. M K Pandhe, General Secretary, CITU addressed the convention, along with the leaders of various trade unions of Maharashtra.

Orissa

The convention was held on 15th July at Bhubaneswar. All the central Trade unions in the State, viz., AITUC, INTUC, CITU, HMS, BMS, UTUC and AICCTU sponsored the convention, and also the federations of Bank, insurance and other sectors. The convention was addressed by RC Khuntia, Sarat Mohanty (INTUC), DP Nayak, D Panda (AITUC), Shivaji Patnaik, Bishnu Mohanty (CITU), KC Pant, P Mishra (BMS), J Tripathy, RK Samantrai (HMS), K Maharana, R Das (UTUC) and K Biswal, J Mahapatra (AICCTU). The convention welcomed the initiative for united countrywide movement against the retrograde economic policies including strike action and also decided to hold joint demonstration in all the districts and industrial centres on 24.7. 2001.

MARCH TO PARLIAMENT BY BEEDI WORKERS

All the Central Trade Unions in two joint meetings held at the CITU Central Office on 4th June and 10th July unanimously decided to organize a Joint March to Parliament by the Beedi Workers of the country on 27th November, 2001 during the Winter Session of Parliament. A new chapter of united struggle was thus

opened in the Beedi industry to mobilise all the Beedi workers from all parts of the country organized under different trade unions to press for their demands. The two meetings were attended by the representatives of AITUC, CITU, HMS, AICCTU, UTUC, TUCC and UTUC (LS). Although INTUC and BMS could not attend

the meetings, they have agreed to join the programme.

There are about 60 lakhs of Beedi workers in the country, who are fleeced by the monopoly Beedi manufacturers through contractual system and home based work, forcing their families to live under perpetual poverty. There is no uniform minimum wage in the

REPORTS & EVENTS

country, which varies from State to State. Social security measures are denied except in the left dominated States of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. Only a small percentage of them 'get Identity Cards, that too in the name of the husband, while the women workers are in overwhelming majority in the industry.

Over and above, the policy of liberalization, privatization and globalization has hit hard the Beedi industry. The Government has allowed the giant multinational Cigarette companies to manufacture mini-cigarettes, reducing the excise duty thereon, and also increased the excise duty on Beedi. With consequent lower prices of such mini-cigarettes, the MNCs have captured a considerable part of the Beedi market in India. Moreover, the

USA has stopped export of various brands of Beedi by India like Dinesh Beedi, Ganesh Beedi, Shakti Beedi, Azad Beedi etc. The Government has also allowed the USA to import their Beedis to India, as well as Beedi rolling machines. Further, the Government is inviting 100 per cent FDI by the giant MNC Cigarette manufactures to India, with excise duty exemptions in the name of developing the under-developed regions like Assam, Tripura, etc. In addition to all these, the Bill on Cigarette and other Tobacco Products with restriction in production, trade, smoking, etc is likely to hit employment in the long run in the industry.

The trade unions discussed the entire gamut of the problems and decided that the massive force of the Beedi workers in the country

must unitedly rally before Parliament to raise their demands in one voice. The trade unions concretised eight demands. Which included national minimum wage, social security measures and labour laws, abolition of contract system, issuance of Identity cards, amendment of the Beedi & Cigar Act, withdrawal of all concessions given to the MNCs etc.

In preparation to the success of the March of Parliament programme, joint conventions, rallies, etc will be held in all Beedi producing States. The All India Beedi Workers Federation (CITU) in its meetings of the office bearers and the Working Committee endorsed the programme and launched preparatory organisational work for the success of the programme.

SURVEY ON HOME BASED & EPZ WOMEN WORKERS

"The responsibility of the comrades who have attended this meeting has increased and we have a busy schedule ahead for the next three months to carry out all the tasks decided in this meeting" said Malathi Chittibabu concluding the meeting of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women [CITU]. She was presiding over the meeting held on 12-13 July 2001 at BTR Bhawan, the Central Office of CITU in Delhi.

The representatives from the 8

States- Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa, Tamilnadu, Tripura and West Bengal and Kanai Bannerjee, Secretary, CITU who participated in the meeting agreed.

Hemalata, Secretary, AICCWW, presented the report of activities. She told that the BJP led NDA Government was going ahead with its policies of privatisation and liberalisation and increasingly succumbing to imperialist pressures. The opposition to these policies is also mounting. Various

sections of the workers are coming in to joint struggles. The State Government and Central Government employees have decided to go on a one day token strike against privatisation and downsizing, on the 25th of July. The Central trade unions were also planning a nation wide strike. She told that it is the responsibility of the coordination committee members to take initiative to mobilise larger number of working women in to these struggles.

The discussions that followed

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revealed that the campaign on the four major issues of working women- equal wages, maternity benefit, sexual harassment and night work was conducted in a few States. In Andhra Pradesh, the campaign was conducted through surveys, distribution of leaflets, group meetings, round table meetings, and conventions in some districts. In Kerala, conventions were held in almost all the districts and dharnas in some of them. In West Bengal, the campaign was integrated with the election campaign. In Tripura, meetings were held in all the blocks.

Meetings were held on Vimal di's Birth Anniversary to focus on the impact of globalisation on the working women in the informal sector.

The meeting discussed at length the issues of Home Based Workers. Introducing the subject, Hemalata told that home based work has increased with the liberalisation and globalisation policies. Even multinational corporations were outsourcing work to home based workers. Majority of them were women. They had no organisation or any legal protection. Very often, the employers or the contractors show on records that they were selling the raw materials to the workers and were buying the product from them, thereby masking the real employer- employee relationship. As they are usually paid by piece rate, the family members, including small children are also made to help the women; thus, the entire family

is exploited. Hemalata told that in order to organise them, it is first necessary to understand their issues, as they perceive them. It is difficult to organise the home based workers because of their scattered nature and lack of job security. But CITU must face this challenge to fulfil its efforts to unite all the workers to oppose the anti working class policies. A preliminary survey would help in identifying their problems, so that proper strategies could be worked out to organise them.

The committee also discussed the conditions of the workers in the Export Processing Zones. Though CITU had affiliated unions in five out of the 7 zones in the country, there was no coordination. In Madras and NOIDA EPZs, several struggles were conducted in which large number of women participated in spite of the oppression and victimisation by the managements. Unions exist in Santa Cruz, Cochin and Visakhapatnam Zones also. It was felt that better coordination is required to develop a nationwide movement of the EPZ workers. It was decided to start with a survey among the workers.

Model survey forms were given for both the surveys.

The Committee also had a separate and detailed discussion on the Voice of the Working Woman. The quality, circulation and the financial aspects were discussed. The Committee opined that it is necessary to bring it as a monthly. Following decisions were taken by

the committee:

- * Complete State level conventions on the problems of working women by the end of September
- * Conduct survey among home based women workers in August-September
- * Conduct survey among EPZ workers in September
- * Translate and print "Jayati Ghosh's Vimal Ranadive memorial lecture on "Impact of Globalisation in Working Women in the Informal Sector."
- * Increase subscription of "The Voice" and help it financially by collecting advertisements. Subscription campaign to be conducted in October.
- * Wide campaign among all sections of working women, through group meetings, leaflets, etc to mobilise them to join the All India Strike by the Central Trade Unions (the date of which will be announced later).

Setting Right the TUR...

Cont. from page 9

The TUR definitely has the right to comment on anything but comments should desirably be based on facts and not on predetermined conclusion.

When we are engaged in a grim battle against globalisation and privatisation all over the country the time is that we should strengthen the unity of the working class.

We only hope that the AITUC will ponder over these issues and come forward to strengthen the unity of the working class.

ANGANWADI FEDERATION PLANS CAMPAIGN

The Working Committee of the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers met on 14 July 2001 at B T Ranadive Bhawan, New Delhi. Neelima Maitra presided, Kanai Banerjee, Secretary CITU attended the meeting.

Hemalata, General Secretary of the federation, presented the report of activities and proposed the tasks for the next few months. She told that the liberalisation and privatisation policies were affecting the ICDS Scheme and the anganwadi employees. Many State Governments were not supplying the supplementary nutrition regularly. The honorarium also was being diverted. In Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, etc honorarium was not paid regularly. Anganwadi centres were being closed on flimsy grounds. The Finance Ministry has not given its approval to start the new projects sanctioned way back in 1995. The Central Government is promoting Take Home Ration System, which

will ultimately lead to closure of the centres. In spite of the assurances given by the Women and Child Development Minister Smt Sumitra Mahajan, many states like Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana etc have decided to hand over the centres to the Panchayat. The Unions in the State are actively opposing these measures. The Himachal union launched intense struggles and was able to stop the attempts of the State Govt to hand over the centres to the panchayats. In Punjab, the union has been continuously launching struggles in the last 3-4 months for the reinstatement of the anganwadi employees arbitrarily dismissed from service by the State Government. The State Government has targeted the activists of the union for victimisation. The Working Committee noted with concern that the BJP led NDA Government has not increased the honorarium even by one rupee in the last more than 4 years, while the prices of all the

essential commodities have skyrocketed. The following tasks were taken by the committee:

- * Send telegrams to the Chief Minister of Punjab demanding reinstatement of the illegally dismissed anganwadi employees and stop victimisation.

- * Mass signature collection on a memorandum to the Prime Minister, in September-October

- * Translate, print and widely distribute the booklet "Save ICDS" on the impact of the Government's policies on ICDS and the anganwadi employees. Mobilise community support to the demands of the anganwadi employees.

- * Wide campaign for the All India Strike by Central Trade Unions. All the Anganwadi employees to join the strike and participate in processions, rallies, dharnas, etc on the day (the date to be decided by the Central TUs).

- * Trade Union class for Hindi states in September

- * Workshop on organisation in November.

CONVENTION AGAINST PRIVATISATION OF COAL MINES

14th July 2001, a joint trade union convention was held at Dhanbad against the retrograde move of the Govt to privatise the coalmine sector. Around 500 delegates took part in the convention and the convention was sponsored by the coal workers' unions affiliated to

INTUC, AITUC, CITU, HMS and UTUC-LS. Workers associated with other trade unions also joined the convention in good numbers. The convention was conducted by a presidium consisting of Rajendra Prasad Singh (INTUC), S.N. Upadhyay (AITUC), Anit Prasad

(HMS), A.K. Roy (CITU), K.P. Singh (UTUC-LS) and J.N. Singh Dharampuri (Janta Mazdoor Sangh). The leaders from various unions including S.K. Bakshi, Secretary, CITU, addressed the convention. The convention condemned the move of the Govt.

to amend the Coal Mines Nationalisation Act, to facilitate privatisation of coal mines and called upon the coal workers,

irrespective of affiliations, to build up militant struggle against such retrograde move. The convention decided to hold massive

demonstrations before Koyla Bhawan, the BCCL headquarters at Dhanbad on 24th July.

UNORGANISED SECTOR COORDINATION COMMITTEE

A meeting of the All India Coordination Committee of unorganised sector was held at Chennai on 14th July 2001. The meeting was attended by twelve leaders from Tamilnadu, Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Tripura, Orissa and P.K. Ganguly, Secretary, CITU. He gave a report of the overall organisational position in the unorganized sector in the light of the report discussed

at the Chennai General Council meeting of CITU in 1998. Each State representative placed reports including movements launched in different sectors in the unorganized sector.

It was noted that State level Coordination Committees in Unorganized Sector were functioning in W. Bengal, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Delhi, Rajasthan, MP, UP, Uttaranchal,

Mahrashtra and Karnataka. State level organisational workshops in unorganized sector were also held in Rajasthan, UP and Uttaranchal. In Maharashtra it is to be held on 17th July. MP also decided to hold it shortly.

The Committee decided to meet again at Bangalore during the CITU Working Committee meeting and decide for an all India Convention.

MARCH TO RAJ BHAWAN BY HANDLOOM WORKERS

The Handloom Sub-Committee of the All India Coordination Committee of Textile Workers, formed at the All India Convention of Handloom Workers held at Calcutta on 27th and 28th July, 2000, met at Chennai on 15th July, 2001.

The meeting was presided over by A.K. Padmanabhan and attended by fourteen leaders from W. Bengal, Taminadu, Andhra

Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Tripura and Orussa. P.K. Ganguly, Secretary, CITU, attended the meeting.

From the reports placed by the States, it was noted that the action plans taken in the Calcutta Convention were by and large implemented successfully in all the attending States, including the All India Protest Day on 21st August last, and other campaigns to

popularise the 12-point Charter of Demands formulated at the Calcutta Convention. As decided by the Calcutta Convention also decided that after reviewing the implementation of the programmes, the meeting decided to hold the March to Raj Bhawan programme on 10th October, 2001 in all the handloom producing States in the country.

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Consumer Price Index Numbers for Industrial Workers on base: 1982 = 100

Sr. No	Centre	Mar 2001	Apr. 2001	May 2001	Sr. No.	Centre	Mar 2001	Apr. 2001	May 2001
1	Gudur	436	426	435	45	Amritsar	395	400	399
2	Guntur	423	426	425	46	Ludhiana	399	405	405
3	Hyderabad	426	427	437	47	Ajmer	441	447	450
4	Visakhapatnam	439	436	437	48	Jaipur	414	415	414
5	Warangal	446	449	456	49	Chennai	470	472	479
6	D D Tinsukia	376	388	386	50	Coimbatore	432	436	437
7	Guwahati	457	468	470	51	Coonoor	429	430	441
8	Labac-Silchar	367	370	371	52	Madurai	441	443	449
9	Mariani Jorhat	409	409	407	53	Salem	431	428	436
10	Rangapara-Tezpur	403	419	419	54	Tiruchirapally	464	462	464
11	Monghyr Jamalpur	409	415	403	55	Agra	408	416	417
12	Bhilai	395	397	406	56	Ghaziabad	462	465	468
13	Kodarma	365	364	365	57	Kanpur	440	442	443
14	Jharia	359	363	362	58	Saharanpur	406	410	416
15	Noamundi	405	404	408	59	Varanasi	466	470	474
16	Ranchi-Hatia	418	417	420	60	Asansol	407	413	418
17	Ahmedabad	447	452	457	61	Kolkata	461	465	465
18	Bhavnagar	467	473	486	62	Darjeeling	380	383	385
19	Rajkot	418	427	430	63	Durgapur	486	491	498
20	Surat	458	465	471	64	Haldia	491	491	490
21	Vadodra	436	442	451	65	Howrah	501	509	507
22	Faridabad	455	463	468	66	Jalpaiguri	395	402	404
23	Yamunanagar	420	422	425	67	Raniganj	384	390	392
24	Srinagar	498	495	497	68	Chandigarh	474	481	484
25	Bangalore	429	433	432	69	Delhi	518	526	527
26	Belgaum	465	469	477	70	Pondicherry	473	464	468
27	Hubli-Dharwar	441	442	448					
28	Mercara	451	450	452	All India 445 448 451				
29	Alwaye	448	449	456	Additional Series of Labour Bureau				
30	Mundakayam	448	445	449					
31	Quilon	463	448	445	1	Kothagudem	442	446	457
32	Thiruvananthapu	503	503	496	2	Himachal Pradesh	443	446	446
33	Balaghat	395	397	405	3	Bhilwara	457	459	457
34	Jamshedpur	414	415	416	4	Chhindwara	419	422	423
35	Bhopal	468	470	475	5	Tripura	403	420	430
36	Indore	455	468	469	6	Goa	541	546	550
37	Jabalpur	446	446	450					
38	Mumbai	517	521	524					
39	Nagpur	467	476	478					
40	Nasik	489	488	494					
41	Pune	504	507	514					
42	Solapur	457	458	461					
43	Barbil	402	406	412					
44	Rourkela	411	402	405					
Government of India Ministry of Labour Labour Bureau Shimla - 171 004									

MAHARASHTRA WORKSHOP ON UNORGANISED SECTOR

The Maharashtra State Committee of CITU organised a State level organisational workshop on Unorganised Sector at Pune on July 17.

The workshop was participated by 54 activists and leaders from various sectors in the Unorganised Sector like Powerloom, Beedi, Contract, Casual, Anganwadi, Ginning, Spinning, Hotel & Restaurant, Auto Rickshaw, etc. The State and District CITU leaders who participated in the workshop were K L Bajaj, General Secretary, Vivek Monteiro and P.R. Krishnan, Secretaries, Sadashiv Bhatt, Satish Chawan and Vasant Pawar. P.K. Ganguly, Secretary, CITU was present from the Centre.

After introduction by Vivek Monteiro, P.K. Ganguly outlined the objective of the workshop. He emphasised taking up the various manufacturing industries in the unorganised sector in the State on priority basis, followed by other sections in the vast unorganised sector. He referred to the report of the Chennai General Council Meeting on unorganised sector and urged for its proper implementation.

The workshop was then divided into four groups, viz, Powerloom, Beedi, Anganwadi and the rest like Contract, Casual workers, etc. The groups discussed various issues focusing mainly on organisational issues and the vital demands of the workers in each sector and movement. Datta Mane

(Powerloom), M.H. Sheikh (Beedi), Kiran Moghe (Anganwadi) and Anna Samant (Rest) presented the report of group discussions.

After discussions, the workshop recommended the following tasks:

1) The State Coordination Committee should meet regularly and report to the State Committee and to the centre.

2) The State Committee of CITU should put unorganized sector in the regular agenda of the State Committee meetings. The manufacturing industries in the State should be identified alongwith the non-manufacturing

sections. Jobs should be distributed accordingly, and while membership in the existing unions should be increased, new unions should be formed where there is no CITU union.

3) Hold regular workshops to review the progress and TU classes in each sector.

4) Plan industrywise and sectorwise movements in both manufacturing and non-manufacturing sectors.

5) Hold State level convention in unorganised sector and call for State level movement.

K.L. Bajaj, summed up the deliberations.

DIVERSION OF PF FUNDS: CENTRAL TUs OPPOSE

By a joint letter dated 20-7-2001 addressed to Union Labour Minister, the leaders of the AITUC, BMS, CITU, HMS & INTUC had deplored the campaign launched in the media by vested interests in support of the proposal by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority to take away PF monies of exempted establishments from the purview of EPF Act and the Scheme made thereunder. Regular write ups in print media and the reported news that the proposal is under active consideration of the govt has shocked the trade union circles. Taking away exempted establishments from the purview of the EPF Act will reduce the corpus of Rs 90000 crores to nearly half endangering the viability of the PF Scheme and the Employees Pension Scheme. Moreover the PF contributions of employees of exempted establishments will no more remain secure and ... The Central Board of Trustees have rejected such a proposal already made by the Dave Committee.

Expressing deep concern over this and related developments in social security aspects, the Central Trade Unions had urged the Minister to convene an urgent meeting .

CITU PROJECT ON CHILD LABOUR INAUGURATE

Mary Johnson, Director of the International Labour Organisation in Delhi, asserted that "Trade unions world wide have a very important role to play to end the scourge of child labour". She was inaugurating the Centre of Indian Trade Unions' National Round Table meeting on Direct Action for Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour. The meeting held on 20th July 2001, at the B.T. Ranadive Bhawan, New Delhi, was attended by participants from 10 States, where the project will be implemented during the next 24 months, and other invitees interested in eliminating in child labour.

India, who was the Chief Guest, explained Government position regarding child labour and the ILO conventions. He commended the initiative in undertaking the task to mainstream child labourers in primary schools. W R Varada Rajan, Secretary, CITU, chaired the meeting. He narrated the initiatives taken by CITU on the issues of child labour and the threat of unemployed youth, both of which are a potential threat to the quality of adult employment. This CITU-ILO programme is the second project in the area of child labour. The first project which entailed sensitisation of trade union



"In countries plagued by chronic unemployment and underemployment, every job given to a child is doubly detrimental. It deprives the child of normal education and at the same time denies a needy adult worker gainful employment. Consequently, the existence of child labour in any economy hinders trade union efforts to raise the material well being of workers," Mary Johnson emphasised.

K Hemalata, secretary, CITU, and Project Coordinator explained the objectives of the CITU programme and told that poverty is the main cause of child labour:

Vinod Vaish, Labour Secretary, Government of

parents of child labourers, was completed two days ago. This project aims at direct action to educate 1000 children and to bring them into the educational mainstream. 20 Non-Formal Education Centres will be started in 10 States to educate children working in seven industries, beedi, brick-kiln, construction, handloom, matches and fireworks, stone cutting and tea plantation.

The meeting worked out strategies for the elimination of child labour and drew up a map of activities to be taken up by CITU over the next two years, based on their experience in different industries in the States.