



THE WORKING CLASS

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The Working Class and the Divisive Forces

B.T. Ranadive

THE nightmarish happenings in the Punjab where killings were carried on for months with use of religious places for piling of arms and organising of crimes, the raising of the slogan of Khalistan, the gruesome happenings in Maharashtra following the Bhiwandi riots where the muslims were found without protection from the authorities, the spread of communal virus to certain parts of Bombay city affecting a section of the working class — all underline the new and menacing challenge faced by the working class.

It has to be recalled that in these most trying circumstances the CITU and its unions and workers in Assam, Punjab and Bombay kept aloft the flag of unity and did not allow it to be lowered. The workers of Punjab and Assam and Haryana and our unions had to face the most perilous situation, risk their life and limb to fight the attack of divisive forces and they discharged their responsibility without flinching and with courage and determination.

Challenge of the Divisive Forces

But the divisive challenge is spreading all over India and unless its causes are understood, its gravity is realised, the working class movement will not be able to combat it effectively.

The trade union movement of our country showed great advance in unity of the workers in recent months. The All India Port and Dock Workers' strike, the Bengal Jute Workers' strike, the 48 hours Coal Workers' strike, united tens of thousands of workers irrespective of their caste and religion. They fought together for months braving the starvation and behaved as a class detachment which knew no differences in its ranks. This spirit of secular and class unity which should pervade the entire country, however, could not affect the counter-attack of the divisive forces. Its effect on India's political developments could not be felt at all. Because, the divisive forces were able to affect lakhs of people over an entire state, as in Punjab, or

thousands of people in Bombay. It is quite clear that the unity in trade union struggles alone will not change the situation and prevent destruction of national unity. Unless its unity begins to influence the popular mind, inspires thousands outside the trade union struggle to unite and overcome their religious and caste differences, it will remain a small island of unity easily submerged under an avalanche of disruptive and divisive forces.

Special Role of the Working Class

The Working Class and its unity has a special responsibility in saving the country's unity. It is the experience of history that the only class, which by its unity and consciousness, can save the unity of a newly liberated country, is the working class. This is so because, in all newly liberated and backward countries complete national unification in thought and deed is not fully achieved. The economic backwardness of these countries maintain old parochial, communal and religious consciousness and separatism and after the forcible exit of imperialism and foreign domination, these inner differences often take precedence over national unity. The working class living in modern conditions, united in thousands in the factory can easily overcome the sense of religious, communal considerations and set an example. That is why in all newly liberated countries either the working class plays this role or the country gets ruined — a ready prey to imperialist domination. The working class of India has to play this role of defending popular and national unity overcoming religious and communal differences. If sections of the working class themselves become affected by communal virus, then the working class is doomed. Unfortunately, in India the workers themselves are often swayed or neutralised by religious and communal considerations and stand paralysed before the attack of disruptive forces, when they should be in the streets to fight them back. This often happens in communal or linguistic riots where the linguistic or communal majority sits silent and does not fight those who attack its class brothers. The working

OBSERVE PEACE DAY ON SEPTEMBER 1

class and the trade union movement must fight against this paralysis and train itself to a secular class army out to defend its unity and the unity of the people. It must realise that the unity forged by it in its prolonged battles can be reduced to nothing if it fails to act as a class force and influence the people.

Champion the Cause of Minorities

In this connection the trade unions must quickly overcome some of their weaknesses in functioning which hamper the process of class unity. The working class and the trade union membership is composed of workers from all castes and religions. The workers coming from oppressed castes and minority community have disabilities and grievances in addition to the grievances common to all workers. Sometimes these are of greater importance to them in their daily life than the common trade union demands. They do not feel enthusiastic about the common movement if the trade unions do not champion their special demands. This is one of the reasons for low trade union membership from these sections. The trade unions must remove this weakness and ventilate the special grievances of these sections.

Lessons from Assam and Punjab

But the main question is has our working class and our trade union movement drawn proper lesson from the happenings in Assam and Punjab? The divisive, reactionary and communal forces in India have always organised communal riots to disrupt unity of the working class and the democratic movement.

But the divisive attack in Punjab and Assam are of a quite different kind. They are specifically directed towards creating a secessionist movement, breaking the unity and integrity of India. The raising of the slogan of Khalistan, a separate Sikh state, apart from India makes it clear. In Assam the secessionists are pursuing the same course under an innocuous slogan of solving the foreigners' issue. It is of course wrong to charge the entire people of Assam or the Sikh masses of Punjab with being secessionists. But the sinister fact is that when these slogans are concealed either in religious or chauvinistic garb, the masses fall easy victims to them. They are not able to resist them politically and isolate the secessionists.

Imperialists Fomenting Secessionist Movements

Firstly, which are the forces that are directly interested in promoting and financing the secessionist movement? The Western imperialists — the USA and its agents want to weaken and disintegrate and dismember India so that they can enslave the country and exploit it. The U.S. hand in Assam agitation has been exposed long ago. The advocates of Khalistan are received by the highest dignitaries in the USA. Millions of dollars worth

currency was found in the Golden Temple complex when the army entered it, according to news report. The CIA is known for planning dismemberment of India. In Britain the secessionists are allowed a free hand by the police and the Government to organise attacks on Indian establishments. Threat of murder are allowed to be broadcast over the BBC. In Australia members of an Indian delegation were allowed to be assaulted by secessionist Sikhs with the Australian police refusing to intervene. Such are the international supporters and promoters of secessionism. And it is known that they are using the military regime of Pakistan to further their purposes. Training camps for secessionist extremists were held in Pakistan to train them in murders, clandestine assaults and cowardly killings of innocent people. The Pakistan press throughout these months carried out vicious and distorted propaganda supporting the secessionists. And finally they have refused to send back for trial the hijackers of the Indian plane.

Attack on Integrity of the Country

It is no longer a question of communal conflict to be settled through usual methods, but a serious attack on the integrity of the country which all communities, all citizens of India must unitedly fight.

The same preparations to divide the Indian people and disintegrate the unity of the country are being made elsewhere, though they still appear in the garb of communal or linguistic rights or demands of religious bigotry.

Alienating Role of Hindu Communalists and Muslim Fundamentalists

The happenings in Bhiwandi and other places are part of the same conspiracy. The Hindu communalists — R.S.S., Ekatmata, Shiv Sena, by pouring poison against the Muslims, by declaring the country to be a country only of Hindus are playing in a despicable manner the game of India's enemies. This propaganda is intended to create a complete sense of alienation among the muslim minority, so that they should have no feeling of commonness with the rest of the people.

This process of alienation is completed by the muslim communal organisations like the Jamaite Islami and muslim fundamentalist organisations, some of whom like some Hindu communal organisations are plentifully supplied with finances from abroad.

The Muslim League pretending to defend the just grievances and demands of the muslim minority only harps on muslim separatism and eggs on the process of muslim alienation and communalism. The end result of this communal appeal is to isolate the muslim masses from the common class and democratic struggle, and look for solution in

separatism. The present day communal appeals are not just made for electoral purposes, for promoting riots for local cause, but, for creating a ground for dismemberment and enslavement of India.

Linguistic Chauvinism Weakening National Unity

The other source of divisive attack comes from linguistic chauvinism and separatism which does not recognise its ties with other parts of India and its responsibility for maintaining Indian unity. This chauvinistic appeal is more during elections, putting one part of the country against another. Several Cong(I) State Governments have made use of this weapon to avoid real remedies against unemployment and other economic problems. These Governments have issued orders not to register the names of the workers from other states in the employment exchange, thus attacking rights of common citizenship and creating a separate state within the state. The same effect of alienation is produced by compulsion on the minority to study the language of the majority in a state, or shutting off from job workers and people of other states by reserving a fantastic proportion of jobs for local people. All bourgeois-landlord parties for remaining in power adopt these means including the Janata Party.

The total effect of these shortsighted policies is to raise regional feelings and weaken the feelings of national unity.

India's enemies, the imperialists use these weaknesses in Indian consciousness, influence regional, local and religious feelings to fan these feelings and create a permanent wall to divide the States and the people.

State Patronage of Religion

The question arises why should the common man, the toiling people, fall victims to these viles and appeals of communalist reactionaries and the imperialists, why are they not able to resist them and fight them back as common citizens of a newly liberated nation?

Here we come to the biggest indictment of the bourgeois-landlord rule, the rule of the Congress party extending over three decades since independence. In these thirty years the feelings of national unity and oneness has been corroded instead of being strengthened. The bourgeois-landlord state and the Congress(I) did not think it necessary to keep the anti-imperialist spirit alive and for years they had very little to say against the danger from imperialism. They did nothing to raise the consciousness of the Indian people to intensify national consciousness and basically fight the reactionary influence of religions and caste. On the contrary they encouraged all religions and beliefs through state patronage, instead of keeping the state and Government completely separate from religion, which is what is meant by secularism. And they have not been found wanting

in the use of communal and caste appeal during elections. Result is that communal virus has spread to the administration also. And after thirty years an ordinary citizen remains either a Hindu or Muslim or a Sikh. This influence of religion, caste and superstition over the people is helpful to the bourgeois-landlord regime in promoting division among the people and the workers.

Class Selfishness of Congress(I)

Because of its class-selfishness, the Congress(I) regime pursues a policy which leads to the growing disintegration of the country and plays into the hands of imperialism. The more than three decades of Congress rule can be summed up as decades of disintegration of national consciousness and unity along with the growing misery of the people.

The criminal role of the secessionists and the opportunism of the Akali leaders which played into the hands of the former cannot hide the responsibility of the Congress Government in contributing to the present critical situation in Punjab. The deployment of the army and the events following it could have been avoided if the Central Government had negotiated the democratic demands put forward by the Akali leadership and isolated the secessionists. But this did not suit the electoral interests of the ruling party. Therefore, extreme steps had to be taken and the mass of Sikh population had to be alienated. The Government could not have acted worse if it had been advised by the bureaucrats secretly in league with CIA agents.

The Punjab Episode — a Sinister Development

The Punjab developments with the Sikh masses overwhelmed by wounded religious feeling and temporarily unable to realise the anti-national and treacherous character of the extremists led by Bhindranwale, constitute a big set back for the democratic and working class movement and danger to national unity. No one raises the question — should places of worship be allowed to pile up arms and use them for antinational purposes? The fact that the overwhelming number affected are not in a position to raise the question shows to what extent religious feelings have overwhelmed democratic judgement and got priority over national consideration. This is the role religion plays — disruption of democratic and national values and their replacement by separatist considerations. Otherwise there should be no two opinions that a place of worship cannot be transformed into an arsenal and those who do it must be punished. There will be an end of freedom of this country if every temple, mosque or Gurdwara is allowed to stock foreign and illegal arms to carry on anti-people activities.

Collapse of Administration

The collapse of the Punjab administration, its failure to tackle the extremists is a sinister development. The same collapse was witnessed in Assam

and forces from outside the state had to be sent to tackle the secessionists. The same collapse was witnessed in Bhiwandi and the army had to be called in.

This collapse shows that the local administration is growingly affected by consideration of localism, communalism, local chauvinism and separatism and is growingly loosing all sense of democratic values and national consideration. On every occasion where such a divisive attack comes, it helps the divisive forces instead of combating them. Both in Assam and Punjab intelligence sources failed because they were working in league with the secessionists. This is the first stage of a final collapse.

Combat the Divisive Attacks

Such is the menacing situation facing the working class and the country. The organised trade union movement will be a pure hoax if it does not take this problem seriously and combat these attacks on the working class and national unity. No other movement, no other class can see this danger so clearly and none can start the fight in a combined manner as the working class can do. Years of prolonged struggle, united struggles of the workers belonging to all religions and all castes, struggles against privations and starvations have led the basic foundation for overcoming all other considerations and influences. The working class and its unions have to protect their unity in the first place and then launch a counter attack on the divisive forces to rescue the people from their influence. The advanced elements in the trade union movement and the working class must show in words and deeds that they are free from all bias in matters of religion and caste.

CITU Demands Withdrawal of Ordinance on Special Courts

Nrisingha Chakraborty, Secretary, Centre of Indian Trade Unions has issued the following statement on July 15:

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions criticises the Govt. of India for promulgation of the "Terrorist Affected Areas (Special Courts) Ordinance" through which the Congress(I) Govt. at the Centre has armed itself with wide powers in the name of curbing the terrorist activities. Some of the offences which can be tried by the special courts, as provided in the Ordinance, for example "promoting enmity between classes", "assertions or imputations prejudicial to national integrity", etc are so loosely worded that these could be used against the general democratic and trade union movement also in the area declared as "Disturbed Area".

As the past experience of the trade union movement is that such special powers taken to tackle the criminals or secessionists or terrorists are used against the normal trade union and democratic movement, the CITU demands that the Ordinance be withdrawn.

That they are wedded to a secular and class outlook alone.

Rouse Political Consciousness — Protect Working Class and People's Unity

In the coming days they will have to wage a battle for protecting working class unity, for backward sections of the working class are susceptible to divisive appeals in communal, caste or regionalist form. Despite the effort of reactionaries the trade unions do succeed in forging unity of thousands during strikes. But its unity based on immediate economic demands is not sufficient to counter the reactionary offensive. On the basis of this unity already achieved the working class must be roused politically to directly intervene against the attack of divisive forces as it does in Bengal during communal riots. The sinister meaning of this attack must be politically explained to the workers and armed with this the united strength of the trade union movement must plunge among the people to combat every manifestation of divisive attack. From protecting working class unity the workers must march forward to protect people's and national unity. That the hard task can be done and fought for has been shown by our CITU's Unions and workers in Punjab and Assam.

NCC Calls for Coalminers' Solidarity Day

The National Campaign Committee, meeting in Delhi on July 25, decided to observe August 5 as the Coalminers' Solidarity Day all over India. In a resolution adopted unanimously, it denounced the CIL for imposing 8 days' wage cut for the 2-day strike on June 4 and 5 and resorting mass dismissals and other penal measures. It condemned the Government for imposing ESMA in Coal industry, banning strikes, thus supporting the CIL's repressive measures to escalate confrontation with the workers. It demanded of the Government to restore normalcy in the industry instead of forcing the workers to go in for indefinite strike. Supporting the Joint Action Committee's programme to observe protest week from July 30 to August 5, the NCC called upon all sections of the working people to observe solidarity day in support of the coalminers on August 5 by holding joint demonstrations, processions, rallies, etc.

Conventions Against Lockouts, Closures: In pursuance of the movement against lockouts and closures, the N.C.C. meeting called upon the state units to complete the state conventions by the third week of August, after which an all India Day will be observed in the middle of September, the date for which will be notified later on. The N.C.C. also extended full support to the struggle of the public sector employees on whom the Government is trying to impose the industrial pattern of D.A. at Rs. 1.30 per point, switching over from the Central pattern.

Coal Workers Prepare for Indefinite Strike

FOLLOWING the unabated victimisations in the coal industry, non-implementation of the National Coal Wage Agreement-III and refusal of the Coal India Ltd and the Government to call the meeting of the Joint Bipartite Committee in Coal Industry, the Joint Action Committee of Coal Unions, comprising of CITU, AITUC, HMS and BMS has decided to make preparations for an indefinite strike.

The Committee which met at Calcutta on June 27, condemned the CIL management for taking vindictive actions against the workers for participating in the 48-hour all India strike on June 4 and 5. Apart from severe repressions by the CISF, the punitive actions taken by the CIL included illegal and mala-fide deduction of 8 days' wages despite the stay orders served by the High Courts of Calcutta and Patna, summary dismissal of thousands of casual workers, break in service of leading activists, large scale suspensions and chargesheets and transfer to far away places.

The Committee reviewed the two day strike action and expressed satisfaction that despite repression and threat, the workers responded magnificently to the call of strike. In a joint statement issued on June 28, the Committee drew the attention of all the coalminers to the policy of confrontation adopted by the Government and the CIL management against the workers and called upon the workers to consolidate the unity achieved through their strike struggles and carry it forward to make preparations for an indefinite strike to compel the CIL to fully implement the NCWA-III, convene the JBCCI, withdraw all penal measures, withdraw the CISF from the coal belts, ensure proper safety measures in coal mines and for upward revision in the rate of D.A.

Banning of Strikes: Government's Policy of Confrontation

The Government fully laid bare its policy of confrontation with the workers, when instead of amicable settlement of their rightful demands through negotiations and honouring its responsibility to implement the NCWA-III, it invoked the notification on July 11 banning strikes in the coal mines and washeries under the Coal India Ltd. This rabid anti-labour action of the Government only confirmed its class hatred against the working class and its right to strike and right to collective bargaining. Unless the Government changes its policy of confrontation with the workers and honours the agreement — the NCWA-III, it is bound to create a dangerous situation leading to the ruination of the industry — so vital for the economy and development of the country. Instead of taking lessons from the five month old strike of the British coalminers, which

has now acquired historic proportions, embracing various sections of other workers and even threatening the Thatcher Government's continuance, the Indira Government, it seems, has foolishly preferred to follow the footprints of Margaret Thatcher in dealing with the Indian coalminers. The Government also seems to have forgotten the recent glorious joint strike struggles of the Jute and Port & Dock workers, uniting all the unions and attracting national and international support and forcing the Government to submit. The coal workers by dint of their past valiant struggles, braving all impediments and the hired mafia gangs, have already drawn the attention of all other sections of workers and played a significant role in throwing overboard all the notorious guidelines of the BPE. They are also not divorced from international connections. Under the circumstances, it will be foolish on the part of the Government to mount repressive and draconian measures on the militant and unionised coalminers depending on its handful of hangerson. The experience of struggles of the coalminers and about the anti-labour character of the Government, is bound to unite all the workers on the path of a continuous strike and hit back the Government like a boomerang.

Meeting of AICWF

The Working Committee of the All India Coal Workers' Federation also met at Calcutta on June 27 and 28. Reviewing the post-strike situation, the meeting viewed that the CIL and the Government instead of taking steps to settle the dispute, have further geared up their repressive machineries, to drown the voice of the coal workers under draconian measures. The meeting took stock of current spate of victimisations. Sources revealed the plan of the CIL to victimise about a lakh in ECL, 40,000 in BCCL, 5000 in CCL and also a large number in WCL. A large number of workers have already been involved in false police cases. The AICWF ratified the decision of the Joint Action Committee and called upon its affiliated unions and appealed to all workers to march ahead with the preparations for the indefinite strike.

Subsequently, the AICWF issued a statement denouncing the Government's notification banning strikes in coal and called upon the workers to launch protest actions demanding withdrawal of the notification and in preparation of the indefinite strike. As per reports, protest actions have already started in ECL, BCCL, CCL and WCL.

The meeting also took stock of the worsening condition of safety in the coal mines and condemned the Government for its miserable failure and criminal collusion to improve safety in mines and prevent

accidents. In a statement the AICWF revealed the alarming numbers of deaths and accidents in different coal belts. In 1983, there were 56 deaths in 49 accidents in WCL, 51 deaths in 30 accidents in BCCL, 27 deaths in 23 accidents in FCL and 24 deaths in 23 accidents in CCL, totalling to 158 deaths in 125 accidents. In this back drop of accidents, the meeting condemned the motivated decision of the Government of India not to invite the CITU to a meeting on safety on national level and demanded invitation to CITU in the safety meetings.

CITU Condemns Banning of Strikes in Coal India Limited

B.T. Ranadive, President, Centre of Indian Trade Unions has issued the following statement on July 11:

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions strongly condemns the notification issued by the Government of India banning strikes in all Coal Mines, Washeries, etc, under Coal India Limited, a Govt. of India Undertaking. It is known to the Govt. that the wage agreement concluded more than a year ago has not been implemented by the CIL Management. The Chairman-Cum-Managing Director of CIL has also arbitrarily refused to call a meeting of the Bipartite Committee in the coal industry. As a protest against this the workers unitedly expressed their resentment by observing 48-hour token strike on 4th and 5th June, 1984. The CIL Management instead of taking lessons from the growing resentment among the workers and taking steps to normalise the situation, has taken a vindictive attitude and victimised the workers by imposing 8 days' wage out and penalising hundreds of Trade Unions workers by removal/dismissal from service, charge sheet, transfer, suspensions, etc. Only a few days back the workers' organisations in the industry had jointly warned to CIL Management that in case they do not change their attitude and meet the demands of the workers, there is every likelihood of a protracted strike in the coal industry. This notification is aimed at taking away the right of the workers to collective bargaining including strike.

The CITU warns the Government of India that unless they withdraw the notification and call the trade union organisations in the Coal Industry for negotiations to restore normalcy in the vital sector of economy, industrial relations situation may deteriorate still further in which case the Govt. alone will be responsible for the same.

The CITU directs its affiliated unions to protest against this banning of strike which is intended to institutionalise the penal actions taken on the staff and debar the workers of the only weapon to fight it back. The CITU appeals to all other Central Trade Unions and democratic mass organisations to raise their powerful voice in protest against this banning of strike.

JAC Reiterates Strike Decision

Following the notification by the Government to ban strikes in coal industry, the Joint Action Committee of the coal federations, meeting at Calcutta on July 19, reiterated its decision to launch an indefinite strike in coal industry. It rejected the imposition of ESMA and ban on strikes in CIL mines and affirmed the workers' right to resort to all types of industrial actions including strikes.

The JAC expressed its deepest concern at the deteriorating industrial relations in the coal industry with growing bitterness between the CIL management and the seven lakh coal miners and fixed the responsibility for this on the "arrogant, obstinate and anti-labour attitude and policy of the present Chair — Shree M.S. Gujral."

The JAC condemned the Central Government for banning strikes in the coalmines under CIL, at the behest of Coal India Ltd., since the workers had secured High Court injunctions against the CIL's decision to cut eight days' wages for the 48-hour strike on June 4 and 5. It accused the Government and the CIL of conspiracy to crush all trade union movements in the coal mines.

The JAC also noted that production of coal in the majority of the CIL mines has declined. It alleged that the raised figures quoted by the managements were deliberately falsified.

The JAC called upon the workers to continue non-cooperation with the managements and observe protest week from July 30 to August 5 against the ban on strike.

The steering Committee elected by the JAC will meet at Delhi on August 9 to decide the exact date to start the indefinite strike defying the ban. The meeting formulated the following 9-point demands in pursuance of which the indefinite strike, will be launched: (1) Withdrawal of vindictive and penal actions including deduction of eight days wages; (2) Immediate convening of the Joint Bipartite Committee of the Coal Industry; (3) Ensuring full implementation of all the clauses of the last wage agreement; (4) Ensuring proper safety in coalmines; (5) Stopping violation of the wage agreement; (6) Early finalisation of all sub-committees set up by JBCCI; (7) Immediate withdrawal of Central Industrial Security Force from the coal belts; (8) Abolition of all contract system; and (9) Scrapping of ESMA and withdrawal of the ban on strike in coalmines.

The meeting was attended by Sunil Basu Roy (CITU), Kalyan Roy (AITUC), T.C. Junde (BMS), Madhu Banerjee (UTUC) and Nitish Sen Gupta (HMS). Bamapada Mukherjee of CITU presided over the meeting.

Letter of Samar Mukherjee to the Prime Minister

Severely criticising the CIL management for pursuing an arbitrary and vindictive policy towards labour and expressing concern at the growing confrontation between the labour and the management, Samar Mukherjee, M.P., leader of the CPI (M) group in Lok Sabha and General Secretary of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions has demanded intervention of the Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi through his D.O. letter No. SM/247/F-10/84, dated July 11, 1984. Following is the full text of the letter:

Dear Smt Gandhi

This is to draw your attention to the present situation in the Coal industry which is among the most vital sectors of our economy. If the bureaucratic handling of the industry in a reckless manner is not put an end to forthwith, there is every possibility of confrontation between the management and the workers adversely affecting the supply of the strategic fuel to our industries.

The present Chairman of Coal India Ltd., Shri M.S. Gujral, who after signing of a good national wage settlement has resorted to taking several unilateral steps to hit the interests of workers. As a result of this wrong policy whatever good atmosphere was created by the agreement had disappeared within a short time.

The National Coal Wage Agreement III provided that the Joint Bipartite Committee in Coal Industry would be responsible for the implementation of the agreement. In several public sector undertakings such meetings are periodically held and issues are sorted out across the table. However, despite repeated demand by the Central Trade Unions for the last eight months no meeting of the JBCCI is being called by the Chairman, Coal India Limited.

As you are aware, the Government of India has formulated a scheme of workers participation in the Management. Though we are critical of the scheme, it is evident from the scheme that periodic meetings of such a forum should be called. The Chairman is refusing to have even this so called participative forum in Coal Industry. I am surprised to learn that even the demand of the trade unions to discuss the performance and production in Coal Industry is not being accepted by this conceited bureaucrat.

The Trade Unions have complained that the National Coal Wage Agreement signed on 11th November, 1983 has not yet been fully implemented. Particularly provisions relating to housing, educational and medical facilities, drinking water arrangements and civic amenities have by and large remained unimplemented causing deep resentment among the workers.

The CIL Chairman's fiat of deducting 8 days' wages for one day strike or unauthorised absence

has been strongly condemned by the trade unions. Despite advice of the Labour Department or the order of the Calcutta High Court the CIL Management is not prepared to adopt a reasonable policy in this respect. It should be noted here that in no other public sector such a draconian policy is being adopted.

Since Shri Gujral has taken over as Chairman of CIL, arbitrary transfer of workers to far away places, summary dismissals on flimsy ground, charge-sheet and suspensions have become a matter of daily occurrence.

I understand that even officers and senior Executives in Coal India are extremely unhappy about the style of functioning of the CIL Chairman.

We have received several complaints about the misuse of CISF personnel in day to day trade union activities. On several occasions the CISF has virtually assumed the responsibility of the State Police Department. The CITU flags have been torn by the CISF in Raniganj Coal belt. The CISF has beaten up several trade union activists and workers during legitimate TU movements. Open connivance of the local management and the CISF personnel has been quite frequently witnessed by the trade unions in collieries. I am informed that the CISF is indulging in even protecting the illegal mine operators in connivance with the corrupt colliery officials.

The safety provisions have been callously neglected in Coal mines with the result that a large number of workers are losing their lives every year. What is more serious is that the decisions of previous safety conferences are not being implemented, while the Union Labour Ministry has not got the adequate machinery even to inspect the mines as provided by the statute.

Perhaps in no other public sector undertaking the corruption is so rampant as in CIL. Theft of coal in broad day light, underhand dealings between unscrupulous Contractors and officials, open operation of mafia gangs in league with the police officials have become the order of the day.

The seven lakh coal workers went on 48 hour All India strike on 4-5 June, 1984 which was quite

Samar Mukherjee met the Prime Minister on July 23 with a copy of his letter. He particularly drew her attention to the penal measures of 8 day's wage cut and the imposition of ESMA. He emphasised that the situation in Coal industry will worsen if the measures are not withdrawn. The Prime Minister assured to consider the matter.

successful. The call for the strike was given by the Joint Action Committee of Coal Unions consisting of all India Federations belonging to CITU, AITUC, HMS and BMS. The CIL Management instead of realising the gravity of the situation has resorted to large scales suspensions, transfers, 8 day's deduction of wages, summary dismissal of casual workers, etc.

These measures of the management have evoked strong protests from all the coal belts. And now the Government of India on 11th July, 1984 has taken a draconian measure of banning strikes in all Coal Mines, Washeries, etc, under CIL. I am enclosing herewith a copy of the Press Statement issued by CITU Centre on 11th July strongly protesting against this draconian measure instead of taking steps to settle the matters by convening a joint meeting of the Coal Unions and the Managements in the Industry as suggested above. I would request you to cause withdrawal of the above notification banning strikes in Coal Industry in order to create a better atmosphere for negotiated settlement of all the outstanding issues.

I understand that the Joint Action Committee of Coal Unions has now taken a decision of indefinite strike if the managements do not retrace from their vindictive steps.

I would therefore request you to intervene in the matter and convene a joint meeting of the Coal Unions and the managements in the industry so that all the outstanding issues are resolved at an early date and normalcy is restored in this vital sector of economy.

Since all the trade unions are committed to the public sector I find that they are keen to reach a solution to these issues so that the country becomes self reliant in the matter of coal supply. With regards,

Yours Sincerely
Samar Mukherjee

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CITU's Message to Sao Paulo

On July 21, Samar Mukherjee, M.P., General Secretary, CITU has sent the following message to the First Congress of the Central Union of Workers, Sao Paulo, Brazil:

"We thank you for your communication dated July 5, 1984, inviting our organisation to send a fraternal delegate to attend the First Congress of CUF to be held on August 24, 25, 26, 1984 at Sao Barnardo do Campo.

We are happy to note that after years of struggle, which the Indian working class had been watching with admiration, you have been able to hold your first Congress. We also realise and appreciate the constraints which you are facing in holding the first Congress. It would have been a pleasure on our part if we could respond to your request, which we very much desire. Like the working class of Brazil, the Indian working class is also struggling like any other developing country, against inflation, unemployment, price rise and for job security. Besides, the General Council Meeting of our organisation has been fixed on the identical dated i.e., August 24, 25, 26, 1984.

In these circumstances we regret very much that we are not able to send a delegate to attend your first Congress. I, however, take this opportunity to express our firm solidarity with the people and the working class of Latin America who are fighting against exploitation by the multi-nationals backed by U.S. imperialists. We also make a common cause for peace and struggle against nuclear war.

We firmly believe that despite our inability to send our delegate, fraternal ties between our two organisations will be strengthened in future.

We wish your Congress a grand success. With warm greetings.

Samar Mukherjee

Message from Trades Union Congress

Lionel Murray, General Secretary, Trades Union Congress, London, has sent the following letter dated July 10, 1984 to Samar Mukherjee, M.P. General Secretary, CITU, who has suitably replied to the same.

Dear Mr. Mukherjee,

I am writing to thank you for all the cooperation and assistance which your organisation extended to Mr. Ian Williams of the National Union of Railwaymen throughout the period of his stay in India. He found the time spent with trade unionists at all levels and in a variety of different industries very rewarding.

A Comprehensive Legislation for the Brick-Kiln Industry

THE Tripartite Committee for the brick-kiln Industry after a lot of discussion has formulated the provisions of a comprehensive legislation for the industry.

The Kiln owners who had closed down their Kilns for over 4 months, in the last season, had been pleading two points viz that their industry is not capable to pay all the benefits to the workmen and that they do not have the super structure to maintain a plethora of registers and records which are to be maintained under the laws. The labour representatives taking a flexible attitude had conceded that while the number of records etc to be maintained be brought down to absolute minimum, they are opposed to scaling down the benefits due to the workmen under various legislations. Hence there was a virtual tug-of-war and finally it was agreed that:

1. The legislation should integrate the provisions of Factories Act, Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) act, E.P.F. Act, E.S.I. Act, Gratuity Act, Inter-State Migrant Labour Act and Maternity Benefit Act. The State Govt. shall be Appropriate Govt. for implementation of the Act while the Central Govt many issue directions. There shall be a state level Advisory Body for the industry.

2. The Brick-Kiln owners shall register themselves with the Govt of the State in which the kiln is set-up. As soon as the owner recruits inter-state migrant labour, it shall furnish a list of such workmen along with their family members to the authority prescribed by the State Govt from which the workmen have been recruited. Such list is to be furnished after the workmen join their duties.

3. For the inter-state migrant labour, a card with the photo of the head of the family will be issued in which the particulars of the family, who would be regarded as direct labour, be issued by the employer. (The management offered that the Govt may issue notification abolishing contract labour in the industry except for unloading of coal and loading of finished bricks after sale).

4. The family members of a workman, who would be assisting the workman should be taken in the muster roll as workmen and proportionate wages determined on the basis of hours of their work, are to be paid to them also. The workmen would not be required to work for more than 9 hours a day and 48 hours in a week. They shall get two paid rest days in a fortnight.

5. The wages of workmen should be fixed every year in the beginning of the season. For the moulders it would be piece-rate per thousand subject to calculation of rest day wages and the wages for

some period per month when due to weather conditions the workers are forced to remain idle. Such wages are to be paid according to wage periods duly notified, weekly, fortnightly or monthly as the case may be.

6. The inter-state migrant workmen will be paid one side rail/bus fare and one month's wages recoverable advance which should be deemed to have been extinguished if it could not be recovered during the session. They should also be paid displacement allowance to the extent of one month's wages and return fare if they work for the full season.

7. While fixing the wage rates, brick-kiln owners' representative should be associated with the Advisory Board of Minimum Wages, as the intricacies may not be known to other owners.

8. The workmen shall get the following medical benefits:— (a) The owners shall arrange transport and treatment in a Govt. hospital of the workmen if they fall sick.

(b) The workers shall get one day's leave on half-pay per one month of service in case of sickness, which can be allowed to accumulate upto the next seasons.

(c) Women workers will get maternity benefit subject to two such benefits with the same employer which will be equivalent to six weeks wages of the women, subject to the condition that she has worked for 120 days in the previous one year with the same employer.

9. There shall be rest rooms and wash facilities for those workmen who are not provided with residential quarters, like the inter-state migrant labour who should be provided with living quarters as specified by the State Govt. There must be drinking water provided near the kilns.

10. If twenty or more women with children below 6 years are employed in a kiln, a room should be provided for the children under care of an employee to enable the women to work.

11. Women if not accompanied by male members of the family, will not be required to work between 7 P.M. and 7 A.M.

12. Appropriate Govt. may prescribe necessary safety equipment and protective clothing taking into account the requirement of health and safety, which the owners must provide.

13. Every brick-kiln employing more than 250 workmen should also provide canteen for the workers.

(Continued from page 16)

Indefinite Strike in Andhra Pradesh

THE Jute barons are bent upon to escalate confrontation with the workers and ruin the jute industry. In Andhra Pradesh they could stall the workers from joining the historic indefinite strike by assuring to extend the benefits of the agreement in W. Bengal. But now they have refused to do it. On the contrary, they wanted to impose 21 shifts and further work load on the workers. The 30,000 workers have thus been compelled to go on indefinite strike from July 5. Workers under all the unions operating in the jute industry in Andhra Pradesh, i.e., CITU, AITUC, INTUC, HMS and other independent unions have joined the indefinite strike. Apart from Andhra Pradesh, because of non-implementation of the agreement, the Raigarh jute workers in Madhya Pradesh are also on strike since January 16.

Mass Retrenchments in W. Bengal

In W. Bengal, the Jute barons, having signed the agreement after the 84-day historic strike, are back again to play their usual nefarious game of violating it and resort to mass reduction of workforce. Several thousand workers in different jute mills have been retrenched on the cooked up plea of shortage of raw jute. Niren Ghosh, M.P., Secretary of CITU and General Secretary of the All India Jute Workers' Federation has laid bare the manufactured lie of the jute barons by supplying the data of exact stock position of raw jute. The last year's crop was around 70 lakhs bales and it carried over a stock of 12 lakh bales lying with the JCI from the previous year. Over and above, the last 84-day strike saved more than 16 lakh bales. And the industry requires about 65 lakh bales to maintain the normal productivity. But even then the monopoly houses are resorting to lay-offs, sealing of looms and machines and playing other tricks to render the workers jobless. These are being done arbitrarily with the ulterior motive to "standardise the complements", in violation of the last tripartite agreement, before formation of the Apex Body to determine the complements without further increase in the workloads on the workers.

Reduction in Work Force

In Nuddea and Gouripur jute mills, the management arbitrarily introduced 4 hour shifts rendering 1100 workers jobless. In Delta jute mill a 5-day operation has been imposed affecting wage cuts and 1200 workers have been driven to the point of starvation. In Fort Gloster New and North mills, the looms have been sealed throwing 1000 workers out of employment. Waverly jute mill has sealed the Broad Looms throwing 500 workers jobless. Due to sudden 6-day running instead of 7-day, several hundred budli workers have been rendered jobless in Naihati Jute Mill. 1500 workforce have been reduced in Anglo-India jute mill. Similarly, several more

thousands have been rendered jobless in Hooghly mill, Ganges mill, Gondalpara mill, Ludlow mill, Agarpara mill Prabartak mill and in the various Calcutta jute mills.

Barons Hoarding Raw Jute

The real story of the "Shortage" of raw jute is that a number of the monopoly houses have cornered the raw jute and selling them at the highest price to reap the harvest at the cost of thousands of workers and jute growers. The Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union has demanded of the Union Commerce Minister to take immediate steps to dehoard the raw jute for equal distribution. But the Central Government is more interested to subserve the monopolists. There is no response from the Commerce Minister. The demand for nationalisation of the entire jute industry including trade thus gets all the more reinforced. There has to be direct monopoly purchase of raw jute from the growers, pending which there must be canalisation of raw jute through the JCI.

Step up United Struggles

While the workers at Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh are on indefinite strike, in W. Bengal, they are again preparing for determined struggle, accepting the challenge of the monopolists. In a statement issued to the press, Niren Ghosh has called upon the workers to again build up strong resistance movement jointly, irrespective of affiliations. He also called upon the workers to launch solidarity actions in support of the strike struggles of the Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh jute workers.

Past Warning by Leaders

The heinous game which has been started by the jute monopolists, proved the truth in the warning given by the CITU leaders while addressing the extra-ordinary conference of Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union on May 25 at Kakinara in W. Bengal.

While congratulating the jute workers for their glorious 84-day strike and the magnificent victory, B.T. Ranadive, Jyoti Basu, Mohd Amin, Kamal Sarkar, Krishnapada Ghosh and Niren Ghosh — all stressed to the workers that there was no room for complacency in a bourgeois-landlord state after a victorious struggle. A Government of the monopolists, by the monopolists and for the monopolists will naturally function to boost the interests of the monopolists only at the cost of the workers. Thus it has to be a continuous struggle more militant, more united and more determined not only to defend the gains, but also to wrest more benefits. And of course the struggle has to be with more political consciousness, rather than being bogged down for immediate economic gains only, so that the struggle is armed with the political ideology with the final objective to change the social system itself.

15 months ago. The workers demanded take over of the mill. CITU, AITUC, DMK and Janata Unions formed Joint Action Committee to conduct the struggle. Various forms of struggle were launched during the period, like picketing, gheraos, pada yatras, hunger strikes and three successful Pondicherry bundhs. Fraternal unions and mass organisations of students, youth, women, etc extended full support to the struggle. A group of workers staged dharna at Delhi before the Parliament also. A number of representations were made to the Union Commerce Minister as well as to the Prime Minister by the state and central CITU leaders also. When all these attempts failed, a large number of workers and leaders started indefinite hunger strike from the middle of June. Over 1200 workers including women and children were arrested and a number of them were removed to the hospital. The hunger strike continued in hospital also. After such prolonged and bitter struggle, the state administration has now announced that a State Textile Corporation will be set up to take over the mill.

ANDHRA PRADESH

Indefinite Strike by Rice Mill and Lorry Transport Workers

The rice mill and lorry transport workers in the state are on indefinite strike demanding implementation of an agreement on minimum wage. The management arrived at an agreement last year agreeing to increase their rate by 50 per cent. But apart from violating the agreement, they are even reluctant to allow the minimum wage announced by the Government. A huge procession was taken out with the support of the fraternal unions on June 18 which culminated in a rally, addressed by the CITU leaders.

Struggle of APSRTC Employees

The Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport employees formed a Joint Action Committee comprising of the CITU & AITUC unions and launched struggle demanding revision of pay scales. A massive demonstration was organised at Guntur on May 16. More than 300 workers took out a procession at Vijayawada. The CITU union staged a day long dharna at Ongole before the office of the Depot Manager. The dharna was staged in protest against frequent malafide transfers also.

Mass Meeting by IRTWA

The Indian Railway Traction Workers' Association, South Central Railway organised a mass meeting Vijayawada, Poornanandampet on June 20. M.L. Banerjee, General Secretary of the All India Railway Traction Workers' Association addressed the meeting. After the meeting a big procession was taken out which culminated at the office of the DRM, Vijayawada, and a memorandum was submitted for forwarding to the Railway Minister.

KARNATAKA

Statewide Strike and Picketing

As decided in the fourth conference of the State CITU, a statewide strike and picketing were organised on June 11 to express solidarity with the peasants demanding land and home sites to the rural poor, regularisation of the ownership of Government land cultivated by landless peasants by granting pattas free of cost, cancellation of the eviction notices by the Forest Department to peasants who have been cultivating these plots for many years, vacation of illegal encroachment on Government land by landlords and planters and distribution of these lands to the landless, grant of free sites to the homeless poor for construction of houses and regularisation of the ownership of the lands on which huts and houses have already been built, etc. Apart from above, the strike call also demanded notification of minimum wages as recommended by the Minimum Wage Advisory Committee in all the 26 Scheduled industries, which cover agricultural workers also.

The State Beedi Workers' Federation also supported the strike. The workers demonstrated with the peasants and the rural poor. They also demanded abolition of contract system in Beedi industry and a 100 bed hospital for Beedi Workers at Mangalore out of the Beedi Workers' Welfare Fund. The CITU unions printed about one lakh leaflets for campaigning for the demands. Innumerable meetings were held at different places.

The strike was successful everywhere, particularly in Dakshin Kannada where three lakh Beedi workers abstained from work. Private buses did not ply. The strike was total in the tile factories at Mangalore, Udupi and Kundapura and in all printing presses. The CITU members in the cashewnut factories, areca and coffee processing factories, weaving factories, ply wood factories and rubber plantations struck work and picketed. Several thousand workers courted arrest at Mangalore, Kundapura, Udupi, Sullia, Bantwal, Puttur, etc. Auto rickshaws did not ply at Bangalore, lorries did not ply in Mysore district and all factories and cinema houses remained paralysed at Raichur. Large processions and rallies were organised in all the industrial centres of the state. Among those arrested for organising picketing were S. Suryanarayana Rao, the State CITU President, Md. Dastagir, the Vice-President, C. Nanjundappa, the General Secretary, V.J.K. Nair, the State Secretary and a number of State Council members.

MEGHALAYA

Agitation by Central Government Employees

Sixty thousand Central Government employees and fifty five thousand railway employees all over

AROUND THE STATES

TAMILNADU

Settlement in Karur Mills

The Karur Mill workers who were on a long drawn strike from January 17, ultimately compelled the management to arrive at a settlement on July 1. The strike was being conducted jointly by CITU, AITUC, DMK and Janata Unions. The management frantically tried to break the strike with the help of police and hired hoodlums and even abducted two workers. When all efforts failed, it declared a lockout in the month of May. But still it could not break the morale of the workers who intensified the agitation. Ultimately the management was compelled to make a settlement and the workers resumed their work from July 1.

Struggle Ends in HPF

The joint struggle conducted by the All Union Coordination Committee comprising of CITU, AITUC, DMK, INTUC and AIADMK unions in Hindustan Photo Films for implementation of the agreement arrived at in October, 1983, ended on June 29 as the INTUC and the AIADMK withdrew from the struggle and compromised with the management. After the agreement was signed, the management refused to implement the same on the plea that the Government of India had not acquiesced to some of the clauses. A valiant struggle arose, including total strike actions on April 20 and May 11. The management declared a lock out on May 11 and deployed goonda elements to work inside the factory. The police came to the rescue of the management by resorting to a brutal lathi charge injuring a large number of workers. V.V. Giri, General Secretary of the CITU union had to be hospitalised. A large number of workers were arrested including three office bearers of the CITU union. At this stage when the united struggle of the workers was at peak, the INTUC and AIADMK withdrew from the struggle and compromised with the management agreeing to the non-implementation of those clauses. One local Congress(I) M.P. intervened to get the release of the INTUC workers on bail on the condition that they will go back to work after accepting the non-implementation of the clauses. The AIADMK union followed suit. The CITU and other unions however, fought out and the management had to modify its terms by agreeing to keep the settlement in abeyance till July 31 to facilitate appeal to the Government of India by the unions. The management had also to agree to withdraw the terminations and break in services ordered during the strike.

Successful Settlement in Ashok Leyland

Although the management had maintained the recognition of a minority union under R. Kutchelar,

the workers led by CITU, after a one day's strike on June 2, went on indefinite strike from June 27 in pursuance of some long pending demands. The management ultimately had to come down and make settlement on July 12. It had also to agree to confirm the temporary workers in the plant.

Hosiery Workers' Strike Continues

The twenty thousand hosiery workers' strike jointly conducted by CITU, AITUC and LPF unions since April 19 for wage increase, still continues. The State Govt. was forced to intervene and order interim payment of 10 per cent wage increase and Rs. 47 as D.A. But the management has gone in for appeal. Meanwhile, the Secretaries of the unions went on indefinite hunger strike, and after they were arrested, another batch has gone in for indefinite hunger strike. Various fraternal unions are being contacted to build up a strong solidarity movement.

Textile Workers Prepare for Struggle

While the workers in the textile industry are preparing to submit new charter of demands, the employers have come up with the counter proposal of D.A. freeze and also depositing Rs. 250 per month to the employers to save the industry from the "crisis". CITU has decided to build up a strong campaign against this and forge ahead unitedly with the charter of demands along with other trade unions. "Yatras" are being undertaken in the Coimbatore and Madurai areas covering the major textile districts in the places. From July 24 to August 1, K. Ramani, president of the State CITU led a group to campaign among the workers in the districts of Coimbatore, Salem and Periyar, while V.P. Chintan, the Vice-President, led another group in Madurai, Ramnad, Nellai and Kanyakumari. Other districts are also being covered.

Movement Against Lockouts, Closures

A strong campaign is being built up against the number of closures, lockouts and mass dismissals which have affected thousands of workers in the State. The main participants in this united struggle are the CITU, AITUC, LPF and some other unions. After a joint meeting of the unions on June 15 at Madras and public meetings, in all industrial centres all over the state on June 30, the leadership of the three organisations conducted joint meeting of the leading cadres from July 11 to 15 at various places. A State level convention has been called on August 5 to focus attention on these offensives and on the anti-labour policy of the Central and the State Government. The united movement is being built up with the plan to organise a one day's general strike in the state,

At Pondicherry: The grim struggle of more than 7000 workers against the closure of the Anglo French Textile mill continues. The mill was closed about

main procession along with other several ones from various directions marched to the office of the Additional District Magistrate. A delegation of 25 leaders of various organisations led by Sunil Basu Roy, Bamapada Mukherjee and Bikash Chowdhury met the Additional District Magistrate and submitted a memorandum. The memorandum demanded immediate opening and nationalisation of Bengal Paper Mill and Pilkington Glass Factory; withdrawal of the closure notice from the two Refractory plants of Durgapur and Raniganj; increasing the productive capacities of Cycle Corporation of India, MAMC, ISCO, Burn Standard, etc; workers' participation in the public sector undertakings with equal status, etc.

Strike by UBI Employees

The employees of United Bank of India went on one day's token strike on July 6 in the four districts of Calcutta, Howrah, Hooghly and 24-Parganas. The call for the strike was given by the UBI Employees' joint Co-ordination Committee demanding reinstatement of the nine terminations and withdrawal of the punitive measures taken against twelve other workers. The workers of UBI have been on struggle since long against the repressive and victimisation policies of the management and against attack on their trade union rights. Avoiding to meet the union representatives, the top officials of the bank, e.g. the Chairman, General Manager (Personnel) and the Assistant Manager (Personnel) are abstaining from coming to their offices. They have obtained an injunction from the High Court against any type of demonstration around the premises of the bank. The employees however staged a massive rally in front of the main office on July 4 to campaign for the strike. To protest against the victimisations, an all India strike has been called on July 31.

TRIPURA

Successful Strike of Cinema Workers

The Seventythree day strike of the Cinema workers of the state came to a successful end on June 26, when the employers signed the agreement in a tripartite meeting at Agartala in presence of Nripen Chakrabarty, the Chief Minister. The workers joined duty on June 28 and the cinema halls opened from July 1. According to the agreement the employees of 'A' and 'B' categories of halls will get five increments over the new pay scales. The employees of the 'C' categories of halls will get increments at the rate of Rs. 20 along with a 50 per cent increase in D.A. Apart from this each worker will receive compensatory allowance and medical allowance at the rate of Rs. 20 each. Besides, all the temporary workers will be made permanent within 60 days. Another significant achievement was that all the employees, permanent and temporary of all categories of halls would receive an amount of Rs. 150 each for the strike period. In a statement issued to the press the Cinema Workers' Association which conducted the strike struggle, congratulated the workers for their determined fight and thanked

the 6th February Committee and all other mass and democratic organisations for extending solidarity to the struggle.

Bundh Against Murder of CITU Activists

At the call of the Tripura State Committee of CITU, a complete 12-hour bundh was observed at Agartala and Udaipur on July 9. In a most dastardly action, the Congress (I) hoodlums entered the G.B. Hospital on July 6 and murdered Com. Bidhu Bhusan Chakraborty a CITU activist and jute workers' leader. Another CITU activist Com. Khokan Bhowmik also succumbed to injuries. In a spontaneous protest, the bundh was observed in other places like Hafania, Amtoli, etc. The bundh was supported by the State CPI (M), the left front and a score of mass and democratic organisations and people from all walks of life.

In a letter on July 11 to Biren Dutta, the State CITU General Secretary and Labour Minister of Tripura, B.T. Ranadive, President, CITU conveyed condolence to the bereaved members of the deceased and denounced the Congress (I)'s barbarous attacks on the CITU cadres. While supporting the bundh call, he congratulated the working class and the people of Tripura for having given the right expression of anger against the barbarism of Congress (I) by responding to the bundh call overwhelmingly. Their response showed the heightening of class consciousness among the workers.

ORISSA

Conference of Signal and Telecom Staff

The Sixth Annual Conference of the Indian Railway Signal and Telecom Staff Association, Khurda Road Division was held on June 20 at Khurda Road under the presidency of K.K. Nair. About 200 delegates attended the conference. Participating in the discussions on the report, the delegates expressed their indignation over the discrimination inflicted by the Railway Board against the Division by depriving them from overtime, dress, leave reserves, training vacancy posts, consumable store, etc. The Conference unanimously adopted a charter of demands including the above and planned to make movements in pursuance of it. The conference also adopted resolutions against the divisive forces and against the danger of war and struggle for peace. The conference elected Pappa Rao as President and R.N. Mishra as Secretary. After the conference, an open session was held which was addressed among others by U.K. Pradhan of CITU, Dushmantha Das of Bhubaneswar City Co-ordination Committee, etc.

UTTAR PRADESH

Jail Bhara Movement

The long drawn struggle by CITU along with other unions demanding take over of J.K. Rayons and other closed factories acquired a new height

North Eastern Region observed a three day programme of continuous demonstrations in all Central Government offices from June 19 to 21. The agitation was called by the Regional Co-ordination Committee, N.E. Region demanding extension of Special (Duty) Allowance to all categories of Central Government employees in the N.E. Region. The Special (Duty) Allowance was originally sanctioned by the Finance Ministry only to such employees who have a'l India transfer liabilities. Later the Home Ministry allowed it to the state cadre officers who are under its Ministry. But the Finance Ministry refused to extend it to other employees who are controlled by the Finance Ministry. Resentment mounted among the employees for such blatant discrimination.

Earlier in the month of May, over one lakh employees from the five states and the two Union Territories of the N.E. Region submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister demanding extension of the benefit to all categories of employees. But there was no response from the Prime Minister. To mobilise the support of other fraternal unions and the people, conventions are being held in all the towns in the N.E. Region in July. A continuous three day relay dharna will be held in the month of August. Thereafter, a north regional convention will be held at Shillong to decide a programme of industrial actions in pursuance of the demand.

W. BENGAL

Victory of Hosiery Workers

The glorious 144-day strike of the fifty thousand hosiery workers of the state came to successful end when at the intervention of Jyoti Basu, the Chief Minister and Vice-President of CITU, the employers were compelled to sign the agreement on July 5, in a tripartite meeting presided over by Santi Ghatak, the Minister of State for Labour.

According to the settlement, there will be an increase of about Rs. 100 per worker including the D.A. Based on 458 points of CPI, the D.A. increase will be Re. 1 per point rise. After six months, it will be Rs. 2 per point rise. The previous rate was 0.69 paise per point. Regarding the daily wage workers, the employers agreed not to give wages below the minimum prescribed. According to the settlement, no penal action will be taken against any worker for participating in the strike.

Successful Settlement of Ananda Bazar Employees' Struggle

The 73-day determined strike of the employees of the Ananda Bazar Group of Publications came to a successful end on July 5, when at the intervention of Jyoti Basu, the Chief Minister, the management agreed to negotiate and settle the long standing demands of the employees.

The employees of Ananda Bazar started agitating one year back for settlement of their long pending demands, including the demand for pensions. They had to give strike notice also which was however withdrawn on the assurance given by the management to settle the demands. But instead of settling the demands, the management went back on its assurance and unleashed an attack on the trade union rights of the employees, served humiliating terms, dismissed 67 employees and brought in outsiders to work for them. A hectic movement followed thereafter and the employees went on indefinite strike from April 25. The management applied nefarious designs including successfully trapping some renowned intelligentsia to publish statements against the striking workers to confuse the people. But all its efforts failed to break the morale of the workers who received growing support from the fraternal unions and democratic organisations. The main point of the struggle focused at defending the trade union rights of the workers, which they did with exemplary determination. Not a single paper of this monopoly publishing house, viz, Ananda Bazar, Telegraph, Business Standard, etc could come-out all these days despite the desperate efforts of the management to bring them out with the help of professional strike breakers and some stooges of the management. At long length the management had to bow down before militant and united struggle of the employees.

The employees entered the office to resume their work coming in a huge procession joined by thousands of workers and people, coming even from the suburbs. Prior to this, a massive rally was organised at Esplanade East by the Co-ordination Committee of workers and addressed by Lakshmi Sen, the CITU leader, who announced about the assurance given the management to the Chief Minister. According to this assurance, the management would negotiate all the demands within one month and will not take any penal action against the strikers. The case of the 67 dismissed employees would also be negotiated upon. Lakshmi Sen called upon the employees to remain steadfast with their vigil till the negotiations on all the points were successfully over. The Co-ordination Committee would continue to function till that time. Among others who greeted the workers were Manoranjan Roy, General Secretary of the State CITU, Kamalapti Roy of AITUC and Ajoy Mukherjee of the State Government Employees' Co-ordination Committee.

Rally Against Lockouts, Closures

A ten thousand strong procession was organised by the Burdwan District Committee of CITU at Asansol on July 4 against closures and lockouts. The procession was joined by workers, peasants students, youth, women and salaried employees, coming from the collieries and industrial areas of Raniganj, Jamuria, Rupnaryanpur, Hindustan Cables, Chittaranjan, Dhakeshwari and other places and covered at the Municipal Park, Asansol. The

before the Chief Minister on July 10. The call for the demonstration was given by the Federation of Public Sector Employees and Workers demanding immediate payment of arrear salaries and settlement of other long pending demands. The demonstration was addressed by Yogeshwar Gope, President of the State CITU and Ram Nandan Prasad, General Secretary of the federation. The leaders called upon the employees to further consolidate their unity and step up the agitation to compel the Government to accede to the demands.

ANDAMAN & NICOBAR

Meeting of State Organising Committee of CITU

The Central Executive Committee of the CITU State Organising Committee met at Port Blair from June 17 to 23 under the presidentship of Mohd Ali, the Vice-President, in absense of the President, N. Vasudevan. The meeting discussed about the struggle of the plantation workers at Katchal, being conducted by the Plantation Labour Union, and decided to extend support to the struggle. In a resolution, the meeting demanded of the Forest and Development Corporation to settle the dispute

CITU Denounces De-Recognition of Unions by CIL

B.T. Ranadive, President and Samar Mukherjee M.P., General Secretary, Centre of Indian Trade Unions have issued the following statement on July 26:

We are surprised to note from the news published in a section of the press that the Coal India management has derecognised five leftist trade unions including CITU in C.C.L. and W.C.L. The CITU denounces this move as it would be the gravest provocation to the unions who representing the genuine grievances of the coal miners are seeking settlement of the issues.

The CITU would like to point out that such a capricious move at this juncture when the subject is being dealt with by the highest people in authority including the Prime Minister herself, constitutes not only a sabotage in the efforts for normalising the situation through a meeting of the Joint Bipartite Committee for the Coal Industry but also an attempt to defy the ministerial authorities.

The CITU demands that stern action be taken against the bureaucracy so that they are not able to bring such a vital industry to ruination and cause a serious set back to all industrial activities through a vindictive attitude of confrontation.

immediately. The meeting also adopted resolutions demanding regular passenger shipping service to and from the mainland, on price rise; demanding Rs. 500 as the minimum wage, etc.

In pursuance of the demands as adopted in the above resolutions, the meeting decided to follow the following programmes:

To hold General Body meetings of all unions; poster campaign in all the islands to popularise the demands; submission of demand notices to all the departments and a Protest Day to be observed in all the islands on August 1 by holding dharnas, wearing black badges, processions and public meetings. In addition to above, the meeting decided to organise corner meetings at head quarters from July 25 to 31.

(from page 10)

14. No person shall be required to enter a kiln when dangerous fumes or gasses are likely to be present. Employers shall maintain first-aid box and report all cases of total accident a serious bodily injury to the authority prescribed by the Govt.

15. Children below 14 years of age shall not be employed in the industry.

16. Towards social security cover, it was decided that Bonus, EPF, Gratuity and leave and holiday entitlement shall be clubbed together and the management shall pay every workmen 20 per cent wages for two years and than 25 per cent from the third year of which 8 per cent in the first two years and 10 per cent from the third year after the Act comes into force will be paid in cash to the workmen at the end of each season while the remaining 12 and 15 per cent shall be deposited in bank account opened in the name of the worker as social security.

17. Being a seasonal industry, provision was made for payment of retaining allowance to the workmen for the period when there was no work subject to the condition that the person has worked for six months or the full reason which ever is lesser and has returned and worked for the full season. The rate of allowance shall be calculated on the basis of a minimum of 10 per cent for the first two years, 15 per cent for the third year and 20 per cent from the fourth year of his service with the same employer.

The committee desired that the legislation should be brought in the statute book as early as possible at least before the next season. The final draft will be placed on July 31 for approval of the Committee.

The CITU was represented by Nrisingha Chakraborty in the Tripartite Committee.

when the workers started a Jail Bharo movement from July 16 under the banner of the State Campaign Committee. The J.K. Rayon is lying closed from May, 1983. Despite a series of movements, including dharnas before the Central Commerce and Labour Ministries and a number of representations made by the State and Central CITU leaders and the assurance given by the Ministers thereto, both the State and Central Government are sitting pretty over the starving mass of 8000 workers and their families. The total number of workers affected by the various closures at Kanpur, Bereilly, Varanasi, Meerut, Allahabad, Bulandshar, Shaharanpur, etc. are over 25,000, their family members totalling to about 1,25,000. The jail bharo movement will continue up to July 31. Till July 19, over 300 hundred workers including women and children were arrested. In a statement issued to the press on July 19, Har Sahay Singh, President of the State CITU and Shankar Dayal Tiwari, Secretary of the State CPI(M) condemned the Government for subserving the interests of the Singhanian group and other monopolists and demanded immediate take over of the J.K. Rayon and other closed units.

Convention by Opposition Parties

Several left and opposition parties in the state met at Lucknow on July 19 and decided to call a state convention at Lucknow on July 31. Shankar Dayal Tiwari and Daulat Ram represented the CPI(M) in the meeting. The other parties represented were CPI, Lok Tantrik Samajwadi Party, Janata, Congress(S), Congress(I), and Janwadi Party. The R.S.P. and Forward Block sent their agreement with the decision. The convention will chalk out plans of movement in pursuance of the 11-point demands of the 17 Opposition Parties, including the demand for take over of the closed units of Uttar Pradesh. In a resolution it supported the jail bharo movement launched by the State Campaign Committee for the take over of the closed plants including the J.K. Rayons.

BIHAR

Railway Contract Labourers' Conference

The 15th Annual Conference of Indian Railways Coal Ash and Transshipment Handling Mazdoor Union was held at Jamalpur on June 23 and 24. The conference was inaugurated by S.K. Dhar, Secretary General, AILRSA and convenor of NCCR. 130 delegates from 21 branches of W. Bengal and Bihar attended the conference and 23 delegates participated in the discussion on the General Secretary's report. On 23rd evening a seminar on "Mechanisation, Automation and their effect" was held. Participating in the seminar Prof. Arjun Prasad, leader of the University Teachers' Association and S.K. Dhar explained the job killing role of automation and mechanisation in the capitalist system and urged upon the workers to fight against them.

Samar Mukherjee, M.P., General Secretary of CITU and Nrisingha Chakraborty, Secretary, CITU, addressed the conference on 24th. Samar Mukherjee explained the international and national situation and drew attention of the workers to the growing danger of nuclear devastation embarked upon by the U.S. imperialists, and also pointed to growing danger from the divisive and secessionist forces, helped by the imperialist agencies, disrupting the unity of the workers and the country. He urged upon the workers to fight these twin dangers to maintain the unity and integrity of the country and also to struggle for peace which is the precondition for the development of working class struggles and proletarian internationalism. He made a scathing attack on the Government for its criminal callousness over the fifty thousand Coal Ash and Transshipment workers who although working directly for the railways, have been kept as contract workers. He called upon the workers to intensify the united struggles for being made permanent workers under the railways. Nrisingha Chakraborty also called upon them to unitedly fight for being made permanent so that they can get all the facilities at par with other workers. The conference adopted resolutions on struggle for peace, on national integrity, against price rise, for abolition of contract system, etc. The conference elected a new Zonal Committee with Bimal Gupta as President and Sunil Chandra Roy as Zonal Secretary. After the conference a mass meeting was held which was addressed among others by Samar Mukherjee, Nrisingha Chakraborty, S.K. Dhar, etc.

State Public Sector Employees Demonstrate

About 5000 employees of the different state public sector undertakings of Bihar staged a demonstration

Extension of EPF in Industries

Through a notification issued on June 29, 1984, by the Ministry of Labour, the Government has extended the EPF in the establishments of certain more industries. Following is the notification :

In exercise of the powers conferred by the first proviso to Section 6 of the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952 (19 of 1952), the Central Government hereby specifies with effect from the 1st July, 1984 every establishments in the following Industries/Classes of establishments and in which fifty or more persons are employed, as the establishment to which the said proviso shall apply: 1. Iron Ore Mines, 2. Manganese Mines, 3. Dolomite Mines, 4. Diamond Mines, 5. Chromite Mines, 6. Graphite Mines.

CITU Supports Struggle of Airlines Employees

B.T. Ranadive, President, Centre of Indian Trade Unions has issued the following statement on July 2:

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions supports the struggle of the employees of Indian Airlines at Bombay who are on strike against police atrocities, and arbitrary, vindictive penal actions taken by the management. It also congratulates the members of Air Corporation Employees Union who, in solidarity with the Bombay employees, have struck work for a day on June 28, 1984. This token strike has exposed that the top heavy management of the Indian Airlines, do not have regular job for the innumerable officers who could, therefore, be pressed into service to manage the work during the strike.

The CITU warns the management of Indian Airlines that their vindictive attitude towards the workers who have been proved to be victims of the capricious allegations from some passenger and subjected to police brutalities, is likely to prolong the confrontation. They should immediately withdraw the penal measures, reinstate the employees and have a negotiated settlement of the dispute.

The CITU demands that the Govt. should intervene for a negotiated settlement of the dispute so that normalcy is restored in this vital industry and the passengers are saved from the present difficulties.

CITU Criticises the Dismissal of Farooq Abdullah Ministry

B.T. Ranadive, President, Centre of Indian Trade Unions has issued the following statement on July 3:

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions strongly criticises the action of the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir in dismissing the ministry of Dr. Farooq Abdullah and installation of G.M. Shah ministry in its place in a most undemocratic manner. Once

CITU General Council Meeting

For the General Council Meeting of CITU to be held at Jaipur from August 24 to 26, all comrades are requested to inform Com. P.L. Shrimali, Rajasthan State Committee of CITU, B-4, M.L.A. Qrs., Jaipur-302001, about their arrival and return journey reservations. For return journey they should send cheques or bank drafts drawn in the name of P.L. Shrimali.

again the powers conferred on Governors vide Article 356 of our Constitution have been misused.

The CITU reiterates its demand of repeal of Art. 356 of the Constitution.

Electricity Employees Demand Change in Power Policy

The National Executive of the Electricity Employees' Federation of India which met at Delhi on June 30 and July 1, under the presidency of E. Balanandan, M.P., Treasurer of CITU, demanded drastic changes in the power policy of the Government of India and double up the power output within a decade.

It also decided to call an All India Conference of the electricity employees representing all the trade unions, and organisations of engineers to discuss and finalize a national programme of action in consultation with other organisations.

The meeting expressed serious concern over the heavy repression unleashed by many electricity boards and State Governments against the employees. Those in authority are making the employees scapegoats to cover up their sheer inefficiency and corruption.

The meeting decided to observe the 3rd August as anti-repression day throughout the country by holding meetings and demonstrations.

It decided to hold Dharnas before the Central Government offices on 12th of September in protest against the Central Government for not taking action on the memorandum of demands submitted by the federation.

The meeting also adopted resolutions on price rise, flood havoc and the political situation in Punjab in which they appealed to the workers to fight for communal harmony and fight against the divisive forces.

Comrade Sudhin Kumar

With deep sorrow the Centre of Indian Trade Unions mourns the sudden demise of Com. Sudhin Kumar at Calcutta on July 18. Com. Sudhin Kumar was the General Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist Party of India and one of the Vice-Presidents of CITU. Com. Sudhin Kumar joined the students' movement during his academic career and later became a wholtime worker in RCPI from 1936. He had to undergo jails several times. He was the Joint Convenor of the first United Front in West Bengal in 1967 and then became the Food Minister in the United Front Ministry in 1969. He served in the same capacity in the first Left Front Ministry in 1977 also.

Assam State Council of CITU Meets

THAT the left forces—the CPI (M) and the CITU in particular, are the main target of attack of the secessionist forces and that the bureaucracy is in hand in gloves with them, is once again proved by the happenings on July 16-17, 1984. After three and a half years, the Assam State Council of CITU was scheduled to meet at Rangapara on July 16-17, 1984 with Samar Mukherjee, M.P., General Secretary, CITU attending the same. Naturally the Assam State Committee of CITU planned a big rally of workers on July 17 and obtained permission from the Police and civil authorities in advance. Preparations of the Council meeting at Rangapara, which is a strong base of CITU, particularly in the Tea Estates, therefore created much enthusiasm among the workers. A handful of secessionist forces decided that the CITU would not be allowed to hold the rally and the meeting. Hence they gave a call for local bundh on July 17 and the Police and Civil authorities withdrew the permission granted long back. Facing all these machinations, the meeting was held and a large number of workers turned out to hear their CITU leaders, though the procession could not be held.

The Council meeting was inaugurated by Achintya Bhattacharya. Then Amal Ghosh Dastidar, General Secretary of the State Committee submitted his report which contained a graphic description of the events of the past three years. He stated that in the last meeting of the Council held at Kokrajhar in 1981, it was noted that being unnerved at the growing popularity of CITU with batches after batches of workers from various Tea Estates leaving INTUC and joining CITU, a concerted attack was launched. Murder, rape, arson and beatings of workers had become the order of the day. If the workers resisted the police came in the scene and opened fire. Hundreds of workers were arrested and one died in Titabor police lock up due to torture. The managements victimised the leaders of the CITU unions and the followers of AASU, ASGP forced the workers to follow them and thus seventeen unions were snuffed out of existence during this period. A number of new unions had come up despite all these. But it is nevertheless a fact that all our unions in organised sector have been thus demolished. The report pointed out the efforts for developing united struggle of the working class in Assam. It noted that in recent times other T.U. centres have grown lukewarm. The report self-critically analysed the fact that the majority of the Council members being young and inexperienced have not taken into account the fact that the moment the workers are organised, they tend to burst out because of years of exploitation that had been forced on them. A mature leadership would take into account the state of the organisation and determine the course of the struggle. In some cases, this did not happen and the leadership also got affected by the wrath of the workers. Pointing out the incidents at Nagrijuli, Chhoibari, Silghat and other places, the report pointed out that helping formation of Kisan Sabha and

developing of democratic movement in and around all trade unions, must be the responsibility of the working class, as without the support of a broad democratic movement, trade union movement cannot exist in isolated place. The report discussed all these aspects and decided upon the course of action to be taken to consolidate the organisation.

Samar Mukherjee, addressed the Council meeting as well as the mass meeting attended by thousands of workers. He drew the attention of the workers to the challenge which the divisive forces have thrown before working class. Lauding the determined battle which is being waged by the CITU in Assam, he exhorted the workers to carry forward united struggle for defence of the national unity and as well as for betterment of living standards.

ILO-DANIDA Seminar

The I.L.O. Regional Office at New Delhi in Co-operation with Danish Agency for International Development (DANIDA) held a seminar on Economic Education for workers at Mussoorie on May 21-31, 1984. 23 representatives from 9 Central Trade Unions including CITU participated. CITU was represented by S.N. Solanki (Haryana) and Ranjana Nirula (Delhi).

Four resource persons who conducted the seminar tried to keep the discussions on general level without mentioning the Indian context. Due to a firm stand having been taken by the CITU representatives, the subject was discussed in the context of our country, and in many cases, the CITU's views were accepted as common understanding.

It was noted in a group report that, "Protection of real wage means maintaining the status quo prevalent in a particular base year. Even full neutralisation in dearness allowance does not actually increase the wages as such. So it is the desire of this group that trade unions should agitate not only to protect the real wage but for the increase of the real wage as such. It is also the view of this group that in the matter of collective bargaining including public sector, there should not be any interference by the Bureau of Public Enterprises or Government."

The final Report therefore had to record this, though in a round about way as, "All the participants noted with serious concern the attempts of some government agencies to unnecessarily intervene in the collective bargaining process, particularly in the public sector enterprises in India. In the interest of a more stable and mutually beneficial and productive labour-management relation in this sector, they stressed that such interventions must be seriously avoided." On the question of Transnational Companies (TNCs), the main report noted as follows:

Foreign investments in the form of multinational companies must not be made on the basis of taking advantage of cheap labour, or bring in obsolete and polluting industries. Effective safeguards must be established to consider the national sovereignty of the host country."

Raptakos Field Workers to Court Arrest

THE Federation of Medical Representatives' Associations of India (FMRAI), in its Working Committee meeting held at Calcutta on June 23 and 24 decided a court arrest programme by the medical representatives of Raptakos Brett before the Parliament from August 13 to 24.

The management of Raptakos Brett, a monopoly drug company, terminated the services of about 115 medical representatives all over India and illegally stopped the salaries of over 150 representatives, apart from issuing charge sheets to a large number. All these draconian penalties were inflicted because they stuck to their organisation, FMRAI and demanded settlement of the charter of demand submitted by it on their behalf in July, 1983. A countrywide agitational programme including strike actions were launched paralysing the company's functions all over India.

The management floated a stooge union and arrived at an agreement with it, which it tried to impose on all the medical representatives. But unable to break the unity of the workers, it recruited anti-socials and deployed hired goondas to break the movements. At Calcutta, a gang of armed hoodlums attacked the field workers on the midnight of July 8, during a programme of continuous all India dharna. Several workers were injured and one Com. Arun Roy Chowdhury was forcefully kidnapped in a taxi, beaten severely and then thrown out thinking him to be dead. The workers fought back and a massive demonstration was held before the Company's office the next day as well as before the local police station demanding immediate arrest of the culprits. The same day, early morning at Patna also the dharna participants were confronted by a group of management's hoodlums with a revolver. But the undeterred workers retaliated and the gangsters had to beat retreat.

The programme of courting arrest as taken by FMRAI will be staged by the field workers of Raptakos along with other field workers zone wise. Dharnas will be staged before the Parliament and a group of workers will court arrest each day from August 13 to 24.

Mass retrenchment in Indo-Pharma: While the struggle against Raptakos acquired a new height, the management of Indo Pharma, another monopoly drug concern, suddenly closed down its Marketing Division on June 4 and retrenched all the 154 medical representatives of the Company. The All India Chemical and Pharmaceutical Employees' Federation comprising of the workers of the plants, offices and the field has drawn up programmes on both the issues. An all India Protest Day was observed on July 18. Rallies were held in all the major cities, towns and districts in the country along with other fraternal trade unions. Gate meetings and demonstrations were organised in all the plants and also in the establishments of Raptakos and Indo Pharma in the country. A massive convention was also held at Calcutta July 25 to mobilise support of the different trade

unions and other mass organisations.

On both the issues, the AICAPEF and FMRAI have approached the Central Government which has not yet intervened, nor even replied to the representation made by CITU. A delegation of AICAPEF is scheduled to meet the Ministers of Labour and Chemicals and Fertilisers shortly. The Working Committee meeting of AICAPEF which is scheduled to meet in August will chalk out the next course of sections.

Countrywide Dharna by State Govt. Employees

IN pursuance of the decision by the National Executive of the All India State Government Employees' Federation, a countrywide dharna programme was launched by the State Government employees on May 29. The programme was launched as a precursor to the forthcoming September 4 all India strike (reported in the previous issue) demanding check on the price line; 8.33 per cent bonus to the State employees' interim relief at Central pattern pending pay parity with the public sector employees; full Central D.A. of State employees; vacating victimisations and scrapping of all anti-employee enactment of the Central and various State Governments, etc.

In W. Bengal, a mammoth rally of thirty thousand employees was held at Calcutta and ten thousand employees participated in a night long dharna. The programme was observed in districts, sub-divisions and block levels also. The State employees in Bihar also staged the dharna through the state. Successful observance of dharna was reported from Kerala also where 3000 employees have been involved in false police cases. Many employees are still under suspension and they are not getting subsistence allowance even. At Kerala, a large number of probationers have been served with termination orders. In Tamilnadu, dharnas were observed at Madras and sixteen other districts. Teachers also participated in the programme in several districts. In Maharashtra, because of the communal holocaust, dharnas could not be staged in 15 out of 30 districts. In the 15 districts the programme was observed successfully. In Orissa, the programme was implemented at Bhubaneswar and seven other districts and project headquarters. In Haryana, despite the disturbed situation, dharnas were held in eight district headquarters. In other places also token dharnas were observed within the limitations of the prohibitory orders. In Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh also the dharna was observed successfully all over the state.

The federation adopted measures to launch massive campaigns for the success of the strike. It has also appealed to all other associations which are not affiliated to it, to join the strike in order to carry forward the united struggle of the State Government employees for their justified demands.

Public Sector Employees Observe Demands Week

THE public sector employees all over India who are on central wage pattern observed a Demands Week from July 17 to 23 protesting against the directive of the BPE to change their D.A. entitlements from the existing central D.A. rates to the industrial D.A. pattern.

So far, employees of a number of a public sector and departmentally run undertakings are on the Third Pay Commission pay scales and D.A. formula. The industrial D.A. rate, i.e. Rs. 1.30 per point rise in Consumer Price Index is far lower than the existing central D.A. rate which these employees have been enjoying. By the switch over each employee will be losing from Rs. 201.60 to Rs. 1141.20 in differential for the price rise during the preceding eight months alone.

Apart from attacking their D.A. entitlements, the Government also made a blatant discrimination against them by refusing to pay the interim relief which was allowed to the Central Government employees. These particular sections of employees have thus been the target of a double attack by the Government — they were deprived from the interim relief without any valid reason, and at the same time were targetted to lose the D.A. amounts by the switch over. The attitude of the Government has further been laid bare by the fact that it tried to blackmail the employees by offering to pay the interim relief provided they accept the industrial D.A. pattern. It is a most frantic and heinous effort of the Government to impose the so-called industrial D.A. rate of Rs. 1.30 per point on these sections of employees — an attempt to desperately hang on to the notorious guidelines of BPE, when these were completely thrown overboard by the well organised and militant workers of the vital industries like coal, steel, etc.

These employees however, are organising themselves and are on the path of united struggles irrespective of their affiliations. A joint Action Committee was formed in a meeting on June 15 (reported in the previous issue), which chalked out the programme of the Demands Week. The Unions which have already joined this JAC are from DTC, ITDC, EPI, WAPCOS, Bharat Leather, NSIC, CWC, CCI, FCI, NFDC, BLC, Bongaigon Refinery, etc.

Addressing the first day's gate meeting at Kailash Building at Kasturba Gandhi Marg, Delhi, P.K. Ganguly, Secretary, CITU made a scathing criticism of the Government's policy and urged upon the employees to coordinate with all the other public sector employees' organisations and step up country-wide united action with a determined bid to defeat the machinations of the BPE and the Government's designs to cut their D.A. rate instead of cutting down the price rise.

The other action programmes of the joint Action Committee include holding of dharnas before the residences of the Union Finance Minister and the Director General of the BPE.

Central Govt. Employees Struggle

THE National Executive of the confederation of Central Govt. Employees and Workers met on July 7 and decided to observe a Call Attention Day on August 7 all over the Country by organising joint mass rallies with other sections of Central Government employees.

The programme was organised to register protest against the breach of agreement by the Government on D.A. by not sanctioning the increases as and when they fall due and demanding immediate release in cash of the four instalments which have already fallen due and submission of the Fourth Pay Commission report by October, 1984, to which the Government is committed. It is also to be noted that although the Government had agreed to the principle of bonus to all and had to pay 15 days' ad hoc bonus to some sections of its employees in the face of hard struggles waged by them, it has not finalised the scheme to pay bonus to all.

In the above background, the Confederation took the action programmes to compel the Government to accede to the demands. The meeting also decided to stage a massive day long dharna before the office of the Fourth Pay Commission at Delhi on August 7. In addition to the above actions, the meeting also decided to observe Pay Boycott Day on August 31 to record the vehement indignation of the Central Government employees over the recalcitrant attitude of the Government towards those burning issues.

Kishan Sabha Demands Increase in Paddy Support Price

U. Raman and Santimoy Ghosh, respectively President and Secretary of All India Kisan Sabha have issued the following joint statement to the press on July 20:

The Government has once again come out with a low support price for Paddy ranging between Rs. 137 to Rs. 145 per quintal, which is only 3.8 per cent more than the previous year's price of Rs. 132 to Rs. 140 per quintal. It is well known that in this one year official wholesale price index has been up by about 9 per cent and consumer price index by about 15 per cent.

Coming in the background of all the tall talks about giving incentives to paddy growers particularly in the low productive traditional paddy growing areas of Eastern and Southern India in the approach to the 7th Plan which is on the anvil, this low increase in paddy support prices, is actually a mere eyewash. If the Government is really serious to see that paddy growers in large parts of the country are able to meet the increase in cost of production including the prices of inputs, they must immediately enhance the support price to Rs. 145 per quintal for the coarsest variety, which All India Kisan Sabha has been demanding.

Conference of Delhi Janawadi Mahila Samity

THE Janwadi Mahila Samity, Delhi held its Second State Conference on June 29 and 30 at the Ashoklata Jain Hall named after its first President. The 214 delegates who attended the Conference deeply grieved Ashoklata's absence but at the end of the Conference they were no doubt consoled by the fact that the organisation of which she was a founder member had undoubtedly moved forward on the path charted by her.

The Conference was preceded by preparations by the units throughout Delhi and Faridabad. General Body Meetings were held in all the areas and delegates were elected. In some areas house to house collection was made, in others street plays by Jana Natya Manch were organised as part of the Conference campaign. For the first time, in many areas women themselves formed groups and pasted posters—the Conference poster exhibited a striking photograph of Ashoka leading a demonstration. It was perhaps because of the preparation that went on before the Conference that the delegate attendance was cent per cent. In fact when the State Committee had proposed a two day Conference some were sceptical as to how many delegates would attend the second day—in fact the attendance on the second day was only marginally less. Another first attempt made this time was the organisation of a creche. This also had a positive impact on the Conference deliberations because usually the children make such a din that it is difficult for the mothers to concentrate.

The Conference began with the hoisting of the flag by Vimal Ranadive, Vice-President of the AIDWA who along with Kanak Mukherjee, also Vice-President of the AIDWA led the delegates in paying homage at the martyrs column. This was followed by revolutionary songs by Parcham. The Presidium consisting of Ranjana Nirula, Kalindi Deshpande, Kamla, Lilavati and Kalavati was then elected. The Conference passed condolence resolutions and paid homage to the memory of Promod Dasgupta, Desraj Chaddha, AIDWA EC member Shipra Bhowmick and its own President Ashoklata Jain. Kanak Mukherjee then made the inaugural speech in which she laid stress on the organisation of a strong women's movement as part of the larger democratic movement of the workers and peasants and other toiling sections of the people. Her speech was punctuated with enthusiastic applause from the delegates and invitees. The inaugural session was concluded with a most moving ceremony in which two young girls from economically deprived families were handed over scholarships for Class IX and X by the Ashoklata Jain Memorial Committee. On the occasion, Dr. Moonis Raza, Ashoka's teacher in JNU and Dr. Vina Mazumdar who are both members of the Scholarship Committee, spoke.

The delegate session then started with the presentation of the report by Rita Karat. The

report detailed the condition in Delhi and the issues which came up during the last two years and the organisation's perspective on them. It included an issue-wise report of the struggles launched and noted that there was hardly a single month in the last two years when there was no programme. It also included a detailed report on organisation pointing out the positive developments and also the weaknesses. Twenty four delegates spoke on the report. The difference was that at the last Conference in many cases women had to be persuaded to speak. This time—for the 24 speakers—it was an inspiring experience hearing them speaking. The majority of these were women only 4 years ago were confined to silent domestic drudgery—and here they were, one after another coming up to speak not only of their own experience but to generalise on these experiences and reach certain conclusions, mainly connected with the rule of the Congress(I) and the need for organisation and struggle. Of course the level of consciousness should in no way be exaggerated—because as the report pointed out—many of the members for instance were victims of casteist and obscurantist propaganda, etc. However, the point to be noted is that in comparison with the previous Conference the level of discussion and interest of the delegates were much better. This should be seen in the background of the composition of the delegates. The Credentials Committee report presented by Babli Gupta showed that the overwhelming majority of the delegates were from the working class—were under 35 and married. Two-thirds were either completely deprived of formal education or had studied only till Class IV and V. 40 were employed although a large number said they required employment.

The Conference passed resolutions on Peace, National Integration, for more employment opportunities for women and demanding implementation of the Joint Select Committee's recommendations for amendment of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.

Greetings to the Conference were made by the CPI(M) Delhi Committee Secretary, Prakash Karat, Chacha Shadiram, President of Delhi CITU, by Subodh Verma, Secretary of the State SFI and Pushpinder Singh, Secretary of the Democratic Teachers' Front.

The concluding address was made by Com. Vimal Ranadive who inspired the delegates with the All India picture of the struggles being fought by women under the banner of the AIDWA.

The Conference elected a 25 member State Committee with nine office-bearers with Indu Agnihotri as President and Rita Karat as General Secretary.

At the Conclusion of the Conference Jan Natya Manch staged a play for the delegates watched with much enthusiasm.

Campaign for Parity in Wages

THE Post card campaign addressed to the Prime Minister demanding parity in wages with public sector employees as decided upon by the NCCR was enthusiastically responded to by all railwaymen. The organisers at several centres had to reprint the cards as the first print was exhausted in 2/3 days showing that a great resentment prevails among the railwaymen.

Zonal Convention of NCCR

Zonal Conventions of NCCR has been held at Malda Town on July 2 for NF Railway and at Secunderabad on July 17 for South Central Railway.

The convention at Malda was attended by 602 delegates from all over the NF Railway. Fraternal delegates from 12 July Committee, Bank Employees' Federation, Life Insurance Employees' Association and Central Government Employees' Co-ordination Committee and also the Chairman, Malda Municipality greeted the convention. S.K. Dhar, N.S. Bhangoo and Srikrishna all three Joint Conveners of Central NCCR attended the Convention and explained the aims and objects of forming NCCR. They exhorted the delegates to intensify campaign for unity of railwaymen to secure basic demands of railwaymen. The Convention demanded:

1. Interim Report of 4th Pay Commission on the question of parity in wages with Public Sector Employees.

2. Immediate payment of further due four instalments D.A. in cash and second instalment of Interim Relief of Rs. 100.

The convention elected a Standing Committee with three members from each sponsoring organisations like AILRSA, UCR and IRWF and General Secretaries of other organisations. A.K. Chatterjee (UCR), Sanjit Sarkar (AILRSA) and J.M. Biswas (IRWF) were elected as Joint Convenors.

The Convention of South Central Railway was attended by 300 delegates with prominent leaders of different local organisations greeting the Convention. S.K. Dhar and Shrikrishna, Joint Convenors of NCCR attended this.

The convention adopted one main resolution ratifying the resolutions and the programme adopted by the Central NCCR. A Zonal Committee of NCCR has been formed with F.V. Saldanha (AILRSA), Disengha Raju (IRWF) and Ahmmad Moinuddin (AIRFC) as Joint convenors.

Both these Conventions decided to organise massive demonstrations on August 20 at the Zonal level.

Meetings, Conventions

The Annual General Meeting of All India Yard Cabin and Traffic Staff Association was held at Kazipet, South Central Railway on June 26-28. 300 delegates from seven Zonal railways attended the conference. Some attempts were made to create impediments in the way of holding the meeting,

which had to be resisted by all sections of militant railway workers. Samar Mukherjee, M.P., General Secretary, CITU and S.K. Dhar, Secretary General AILRSA greeted the delegates' session and addressed the mass meeting. Samar Mukherjee was given a rousing reception. The meeting elected Dinesh Bhattacharya (NF Railway) as President, Surma Singh (E. Rly), as Working President, Suresh Prasad (E. Rly.), as General Secretary, D.K. Sarkar (N.F. Rly.) as Joint General Secretary and R.N. Mahanty (E. Rly.) as Central Treasurer.

The ZCCR of South Eastern Railway met at Anara on July 13, and decided to activate the programme of postcard campaign and demonstration before the General Manager on August 20.

Grievances of Project Casual Labour

The Project Casual Labour have so long been discriminated in respect of being granted temporary status and absorption in the railway. Orders were issued in the year 1981 to create 40 per cent Construction Reserve Post, which have not been implemented. N.F. Railway Construction Labour Association had been representing for implementation of the orders.

On 1st June, the Railway Board have issued further orders to treat the Project Casual Labour as temporary staff from 1-1-84 after completion of 360 days continuous service in the railways.

Samar Mukherjee, M.P., General Secretary, CITU has taken up this case with the Minister for Railways stating that these orders are still discriminatory and all the Casual Labour should be brought at par. He has also supported the case of Project Casual Labour of NF Railways for creation of Construction Reserve Posts.

In the Southern Railway a batch of 150 Project Casual Labour has been retrenched in February, without observing the direction of Kerala High Court. These workmen have started an indefinite hunger strike by batches before the office of the Chief Engineer from July 11. The first batch was arrested and taken away after 5 days. The second batch is on hunger strike from July 17. Samar Mukherjee has taken up this issue also with the General Manager, Southern Railway and Minister for railways.

Vindictive Punishment on Loco-Running Staff

The authorities of South Central Railway have vindictively punished Sunderraiiah, Branch Secretary, LRSA, because he asked relief after 14 hours' duty. The incident happened on July 5, 1983 and since then he has not been allowed to work as Driver (Diesel) so far. Over and above he has been served with a major penalty charge sheet. In a letter dated 10th July, 1984 Samar Mukherjee, drew the attention of the Railway Minister to the facts of the case and demanded immediate intervention in this case.

rejected by the 7000 members of the unions. The ILO Governing Body in its meeting held at Geneva in May also criticised this ban by the Thatcher Government and ruled that it was against Convention Nos. 87 and 151 on Freedom of Association and Labour Relations which guaranteed the workers without distinction to form and join Associations of their own choosing. The High Court ruling came when the Government's morale was at the lowest having been mauled a few weeks back by the House of Lords which turned down the Government's Bill for the abolition of the Greater London Council and other Metropolitan Councils. The Lords considered the move to scrap elected councils and replacing them by unelected Tory representatives as undemocratic.

In the midst of this pitched labour-capital confrontation, London's Trafalgar Square reverberated with the cries of "No Cruise" as Ronald Reagan left Britain, on the final day — June 9 of his recent visit. Two lakh marchers coming from all walks of life shouted the slogan to the war mongering U.S. President: "Take your Missiles with You". Addressing the rally where trade union banners were prominently in evidence, Bruce Kert, General Secretary of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) greeted the mineworkers for their valiant struggle to save jobs and the industry. Linking the two causes he said that the Government's plan to run down the mines was to increase the nuclear plants. He said, "we have a contract to go forward together until we produce a more sane world."

Events show that the present confrontation of labour with the Tory Government is likely to be more bitter and prolonged.

USA

2500 Copper workers in USA are on strike for the last one year. July 1 was the first anniversary of the longest strike in the history of US Copper industry. The strike started when the Phelps Dodge Corporation demanded cuts in wages and benefits amounting to 6000 dollars per year for each worker. Since then, the management has refused to negotiate with the union to end the strike despite a loss of 63 million dollars in revenue of the company. The strike is being jointly conducted by 13 unions and has affected a number of the Company's mines in Arizona and Texas. The most violent incident occurred at Clifton on May 5 when with the help of professional strike breakers, the police swooped on the demonstrating strikers, fired tear gas shells, injured a large number and arrested ten strikers. In the following days troops were deployed at Morenci with helicopters flying overhead.

Strike foreseen by miners: The United Mine Workers' current contract with the managements expires on September 30. Six times during the last 17 years the miners had to go on lengthy strikes for signing of new contract after expiry of the previous ones. While the current talks opened five months before, there are abundant signs that the workers will be compelled to launch strike actions. The

union's strike fund already exceeds thirty million dollars and full scale strike preparations are further augmenting this fund.

Job cut in General Motors: General Motors which cut off from its various subsidiaries in different countries 7,46,000 jobs in 1980, followed by 6,91,000 in 1983, are again planning to cut off 80,000 jobs in USA by 1986, while forcing the rest of the workers to work for 50 to 60 hours in a week. Their plan is also to cut 13,000 jobs in FRG and 12,000 jobs in Brazil apart from closing down two plants in Britain. They have already started sacking the trade unionists in Columbia where resistance by the workers have been stepped up.

West Germany

The longest and most expensive strike in FRG since the World War-2, demanding a 35-hours' work a week ended on June 30. An agreement was signed between the managements and the Metal Workers' Unions at Hessen and Struttgart regions with a compromise at 38.5-hour week. The strike at Hessen lasted for six weeks, while at Struttgart it was for seven weeks. The strike is estimated to have caused the economy about 9 billion Marks (about 3.2 billion dollars). The auto industry was particularly hit.

Urugua

A massive strike jointly conducted by the trade unions and supported by all democratic forces coinciding with the military dictatorship's celebration of its 11th anniversary on June 27, completely paralysed all functions in Urugua. The industries were grounded to a halt, shops were closed, transport was disrupted, banks and schools were closed, news papers did not appear and even radio broadcasts were limited. All this happened despite threats from the regime and declaration of the strike as illegal. The strike was organised demanding trade union rights, democratic freedom, release of trade union and political prisoners and unconditional election in November 1984.

South Korea

Brutal repression by the fascist clique in South Korea is evoking increasing indignation among the workers and people. Fishermen from the east coast are at present engaged in protest actions against attack on their livelihood. They recently suffered losses amounting to 40 million Won (1 U.S. dollar-767 Won) when the regime sold off their collective sea food farms — their means of living for the last ten years, to a private entrepreneur. The fishermen set afloat more than 60 fishing boats to stage a demonstration on the sea.

In May, over 900 taxidrivers from various companies rallied on the streets of Taegu to press for their demands for higher pay and right to organise trade unions. They staged a sit in strike outside the local Administration offices and later occupied the taxi companies' offices. The ruling Junta arrested sixty demonstrators.

International Struggles

Great Britain

The nearly five month old glorious strike of the two lakh British coalminers got a lively solidarity boost when thirtyfive thousand dockworkers organised under the Transport and General Workers' Union went on continuous strike from July 10. The TGWU said that the employers had breached an agreement with the union by employing unregistered labour to move iron ore bound for a steel plant which was being picketed by the striking coal workers. The nationwide dockworkers' strike which is the first since 1972, when the Edward Heath Tory Government had declared a national emergency, has further pushed the adamant Thatcher Government into the whirlpool already created by the coal workers' strike. Britain is in the midst of a profound political crisis, unprecedented in the post war history—probably the first since the great general strike of 1926.

The National Union of Mineworkers under the slogan, "United we will resist" has expressed the determination to save the workers' jobs and the nationalised coal industry. The miners had apprehended about their job security since the Government had appointed Ian Mac Gregor, an American businessman as the Chairman of the National Coal Board last year. Mac Gregor earned notoriety as the Chairman of the British Steel Corporation when he made ten thousand steel workers redundant in the space of a few years. Their apprehension is being proved correct. The Government's plans are not only to close down 20 "unprofitable" pits and throw out twenty thousand workers jobless, but also to sell the industry, pit by pit, back to private owners which is fully in line with its approach to other nationalised industries. The Government's plan to cut the number of miners was "tactically" announced only at the end of winter to weaken the effect of a strike, as the energy consumption drops due to the warmer weather. The miners' charge is that the National Coal Board with full government backing is trying to break up the industry. To do this, they must first break the union. With the threat of emergency and deployment of army in the offing the Thatcher Government has already deployed thousands of policemen equipped with riot gear to deal with the strikers—8000 policemen in Nottinghamshire alone. The savage vengeance with which the police is confronting the strikers made Margaret Thatcher face a most uproarious Parliament exposing the fissures in the ruling Conservative Party itself. The entire opposition and some within the ruling party charged Thatcher for politicising the police and having made it her "private army". Despite loss of 10 million Pounds a day of production, 20 million Pounds in a week are being frittered away for the massive police force. Already two miners have been killed, hundreds injured and over 3000 arrested. Frantically trying to break the strike, the Government has also offered sharp increase in the redundancy pay—19,000 Pounds from the usual 7000 Pounds,

while for the young miners the deal is 5000 Pounds from 500. But in vain went all these attempts to weaken the strike by police violence, by monetary offer or by "tactically" late announcement of the closure decision. The strike has remained complete. And with the strike of the dock workers spreading to the nearly 100 ports, Britain has faced an almost total blockade of international trade. The Pound plunged to its all time low against the dollar forcing the major banks to announce 2 per cent increase in basic lending rate bringing it at par with the base rate in USA. The mortgage rates have also gone up. The stock market has also slumped. This has given rise to the fear the inflation will further go up while unemployment continues to be at the record level of over 3 millions.

Overwhelming solidarity actions came from other unions. Defying the Employment Act, 1980 prohibiting solidarity actions, the National Union of Railwaymen, Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, the National Union of Seamen and other unions along with the Transport and General Workers' Union met and decided to extend full support to the miners by instructing their members not to transport coal.

Coming as new blow to the Thatcher Government, the High Court ruled on July 16 that the ban put by the Government on January 25 against the unions at the Government Communications Headquarters at Cheltenham against the right to strike and appeal to industrial tribunals against dismissals, was illegal and against natural justice. The Government's argument was that it had ordered the ban to tighten security and stop the work slowdowns which affected Britain's contribution to NATO intelligence gatherings. The Government had offered 1000 pounds to each member of the unions as "Compensation" for losing the trade union rights which was

NUM Acknowledges CITU's Letter

Acknowledging CITU's letter of support to the British coalminers' strike, written by Nrisingha Chakrabarty on June 12, the National Union of Mineworkers has given the following reply on July 9:

Thank you for your communication of 12th June expressing solidarity with our industrial dispute. Your message of support will be publicised within our trade union and I am sure our members will be greatly encouraged by your sincere message.

Your fraternally,
P.E. Heathfield
SECRETARY.