

THE VOICE

OF



THE WORKING WOMAN

Vol. II No. 4

July-August, 1982

50 P.

Wanton Firing on Miners

THE Verbeli manganese ore mines where police firing on the workers took place on June 27, is situated about three kilometres from Balaghat (Madhya Pradesh), employing about 3000 workers.

Dissatisfied with the INTUC union a new union was formed a few months ago, not affiliated to any central trade union organisation. With this began the harassment of the workers.

On June 25, the management issued a show-cause notice to a leading worker. On June 27, all the workers, including the women workers, marched en masse to the manager's office and requested that the show-cause notice be withdrawn. When this was rejected, the workers sat in front of the office, men on one side and women on the other, with a passage in between for anyone wanting to go into or come out of the office. Thus, there was no obstruction or any gherao.

But the management told the police on the telephone that the workers were gheraoing the office. The police came immediately and, without any warning, began a lathi-charge on the women workers who were sitting absolutely peacefully. Several women workers were injured. When the other workers protested against the lathi-charge on the women and there was some stone-throwing, the police inspector took out his revolver and opened fire without any warning. Three workers died on the spot with bullet injuries on the head and chest. Obviously, the firing was meant to kill. One woman who was injured succumbed to her injuries in the hospital next day.

The Khanij Mazdoor Ekta Union (CITU) and the Madhya Pradesh State Committee of the CITU have protested against the wanton police firing and demanded a judicial enquiry into it.



IN THIS ISSUE

Wanton Firing on Mineworkers	1
Muslim Women Attacked for Seeing Films	2
In Memory of Pankaj Acharya	3
Hard Fight Wins Victory—Karnataka Beedi Workers	4
False Promises of Employment—The TLA Understanding	5
AROUND THE STATES	
Tripura: DWO Conference	6
U.P: Police Found Guilty—Siswa Rape Case	6
W. Bengal: Central Govt. Employees's Demonstration	8
Delhi: Social Welfare Workers Win First Round	
Cooch Behar: Death of a Nurse	9
Madhya Pradesh: JMS—First Conference	10
Delhi: JMS—First Conference	11
Madras: Fight to Retain Creche Facility	12
Visakhapatnam: Towards a District Convention	13
JUNE 1 — International Children's Day	14
Genocide in Lebanon	17
Letter from the Bradford 12 Campaign Committee	
Death of Three Wives	18
Scientific Advancement—Yes, Female Infanticide—No.	20

Cover page : Presidium of the M.P. Conference.
In the chair, Vimal Ranadive.

Muslim Women Attacked for Seeing Films

DO films affect women more badly than they affect men? Not that any of us know of, but some Muslim organisations have recently been trying to prevent Muslim women from their harmless visits to the cinema.

In Tamilnadu, unmarried girls of Melapalayam, in Tirunelveli district, are reportedly being prevented by their menfolk from seeing films.

Earlier this week, a bus in which a few Muslim girls were going to the cinema was damaged when attacked by some Muslim men. The police have registered a case and arrested two people in this connection.

Meanwhile, there were reports from Maharashtra and Karnataka about some Muslim organisations preventing Muslim women from going to films.

In Jalgaon district in Maharashtra, Muslim women coming out of cinema halls were beaten up by the kazis and their religious organisations.

Far from being cowed down by these attacks by religious persons and organisations, the response of these women has been to hold a public rally protesting these attacks. They have questioned a ban on women alone seeing films, asserted their equal right to choose what they will or will not see, and affirmed their determination to continue seeing films, despite the threats of their religious organisations.

Such bold and courageous stands for their rights as equal members of society is on par with the difficult struggle women are waging in Pakistan, Iran and other Muslim-ruled countries. It will win the whole-hearted support of women everywhere, as in Jalgaon women's organisations have rallied to the support of their Muslim sisters.

In Memory of Pankaj Acharya

THE sudden and untimely death of Pankaj Acharya has plunged in grief all those who knew her and worked with her. She was only 58 years old, full of vigour, courageous in the face of the attacks coming from Congress goondas, which have become such a common feature of West Bengal today.

A worker and redoubtable fighter for the women's cause since the early years of the women's movement in West Bengal, first in the Atma Raksha Samiti in the 1940's, and then in the Ganatantrik Mahila Samiti which succeeded it, she took over as its General Secretary in 1970.

She was elected a Vice-President of the All India Democratic Women's Association at its founding Conference in March 1981, served ably as Chairman of the West Bengal State Welfare Board, and was a member of the West Bengal State Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) since 1978, as well as being headmistress at one time of a school in the Halatu area of Calcutta.

Under her leadership, along with that of her women colleagues and comrades, the women's movement was taken to all districts of West Bengal, until today the Samiti counts a membership of over five lakh women.



A very good organiser, as her work bears out, and a forceful speaker, Pankaj showed inspiring and magnificent courage during the period of semi-fascist terror in W. Bengal in 1971-72. This was the period when the CPI(M) lost 1200 of its members in West Bengal. She foiled all the attempts of the Congress goondas to close down her school in Halatu, at a time when from any corner a bomb attack might have taken her life.

Pankaj of course, like so many of her comrades, was suffering from many ailments, but this could not stop her from participating in the rigorous campaigning during the last general elections which voted the Left Front Government

on page 19

Born —1924

Passed BA; B.T.,

and became Headmistress of the Girls' School in Halatu.

Joined CPI—1944

working in T.U. movement in Budge Budge

Married—1946

Went underground in 1948

Attended Asian Peace Conference in Peking—1952

Elected Member, Calcutta District Committee CPI, 1957-58.

Arrested in 1962, released 1963.

Elected General Secretary,

Ganatantrik Mahila Samiti — 1970

Elected to the West Bengal State Committee of Communist Party of India (M) 1978, and again in 1981-82.

Braved the Congress semi-fascist terror in 1971-72 as Headmistress, Halatu Balika Vidyalaya.

After 1977 election,

Worked as Chairman, Social Welfare Board.

Pankaj leaves behind her husband the Tramway Workers' leader, her son, daughter-in-law and a grandson.

Hard Fight Wins Victory

It was a hard fight, but the determination of the workers won them their demand. Thousands of women beedi workers faced up to police repression and ultimately forced the unwilling beedi manufacturers to bring lakhs of beedi workers under the operation of the Provident Fund Act, with retrospective effect from 1.8.1978. They equally compelled an indifferent Government to strictly implement and supervise the working of the Act.

The Demands

THE Fourth Conference of the Karnataka State Beedi workers' Federation (CITU), held in May 1982 at Buntwal, Dakshina Kannada, had formulated the immediate demands of the workers as implementation of P.F. Act; a wage of Rs. 12 per 1000 beedis, abolition of the system of fixing the beedi leaf average per kg. of leaves. For the past five years, workers' contribution to P.F. was being collected, but no accounts have been maintained by the employers and no receipts given by the P.F. authorities for any deposits that may have been made with them. Consequently the workers could not draw any benefits as per the provisions of the Act. The sums of money involved are quite large; for example, in one out of the five districts alone, there were two and a half lakh subscribers.

June 15 Call for Mass Picketing

The Fourth Conference therefore gave a call for one day's picketting of all Government administration offices on June 15, 1982. All five districts—Tumkur, Chitradurga, Kolar, Manglore and Mysore—observed the call. The greatest mobilisation was in Dakshina Kannada, where more than half of the beedi workers in the State are concentrated, i.e., a workforce of two and a half lakhs, spread over eight talukas and hundreds of villages. Each taluk centre saw huge demonstrations, dharnas, gheraos and picketting.

In Mangalore, more than 1650 workers, 90 per cent of them women, picketted the Deputy Commissioner's Office in batches. The police at first tried to keep open a passage to the D.C.s office. When this failed they began to beat back the workers with lathis. Contrary to their expectations, more and more workers came forward to the picket lines, even the

mothers carrying their babies; soon they were bleeding profusely from the blows received. Real battle-scenes then ensued when the picketers, angry at the beating-up of women and babies, hit back. In the meantime, a large gathering of the public began to move in the direction of the picket-lines. Then the police began arresting the workers. All this continued till five in the evening when the D.C.'s office closed.

The members arrested were too many to be accommodated either in the lock-ups or the jails of Mangalore. Hence all the arrested were let off unconditionally.

Hunger-strike and Work Stoppage

While the Labour Minister sent word that a meeting would be called 'soon' in Bangalore to discuss all the demands of the beedi workers the South Kannada Union decided to continue the struggle which they had begun earlier, with an indefinite hunger-strike by seven of the workers' leaders led by U.B. Lokayya; and continuation of the work-stoppage throughout the district for the full nine days, June 12 to 20. And the beedi industry normally producing 30 crore beedies a day, came to a standstill.

June 18 — Joint Demonstration

On June 18, another mighty demonstration of beedi workers, this time joined by large numbers of other CITU workers, took place, gheraoing the Deputy Provident Fund Commissioner's Office at Mangalore for nearly four hours. A 35 strong workers' delegation led by P. Ramachandra Rao and K. Moosabha met the P.F. officials and a long discussion ensued. The discussion revealed the astounding fact that the P.F. Department — a Central Government Department — had received

On page 18

False Promises of Employment

THE Arvind Mills, Ahmedabad, in May terminated the services of 24 women workers, with service records ranging from one to sixteen years. All these years they have been kept on a contract basis, which of course means no regular, secure work, and no benefits like paid leave, P.F., bonus, etc. They have to go and stand at the mill gate every morning, like beggars. If they are taken, then they are lucky for that day; if not they have to return home empty-handed.

Those that get work are forced to sign the pay register by thumb impression even when they can write, as receipt for an amount which is far more than what is actually paid to them. A small part only comes to them and the major portion is retained by the employers.

A large number of workers men and women, in the mill, work under these conditions. Since May, the 24 victimised women workers have been agitating, along with the men workers, for their reinstatement and an end to the contract labour system.

Meanwhile.....

The Textile Labour Association (TLA) of Gujarat, triumphantly announced in April last, an "Understanding" arrived at with the Ahmedabad Textile Mills Association (ATMA). Proclaimed as part of it "programme for women's welfare", it promised 3000 to 6000 more jobs for women by reservation in certain sections in some departments of the textile mills of Ahmedabad.

However, as the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women has pointed out, there are some serious omissions in the agreement. This casts such doubts on the whole scheme that the Committee fears the whole thing is just a hoax being played on the unemployed women workers of Ahmedabad.

Firstly, the "understanding", to create employment for 3000 to 6000 women does not specify by when this goal is to be achieved. Nor does it say that this employment when given, will be duly fulfilling all the labour laws regarding regularised work, earned leave, provident fund, maternity leave and benefits, provision of creches, etc.

Secondly, the "certain sections" reserved for women are all in the unskilled areas of reeling, winding, doubling, water-room and sweeping. Recruitment of women to the skilled occupations such as Mukadams, Oilers, Fitters,

Fitter Coolies, Basket Carriers, and jobs of a supervisory nature, is **specifically excluded** by the "Understanding". In other words the present general practice and policy under Congress rule, of depriving women of skilled jobs, and the training to acquire such skills, is to be perpetuated. Since women are in fact at present working as Mukadams, this agreement means they will be gradually eased out of these jobs. And during the International Women's Year in 1975, the TLA and ATMA had declared that wherever a woman left a job she would be replaced only by a woman!

Thirdly, the new women recruits must be between 28-35 years of age, and will first enter as *badli* workers. Usually *badli* status is given to young workers of about 18, entering employment for the first time. After 240 days, as per rules, the employee becomes permanent, getting all benefits available under the law. The Understanding again is silent on how long the woman will remain a *badli* worker. If indefinitely, then she will be under constant threat of dismissal as a casual worker, to be exploited as the management desires.

The age-limit of 28-35 is also very curious, for it coincides with the age at which a woman may not like to have further children, and will

on page 15

DWO Conference

THE Ninth State Conference of the Tripura Democratic Women's Organisation was held from June 24 to 26 at the auditorium of the Music College in Agartala in a colourful setting. After the hoisting of the flag by President Sadhana Chakraborty, Vice-President of the organisation Mangaleswari Deb Barma paid floral homage at the Martyrs' Column.

The proceedings of the conference were conducted by a five-member presidium consisting of Sadhana Chakraborty, Mangaleswari Deb Barma, Radharani Sinha, Sushi Laxmi Jamatia and Hemanga Probha Dutta (mother of martyr Gautam Dutta). A five-member Steering Committee consisting of Ila Bhattacharyya, Rama Das, Khanjani Deb Barma, Gouri Bhattacharjee and Prabha Datta guided the work of the conference. Sudhanya Deb Barma, Chairman of the Reception Committee, welcomed the delegates.

The Secretariat's report to the conference

SISWA RAPE CASE

Police Found Guilty

ALL the police personnel as well as the District Magistrate involved in the Siswa Gang Rape Case have been either suspended or transferred, pending the CID enquiry ordered into the incident. The District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police of Basti have been transferred for not giving the correct information about the Siswa outrage and keeping the Government in the dark for so long.

The Siswa outrage came as a result of the election of the village Pradhan. The Congress(I)-backed nominee, Heera Upadhyaya, who had been Pradhan for the last twenty years, was defeated by the independent candidate, Bhagwan Dutta Pandey. The police personnel and anti-social elements descended on the village after dark on April 23. They beat up those who had not voted for Uphadhyaya, and when the menfolk fled in panic, the police indulged in the orgy of mass rape, torture and plunder of the women-folk. Several un-

dealt with all the developments in the women's movement in the State. The women of Tripura have a glorious history dating back to the period of the armed struggle in the late forties. The First Conference of the organisation was held in 1951. Many comrades have laid down their lives in heroic struggles since then.

Two hundred and twenty-eight delegates participated in the conference, 62 of whom were tribal women, two Muslim women and eleven Manipuri women. Thirty-two delegates participated in the lively discussion on the report.

The conference also adopted a 15-point charter of demands on the basis of which proposals were made for building a strong and militant women's organisation in the State. The charter included the demands for an end to the authoritarian drive of the Central Government, for consolidation and extension of democratic rights and liberties and for more

on page 19

married girls were also raped. Of the 52 houses in the village, at least 22 have been looted of all their belongings. Grain stored for the coming rainy season has been taken away, every cooking utensil, thalis, tumblers, etc., every piece of gold and silver jewellery, clothes, bedding, goats, chickens, live-stock — everything was carted away. The looting went on till the early hours of the morning under the supervision of the daroga of Mohana thana, and the loot was carried away in tractor-drawn trolleys and the police jeep, doing more than one trip.

Kerosene was poured on to the children, and the women were threatened with their burning, if they raised any resistance.

The villagers are living on borrowed grain using earthen utensils gifted to them, and other help from neighbouring villages.

— And the Congress(I) leaders of the area continued to say that nothing had happened in the village of Siswa.

WBSLIDC Serving the Small Tanners/Artisans

- * A leather factory in Tangra Area of Calcutta with the most modern equipment to assist small and cottage units in the manufacture of quality leather.
- * Marketing arrangement for leather goods produced by the workers engaged in the industry through the Corporation.
- * Supply of necessary raw materials and technical know-how to the small industrial units and leather artisans.
- * A new project in India-Leather Board Plant out of chrome shavings to be set up at Calcutta.
- * Determination to forge further ahead with the cooperation of tannery workers, leather artisans and technologists.

THE WEST BENGAL STATE LEATHER INDUSTRIES DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD

(A Govt. of W.B. Undertaking)

**Shilpa Bhawan, 2 & 3, Black Burn Lane (4th Floor),
Calcutta-700 012.**

Central Govt. Employees' Demonstration

ON May 6, working women in Bengal held demonstrations throughout the day in different places to bring attention to their pressing demands.

At the call of the Coordination Committee of Central Government Employees' Unions and Associations, women employees from Calcutta Telephones, Income Tax, Accountant General, Geological Survey, Postal Accounts, Survey of India, G.P.O., etc., participated. Work in most of the offices was affected.

The women presented their demands, reflecting the grievances of working women everywhere in our country. They demanded that (1) a creche should be set up for working women in every office; (2) more hostels should be built to solve working women's housing problems; (3) travelling facilities should be increased; (4) maternity leave should be lengthened; (5) working hours and service conduct rules should be changed; and (6) toilets, recreation clubs and canteens should be established for the convenience of all employees.

Common Demands

Actually, the grievances of these working

women are not very different from the general demands of all employees. The anti-labour policies of the Central Government have increased the problems of all workers, including women. While miseries are heaped on all workers, it is working women who are at the bottom — and therefore they are exploited the most.

This makes it all the more important for women to build a broad united front, and extend the May 6 programme into the beginning of a democratic movement.

Already rallies and demonstrations have compelled managements in several places to make concessions. A stronger and united struggle of women is bound to contribute to the benefits of the entire working class, and establish equality of rights between male and female workers.

The Coordination Committee is determined to work for this unity and strength in their struggle to achieve the urgent demands of working women everywhere. □

DELHI

Social Welfare Workers Win First Round

THE piece-rated women workers of the Social Welfare Centre under Delhi Administration called off their 17 day-old dharna on May 14, 1982, on the assurance of the Chief Secretary, Directorate of Social Welfare, Delhi Administration, that the Handicraft Shop at E Block, Connaught Place, and six other centres, would not be closed and consequently there would not be any retrenchment of the piece-rated workers.

The women workers started their dharna on April 28, 1982, at the only Handicraft shop of the Administration, where the stitched

material prepared by these poor widows and destitute women, refugees from Pakistan, is kept for sale. The proposed shifting of the shop was a direct threat of retrenchment to these women, who are not covered by any labour laws though they have been working more than 25 years without any break in service.

The decision to shift the shop and close the six Centres was taken by the authorities in the wake of the formation of the Delhi Social Welfare Mahila Karamchari Union. As usual,

On page 9

DEATH OF A NURSE

28 year old Barnali Dutta, senior nurse of Maharajah Jitendranarayan Hospital, was yet another victim of increasing atrocities on women in our country. On the stormy night of 8th June, she was woken up at 2:00 in the morning by loud thumps on the door. Before she could do anything, a few men broke open the door and rushed in. They gagged Barnali with a piece of adhesive plaster and raped her. To add to this, they poured carbolic acid down her throat through a small pipe, and then left her.

The next morning, she was taken to hospital by some youths who claimed she had taken

the acid to commit suicide. The young men left before the hospital authorities could find out who they were. Barnali Dutta died in spite of the doctors' attempt to save her.

Barnali's death adds to a long and painful list of women who have suffered indignity and death in different parts of the country today. Working conditions, whether in hospitals or elsewhere, lack of official accommodation, lack of security, and of course the economic and social exploitation of women, have all led to this.

Bad Working Conditions

Because of the appalling conditions in hospitals, nurses are especially vulnerable to poor treatment or worse. They not only work in overcrowded, under-staffed wards, but are sometimes harassed by patients, doctors, or relatives. Shockingly inadequate accommodation only complicates the problem. Barnali was one of the 70 per cent of the nurses in district hospitals denied hostel facilities. The Health Minister has admitted the need for 6,000 more nurses to meet the requirements of the hospitals and health centres in West Bengal.

Chief Minister Jyoti Basu has announced a high-level inquiry into the incident, and has also announced a grant of Rs. 10,000 to the nearest relative.

But the death of Barnali Dutta and others like her will only be made up for, at least to some extent, if the working conditions of working women like her are made more secure and human.

United Protest

The West Bengal Nurses Association and the Gantantrik Mahila Samiti have called upon men and women to fight unitedly against such atrocities. The Samiti condemned anti-socials who are trying to destroy the peaceful life of ordinary people in West Bengal. A condolence meeting was held by the Nurses Association on June 18th. □

Delhi Social Welfare — From page 8

the authorities adopted vindictive tactics to harass the union members. However, the designs of the authorities could not materialise because of the unity and determination showed by the women workers, most of whom are above sixty years of age.

On behalf of the Union Sushila Gopalan, M.P., and Pramila Pandhe, General Secretary, met Mr. S.R. Adige, Secretary, Government of India, Ministry of Works & Housing at Nirman Bhavan. Mr. Adige informed them that the requisition period of the shop has been extended from 1980 to 1985, as per amendment to the Act.

The Union representatives pointed out to Secretary the underhand dealings of the authorities to vacate the premises, despite the fact that it can be retained till 1985. They drew the attention of the Secretary to their apprehensions about disposing of the shop in such an important location in this hasty manner.

Regarding the Nine-point Charter of Demands put up by the workers negotiations are to be held in the near future. If the just and genuine demands are not met the Union has decided to chalk out a programme of action to enforce their fulfilment. □

*FROM PRAMILA PANDHE

(Gen. Secretary, Delhi Social Welfare Mahila Karamchhari Union.)

Madhya Pradesh First Conference

JANWADI MAHILA SAMITI

A Conference of women of Madhya Pradesh, was held for the first time in Bhilai on June 4, 1982. The conference was notable for two things: of the 123 delegates and observers, from 13 districts, as many as 72 were working women. And secondly, there were both industrial as well as agricultural women participating, along with lower middle class housewives, teachers etc. Thus there were women from the rice and dal mills of the State who have recently come into struggle for their demands, from the manganese, coal and asbestos mines, women contract labour, women agricultural workers, women from the railways, women teachers, and so on.

The report for discussion was given by Manjulabai, from Harda, who is herself working among the Advasi agricultural labour. The speeches of the twenty three delegates who took part in the discussion as well as Manjula's introduction all showed the same growing awareness of the need to unite, organise and fight for better conditions. As Manjulabai pointed out, even after 30 years of independence our children still go without milk. Why? Our young girls who become sarpanches in the villages are threatened by goondas. Even our doctors and SDO's have to go on strike. Four years ago ordinary coal was available at Rs. 4 per quintal, now it is Rs. 40. This is not just propaganda tables. This is the reality of Congress (I) rule. Unless we fight against this unitedly this "ajgar" will eat you and me.

Women Speak Out

Speaking of the conditions of Muslim women, she said: "In the Muslim community a man can have three and four wives, by taking a divorce. No one cares what happens to these women. If Muslim women venture to see a cinema, they are beaten up as soon as they come out of the hall. I asked the Kazi in Harda, why do you not ask Muslim film stars to take to purdah? Ah, he said, but they are big people. We women must organise and unitedly resist these atrocities on women, resist dowry,

and the other social evils of our society".

Sonia, a working woman from Durg, charged the ruling Congress (I) with coming to the women only for a vote. "We climb six floors to work as domestic servants and get Rs. 4 for our labour. If we are dying, these people will not part with any money to help". A woman worker on behalf of the women of the Railway Marshalling Yard recounted how the women had fought alongside the men at the time of the railway strike in 1974, again against the police and goondas who entered our yard during the January-February, 1981 strike. "At that time we were on strike for 25 days. Many workers were served with dismissal notices. The type of atrocities committed were unheard of. The police and Congress goondas entered our houses, abused us women in filthy language. FIRs were filed against us because we held a demonstration and went to the S.P. to give a memorandum against the police who were abusing us. We, men and women of the railways, we fought together, and we will fight again against the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) and the National Security Act (NSA).

"Is it not surprising that atrocities are committed against women in a country where a woman Prime Minister rules? Even when the All India Loco Running Staff started a struggle against atrocities on women, many workers were dismissed. We have to build a strong organisation, only then will we be able to face the Government".

Sarala Sudevan, from Vishrampur Colliery was happy that a woman's organisation was being started in Madhya Pradesh — a State where the ghastly practice of *Sati* is still encouraged and practiced. "We have no place anywhere in the society to function, except to rear children and cook. In the rural areas in Sarguja District, women and children work in the fields for many hours; in the coalmines they work for more than 12 hours and get meagre wages. Unless we unite and fight, our struggle will not be successful."

(on page 15)

Holds Its First State Conference

JUNE 30 was an important day for the Delhi Janwadi Mahila Samiti, as they held their first State Conference in New Delhi.

Delegates, observers, special invitees and volunteers began arriving in groups at 35 Ferozeshah Road by 10:30 in the morning. The meeting began with Susheela Gopalan, M.P., hoisting the flag. The women then filed past the Martyr's Column to pay homage.

The morning began on a spirited note with songs by *Parcham*, a group of young men and women who sang their demand for an end to atrocities against women.

Condolence Resolutions

The presidium proposed resolutions to condole the deaths of A. Balasubramaniam, CPI-M politburo member, Major Jaipal Singh, Secretary of the Delhi State CPI-M unit, and Pankaj Acharya, Vice-President, AIDWA.

Susheela Gopalan, M.P., and General Secretary, AIDWA, Lakshmi Sehgal, Vice President, AIDWA, and Vimal Ranadive, Vice President, AIDWA, and General Secretary, All India Coordination Committee of Working Women were present on the dais.

Inauguration

Dr. Lakshmi Sehgal inaugurated the conference with the story of her experience in the women's regiment of Subash Chandra Bose's Indian National Army, in Japan. Nobody, she said, should forget the historical fact that women have always fought shoulder to shoulder with men, whether it was in the struggle for independence, or in the later struggle against an unjust and authoritarian government.

Captain Laxmi pointed out that 35 years of independence have not reduced our problems—in fact, they have become more difficult because now the enemy is among us. She asked women to fight for themselves, their children, and their future, by joining the democratic movement against landlords and capitalists.

JMS Report

The convenor of the Preparatory Committee Rita Karat, presented a report on the JMS. With a membership of 2,359 and a target of 5000 for the coming year, the JMS has its tasks clear—to lead a united struggle against atrocities on women, as well as to fight against the anti-people policies of the present government and the injustices of the present social system.

The policies of the Congress rulers since independence has landed the country in the current crisis which affects every sphere of our lives. Skyrocketing prices and increasing unemployment are the lot of the common people, while a handful of monopolists and landlords continue to thrive. Black laws such as the ESMA and NSA have been passed to prevent people from protesting against this state of affairs.

These and other recent developments make it necessary to link the day-to-day demands of women with the broader struggle in defence of democracy.

It is with this background in mind that one has to see both the national and local struggles undertaken by the Samiti.

All India Actions

On the All-India level, two historical rallies were held in the capital. The first, held in March, was to focus on the demands of peasants and agricultural workers. The second was called to demand trade union rights and protest against ESMA and NSA. Large numbers of women participated in both rallies, as they did again in the January 19 All India General Strike.

on page 16

FIGHT TO RETAIN CRECHE FACILITY

ON repeated requests from the Working Women's Association of the Central Government Employees working in Shastri Bhavan, Madras, the Government had granted the facility of a creche on the 6th floor of the building in 1981.

Initially the Griha Kalyan Kendra was entrusted with the responsibility of running the creche. With a view to reducing the expenses, the Association made a request that it be entrusted with the responsibility. The Association being registered under the Societies Act, the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms acceded to the request and agreed to transfer the furniture and fixtures to the Association. On the basis of this decision, the Association started collecting donations and began to enrol a greater number of parents to avail of the facility.

While matters were proceeding in such smooth fashion, the Director of Estates suddenly decided to withdraw the allotment of space provided on the 6th floor of the Shastri Bhavan office complex, without providing any alternate accommodation. In fact the Shastri Bhavan complex has many residential quarters. The request of the Association to provide at least a T-2 type quarters, which is under the control of the Director of Estates was also not conceded.

The present position is that the Director has granted two months extension of the facility, the expiry of which period would end in the closure of the creche for want of accommodation. A delegation on behalf of the All India Co-ordination Committee met the Union Minister of Works and Housing on 3 June 1982, to urge upon him the necessity of continuing with the place allotted for the creche in 1981. The Secretary of the Association, Shreemati N. Sulochana, also submitted a memorandum on behalf of the working mothers in Shastri Bhavan to the Director of Estates, Mr. S.P. Biswas, requesting him to continue the present facility given by his predecessor.

In fact, it is surprising why this small facility of a creche for the working women at Shastri Bhavan should be withdrawn, when the policies of the Government are to increase them so that women can work in their offices with peace of mind. The Education and

On page 13

CHILD LABOUR

Many thousands of children, some as young as six years, are virtually sold into annual or lifetime work in farms, homes, factories or brothels.

In some parts of Bombay one-quarter of the children work between the ages of 6 and 9, and nearly half between 10 and 12.

In Pakistan, 1.5 million children are employed in carpet weaving, many of them from age of six. They work 11 to 12 hours a day for a monthly wage equivalent to 8.12 US dollars.

Girls in their early teens in South Korea sew shirt collars and cuffs for a few cents an hour, seated all day on hard slabs in poorly lit hovels.

It is estimated that one-fourth of Thailand's children under 16 have to work and that about 2 million work in mostly unlicensed factories. A large proportion suffer from malnutrition.

Towards A District Convention

From N. Nirmala

WORK towards consolidation of the Working Women's Coordination Committee is being vigorously pursued in Visakhapatnam. A subscription campaign led by N. Nirmala, an M.L. student of Labour Laws in Andhra University, Nalini, doing research in on Women's Welfare Programmes, Susheela, a Chemistry student and S. Punyavati (see box), has been started, and women workers in different industries and institutions, are being met. We proposed to them the setting up of a Committee of Working Women in the different categories, and institutions of work.

Though small in number, subscribers to *The Voice of the Working Woman* were enrolled from various categories of workers, employees, professions, etc. For example, workers and employees from the Port Trust, workers and employees from M.M.T.C., employees from LIC, students from the Nursing School and College, Staff Nurses from King George Hospital, librarians, teaching staff and research scholars from the University campus, advocates, doctors, teachers, etc.

We were very much encouraged and inspir-

From page 12

Welfare Ministry promises such benefits, and to extend them wherever possible. Working women and the children at Shastri Bhavan demonstrated on 1 June on the occasion of Children's Day, demanding continuation of this facility, to be run by the Welfare Association economically, so that more women can take advantage of it. The Association is demanding statutory provision for creches for working mothers, wherever they are working.

ed by the response from some sections, though a little bit discouraged by the response of the teaching staff of the campus and some of the professionals. Our real inspiration came from the industrial workers and employees, and the nursing staff. They are willing and anxious not only to read but also contribute articles to the bulletin.

We are continuing our campaign and hope to convene a district convention in the near future.

WOMAN ELECTED PRESIDENT OF UNION

S. Punyavati, advocate, and a member of the Visakhapatnam District Working Women's Coordination Committee, was the CITU candidate for the post of President in the recent elections of Union Carbide Process and Plant Workers' Union. The General Body was held on April 29, 1982, and Punyavati was elected to the post of Working President of the Union. Of the 130 workers in this unit, nearly 100 are women workers. This year, 1982 is the due year for renegotiating the agreement between the workers and the management. Previously the President had been affiliated to the INTUC. This time the workers have unanimously elected a CITU leadership in the hope that their interests will be better looked after.

This is the first time in Visakhapatnam that a woman representative has been elected to the top union post in the sea-food industry.

June 1, — International Children's Day

(On the call of the AIDWA, as decided by the Executive Committee meeting in New Delhi on April 10-11, 1982, June 1, 1982 was celebrated as International Children's Day, in various parts of the country. At the time of going to press, reports had reached us from only two or three places — Editor).

Madras-Tamilnadu

IN the city where protest demonstrations and rallies with their placards and slogans are a common occurrence to the citizens, a procession of bright-eyed small and very poor children, was an unusual affair, which made its own visual as well as emotional impact. Over 70 children, most of them child workers from the beedi and handloom industries, and over 200 women demonstrated in front of the Labour Commissioner's Office. "*Happy Child — Nation's Pride — Sivakasi's Child — India's Shame*" read one of the placards. The miserable working conditions prevalent for the Sivakasi child workers was particularly highlighted by the demonstration organised by the Democratic Women's Association and the Working Women's Coordination Committee.

Spotlight on Sivakasi's Children

The main demands were the immediate release by the Government of the Harbans Singh Commission Report on Sivakasi children, submitted some years ago; part-time work and part-time education for these children, besides provision of free meals at noon. Mythili Sivaraman, one of the well-known women's leaders of Tamilnadu, addressing the demonstrators, said that nothing seemed to have come out of the Rs 1.7 crore UNICEF project for the uplift of Sivakasi, Sathur and Thiruvengal areas. This was meant to be a package deal, to improve conditions of child workers; improved sanitation and water supply, elimination or at least reduction of the hazards faced by children working in cracker works, etc.

The State Government also, had, some time ago, prepared a project report for UNICEF in which it proposed starting 100 non-formal training centres for the Sivakasi children. But as Mythili pointed out, "Unless

the working hours of children are reduced, these centres will have no meaning. You cannot expect the child to seek education at 8 at night after a hard day's work".

For the children of beedi families, the organisations are demanding free text books and uniforms for the children.

Stringent Enforcement of Laws Required

Child labour should be abolished, and stringent action taken against those violating child-labour laws. There should be a special inspectorate to enforce these laws at the Central and State levels, nutritious meals and medicare at the work-places, and creche facilities for the children of working women.

Preparations for the Demonstration

A lot of care went into the preparation of big handwritten posters containing statistics on the children. Unfortunately by the end of the demonstration, most of them were torn by the over enthusiastic children. In addition 3,000 handbills were distributed and 400 wall posters put up mainly in the suburban trains and buses.

Bihar-Dhanbad

Children's Day was successfully observed on June 1. A memorandum containing a 9-point Charter of Demands was submitted to the B.D.O. of Nirsha, Dhanbad, by a delegation led by Mridula Ghosh, President, Dhanbad Janwadi Mahila Morcha, and a discussion held with him.

Patna

The Day was observed by the Patna unit of the J.M.M., where a large number of

on page 15

M.P. First Conference from p. 10

From Gwalior Kanti Singh narrated how the number of atrocities on women are increasing daily. Ramdevi a beedi worker, also from Gwalior told the delegates how they are cheated by the employers, how the Government does not enforce the Minimum Wages Act and so they get Rs. 7 instead of Rs. 10; of the cuts made in their quota, of lack of Provident Fund, medical treatment, etc.

Bina from Shahdole District had something a little different to say — she castigated the women for being superstitious and believing whatever they are told. "We must fight against this too".

Many other delegates, raised many other points — Jogabai, a militant contract labour worker, Rukmini Singh from the Bhilai Steel Plant, Anita Badel, a teacher, Sushila, Gayatri, Saroj, as also the famous poetess of M.P., Raj Kumari Rashmi who recited a special poem to the delegates.

Greetings to the Conference

The conference was greeted on behalf of the CITU by P.K. Moitra, Chairman of the Reception Committee, by the Students' Federation of India, the Democratic Youth Federa-

International Children's Day from p. 14

women, and young boys and girls assembled together in a function under the chairmanship of Mantri Devi. Kumari Keka Pal, the Assistant Secretary of the J.M.M., while condemning the various forms of exploitation of children, demanded enactment of more specific laws for the protection of children, besides guarantee of implementation of existing laws.

The decision was taken at the function for the J.M.M. to start night schools to educate the local children.

Ahmedabad-Gujarat

Children's Day was observed in a somewhat different manner. With the help of the DYFI and the SFI, exhibitions were put up in different areas of the city for one week commencing June 1. The exhibition depicted the miseries of children of underdeveloped countries, and compared them with the happy children in Socialist countries.

tion, the Kisan Sabha and others. Vimal Ranadive, who had inaugurated the Conference, summed up the lively discussion. She gave the delegates the all-India programme, adopted by the All India Democratic Women's Organisation and called on the delegates to build up a strong organisation.

A Committee of 17, two women from each of the 13 districts was set up by the Conference, with Manjulabai as Convenor.

At the end of the Conference, a procession was taken to the place of the public rally, in which over 700 women joined. This was the first time such a gathering was held in Bhilai. The rally was addressed by Vimal Ranadive, Manjulabai, Jogabai, Rithi, Rukmini Singh and others, followed by a cultural programme.□

TLA "Understanding" from p. 6

probably not be having any children under the age of 6. In other words, in this underhand way the employer is relieved of having to give women maternity leave and pay the accompanying maternity benefit, at the same time he is relieved from the 'bother' and expense of running creches. Now it is clear why in the "Understanding", there is no mention of provision of these facilities.

Bogus Welfare

The importance of these 3 points becomes all the greater when we note that the women about whom the TLA is now expressing so much concern, *are currently all contract labour*, i.e., they are casual labourers, with no security of service, with very low wages — Rs. 5 to Rs. 6 per day whenever they are 'lucky' enough to find a day's employment — and long working hours of at least 10 hours in the mill premises.

The so-called "Understanding" is nothing but a lie to create illusions among large sections of women job seekers about obtaining employment. It is meant to keep them from the path of organising and fighting for a change in their status, as the dismissed women workers of the Arvind mills are doing. This "Understanding" must be denounced and exposed by all trade union organisations, and all support must be given to end the contract-labour system once and for all.□

Delhi—First Conference from p. 11

Local Activities

In Delhi, Faridabad and Ghaziabad, the JMS has attempted to take up the day-to-day problems facing women in the city. Ration supplies, drinking water, and sanitation facilities are among these concerns, and deputations, demonstrations and gheraos have been held in various areas where the JMS units function.

Police Atrocities on Women in Delhi: The Samiti took up the case of Rajwati, a resident of Mongolpuri, who was called to the Mongolpuri thana on false charges, and molested by the Sub-inspector. The Samiti, along with other organisations, held a big rally. The SI was finally transferred.

In New Seemapuri, a young pregnant woman was raped by local goondas, with the connivance of the police. Hundreds of women participated in a dharna at the local police station. Although the case received wide press publicity, the policeman got off scot-free.

Against Dowry: The Samiti noted that dowry crimes are on the increase in Delhi. Many such cases have been taken up, and demonstrations have been held outside homes where brides have been killed, or where they have allegedly committed suicide.

Rita Chadda, a woman of 22, survived 70 per cent burns after she was burnt by her husband and her mother-in-law. JMS organised a demonstration outside her in-laws' house. The militant demonstration won the support of the entire locality. The demonstration got back the dowry worth Rs. one lakh, on the spot.

As the report stressed while these demonstrations help a great deal, they cannot solve the problem of dowry. This is part of the social system. Immediately in addition to social awareness and social boycotts, the law must be amended, and a broad-based powerful united movement must be built to force the authorities to deal more effectively with these social crimes.

Legal Aid Cell: Set up by the Delhi Committee last year, this cell has been handling several individual cases. In 5 cases, legal action has been taken and the cases have been registered in court. The cell has also drafted

suggestions on the amendment to the laws on rape and dowry, to be presented to the Parliamentary sub-committee.

The report pointedly warned the women that it was not only the local and national scenes which affect women and their families. What is happening in the international scene, especially the power exerted by imperialist countries, affect us all. The JMS therefore resolved to support all anti-imperialist struggles in every part of the world, whether in Latin America, Africa or Asia.

Discussion on the Report

Susheela Gopalan greeted the conference, and said that all women must take up vigorously the issues of peace, price-rise and unemployment. Vimal Ranadive also spoke of the struggle against price-rise and the need for better drinking water facilities.

Delegates from Delhi, Gaziabad, Nand-nagari, Sawan Park, Mangolpuri, Bagichi, Kabir Nagar, Faridabad, Jahangirpuri, and Kalyanpuri spoke about their area members' struggles on issues such as atrocities, rations, water, toilet and sanitation facilities. The delegate from Kalyanpuri spoke movingly about her own escape from torture for more dowry.

All the speeches were marked by a militancy and spiritedness, reflecting the new awareness at least among the speakers born of their own experience of the last two years. Each of them stressed, and the dowry victim more poignantly, that oppression of women was not a natural state of affairs which has to be silently accepted by women. We must resist; and to resist, we must organise. Therefore we must support and strengthen and expand the Mahila Samiti, and supporting one another, we must fight. Such speeches were in sharp contrast to the preparatory convention held two years ago when it was difficult to get women to speak.

The delegates summed up the tasks lying ahead for the JMS: to fight against dowry, social crimes, price rise, unemployment; to fight for better health services and better working conditions; and to fight to defend democracy and equality. □

GENOCIDE IN LEBANON

Accounts are now available of the horrible genocide the Lebanese population has been subjected to by the Israeli aggressors. 9,500 civilians have been killed 16,600 wounded, and half a million homeless. Christopher Guianno, a Canadian surgeon who worked in a hospital in Sidon, told a Press Conference upon his return to Ottawa that U.S. made cluster bombs were used to kill Palestinian refugees. He said he saw entire blocks being destroyed and cluster bombs being dropped on refugee camps. The State-run hospital in Sidon was blown up and his own hospital was bombed four times, although it had the Red Cross boldly painted on its roof in accordance with the Geneva convention. He said that refugees were allowed to return to their camps and then they were bombed again, as a result of which he estimated 10,000 Palestinians and Lebanese died, half of them children under 13 years of age.

The Israeli authorities arrested Guianno and other foreign doctors and, together with 600 others, kept them in a school yard turned into a concentration camp. Des-

pite the intense heat, three glasses of water and one loaf of bread were daily given to every five prisoners and anyone who complained was immediately brutally beaten up. He said he saw four prisoners beaten to death before his eyes. Without any reason, an Iraqi surgeon and doctors from African and Asian countries working in Palestinian hospitals were beaten up. Interrogations were also accompanied with brutal beatings.

The Israeli aggressors are criminals carrying out the no less criminal global plans of U.S. imperialism.

Shells, rockets, cluster bombs and napalm, are being used, the same as in Vietnam.

Free the Bradford 12

In reply to the telegram and message of support sent on behalf of the All-India Coordination Committee of Working Women, to the Bradford 12, now standing trial in England (see our last issue) the following reply has been received:

Dear Sisters,

Thank you very much for your message of support — your telegram was much appreciated by all. The court proceeding will probably continue for a few more weeks during which time the campaign will be in full swing ... The father of one of the defendants, Masood Malik, died on May 14, of a heart attack. We are setting up a special fund to pay for the cost of flying his body back to Pakistan, and for the upkeep of his family while Masood's bread-winning brother is away.

In Solidarity,
The Bradford 12 Campaign
Committee

NEW WAYS TO KILL

The United States is conducting active preparations for chemical war. Even today, it has around one hundred different types of chemical weapons with their stockpiles running into 150,000 tons, enough to kill all people living on Earth 50 times over.

Despite all this, Washington is continuing to build up the production of chemical warfare agents. Last year alone, it spent 260,000,000 dollars to produce new types of chemical weapons. The corresponding projected expenditure for this year is 455 million dollars and for 1983 as many as 810 million dollars.

Beedi Workers' Hard Fight

from p. 4

crores of rupees in Provident Fund Deposits, but had never issued receipts for these amounts, on the plea that there was a Supreme Court stay order.

P.F. Deposits Unrecorded

In the meeting the workers forced out the true situation — whereas 78 beedi establishments were covered by the P.F. Act, only two establishments had been issued receipts for deposits made. It is anybody's guess how much money has been eaten away. Next day when these facts became known, spreading like wild-fire throughout the district, the workers' anger knew no bounds. The effect on the public also was electric, and from all sides pressure began to mount on the beedi employers. So much so that on the 19th itself a meeting was arranged between the employers and union representatives at the office of the Police Superintendent.

After prolonged and bitter negotiations, agreement was unanimously arrived at *that all the beedi manufacturers of Karnataka would implement the P.F. Act retrospectively, from August, 1, 1978, in full. Further, the P.F. Department would have to take all necessary supportive action for quick and full implementation.*

Struggle Not Yet Over

After the agreement was signed, the workers' representatives met separately and decided to withdraw the work-stoppage. However, in view of the fact that the Regional Provident Fund Commissioner had failed to turn up for the June 19 meeting as promised, it was decided to continue the hunger-strike until the Regional Commissioner vouchsafed the implementation of the Act, and the workers obtained the benefits to which they are entitled.

The hunger-strike continued, drawing thousands and thousands of workers from every nook and corner of the State, until it took on the appearance of a pilgrimage. This also forced the Regional Commissioner to fly to Mangalore. With the Deputy Commissioner in the chair, a tripartite meeting was called.

The practical problems arising from implementation of the Act from August 1978 were thrashed out and a procedure worked out.

Double CITU Membership

It was a truly mass movement which resulted in a mass victory. The beedi workers of Dakshina Kannada District have pledged to double the CITU membership by the end of 1982.

Death of Three Wives

IN the very heart of the capital of the country, Delhi, in daylight and openly, the number of deaths of young wives by burning has shown a terrible spurt in recent months. Three recent cases involved working women — two college teachers, and one an employee in the RBI. In a growing number of cases, the murders occur six to eight years after marriage, though most are within one year of the marriage. The rapacious men and women who commit these crimes seem to be totally unaffected by any human sentiments or even public outrage and condemnation. Much bigger campaigns, more stringent law enforcement bodies and extremely severe punishment, brought about by public intervention will be required to put an end to such barbaric behaviour. In a recent case in Delhi, to the greed for material possessions has been added a possible new motivation — collecting insurance money on a deceased wife.

Surinder Khanna, a small factory owner of Radhey Puri, married for the first time in October 1975. Barely six months after her marriage, his wife, Prem Bala apparently committed suicide by dousing her clothes with kerosene and setting herself ablaze, in her kitchen, on the night of April 13, 1976.

Khanna remarried on April 19, 1977. His second wife Rani who hailed from Punjab died on July 27, after sustaining burn injuries received when the kitchen stove burst. At the time Rani's death was said to be accidental.

After the death of Rani, her parents married their younger daughter, Rachna, to

on p 19

Khanna. Rachna, Khanna's third wife, reportedly killed herself by burning in April 27, 1982, on the terrace of the Radheypuri house. She took this extreme step barely 13 days after returning accompanied by her husband from her parents' house at Ferozepur, Punjab, following the delivery of her child. Khanna and his father were both at home when Rachna burnt herself on the terrace. In fact, all these burnings took place at the factory owner's house between April 13, 1976 and April 27, 1982.

A case of abetment to suicide has at last been registered against the husband, on a complaint by the parents of Rachna and Rani. Their brother has alleged that the accused had demanded Rs. 20,000 from Rachna, and hers was a dowry death. In a report to higher police authorities the parents have stated that their daughter was tortured and burnt to death by Khanna when she failed to meet his demands.

The probe is now on to ascertain whether the earlier deaths also were in fact accidental or planned — and whether the three women who died were insured or not.

Female Infanticide — from back page

Another advertisement has recently appeared in a national daily (see below) while no mention of course is made of the purpose of pre-natal determination of the sex of the foetus, the message is clearly enough conveyed in the seemingly innocent first line of the advertisement.

IS IT A BOY OR GIRL? FIRST TIME IN N. INDIA

It is now possible to find the sex of your child in early pregnancy before it is born with the aid of latest sophisticated imported electronic equipments and established scientific techniques.

For details contact or write:

**ANTE-NATAL SEX DETERMINATION
CLINIC**

**M/s New Bhandari
Hospital (Regd.)**

**2638 Chowk Moni (I/S Chatiwind Gate)
Amritsar,
Phone : 32500**

Pankaj Acharya — from page 3

back into power. In the course of the campaigning she fell ill in North Bengal, having used up all her strength. When she developed severe liver trouble she was brought to Calcutta and admitted in the Intensive Care Unit. Ill as she was, she insisted with the doctors that she would go to cast her vote, and vote she did, on May 19. She came back to the hospital determined to participate in the victory celebrations after the results were out. But this last desire of hers she could not fulfill, and on the night of June 11, at 11.20 p.m. she died.

In the journey to the crematorium a large procession of women and men came with Red Flags and Festoons, to pay their tribute.

The Voice of the Working Woman salutes this valiant woman, fighter for a better life for all, men and women and expresses its deep sorrow at the loss of this courageous comrade. We send our heartfelt condolences to her family, and assure the democratic movement of West Bengal that we will continue to work with renewed determination for the cause for which Pankaj Acharya, stood, fought and died.

Tripura from page 6

powers and finances for the State Government.

The membership of the organisation has grown very fast. It was 32,797 in 1978, 44,765 in 1979 and 31,655 in 1980 when the growth of the organisation was hampered by the communal riots. The membership now is 50,306 and the 1982 membership drive is still going on.

The conference elected a 41-member State Committee. It re-elected Sadhana Chakraborty as President and Ila Bhattacharyya as Secretary. Radharani Sinha, Mangaleswari Deb Barma and Dulali Das were elected Vice-Presidents, and Khanjani Deb Barma, Gouri Bhattacharjee and Rama Das as Joint Secretaries. An eleven-member State Secretariat was also formed.

SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENT—YES FEMALE INFANTICIDE—NO!

SOME disturbing news has recently shown once again how scientifically-useful tests can be used against women in our society. For most of our women, the birth of a son is not only important, but vital. The pressures and cruelty of this attitude are clearly seen in the recent use of sex determination tests to get rid of female children.

Instead of educating their women patients about the equal value of male and female babies, two doctors in Punjab have recently begun a shameless exploitation of our society's obsession with male children. These doctors have been circulating a letter promising to determine the sex of the foetus by a test called **amniocentesis**. They aim to "give relief" to couples "requiring" a male child.

The sex of the foetus can be determined through amniocentesis after the completion of the 16th week, upto the 20th week of pregnancy, they claim. The All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi tried out these tests in 1974-1975, but discontinued their use when it was found that female foetuses were being aborted.

Greater Burden on Women

In a statement to the press, Vimal Ranadive, Secretary of the All India Coordination Committee, points out that the proportion of females in the population is already going down. This is because of the low economic and social status of women in the country. In a prejudiced and feudal set-up, women are deprived of health care and nutrition. Frequent pregnancies and overwork add to their deteriorating health. In this already grim situation, how frequent abortions in search of a male child would affect the health of the mother can be well imagined.

The doctors advertising these tests have also stated their fee—a steep Rs. 500, in spite of admitting that tests conducted upto the 20th week of pregnancy may cause abortions.

Appeal for Protests

Several women's organisations and volun-

tary organisations have recently condemned this twisting of modern medical methods to encourage female infanticide. They appeal to individuals and organisations to write to the Health Ministry and medical associations to protest against the abuse of these tests.

A convention will be held in Delhi on July 15 by the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women, the AIDWA, and the NFIW, to condemn the misuse of these tests. Dr. Vina Mazumdar of the Centre for Women's Development Studies, Dr. Lotika Sarkar of the Faculty of Law, Delhi University, and Dr. Imrana of JNU will be the main speakers.

on page 19

WRONG DIAGNOSIS

Dr. Lakshmi Sehgal, Vice-President of the AIDWA, has written a letter about the sex determination tests to Smt. Avabai Wadia, President of the Family Planning Association of India. Dr. Sehgal underlines that the abortion of female foetuses cannot be a method of population control. She also expresses her fears about the consequences of these tests in a country like ours where so much importance is given to the male child. She mentions two cases in which she was professionally consulted, where the aborted foetuses, diagnosed as female, turned out to be male. The mothers have now developed serious psychological problems as a result.