

THE VOICE
OF

THE WORKING WOMAN



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Re 1.00



Working
Women
Unite
Fight
For
Equal
Status
Equal
Wage
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GREETINGS TO FIGHTING WOMEN
on 8th March the International Women's Day

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International Women's Day—1984

The "Voice of the Working Woman" greets the women in the Soviet Union, China, Viet Nam, Korea, Kampuchia and in other socialist countries on the Day of International Women's Year, 1984, who have emancipated themselves from feudal and capitalist system establishing socialism and taking big strides for further improvement in their situation. Today women all over the world including USA, West Germany, France and other countries are fighting against the militarisation of their country while raising their voices against unequal status and inequality. We are proud of our sisters in Greenham Common in U. K. who fought for years against the installation of cruise missiles in Europe and when they were installed, tried to smash the barbed wire surrounding in an attempt to reach the cruise missiles. Their courage and determination had no parallel. More and more women under capitalism are participating in the struggles and demonstrations demanding a basic change in the present social system which will liberate them from the feudal and capitalist bondage.

In India, the day will be observed in the midst of all round attacks on all sections of women. Crimes against women are on the increase. Bride burnings, atrocities on harijan and tribal women by landlords and anti-socials have become a daily affair. Working women in industries and establishments are thrown out due to introduction of mechanisation, equal remuneration and maternity benefit acts. The protective legislations concerning women have become a matter of joke. Despite repeated demands and agitations by various women's organisations and the recent hunger strike by the mothers of dowry victims, despite the assurances given by the Prime Minister, the women Congress Members of Parliament etc., the Dowry Prohibition Act is not yet being introduced in Parliament. At no time, the

(Contd on p. 8)

REPORTS FROM STATES

Women In Bengal Solidly Support Left Front Govt.

Shyamali Gupta, West Bengal

Ganatantrik Mahila Samiti, West Bengal has continued its activities all through. Increase in membership and membership renewal continues. The organisation now is 9,11,000 strong. The monthly journal EKSATHE sells 5500 copies and the news bulletin 10,000. Educational pamphlets related to women's movement written by Comrade Kanak Mukherjee were sold during the Karl Marx Death Centenary programme at Calcutta. A programme has also been launched to reach our illiterate members. A continuous campaign has been undertaken by the Samiti in support of the Left Front Govt. of West Bengal. In September when a section of the Cong (I) supported Junior Doctors' strike against the health policies of the Left Front Govt., the public health services were disrupted totally. Samiti workers collaborated with all democratic minded people to help restore normalcy in hospitals. Through squads and meetings they revealed the real motive behind the strike, and also organised a convention. The Samiti took part in the campaign, to restructure Centre-State relations for more powers to the states, which culminated in the general strike on September 28. The Samiti workers picketed in front of Central Govt. offices, organised meetings, distributed leaflets and pasted 5000 posters. On the occasion of the fourth opposition conclave the samiti members participated in the mass rally in large numbers, and also protested against attack on Farooq Abdullah by Cong (I) hooligans.

In almost all the districts Samiti units protested sharply against oppression on women. Campaigns were organised for amendments in

Dowry Prohibition Act and Criminal Procedure Code with regard to rape and dowry killings and to enact uniform laws for marriage, divorce, inheritance, maintenance and adoption for women of all communities. Thousands of postcards were sent to the Prime Minister and a memorandum was handed over to the Chief Minister requesting him to send it to the Prime Minister and the Governor. Ganatantrik Mahila Samiti participated in the peace movement campaigning against the nuclear war danger by the U.S.A. Large number of women attended the Nov. 20 peace rally. A joint convention was organised against the racist South African regime.

For almost a year now, the ideas of Karl Marx were propagated through seminars, study circles, sale of Marxist literature etc. During the Karl Marx Death Centenary celebrations, one day i.e. 16th Nov. was construed as Women's Day when a large number of women from Howrah and 24-Parganas were mobilised to participate in the procession. The open rally was addressed by Comrade Kanak Mukherjee.

Women Active In The Anti-Dowry Campaign

Delhi

Under the auspices of the Dahej Virodhi Chetana Manch (DVCM) a protest was organised outside Parliament on 26th August '83 against Government's inaction to amend the Dowry Act. Coms. Susheela Gopalan, Vimal Ranadive, Kanak Mukherjee and Ila Bhattacharya joined in. 135 women courted arrest out

of which 100 were JMS members. JMS along with SFI held Anti-Dowry Campaign in colleges of Delhi University.

JMS demonstrated at the Delhi High Court to protest against the Court's retrograde judgment in Sudha Goel case acquitting all the three, found guilty of murder by the lower court. A contempt case has been filed against them and they are fighting.

JMS along with DYFI demonstrated against police atrocities, held meetings against rise in price of milk, cut in rations and fought for better civic amenities in resettlement colonies. They also held solidarity demonstrations during the strike by the women working in the Social Welfare Board. JMS participated in a demonstration against US attack on Grenada as also in the Peace March on September 1.

The membership of JMS in 1983 has increased from 2300 to 3100. The JMS now has 5 new units. They have completed all the unit conferences and are now preparing for the State Conference planned in April. A very positive feature of the organisation is that more working class women are becoming active and expressing their problems freely. JMS organised a meeting to observe Marx Centenary. A 2-day seminar on Marx is to be held on March 3 and 4.

In the memory of Com Ashoklat Jain, the JMS has instituted scholarships for needy school students to be given on her birthday.

Women Participate In Jail Bharo Andolan

Laxmi Saigal, Kanpur

AIDWA Kanpur has functioned very well in the past few months. A campaign was launched to collect signatures against the government's dilly dallying in bringing the Anti-Dowry Bill and Amendment to the Criminal Procedure Code. 3000 signatures were collect-

ed and sent by registered post to the Prime Minister and copies sent to the Governor and Chief Minister of U.P.

Women have been organised in different areas. Deputations were taken to the concerned Municipal Officers for problems such as lack of civic amenities like drainage and toilet facilities, open man holes; and poor water supply. The women, especially in the Kachchi Bastis are very militant and prepared to fight for their rights, mainly against eviction and harassment by police and petty officials. Their huts are pulled down and flats are built there to be given on high rents. A Kachchi Basti Federation has now been formed by the AIDWA and DYFI to carry forward the struggle in an organised manner. On September 26, in response to the "Jail Bharo Andolan" several women with children took part in the procession. They sat in Dharna at the City bus stop to protest against hike in bus fare and were arrested and taken to police station where the women again threatened to sit in Dharna. Most of these women were from the Kachchi Basti. A conference of the Govind Nagar Kachchi Basti is being arranged.

Assam AIDWA Enrolls Members In Worst Hit District

Tushita Daheeta, Assam

Owing to the unstable political situation in the state, AIDWA, Assam could not carry out its activities on a regular basis, and even now the rural areas are out of reach. In Darang and North Lakhimpur alone, the extremists have murdered more than two thousand innocent people. In spite of this the AIDWA has managed to function. Though large public meetings could not be held, district conferences were held in Darang and Sibsagar. In North Lakhimpur over one thousand members have

been enrolled and a district committee formed. It is remarkable that the best work in Assam was done in the worst hit district of Kamrup. Women workers of Tea Gardens and Vaneer Mills have been enrolled as members.

Over 300 post cards have been sent to the Prime Minister, on the Dowry Amendment Bill. A deputation of the state committee went to the state legislature and also submitted a memorandum having several thousand signatures. Five thousand copies of the memorandum were printed and distributed to all the districts of Assam. A campaign was launched for women's emancipation on the occasion of the death centenary of Karl Marx in Kamrup, Goalpara, Dibrugarh, Tihu, Namrup etc.

Memoranda were also submitted to the district authorities of Dibrugarh and Kamrup by the district committees against atrocities on women in Pakistan.

Impressive Rally In Nalgonda

Com. M. Udyam, Nalgonda, A.P.

The programme of 23rd Nov. was successful in 8 Districts, with 35000 postcards with signatures sent to the Prime minister. In another seven districts, meetings and processions were conducted on the legislations concerning women. In Nalgonda, an impressive rally with 1300 women submitted a memorandum to the Dist. Collector to be forwarded to the Prime Minister. The press in Andhra gave good publicity to the 23rd Nov. programme. In two women's colleges, the Principals co-operated with the movement. In an impressive meeting held at Hyderabad a seminar was held, where prominent women took part. The situation in Andhra is favourable for increasing the work of AIDWA. The 1983 membership is 50,000.

Women Join Peace Rally

Sudha Bindu Mitra, Bihar

The State Committee of Bihar participated in several programmes like Khetihar Mazdoor and Kisan Rally held on 19th Sept. at Patna. The Janwadi Mahila Samity joined in the peace rally in Jajepur on 28.12.83. The Mahila Samity also co-operated with the convention of working women on 26-27th sept. 1983 in Patna which was guided by Com. Vimal Ranadive. Marx Centenary was observed in many districts. Post cards and signatures on the question of Dowry Amendments have been sent to the Prime Minister. The district conference of Vaishali district was held on 20-21st of Oct. '83. The Executive committee meeting of Bihar is going to be held on 16th February where the decision of the state conference will be taken.

Muslim Women Participate: Demand Common Civil Code

Com. T. Devi, Kerala

The Mahila Federation observed a protest Day on 26th. Sept against the atrocities on women in Pakistan at 200 centres with torch light demonstration. A demonstration was also held on 1-10-83 in all districts and taluk centres in front of state secretariat in protest against price rise and ration cut. 23rd November '83 was observed as a day for women's legislations when demonstrations were held in all districts head quarters and 19,500 women participated. 1,32,500 signatures were collected in 13,200 post cards, sent to the Prime Ministers. Padyatras and house to house canvassing was organised throughout the state popularise our demands for common civil code and amendments to dowry, and rape Act. Active participation of

Muslim women in this campaign was worth mentioning. The legal cells have been set up in four districts. The district conferences were held in 13 districts and state conference was held on 10th and 11th Dec. 1983 at Trichur, attended by 315 delegates. The state conference was inaugurated by Com. K. P. Gouri Amma. Com. Susheela Gopalan spoke on the question of organisation. The delegates spoke on national and international questions. The conference elected a 41 member committee with Com. P. Deutty, M L A as President and Com. T. Devi as General Secretary. The State Committee and the Dist. Committee of Ernakulam sent telegrams to the Iranian Embassy demanding the release of Com. Marium Farooz and others. The State Committee contributed Rs. 1000/- for Tripura Relief Fund.

Women Fast In Protest Against 600 Women Workers' Dismissal

Tamilnadu

Campaign demanding enactment of the law against Dowry was conducted through out the State and about 20,000 cards with 80,000 signatures were sent to the Prime Minister. Protest demonstrations were conducted against the price rise of essential commodities imposed by the Tamil Nadu Government throughout the State. On 23rd November '83 demonstrations were held in several districts. In Madras, a seminar was conducted on the topic "Law and Ladies". A memorandum was also submitted to the Government by a deputation led by Com. Mythili Sivaraman. Marx Centenary was also celebrated in major centres all over the State. Classes were also conducted on this occasion. The organisation participated in the movement against obscene advertisements. Solidarity was also expressed with the sugar factory workers of Nellikuppam against lockout.

In Kumara Palayam of Salem district, the AIDWA members participated in the demonstration and fastings held to oppose the dismissal of 600 women workers in Sundaram Mills. The organisation brought out 25,000 hand bills and 500 posters on the occasion of the agitation held by 14 opposition parties against the anti-people policy of Central and State Governments. The AIDWA gave its full support and participated in the State level conference of Working Women held at Coimbatore on December 27th. Com. Pappa Umanath participated and greeted the delegates of the CITU State conference on 28th December on behalf of AIDWA.

Punjab Branch Hold Meetings For Communal Harmony

—Rajinder Kaur, Punjab.

The Working Committee of the Punjab branch of AIDWA met on 15th Dec. 1983 and decided to hold meetings in villages for maintaining communal harmony and peace condemning the violent activities of extremists and divisive forces. It decided to enrol membership of PDWA. As per the decision, meetings took place in Amritsar, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana and Sangrur, where attendance was from 20 to 150 women. A demonstration was organised against the police officials in protest against their inactivity in the case of a molestation of a girl at Manawale village in Amritsar district. They were compelled to arrest the goondas. In the village of Jaiji, Tehsil Ajnala one woman's husband died. Her in-laws did not allow her to cultivate the land which was her rightful share. Not only that, they used to beat her. The PDWA with the help of the police compelled the in-laws to give the share of the land to the girl. This had a very good impact on the public. The Punjab branch gheraoed a Depot holder who

was not distributing Kerosene Oil properly and forced him to distribute it without any discrimination. A demonstration was held against a corrupt doctor in Phillaur with good number of women and compelled the authorities to take legal action against him. A number of cases of dowry were dealt with by the branch during last 6 months. The membership of Puniab DWA at present stands at 10, 850.

G.M.S. Tripura For More Powers To The State

—Com. Illa Bhattacharya, Tripura

The 23rd Nov. was observed all over Tripura by sending 800 post cards to the Prime Minister and by holding 14 conventions attended by thousands of women. In Agartala, a central convention was held where 1500 women participated. The Peace convention was held when G. M. S. participated. In the Tripura Bundh for the demands of more power to the state, women activists held street corner meeting. The membership at present is about 50,000.

Khandav Village-Dowry System Abolished

—Com. Niru Patel, Gujarat.

The Bhavanagar unit of AIDWA observed 23rd Nov. with a huge mass demonstration and public meeting. About a thousand post cards were posted to the Prime Minister. The unit also published a booklet on the problem of Dowry and the proposed amendment to the Dowry Act. A memorandum was submitted to the Chief Minister of Gujarat. A dharna of 200 women was held on 23rd when college girls participated. A village namely, Khandav, abolished the Dowry system. They observed this day with mother-in-laws and daughter-in-laws sitting together. The Gujarat M.S. is conducting 30 adult classes.

Joint Dharna Against Firing in Uran

—Subhasini Ali, Bombay.

The strike sponsored by the opposition parties in Maharashtra on 31st Jan. against the indiscriminate firing in Uran where five Kisans died and 12 were injured, was unprecedented in the democratic movement of Maharashtra. The strike was total, no transport plied in the street. All sections of people came out condemning the policies of the Chief Minister of Maharashtra denying the just price for their land taken by the Govt. for Nava Shiva Port. Women constituted a large number in the protest actions.

On 25th January, over 350 women belonging to Shramik Mahila Sangh (AIDWA), NFIW, Samajwadi Mahila Sangha and Shramjeevi Mahila Sangh held a day-long Dharna at the Flora Fountain to protest against police atrocities and killing of the peasants, both men and women, of Uran Dist. (Maharashtra), who were agitating for adequate compensation for their agricultural land, being acquired by the Maharashtra State Government for the new port of Nhava-Shiva. Women joined the Dharna from bustees, and from all the parts of the city. They shouted slogans condemning the police brutalities. After the Dharna and again on the 27th a delegation of 40 women including Com. Ahilya Rangnekar, Smt. Pramila Dandavate, Com. Tara Reddy and Smt. Alha Desai met the Chief Minister who agreed to withdraw the SRP from the affected areas.

Demonstration At In-law's House For Dowry Murder

On 26th January a young Marwari bride in the Jogeshwari suburb of Bombay, Nirmala Chhajed, was burnt to death after being stran-

gled by her mother-in-law and sister-in-law. The in-laws were demanding 1 Kilo of gold as dowry. After 2 days, the in-laws were arrested and then released on 3rd Feb. on bail. On 4th Feb., the Sharmik Mahila Sangh units of Jogeshwari and Andheri took out a procession of women to the colony where the Chhajed family lived. They were joined by a few DYFI comrades. Shouting anti-dowry slogans in the neighbouring area, the procession reached the colony and, immediately, hundreds of Marwari women living there came from their homes and joined the demonstration shouting that they were convinced of the guilt of the Chhajed family and that they were willing to boycott them socially. Some of them gave the information, that the Chhajed family owned a jewellery shops in the neighbourhood and would be present there. The demonstration then marched towards the shop where a huge crowd collected. The younger brother-in-law and the accused mother-in-law of Nirmala were present in the shop. Seeing them, the crowd of people, mostly women, became enraged and the demonstration became very militant. Meanwhile another member of the family rushed to the police station and lodged a complaint that their shop was being looted.

The police came to the spot and started beating the demonstrators with lathis. Comrades Subodh Kumar and Nirmal Deo Upadhyaya of DYFI and Com Subhasini Ali of AIDWA were beaten. The people who had gathered, were simply shocked by this police offensive. Afterwards 9 women and 4 men were arrested, charged with rioting and sent to the lock-up. They were released on bail only the next afternoon. The name of the women are Ratnaprasha Dallade, Vijaya Thore, Meera Pal, Reeta, Pushpa, Premnath, Girja bai, Ram Janaki, Vijaya Charan and Subhashini Ali. The following day, CITU members of the area struck work and hundreds of them demonstrated in front of the police station concerned.

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capital of our country had so many crimes committed against the womenfolk as they are today. But Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister had something else to state with regard to this. She said "Voilence was not directly against women alone, it was part of a general climate of voilence, not only in this country but all over the world". She advised women, therefore not to be aggressive while tackling their own problems. The advised women not to go for "confrontation". We would like to tell her that women would not like to be "aggressive" unless there are compulsions to be, they would not like to 'confront' the Government, the police, the landlord, unless they were convinced that there was no other way. Mrs. Gandhi now states that some people started saying that the anti-dowry legislation harms women more than benefitting them. We would like to ask her who are these "some people", for whom, she explained "the whole question had to be carefully examined". Surely not the ordinary women who are daily being burnt. The vested interests are bent upon sabotaging the introduction of the Dowry Bill in Parliament, like the Equal Remuneration Act which was passed but not being implemented. How does it help women if the Indian Constitution had granted equal rights and opportunities to them, when in practice they are deprived of them? Employment as a fundamental right of women should be incorporated in the constitution. When lakhs of women are out of jobs, the self employment scheme of 25,000 small units for women is thrown at them ! Is it not a cruel joke ? The experience of self employed women shows that unless a good market is procured, the products remain unsold in the competitive market today.

Women, including working women are rightly agitating and demonstrating for their demands against mechanisations which throw

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Decisions Of All India Democratic Women's Association

The Central Executive of the All India Democratic Women's Association met in Delhi on 8th February, 1984 and decided for the following campaigns for the coming 3 months:-

(1) To observe March 8th as International Women's Day and if any state wants to connect any particular issue on the occasion they can do so without losing the importance of the International Women's Day.

(2) All the State Committees are requested to mobilise women in support of the Calcutta conclave programme which includes such urgent demands of the people as measures to control prices-rise and adequate supply of essential commodities, expansion of employment opportunities, reversal of anti-labour policies of the Govt. of India, steps against closures, lock-outs etc., remunerative prices for peasants' produce, minimum wages for agricultural workers, steps against atrocities on Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, religious minorities, women and other weaker sections of society, scrapping of draconian laws like the National Security Act, Essential Services Maintenance Act, etc. Women should participate enmasse on Feb. 18 programme in the States.

(3) 10th April must be observed as a protest day against the reluctance of the Government to pass the amendment for the Dowry Prohibition Act as recommended by the Joint Select Committee and for the constitution of Vigilance Committee, Family Courts, Women's Commission and for passing Common Laws for Women of all communities. It should be observed as a joint programme wherever possible. Dharnas, Marches and Meetings should

be held all over India and Memorandum should be given to the Governors (draft copy will be sent by the Central Office).

(4) *Peace Marches*. Women should join Peace Marches, Meetings and other programmes organised for peace and should continue campaign for peace and against war.

The meeting passed the following resolutions;

(i) Condolence Resolutions on the sad demise of:-

(a) Com. Ashok Lata Jain, Member of the Executive Committee of the AIDWA.

(b) Com. Deshraj Chaddha, Central Committee Member of the CPI (M),

(c) Com. Dulali Das, Tripura AIDWA.

(d) Com. Asha Jag Dayal, Punjab AIDWA.

(ii) Resolution welcoming the decision to resume the tripartite meeting of the Government and the leaders of the Opposition Parties to solve the Punjab issue and invite the Akali leaders to participate in the talks. While condemning the terror let loose in the area doing immense harm to the life and property of the people Punjab, the resolution appealed to all sections of the people in Punjab to help stop this violence in Punjab and restore peace and communal harmony in that area.

(iii) Resolution protesting against the recent price hike of sugar and rice by the Central Govt. and also against unprecedented increase in the prices of all the essential commodities and called upon the women of the country to unite with other mass organisations against the price rise and other anti-people policies of the Government.

(iv) The meeting resolved to support the National Campaign Committee of Trade Unions' programme of action against lock-out, retrenchment, lay-offs and de-notifications. These are vital problems which are confronting the people and the workers. The resolution called upon units to give full support to the action programme and to ensure full participation of women in the programmes.

Mothers of Dowry Victims on Hunger Strike

Com. Mehmuna, Delhi.

There were 6 women sitting on hunger strike outside the Prime Minister's bungalow. The only 'roof' above them in the chilling weather was a 'Tambu' stretched on the second day.

What did they want? 'Justice' was the reply in chorus. Yes, they all had a common problem. All of them had their daughters killed at the hands of the husbands and in-laws. The reasons for killing in all these cases were dowry. And in all these cases the police had connived with the accused. The murderers had gone scot free.

One of them was Shanti from Agra, killed on 20th November 1983 by her husband. He hanged her on to a tree after killing to cook up a suicide story. To hush up the case, the girl's parents were offered money by the police. Another victim was Rajesh Kumari Yadav, burnt to death at 12 noon on January 7, 1984. The in-laws did not even attend the cremation. Earlier her husband, a teacher, had burnt her furnitures given as part of dowry, to play Dewali. Anju Khandelwal, next in the list was burnt on June 17, 1983 and succumbed to her burns a week later. Her in-laws forcibly took her statement that she died of candle burns and threatened to kill her parents if she told

otherwise. Anju told this to her mother. The case has not yet been taken to court. Anita Sing, another hapless girl was throttled, burnt and cremated even before her parents could reach, by her husband, an Air Force employee, and her father-in-law. The case is shuttling between the Air Force police and the civil police because the house is in a civil area. There were 2 more cases. They sat in dharna, in the hope that being a woman the Prime Minister will have the heart of a woman. But the Prime Minister had no word of sympathy for them, when they called on her to give a memorandum. Instead, she wondered if hunger strike would at all help them. This was narrated to a delegation of All India Democratic Women's association which met them during their strike. The delegation was led by Com. Vimala Ranadive. Vice-President of AIDWA accompanied by Coms. Asha, Ranju, and Mehmuna of Delhi J.M.S. AIDWA in a statement issued later condemned not only the murders but also the heartless attitude of the Prime Minister towards the victims. AIDWA also demanded that Dowry Prohibition Act, be brought in the next budget session of the Parliament. Also the common Civil Code should be applied to all communities.

AIDWA appealed to the women and all democratic people to come forward to raise their voice of protest against such tragedies in social life. □

The Voice of Working Woman

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“We are For Peace” ! Says Joy Huitt, U.S. Coal Miner

Joy Huitt, a coal mine worker from U.S.A. was firm when she said “there are three factors which are likely to defeat Mr. Reagan in the coming Presidential election. One, he has substantially cut the welfare programmes for poor people, secondly women are going to vote against him because of the defeat of the Amendment of equal rights for women (ERA), and thirdly, on the question of peace and war”. When asked about how far the American people desire for peace, she said “of course, why? We all want peace.....we are demonstrating in the streets.....when the Nuclear weapons move, we lie prostrate in front of the weapons as we did in Washington.....Millions of people gathered .” Her deep desire for peace was expressed when she was informed about the news item appearing in the press that President Reagan wanted to continue the talks with USSR. She said “Let us pray that they do talk !” Joy said that there were six candidates in the field—Republican, Democrats, and Independents. Democrat Mondale may win this time. Of course, all money power is behind Reagan...” What about women Joy? “In general, women sit at home, do not vote. But due to the defeat of the ERA amendment and our work among them, we feel they will come out to vote...” She said, she was a Democrat, Mary Ann was a Republican.

Joy was a coal miner just a few months back working in coal mines. Coal was produced on contract in USA. The contract in the mines where Joy worked was over. The company was closed. Joy was a nurse before she joined here. Perhaps she would have to go for nursing again she said. She had to work underground to supervise the running of belt, clean-

liness, etc. It appears the ILO convention on forbidding women to go underground is not applicable in USA. According to both the delegates, they had to fight to get employment in coal. Before 1977 no women were employed. Now also in about 3700 coal mines all over U.S., women are only 1% in employment. “The mines are fully mechanised”, but “they are not owned by the Government, as in your country, but privately. The wages for men and women are the same here, but in other work places they are far less than the men.” Joy, when working as a Nurse used to get poor wages, while in Mines a good salary was available. She said the “reason was obvious. Nursing is a woman’s job...so less wages. In coal industry 40% people were laid off recently because of the recession...” What about Maternity Benefit for women? Mary Ann said “there was no Maternity Benefit for women in Mines. We, women are fighting for it and also for benefit for men when women go to attend”.

When asked whether there was sex harassment at their work place, Mary said ‘Oh, so much. There are so many cases pending in the court.’ Mary Ann looks after the safety of the coal miners. She had to fight in the court to get sufficient compensation for the accident. She arranges conferences, seminars. She said one Linda Rasobichi, who was herself a coal miner in the past is on the International Health Safety Committee. She does very good work in the interest of the coal workers. She finds the reasons of the accident, will find out the cost, will write to the court filing suit etc. while in our country, a number of accidents like Chasnala take place when hundreds of workers die every year, Mary said a very few accidents

take place in U.S.A Careful supervision, wearing of gas mask and apparels for miners are there. Joy intervened to say, "But we are demanding apparels for women. Why? There are no apparels for you" Joy explained "you know, women were not employed till 1977 in mines. So we do wear whatever is available. It is sometimes of the bigger size...and the result is cutting of fingers etc," which is of course a rare case.

"Ann, what about the male chauvinism in Unions? Do the trade union leaders treat women workers on equal terms? You know, in our country CITU has taken up the question of their promotion on the higher bodies. We are fighting for their equality in society and also in the Unions..."

"You know, this is a man's world. The same treatment is given in our country in the society and also in the unions by the trade union leaders. But we are fighting against it. I will give you example of our National convention of unions of mine workers in U.S.A., held sometime back. There were 2000 delegates in total, out of which only 21 were women. But Mary hastened to say, "they were elected by local workers—male workers. They voted for women This was quite interesting and good. Is it not?" "Yes of course. In the 4th conf rence of CITU there were only 25 women delegates out of say 5000, this time at Kanpur there were 50 women delegates out of 2000". She expressed satisfaction.

Mary replied, when asked about the increase in the divorce cases in U.S.A. recently, "it was but natural. Women should not be abused. And when they are, they refuse to stay with their husbands and quit." But she said immediately, "But look I have married 25 years back...and Joy too. We had no divorce."

These two women, a coal team from U.S.A., came to India to meet women, see the situation

of women, the child care centres etc. They wanted to attend the convention held on 20th Jan., organised by the N.C.C, on closures, lay off, denotification. Since Joy was laid off, she wanted to hear what workers say And they did attend the whole session, patiently listening to the translation of the speeches. They perhaps must have felt it was the same cause for which the workers in U.S.A. are fighting against their employers, against the monopolist policies of the Reagan's rule. Joy particularly told me pointing out to the programme of action in the resolution, to write to her about the march to Parliament..."

(The women coal miners were interviewed by Vimal Ranadive) □

Crime Rate Drops in China

The crime rate in September and October was at its lowest in recent years, now that public security units throughout the country have meted out quick, severe punishment to criminals

The crime rate dropped by 46.7 per cent from August to September, of which major crimes went down by 38.7 per cent. In October, the crime rate fell by another 11.5 per cent, and major crimes decreased 28.5 per cent.

According to statistics from 18 big cities, the crime rate went down 46 per cent from August to September, of which major crimes fell by 48 per cent. There is a continued downward trend in October,

On September 2 this year, the Second Session of the 6th NPC Standing Committee decided to increase the maximum penalties, including capital punishment, which can be imposed on offenders who cause grave harm to the social order and public security.

Cont. on p. 14

Rousing Reception To The Delegates Of U.S.S.R., P.R.C. And Yugoslavia

On the rainy evening of December 25th, 1983 affection and love were showered on the delegates from Soviet Union, the Peoples Republic of China and Yugoslavia by the members of All India Democratic Women's Association. In spite of pouring rains and havocs created by it a huge gathering of men and women had assembled at Jain Bhavan, Trichy to receive their sisters from the socialist countries. The delegate from U.S.S.R, three delegates from China and two from Yugoslavia were on a visit to Trichy to attend All India Women's Conference held in the last week of December. Thunderous slogans and standing ovation marked the entry of the delegates into the meeting hall. The delegates were thrilled by the spontaneity of the reception.

In her presidential address Com. Pappa Umanath, Secretary, Tamil Nadu State unit of A.I.D.W.A., received the delegates on behalf of the Association. The delegates were then profusely garlanded. The delegate from Soviet Union was visibly moved, when she was garlanded by Com. Bangaramma the veteran activist of AIDWA, and mother of martyr Krishna Murthy who laid down his life in the police firing on Golden Rock railway workers. The other delegates were garlanded by working women and the activists of the AIDWA. Then Com. Pappa Umanath presented to the delegation, the traditional Tanjore handicraft plates with the figure of famous Rock Fort of Trichy inscribed on them. The delegates were also offered the flags of AIDWA and messages of greetings were presented by comrades Chandra, Hema and Vasuki.

Replying to the reception and felicitations

offered, the delegate of Soviet Union, Com. Lidiya Barmina, Dean, faculty of English, Foreign languages Institute of Moscow proudly recalled that she hailed from the first socialist country in the world. She narrated vividly the sordid experience of the people of Soviet Union in building and preserving socialism, in isolation when her country was liberated by the great October Revolution in 1917, it was economically very backward. So the very first task of the new state was to further rapid strides in all the fields of economy. When the country was up on the ladder of economic development it had to face the disastrous II World War, the aggression of the Nazi Forces and the betrayal of the other allied countries.

The people of Soviet Union have experienced the disastrous ravage of war and they have lost 20 million precious lives in the two world wars. Women in Soviet Union had to necessarily engage themselves in all productive fields of the economy while their men counterparts were engaged in the War Front in countering the aggression. Now women in U.S.S.R. have developed themselves in all fields and are equal with men. Their participation in political administration is ensured by the Constitution. Hence the primary task of the Women's Organisation in their country was to spread the message of peace and to fight against the imperialist war machinations with the co-operation of the sisters of the world. In this context she said that Indo-Soviet Co-operation Treaty plays a notable part and wished that the co-operation and friendship were further strengthened for the mutual benefit of both the countries and for the cause of world peace.

The delegation from Peoples Republic of China consisted of Comrades Yu Shugin, Lou Xiaoquao and Liu Zhenfeu. In her speech, Com. Yu Shugin, member of Standing Committee, All China Women's Federation wished that the friendship between the peoples of the two popular countries on the earth flew like the ever flowing tides of river Ganges in India and river Yangtse in China. After the liberation of China in 1949 and the adoption of the New Constitution, rapid changes have occurred in the status of women. Women have been ensured of equality in all walks of life by the Constitution. However in the background of the remnants of feudalism, still to be wiped out, the struggle for total emancipation of women continues. Women are treated at par with men in education, employment opportunity and wages. In marriages women have right to choose the partner in life. Participation of women in political administration is ensured from the commune to the National Council level. She proudly recalled that 22% of membership in the supreme body of administration in China, viz, National Council is held by women. The primary task of All China Women's Federation was political, ideological and education among the vast masses of women.

The Yugoslavian delegation consisted of Comrades Radmila Papader and Mangilen Lalich in her reply to the greetings and felicitation offered, they pointed out that women in their country have developed themselves equal to men in all fields and the problems of women considered, as the problems of the entire society because their country have a socialist system headed by the hegemony of working class interested in the welfare of all the sections of the society. Hence they did not have a separate organisation for women in their country. She recalled that their women had fought in the battle field with their men coun-

ter parts in the II World War. She listed out in details the various rights ensured by the Constitution to the women in education, employment, wages, marriages, maternity benefits, bringing up children, retirement and in other fields. She also wished that the friendship between the two countries should further get enriched by mutual co-operation.

The speeches of the fraternal delegates were translated into Tamil by Comrades Vasuki, Chandra and Hema. Com. G. Vijaylakshami, district secretary, AIDWA delivered the vote of thanks and the meeting came to an end amidst thunderous applause and a chorus of slogans hailing socialism condemning imperialism and praising the unity of India with the respective socialist countries.

(Contd. from p. 12)

The decision has been firmly endorsed by Government and security units, and warmly welcomed by the people. Many criminal gangs have been rounded up, and a number of unsolved crimes have now been settled. Public Security and social order are improving remarkably.

Some offenders, impelled by the government's policy and persuaded by their parents, spouse, brothers and sisters, have confessed their crimes and have thus received more lenient punishment. By the end of October, 607 criminals in Beijing turned themselves in to public security units.

Although public security is improving, it has not yet equalled the best record since the founding of the People's Republic. The struggle must be continued. □

U.S. Responsible For The Deformed Babies in Viet Nam

Nguyen Ngoc Phuong

The after-effects of the chemical warfare agents used by the U.S.A., in Viet Nam two decades ago are still being felt by the Vietnamese populace affected by these toxins. Many babies born of parents, one of whom was affected by the U.S. chemicals in Viet Nam, are headless monsters. Several unborn infants (foetuses) develop moles that change into cancerous tumors that also spread to the mothers' uterus.

The incidence of congenital deformities on the world average is around 1 per thousand. In Viet Nam, in zones where one of the parents has been exposed to these chemical weapons and in the particular to Agent Orange, it is 47 per thousand.

This article describes the horror created by the chemicals that the United States used in its war against Viet Nam, to make entire regions sterile.

I am a woman and also a medical doctor who has specialized in obstetrics and gynaecology. I have been taking care of women and new-born babies in Viet Nam, a war torn country.

The U.S. Air Force used many kinds of weapons to destroy my country, not only the natural environment, but also human beings, spiritually and materially.

I would like to describe here the consequences of a special weapon, toxic chemicals. The U.S. Air Force sprayed 72 million litres of toxic chemicals over my country and my people. More than 100 million litres of Agent Orange, which contained at least 130 Kgs of

Dioxin, were used. It is really an enormous quantity of the highest toxic substance at present because only a few microgrammes can cause still births, miscarriages, abnormal pregnancies, monstrosities and cancers.

What can be more miserable and horrible for a mother when, at the end of her hard labour, she gives birth to a monster caused by the so-called "defoliants and herbicides"?

I have met many couples, husbands and wives, in Viet Nam, who had to live apart for tens of years due to the war, but who still remained faithful to each other. After the liberation of the country, they were reunited. But the first child they had after such a long expectation turned out to be a monster of toxic chemicals!

How does one think of the situation? How would one feel it, almost every day, one had to take care of such deformed babies? How would one feel if one were the mother or father of these deformed babies?

I have also met many women in Viet Nam, who are very young, still in their early 20s, but who are unable to conceive a normal offspring as they are suffering from Hydatiform mole. They often bleed massively, and 25-30% of these cases develop cancer. Almost all those patients were exposed to toxic chemicals during their childhood, when they were only 5-6 year old children. To cure this disease, we are forced many times to cut off their uterus. As a doctor, taking care of these patients, have wept while operating them. Really, I have cried many times for them, for those who are too young,

the most unfortunate patients of mine! They will live on, but they have been deprived for ever of the happiness of having a child, a common happiness expected by all women in the world.

We also know that it is not only in Viet Nam but also in the U.S.A. and Australia that many women, whose husbands were exposed to toxic chemicals during wartime in Viet Nam, are suffering from the same fate as that of the Vietnamese women.

How long these sufferings of the Vietnamese, American, Australian women will last, for how many generations, we do not know for sure at the present time.

This is only a part of the destruction caused by the imperialists in a small developing country as ours. But I think it may happen to other countries also.

So, in the name of life, in the name of all mothers, all children in the world, I believe that everyone will act effectively against war to protect our planet from devastation from all kinds of weapons and to build a happy and prosperous future for our children."

The Inspiring Story of Greenham Common

Jenice Allen, Great Britain

In 1979 the decision to site 160 Cruise Missiles in Britain was made at a secret meeting by Mrs. Thatcher, the Prime Minister. The Cabinet was not consulted. The Parliament was not consulted. The British people were not consulted.

In the Berkshire Hills, less than one hour's drive from the centre of London, final work is being completed on the construction of six reinforced silos for the housing of Cruise Missiles.

In December 1983, 96 cruise missiles will be sited at Greenham Common. (They were already deployed in December.)

Each Cruise Missile carries a 200 kiloton warhead, and is nearly 100 times more powerful than the bomb that devastated Hiroshima in 1945.

We will never know the final death toll of the Hiroshima Bomb. Nor will we ever know the number of subsequent deaths directly or indirectly caused by the radiation from the bomb. But we do know that approximately 120,000 civilians and 20,000 soldiers died within the first 2 weeks.

If as is planned, the US Government is successful in deploying these Cruise Missiles at Greenham Common, it will have stationed on English soil, weapons with more than 10,000 times the devastation potential of one Hiroshima Bomb.

The scale of US military involvement in Europe is immense. There are now 120 American bases in Britain alone, and at least 20 of these house bombers capable of carrying nuclear bombs. In November 1982 the North Atlantic Assembly, the Governing Body of NATO, decided that Cruise would be deployed under the sole command of the US Forces. The American President has no need to consult his NATO allies if time and circumstances prevent this. Therefore, major British missiles are American-owned, American-tested and American-deployed. Britain is not in control of its own defence. There is no such thing as a Dual Key System in modern nuclear strategy. It is the US, which consistently claims the right to world leadership, which has precipitated the situation that we have today.

In the summer of 1981, a group of women who called themselves Women for Life on Earth marched 110 miles from Cardiff in Wales to Greenham Common in England. Four wo-

men chained themselves to the fence of the base demanding a public debate on the cruise issue. From this initial action the question of cruise has been brought to the minds of the British public, and for the first time the Government has been forced to acknowledge the presence of this new generation of nuclear weapons in British soil.

By the end of 1981 a camp was established outside the main gate at the Greenham base. In February of 1982, after long discussion, it was decided that the protest would be more effective if non-violent Protest Action were pursued. Because the presence of men encourages aggressive behaviour, they were asked to stay away and the protest became a Women Only Protest. Since then the Movement has grown in strength. In December 1982, 30,000 held hands around the base. In Easter 1983 20,000 women blockaded the base for two days. At any one time there may only be 45 women at the camp, but tens of thousands of women around the world support us and we support them. Women are constantly being assaulted, arrested and jailed, and there are repeated attempts, both legal and illegal, to evict the women from the camp. It is very cold and miserable in the winter and the police presence is getting stronger day by day. But we have persisted in the principle of non-violence. We have been accused of being sexist, separatist, lesbians, dirty, foolish, of not following our traditional roles as women, of being funded by one of the Super-Powers, and of living off Social Security payments.

Greenham women have also been active at Comiso in Sicily, where 112 Cruise Missiles will be deployed. Last month twelve women were arrested there and deported without trial for attempting to blockade the base. Two women had their arms broken by the Italian authorities.

Next week four more Greenham women

will go out to Comiso to help start a woman's peace camp there. So we have, through our efforts, become an increasingly disturbing factor in British public life, and have created a situation where women feel that they are powerful and can do something to *END* this nightmare. At the moment there are 14 peace camps in Britain. The peace movement in Britain has made nuclear weapons an issue in the forth-coming British General Elections.

We are not just asking for a reduction—we want an *end* to the deployment of *all* nuclear weapons in the world. We want an end to all preparations for a *conventional* war. We want an end to the destruction of the planet by the careless use of *nuclear power*.

Britain still dumps nuclear waste in the Atlantic, and eight tons of nuclear waste pass through Central London every week. We want an end to this dumping and we want an end to this transportation of nuclear waste.

We want an end to exploitation of Third World Peoples. We want an end to racism throughout the world. We want an end to repression and suppression of women throughout the world. □□

PEACE CONVENTION

A convention for Peace against Danger of Nuclear War and threat to India's Security was organised by eight left and opposition parties in New Delhi on March 8 and 9. A number of Women's Organisations including AIDWA participated in the convention. Report will be published in the next issue.

Mass Dharna on 8th March by P & T Women In Kerala

A well attended, successful Women's Convention was conducted by NFPTE on 14th January 1984 at Ernakulam. More than 600 working women representing all the nine unions affiliated to the NFPTE in Kerala participated in the convention which was presided over by Com. K. Leelamma, Convener, Mahila Sub-Committee of NFPTE, Kerala Circle.

Com. K. Balachandran, the Mayor of Cochin and the Chairman of the Reception Committee for the convention welcomed the gathering. Com. Sony Kamath, leader of the women's wing of Kerala Government Teacher's Association inaugurated the Convention in the absence of Com. K.R. Gouriamma, MLA who could not come due to illness. Com Sony, in her inaugural address, drew the attention of the house to the various problems confronting the working women and to the activities of Working Women's Co-ordinating Committee in Kerala and at the national level. Com. Leelamma explained the activities of the Mahila Sub-Committee since its formation in October 1978. She told the house that due to the incessant pursuance of the Committee, the P&T Department opened Creches at different places in the state. She called upon the women workers in P&T in Kerala numbering about 12,000 to take more interest in the day-today activities of NFPTE.

Com. P.S. Ramankutty, Convener, Kerala Circle Coordinating Committee of P&T Unions, greeting the delegates, explained various issues. Five active workers of NFPTE are still out of service and 30 under suspension for trade unions actions. About 300 comrades transferred to distant places in May 1982 have

not yet been brought back to original stations, despite repeated assurances given by higher authorities and the fact that complete normalcy was restored by unions. More than 3000 workers including a number of women workers were imposed with break-in-service. In spite of all the heavy victimisation and continuous harassment, the workers' movement could neither be destroyed nor defeated. The P&T workers in Kerala resisted all the onslaughts from the Government. Com. Ramankutty explained the sad plight of women and the toiling masses in the country for which the ruling class is responsible. He called upon the women workers in P&T to join the mainstream of the working women and fight out the injustice and the naked exploitation.

Com. C.K. Omana of the Kerala Mahila Sangham also greeted the convention.

Com. V.V. Prasannakumari presented a charter of demands for discussion and approval of the Convention. After thread bare discussion for about five hours, the Convention decided to submit the Charter of Demands to Circle and District level authorities on 8th February 1984 after mass demonstrations. Thereafter, mass dharna will be organised on 8th March at maximum centres. Participating women employees of all arms of P&T services will draw attention of the public and the administration to the demands. It was also decided to join common programmes if chalked out by women's organisations on 8th March, the International Women's Day. Further programmes will be decided by the Joint Circle Conference of P&T Unions at Alleppey in April 1984.

Through a resolution the Convention registered emphatic protest against the price hike of rice, sugar, coal etc. In another resolution, the Convention demanded cancellation of all types of victimisation of P&T employees in Kerala. The Convention also demanded that all temporary workers employed in the P&T Dept. on 'hourly wages' as 'Reserved Trained pool' be regularised in service immediately. Convention called upon the district Mahila Committees and Local Coordinating Commi-

tees to organise trade union camps and study classes for women workers.

Com. Uma Vasudevan, Convener of the Reception Committee proposed vote of thanks. *Leadership Camp :*

A state level leadership camp was conducted for active workers of the Mahila Committee of NFPTE in Kerala on 12th and 13th November, 1983 in Trivandrum. 81 comrades from the affiliated unions participated in the camp. NEPTE has decided to organise such Camps at different places in the state in 1984.

Fate of Women Workers in Hyderabad

About 30 women workers are working in a private Pharmaceutical Company named Uni-Sankyo Private Ltd. at Gaganpale. There woman workers are working since 1975. All these workmen are designated as Assistant Supervisor, Health Visitors, Address Collectors, Helpers, etc.

These women workers will have to go round the city and outside to collect urine from the pregnant women of different places, which is the main raw material for the production of the H.C.G. It is a medicine used for creating fertility among the women. This Company is collaborating with a Japanese Company. This is the only licensed Company in India, to produce such a medicine. This medicine costs Rs. 80/- to 140. per pill or injection. Though this company is earning lot of profits, they are refusing to pay better wages to the women workers. There was no way to fight except to join a union. So they got registered their union under the Trade Unions Act, during the month of September 1982. Ultimately they got the registration number and the same was intimated to the management.

After the letter of intimation, the management orally said, "we don't have any work to keep you all with us. Hence you are all terminated". The Union took up this matter with the Labour Department as dispute under the I.D. Act. But the management was very ada-

—Report from Uni-Sankyo mant, and got the workers arrested (including the president and all the office bearers) and put them under the police custody for about one full night and 12 hours. Later, they were produced before the Magistrate and then were released on bail. The Union fought this case for about a month. Meanwhile this issue was also represented to the A.P. Labour Minister. Only then the matter was taken up and the joint meeting was called for where then management was asked to take back all the employees. All the workers were reinstated on 9th November, 1982.

Then in the beginning of the next month, once again the management terminated all the (30) women workers including the supervisor. Again the union raised a dispute under the I.D. Act. But the management did not turn up to the joint conciliation meetings which were called more than a dozen times. Then the workers withdrew the case under the I.D. Act and filed individual petitions under the A.P. Shops and Establishment Act.

After six month's fighting, after hearing both sides, the authority gave a judgement of 40 pages on the basis of the following points :

- (1) The applicability of the Act, to the Company's workmen,
- (2) Condonation of delay,

(Contd. on p. 21)

26 January 1984

Consolidate National Integration and Unity

On this day we renew the pledge we took to build a prosperous India. Our pledge was to ensure economic and social justice to our people, guarantee freedom of thought and expression and equality of status.

Fulfilment of these cherished goals and aspirations demands our continuous effort.

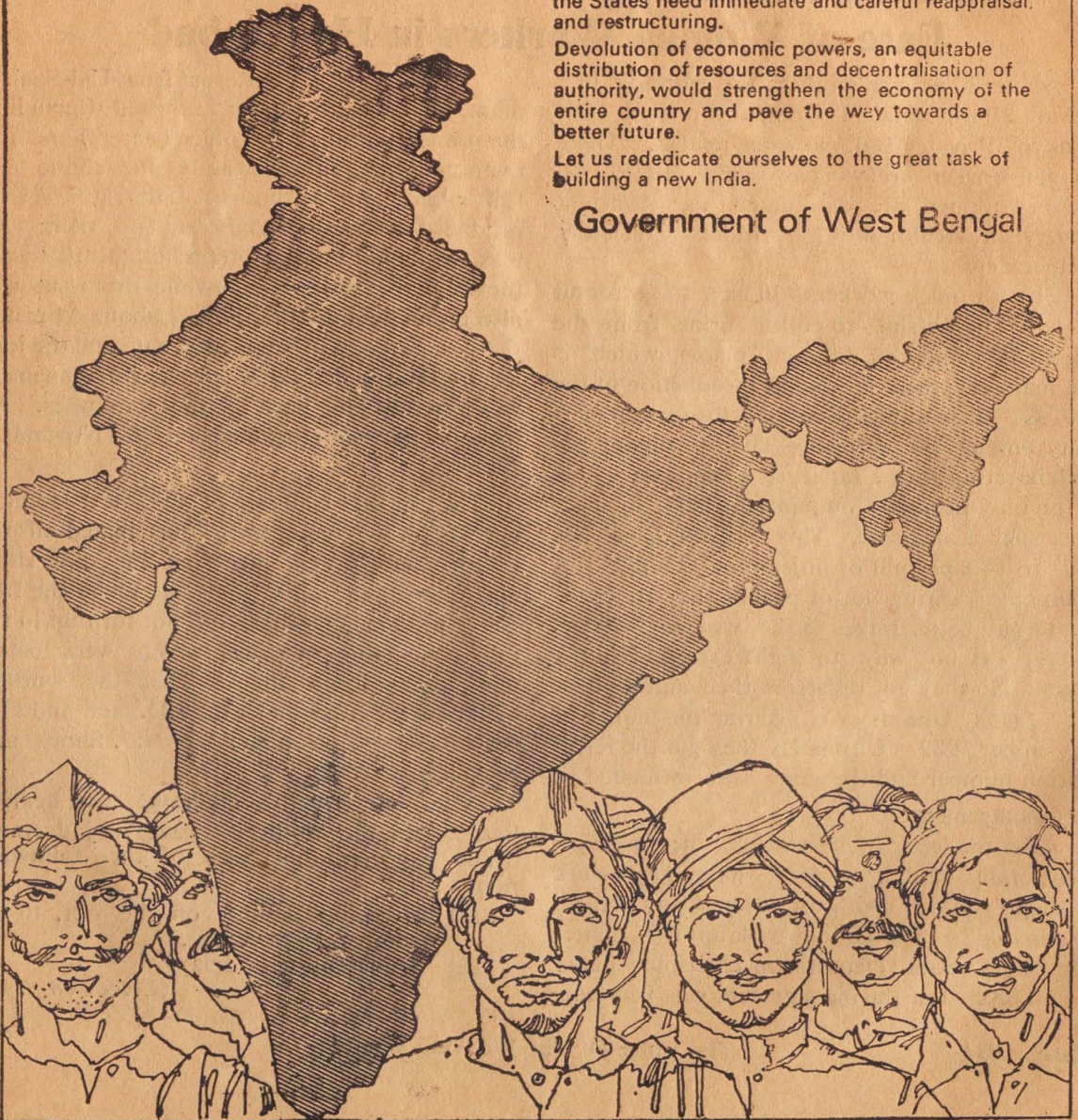
Over-centralisation has given rise to regional imbalances and growth of political authoritarianism in the country. Disparity between regions in the economic sphere has provided a fillip to the separatist, parochial and other reactionary forces. As a result, national unity and integration are gravely endangered.

Along with political and legislative issues, economic and financial relations between the Centre and the States need immediate and careful reappraisal, and restructuring.

Devolution of economic powers, an equitable distribution of resources and decentralisation of authority, would strengthen the economy of the entire country and pave the way towards a better future.

Let us rededicate ourselves to the great task of building a new India.

Government of West Bengal



(From page 19)

- (3) About the existence of employee-employer relationships.

The Authority in his judgement, stated that the above 3 issues were legitimate and the act would be applicable to the workmen and condoned the delay and also stated that the employee-employer relationship was existing.

Then, the management went to the High Court of A.P. and took a stay against the proceeding. The Union also went to High Court and got it vacated. The Union is making efforts so as to settle the issue as early as possible. Still all the women are on strike.

WOMEN IN JAPAN OBSERVE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The Working Committee for the Central Rally of 1984 International Women's Day was formed on January 26 by the Federation of Women's Organizations, New Japan Women's Association, Conference of Trade Unions for Promotion of a United Front (CUT-UF), Democratic Youth League and other democratic organisations. The committee decided to hold the Central Rally in Tokyo on March 8. Some slogans of the rally are as follow:

1. Not to allow mal-revision of the Labour Standards Act to delete the provision for protection of motherhood, for enactment of an effective law for equal employment between the sexes, for total ratification of the "Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women".

2. Cuts in Military budget, and for funds for better living, welfare and education.

3. "No" to Nuclear Missile Tomahawks. For a total ban on nuclear weapons, and enactment into law of the Three Non-Nuclear Principles. To abrogate the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty which would make Japan into a nuclear battlefield.

4. To unite with women of the world, and realise peace and the liberation of women.

Women Employees in Central Govt. in West Bengal Hold Their Convention

A convention of working women of Central Govt. employees in West Bengal was held on 29th January, 1984, as a part of the programme of the 7th conference of the co-ordination committee, at Calcutta. 384 delegates attended. Com. Anima Bannerjee and Kanika Murmu, Joint Secretaries of the women's group placed the report before the delegates for discussion. 18 delegates participated in the discussion. The working women's convention took note of the various problems faced by the women employees and concluded that although peculiar in nature, they all emanate from the anti-people policy of the Central Govt. The convention, called upon all women delegates and employees to associate themselves more and more with the mainstream of the movement under the leadership of the organisation.

Com. Chaya Bera, Minister of State, Government of West Bengal, and Com. Santi Ghatak, Minister of State for Labour, addressed the convention. Chayya Bera appealed to the women to fight against backwardness and superstitious ideas.

A nine member working group to organise the Central Government women employees was formed with Anima Banerjee and Kanika Murmu as joint conveners.

I Have Chosen the Second and Arduous Way

Here is the report of a garment factory supervisor in Hongkong where the same conditions as here exist. The woman was interviewed by Asian Women Workers' News letter (editor)

The word has been passed from one generation to the other that if one is really hard working, she will eventually become rich. Working eight hours a day is just a routine for a worker but this is not so in the case of women workers who are required to work 12-16 hours in the textile and garment factories. They have to work rigorously for seven days, omitting the rest day, and after fifteen days, realise that their earnings are not sufficient to survive till next pay day. There is no progress even for those women workers who have invested ten years of their life in the factory. On the other hand, the factory prospers as evidenced by purchases of new machineries and expansion of the Phraphadaeng industrial area.

I started my work in this factory five years ago, after my experience of work in three other garment factories. This factory is owned by a Chinese from Hong Kong, married to a woman from Northeast Thailand. Recruitment is usually done from the area where the wife came from, to ensure the loyalty of the workers to the management. As a result, most of the women workers never questioned the owner about welfare and medical services or even the poor meals given to them. First and foremost is the collection of pay checks on each pay day, a big part of which goes to the rural areas for support of parents and families.

Regular working time is 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., but very often we are required to work in the evenings up to 9:00 p.m. or even 12' clock midnight. We tried to escape from overtime work only to be summoned to the manager's office the next day to explain the reason for not doing overtime work. But as the days passed on, our bodies started to groan because of the pressures of work, and we suffered the aches and pains of weeks' work. Still the foreman approaches us for more work and extended working hours. There is no way of

evading him because he forces us to do the work applying different ways and methods. One way is not to give us bonus at the end of the year, another is not to recommend us for salary increase. Next, he can transfer us to other sections where work is harder and often double.

My work in this factory consists of inspecting the quality of sewing work of my co-workers, before the garments are packed for distribution.

I discovered also that my task is conflicting with the work of my co-workers. As they aim to work hard and meet the quota to earn a good income, they tend to neglect the quality of their work, while I have to check the quality of such work and earn on a daily basis. And if delivered goods are returned or the quota is not met and orders are delayed, the owner who is charged by its clients for these errors and inconveniences, in turn, deduct these from our pay.

Harassment consisted of making a daily report of our work and insinuations for voluntary resignation. Despite all these, I finally became a permanent worker in this company. In this factory I find that there are only two ways of surviving : 1. to agree always with the management or 2. to stand side by side with fellow workers in the struggle for what is due to us.

I Have Chosen the Second and Arduous Way.

WFTU Commission on Problems Of Working Women

The WFTU Commission on Problems of Working Women which met in Prague on October 6-7 stressed the need for more intensified action by trade unions in mobilizing

women workers to carry forward the struggle against the consequences of the worsening capitalist crisis, mounting unemployment and falling living standards, as well as in the fight against militarism and war and for peace and disarmament.

The meeting was presided over by Jirina Vesela, Secretary, Central Council of Czechoslovak Trade Unions (URO) and attended by Karla Pitrova, Head of the Women Workers Section of URO; Parvathi Krishnan, Secretary, AITUC (India) Daniele Rey from the Women's Section of the CGT (France); Digma Cires Avella, Head of the Women's Section and member of the National Council of CTC (Cuba); Nida'a Shakir Mahmoud, member of Executive of GFTU (Iraq); a representative of CUT (Chile); Margarita Cvetkova, Responsible Secretary of the AUCCTU Commission on Women Workers (USSR); Elvira Novikova, Head of Department, from the Soviet Trade Unions' University, and Doth Kim Que, Deputy Head of the Women Workers' Department of Vietnam Federation of Trade Unions, and others. The WFTU Secretariat was represented by Ernesto Araneda, WFTU Secretary, and Alena Naroveova, the head of the Working Women's Section.

The Commission proposed a plan of work to the WFTU Secretariat in order to promote international trade union action on the problems of women workers, carrying forward the conclusions on the 4th World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women and the 10th World Trade Union Congress.

Participants in the meeting stressed that the struggle for equality of women can be successful only when it is understood and carried forward as part of the struggle for the defence of the vital interests of all working people, for social progress and development and for a New International Economic Order.

The Commission examined plans for the active participation of the trade union movement in preparations for the 3rd World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women on the theme: Equality, Development, Peace, to be held in 1985. It was emphasized that the trade unions should be involved in preparations at the national level in the various countries, bringing to the Conference the specific contributions of Working Women as women and as trade unionists.

Participants at the Commission meeting spoke of the active participation of working women in various countries in the struggle for peace, against the arms race and against growing war danger. Full support for this struggle as well as solidarity with the struggles against racism and apartheid, fascism and dictatorship, in which women workers also play an active part, were expressed at the meeting.

One of the proposals made by the Commission was to initiate preparations for more active trade union involvement in the observance of International Women's Day next Year (on March 8, 1984) as a day of International and National action for working women's demands and as a day of solidarity in the struggle for peace and international cooperation for social progress. □ □

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Please send reports on observance of the International Women's Day on March 8, for publication in the next issue.

DID You Know

Reservation for women in Panchayat Mandals.

".....Meanwhile, the Chief Minister, Mr. N.T. Rama Rao, in an attempt to take the wind out the sails of the Congress(I) men assembled on the banks of the Krishna in Vijayawada, announced that in the proposed panchayat mandals set-up, reservation would be made for women. He said although women constituted 57% of the country's population, their representation in Parliament and the state legislatures was negligible. The Telugu Government in Andhra Pradesh, therefore, had decided to give equal opportunities to women in all spheres so that they could play an effective role in the development of the state. To begin with, 30% of jobs would be reserved for women in the Government and public undertakings in the state".

6-2-84 : statesman

A Unique Trade Union

"The National Union of Tailors and Government Workers of Great Britain has become the first Trade Union with 50 per cent of its national executive composed of women, of the 13 executive committee members seven are women. The Union has 75,000 members of whom 93 per cent are women."

Peoples Democracy, 5-2-84

Whipping of women banned in Pak

Islamabad, January 27. The Pakistani military authorities have approved an amendment to the martial law order to exempt women from the punishment of flogging, official sources said.

The authorities also limited such punishment to no more than 30 strokes. Certain courts last year ordered women indulging in fornication or adultery to be flogged, as men are. A blind woman in central Pakistan's Bahawalpur district was flogged when she refused

to identify her paramour. The amended order said "punishment of whipping shall not be awarded to women of any age".

Women's organisation throughout the country reacted sharply of the whipping and protested against this punishment to women for any kind of offence committed by them.

28.1.84: Indian Express.

Sudha Goel Case

The Delhi Administration, the women's organisations and the sister of Sudha Goel, whose death highlighted the problem of dowry deaths, filed appeals in the Supreme Court on Wednesday against the high court judgement acquitting the three accused.

9.2.84: Indian Express.

Laws Alone Cannot Solve Women's Problems, says P.M.

Mrs. Gandhi feels that mere legislations and an aggressive womens' movement cannot solve the problems of women in the country — Some had already started saying that the new anti-dowry legislation harms women more than benefitting them. Without going into the depth of the matter it was not possible to decide the truth. The whole question has to be carefully examined — There could be a middle way and not just confrontation.

30.1.84: Statesman.

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them out of jobs, for protection of their trade unions rights, for implementation of the protective legislations and end to the Dowry murders and atrocities on women. They do appeal to the democratic people and working class to join in their demands and they are joining gradually.

On this day, women in our country will again pledge to strengthen their fight, for their liberation with the slogan of unity and struggle. The unity achieved during the struggles for their immediate demands will surely lead them to confront the Authoritarian Rule of Congress in the near future.