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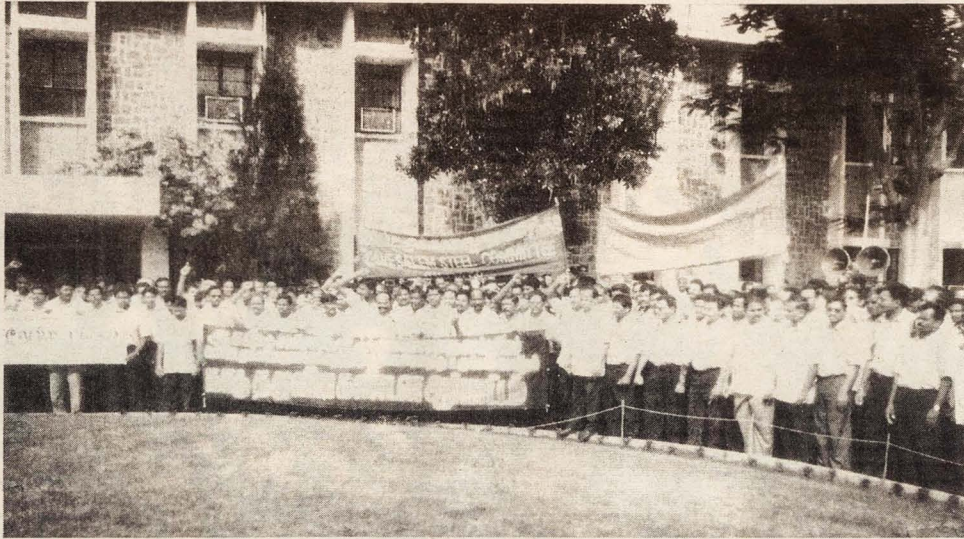


LET US FIGHT ECONOMIC POLICIES !

LET US DEFEND LABOUR RIGHTS !

SALEM WORKERS AND FAMILIES ON WAR PATH

Govt. of India's drive for privatisation of Salem Steel Plant (SSP) is being resisted by the workers and their families tooth and nail. Present NDA Government is soaked in corruption. They want to handover this state-of-the-art plant with 800 acres of prime land to any private party at abnormally cheap price. All the trade unions is Salem Steel Plant and all the political parties have opposed the move. The private bidders have been resisted physically by the workers and their families when they went to inspect the plant. But, the NDA Govt is shameless. At present



only the Jindals are in the bid to buy SSP. So technically the tender should be cancelled.

Moreover the Jindals don't have the qualification as stipulated in the invitation that "the party should have a preferably, demonstrable experience of marketing stainless steel products in the international arena with a global network". Jindals did not fulfil this criterion but this condition has also been waived for them. The way SAIL has bent the rules and waived the qualifying criteria

to help Jindals has created tremendous unrest among the employees, their families and the local population.

On 5th September, the

employees and their families formed a huge "Human Chain" against the privatisation move. On 25th against privatisation of NALCO, and their action has inspired the people of Tamil Nadu. September, they sat in a protest 'Dharna' before the State Secretariat. Several senior political leaders, trade union leaders, journalists, technologists and important citizens took part in the Dharna. The NDA Govt. was castigated for their move to sell the country's assets for a song and jeopardise our national financial sovereignty. The NDA Govt. bent upon for privatisation despite popular resistance everywhere.

It was resolved that the struggle would be continued until the privatisation of Salem Steel Plant move is defeated. The trade unions and people of Orissa were congratulated for their valiant fight.

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THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

OCTOBER 2002

ALL IN THE GAME



Courtesy: The Hindu

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EDITORIAL

'MODI SPEAK' - THE DESPICABLE FACE OF HINDUTVA FASCISM

The man who masterminded the ethnical cleansing in Gujarat, Narendra Modi has embarked on his '*Gaurav Yatra*'. The speeches and utterances of Modi have only served to lay bare the despicable face of the RSS brand *hindutva* fascism.

The Supreme Court is seized of the Presidential reference on the Election Commission decision to defer the elections to the State Assembly in Gujarat, as the ground realities there are not conducive to go in for that kind of democratic exercise. Even then, the Modi '*yatra*' is just an electioneering campaign. The intent is clear. Bank on *hindutva* and resort to no holds barred rhetoric in muslim bashing and somehow or other win the elections. The central leadership of the BJP is busy with justifying the *Gaurav Yatra* of Narendra Modi and his anti-muslim diatribe. And the most disturbing aspect of it is that the BJP and RSS are making Modi's Gujarat as the laboratory for experimenting with their aggressive *hindutva* fascism and projecting Narendra Modi as their role model.

Modi's inflammatory speeches, reported in the media, are highly reprehensible. Terming relief camps, where those families uprooted because of the communal carnage are forced to take shelter, as child producing factories, the talk of "we five, ours twenty-five", coupled with the threat of "we will teach them a lesson" are the typical of the 'Modi-Speak', which should put any BJP leader to hang his head in shame. But, the BJP is 'a party with a difference'. Therefore, from L.K.Advani, who is an M.P. from that very State, waiting in the wings nurturing the ambition to ascend to the seat of Prime Ministership, to the likes of Venkaiah Naidu, the BJP President of the day, all have lined up drumming up support and justification to this atrocious brand of 'Modi-Speak'. The chorus that Modi was only delivering a lecture on the virtues of population control cannot dupe anyone.

The Gujarat Governor, a hard core RSS pracharak, is sitting pretty even after such heinous and criminal exercise is indulged in by the Chief Minister, who is supposed to uphold the Constitution of the country. The National Commission on Minorities, though making some noises, is yet to initiate any concrete measure to reign in Modi - not to speak of punishing him.

The situation is grave. It is for the people to act decisively. The working class must teach the Modis and his cohorts throughout the country the proper lesson. They must be vested with the most deterrent punishment. They must squarely be routed.

WORST DROUGHT AND PLIGHT OF PEASANTRY

M. K. Pandhe

Commencement of the month of October indicates generally the end of monsoon rains in India. This year July was the driest month during the last 100 years. Some late rains came during August and September but much below the requirement. The US based centre for Ocean-land atmosphere studies, through its Satellite maps, had indicated that South West Monsoon had already begun its withdrawal course. According to India Meteorological Department, 301 out of 523 Meteorological Districts have received scanty or deficient rains. Many observers have, however, pointed out that this assessment is on the lower side.

The official spokesmen and the media are trying to paint the situation as normal with a view to attract foreign investors. This has become more serious after Standard and Poor's (S&P) ratings have characterised Indian situation as "junk". The Finance Secretary S. Narayan went to the extent of stating, "... the major fear of drought receded due to good rains in August and September".

Officials have admitted drought conditions in Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Eastern U.P., Arunachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Daman Diue, Nagar Haveli, Karnataka, Rayalaseema, Kerala, Tamilnadu and Pondicherry. Maharashtra, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, M.P., Bihar and Assam have also reported drought situation in several districts of their States. Practically the whole of the country is engulfed by drought, posing serious food shortage in the forthcoming period.

Financial Express in its issue dated 22nd September 2002 pointed out now kharif crop is lagging behind in area coverage, which would ultimately lead to decline in agricultural production. "Paddy is lagging behind in area coverage by 57 lakh hectare (lh) as compared to previous year. This year the area coverage under coarse serials is less by 54 lh. This includes Bajra, which is less by 27 lakh hectare, jowar, which is less by 7 lh and maize, which less by 9 lh. Area coverage under oilseeds is less by 13 lh out of which area under ground nut has shrunk by 4 lh and that of soyabean by 5 lh. The total area under pulses

has shrunk by 17 lh and that of cotton by 12 lh." Union Minister for Agriculture, Ajit Singh admitted: "Cattle have been affected very badly, with high death rates and distress sales also. And those are often the only assets that many people have, especially in Rajasthan. They try to take them for grazing in other States, but these States will not allow them this year".

Estimated cost of relief work measured and placed before the Central Government work out to be Rs.17,000 crores!

Despite such a critical situation the powers-that-be are not taking necessary steps to tackle the situation on a war footing. S. Swaminathan, noted Agricultural Scientist observed, "India is one of the few countries with over two centuries of recorded experience in managing the consequences of monsoon failure, from which we can learn. But the tragedy is that we are a classic case of a data-rich but action-poor country". Giving an example of Orissa he noted, "I have been fighting for the last two years for setting up community and food banks in all villages. Last year 1,00,000 grain banks were approved for the tribal areas. But till to-day not one has been set up. There is so much gap between decision and action".

Several State Governments have declared some districts as drought affected but no steps have been taken to extend relief to drought affected people. They are hoping that Central Government would give them financial assistance for drought relief. However, such assistance is not forthcoming. The decision of the Central Government to export rice to earn foreign exchange is not taking into account the conditions, when the Government will be forced to import rice at much higher price.

The country will seriously feel the pinch of the situation when the kharif season will be over and the food scarcity and drinking water shortage would be looming large before the country.

The drought conditions have had devastating impact on the lives and livelihood of the peasants and the agricultural workers. It will also result in a

spiraling effect by way of pushing up the prices of food grains and vegetables making the living conditions of the workers more difficult. The collapse of the public distribution system and the determination of the NDA Government to stop all food subsidy will add to the woes of the working class. The unorganised sector workers will be worst hit by drought conditions, as they do not get adequate protection against rise in prices of essential commodities. The migrant workers, whose number is swelling these days, will also experience serious erosion in their standard of life. Several poor peasants will also go to different areas in search of jobs to maintain their families. The problem of drinking water in several industrial areas will also become acute adversely affecting livelihood in several urban surroundings. Shortage of water quite often accompanied by unhealthy living conditions for urban and rural population with threat of epidemics is likely to loom large in various parts of the country.

The poor peasants and the agricultural workers in the rural areas will be worst hit by the drought in the country. This strata has no other source of livelihood and they will have to face acute starvation due to absence of gainful employment. There is a limit for jobs for the migrant workers and hence in the long run it will not materially alter the situation.

The All India Kisan Sabha and All India Agricultural Workers Union have already taken up the issues of poor peasants and agricultural workers. They have planned movements in defence of the interest of these people. Working class and the trade union movement in India must rally behind the demands of these poor peasants and agricultural workers and extend solidarity support to the fighting peasants and agricultural workers. It is only through such solidarity actions that we can take steps to build worker peasant alliance in the country. This unity will also lead to strengthening of our general struggle against the LPG policies.

The situation today calls for a countrywide movement on demands, which must include Food for Work Programme, Strengthening of the PDS, Debt Relief to Poor Peasants, Free Supply of Fodder to the Cattle of Poor farmers etc.

Many persons who are literally starving due to

destruction of crops and lack of any opportunity for work. The Central Government with the co-operation of the State Government should immediately start food for work programme so that these people get some source of livelihood and feed their families. Delay in commencing such a programme by the Central Government is resulting in destitution of the rural poor. Huge stocks of food grains lying in FCI godowns and rotting therein can be used effectively for implementing this programme.

The public distribution system in our country is virtually on the verge of collapse and poor people do not get benefit out of it. The number of people covered by the scheme has come down drastically, while many essential commodities are not supplied through these distribution channels. The Kisan Sabha and Agricultural Workers unions have also taken up the demand for immediate measures to help the drought affected people. Trade unions should come forward to take up these demands and launch movements.

The Government of India must take up the programme of procurement of food grains at remunerative prices, when the khariff crop reaches the market, so that peasants and agricultural workers are protected. Popular movements will have to be launched against racketeers, who would try to make profits out of miseries of the people.

Due to crop failure the poor peasants are not in a position to repay the loans taken from the financial institutions/Government. They should be given immediate relief by deferring their repayment of loans or even cancellation if necessary. Otherwise they will become landless.

The Government should arrange free supply of fodder to the poor peasants who find it difficult to feed their cattle due to non-availability of fodder in rural areas.

The CITU State Committees should study the situation in their respective States, formulate concrete demands and chalk out direct action programmes in support of the peasantry and agricultural workers. They must also join the action programmes of Kisan Sabha and the Agricultural Workers Union and mobilise the working people in massive solidarity campaigns and agitations.

FOURTH CONFERENCE of AIFAWH

The Fourth Conference of the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers is going to be held in Puri, in Orissa from 29th September to 1st October 2002. Around 400 delegates from 22 States in the country representing a membership of 1, 36,557 in 2001 will attend the Conference. The Orissa State Committee of the CITU and the State Committee of the newly formed Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union in Orissa have been making all the necessary arrangements for the accommodation and other requirements of the delegates.

State wide campaign has been conducted among the anganwadi employees in all the districts in the State, which was met with great enthusiasm. Suryakant Misra, Health Minister and Subhash Chakravarty, Minister of Sports and Tourism will participate in the open rally on the 29th September. The draft General Secretary's report has been sent to the States for translation into local languages and circulation among the delegates, so that they can come prepared for fruitful discussions.

The General Secretary's report noted the international and national situation after the third Conference at Bhopal, in the background of which the Fourth Conference was taking place. It noted the Government's attempts to weaken the ICDS Scheme, which has been acclaimed as one of the best implemented Central Schemes for the poor women and children. This was a part of the Government's attempts to cut down on welfare expenditure. In many States, the Supplementary Nutrition was not being supplied for months together. The Government wants to universalise the system of 'Take Home Ration', which in effect would dismantle the ICDS Scheme. The other measures which form part of the Fund-Bank dictate 'economic reforms' like downsizing and ban on recruitment etc increased the workload on the anganwadi employees, without any or a commensurate increase in remuneration.

Analysing the activities undertaken by the Federation since the last Conference, the report noted that the Federation carried out mainly three

types of activities- i. Sustained campaigns were conducted on the major demands of anganwadi workers and helpers; ii. Efforts were made to educate the anganwadi workers and helpers on the relationship between their living conditions and the policies of the Government; and iii. Efforts were made to strengthen the organisation. The Federation made conscious efforts to link these three types of activities and conduct them in a balanced way.

The AIFAWH gave calls for a series of campaigns and struggles during this period, on the major demands of the anganwadi workers and helpers, like regularisation, enhancement of honorarium, and against privatisation and handing over the management of the anganwadi centres to the Panchayats or 'Mothers' Committees'. In an effort to involve the largest number of anganwadi employees in the activities of the unions in these activities, the Federation chose such forms of campaign like distribution of leaflets, collection of mass signatures, sending post cards, telegrams etc to the HRD Minister, Prime Minister etc. Dharnas, mass hunger strike, Rasta roko, picketing, rallies at project, district, and State level and Conventions at the all India level, etc were held several times on the issues of anganwadi employees.

AIFAWH participated in all the NPMO programmes and the calls given by the CITU and the joint calls of the Central Trade Unions. Lakhs of anganwadi workers and helpers joined in the all India strike in December '99, May 2000 and 16th April strike against privatisation and anti working class policies of the Government.

The draft General Secretary's report emphasised the importance of addressing the local problems of the anganwadi employees, particularly the helpers. It has noted with some satisfaction that many State Committees were addressing these issues, like regular payment of honorarium, payment of extra remuneration for extra work, supply of good quality of nutritious food in time, reservation for anganwadi workers in Supervisors posts, additional benefits like bonus, festival

allowance, summer holidays, and implementation of the welfare benefits declared by the Government of India. Of particular significance were the struggles in many States against the handing over the management of the anganwadi centres to the Panchayats and the so called 'Mothers' Committees'. In Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka, the Unions conducted big struggles against this and achieved success in forcing the respective State Governments to retreat their steps. The report noted that this was possible because of the efforts made by the Unions to gain the support of the general public, particularly the beneficiaries, the sustained campaign and determined struggle uniting all the anganwadi employees and the support extended by the trade unions particularly the CITU. At the same time, the report warned the Unions against being complacent as the Government was going ahead with the same policy of withdrawing from welfare benefits and privatisation. Unless these policies are rejected lock, stock and barrel by uniting with all the other sections of the toiling masses like the unorganised sector workers, agricultural workers, poor peasants, women etc it would not be possible to save the ICDS and the interests of the anganwadi employees.

The importance of raising the consciousness of the anganwadi employees was also stressed in the report. The Federation discussed this aspect several times and asked the State Committee to organise trade union classes for the activists at the project, district and State level. But many States did not pay proper attention to this aspect and as a result in most of the States the scarcity of trained cadres was felt. Only a few States like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana etc organised classes. The Federation organised trade union classes for the Hindi States two times during the period under review, but the report noted that this was not enough. Such efforts should be more consistent. Special importance was given to expand the organisation and consolidate it where it was already there; as per the call given by the Third Conference of AIFAWH. The Union in Punjab overcame the disruption which it had to face at the time of the third Conference and now

expanded to all the districts and regained its strength. In Haryana, the Union suffered a setback due to the murder of its General Secretary, but efforts were made to overcome this setback and now the Union has again become active. In Andhra Pradesh, where the State Government resorted to terror to suppress the Union, the Union had a temporary set back but now the membership, mobilisation and activities have shown improvement. The Federation has organised two workshops on organisation to identify the weakness and initiate the necessary steps to overcome them. The membership of the Federation has increased from 85,287 at the time of the last Conference to 1, 36,577 in 2001, i.e. an increase of more than 60%. During this period, Unions of anganwadi workers and helpers have been registered in Uttaranchal, Uttar Pradesh and Chattisgarh at the initiative of CITU and affiliated to AIFAWH. In Jharkhand, an independent Union also got affiliated to the Federation.

The draft General Secretary's report underlined the importance of democratic functioning and involving as many anganwadi employees as possible in the decision making process. Emphasising the importance of project committees the report noted "As project committees have immediate and close contact with the anganwadi employees, they play an important role in taking the union to the general anganwadi employees". The report pointed out that there were immense possibilities to strengthen the organisation and expand its influence in almost all the States. It called upon the activists of the Unions to work hard to prepare themselves to face the challenge posed by the BJP led NDA Government, which was encouraging communal divisions and threaten the unity of the people, This can be done successfully by strengthening the organisation, intensifying joint struggles and participating in broader united struggles against the anti people policies of the Government. It exhorted the activists 'our aspirations should not be confined to narrow boundaries. We must aim high. We must constantly and consciously thrive to improve our abilities, enlarge the scope, overcome the limitations and attain our goals. In fine, we must give a new orientation to our work to take on the challenges ahead'.

SECOND NATIONAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR: MORE ON REVIEW OF LABOUR LAWS

Tapan Sen

We had made a gross understatement while commenting on the recommendations of the Commission on the basis of a quick glance on the summary of the recommendations in respect of changes in labour laws, in the September issue of 'The Working Class'. We had observed: **"The Commission, while making specific recommendation on change of labour laws, followed more or less the lines dotted by the Finance Minister's announcement in his budget speech in 2001."** This was a mistake. The Commission, in its recommendation had not just followed 'the lines dotted by the Finance Minister's announcement' but had gone much ahead of that while obliging the employers' lobby, both in respect of retrenchment and contractorisation. The then Finance Minister of the NDA Govt., Yashwanth Sinha in his budget speech in February 2001 made two announcements: (1) The Industrial Disputes Act will be amended to exempt establishments employing up to 1000 workers from seeking prior permission of the Govt., for effecting lay-off, retrenchment and closure. (2) Employers will be permitted to freely outsource both core or non-core activities and the Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act would be amended accordingly.

The Commission has, in fact, recommended more concessions than what the Govt. had asked for their corporate friends and foreign masters. The recommendations seek to confer complete liberty for the employers to "hire and fire" and deploy contract workers in all types of jobs. There are also suggestions, in addition, as sops or freebies, various measures to cut the trade union rights to size.

COMPLETE LIBERTY

Let us first look into the existing provisions under these Acts. The Industrial Disputes Act stipulates that in the establishments employing 100 workmen

and above, prior permission is required to be obtained by the employer before effecting any retrenchment. Section 25N of the ID Act contains such stipulations. Section 25N (2) says: "On receipt of a notice under clause C) sub-section (1), the appropriate Govt. or authority may, after making such enquiry as such Govt. or authority thinks fit, grant or refuse, for reasons to be recorded in writing, the permission for retrenchment for which the notice relates."

Similar provisions are incorporated in Sections 25(O) and 25(M) of the ID Act in respect of closure and lay-off also

The Second National Commission on Labour has recommended in clear term that "prior permission is not necessary in respect of lay-off and retrenchment in an establishment of any employment size" (Para 6.88). It considered even the limit of 1000 workmen, desired by the Finance Minister, which covers almost 90 percent of the workforce and more than 98 percent of the establishments, as intolerable and wanted to allow 'hire and fire' at the whims of the employers in hundred per cent cases.

In respect of closure, the recommendation of the Commission relieved the employers from their obligation of obtaining prior permission from the Govt. for closing down establishments employing up to 300 workers (existing limit is 100 workers). (Para 6.88)

It may appear that the Commission, at least in respect of its recommendation regarding closure, has expressed its disagreement with the then Finance Minister's prescriptions. But that is simply eyewash. In the subsequent clause no 6.91 of the Report (Vol-1, Part-1) it has been clearly mentioned that the concerned employer (in establishments employing 300 or more workers) is required to make application for permission for closure 90 days before the intended date of closure and **"If permission is not granted by the appropriate Govt. within 60 days of the**

receipt of the application, the permission will be deemed to have been granted.”(Para 6.91)

The language of the above recommendation must be closely noted. A reading between the lines will expose a nasty deceptive design. The aforesaid recommendation makes right to closure for the employers even in establishments employing 300 or more practically guaranteed, with just a formality of submission of application for permission. The present Section 25(O) subsection (4) of the ID Act says that”. Where.... the appropriate Govt does not communicate the permission **or the refusal to grant permission** to the employer within a period of two months...permission applied for shall be deemed to have been granted.” The Commission has consciously dropped (or ruled out) the existing provision **for refusal** of the permission to be conveyed by the Govt., from its recommendation, thereby proposing provision for automatic approval of closure just through submission of an application. Can-deception and fraudulence go further?

Over and above this, the Commission has recommended repeal of Chapter V B itself.

In fine the Commission's recommendation upholds in practical terms the absolute right for the employers' community to resort to lay-off, retrenchment and closure at their will in all establishments of any employment size. All the "ifs and buts" contained in the report are all non-consequential, which stand exposed as a **nefarious game of deception on the part of the Commission to confuse and misguide the people.**

COMPENSATION?

In order to cover up the crime committed in proposing total dismantling of the protective measures against lay-off, retrenchment and closure, the Commission proposed a varying rate-structure of retrenchment compensation for the affected workers. The Report of the Commission noted: "...The Commission would like to recommend the compensation per completed year of service at the rate 30 days on account of closure in case of sick industry which has continuously run into losses for the last 3 financial

years...and other non-profit-making bodies like charitable institutions etc., and at the rate of 45 days for retrenchment by such sick industry or body where retrenchment is done with a view to becoming viable. It would also recommend higher retrenchment compensation at the rate 60 days of wages and similarly a higher rate of compensation for closure at the rate of 45 days wages for every completed year of service for profit making organizations. For establishments employing less than 100 workers half of the compensation mentioned above in terms of number of days wages may be prescribed.... (Para 6.88)

This so called **“adequate compensation package” for the workers** has shamelessly been described by the Commission as **“the best, more honest and equitable course”**, in lieu of the bonanza of absolute liberty for the employers in respect of lay-off, retrenchment and closure without **hurdles**. **This** cannot be considered as compensation to loss of permanent jobs and a regular flow of income, more so in a “sharply declining interest rate regime” and in the midst of terminal recessionary situation in the economy. It may be recalled that the then Finance Minister in his budget speech had indicated a flat rate of compensation of 45 days of wages per every completed year of service. The Commission, in a subtle maneuver, has scaled down the compensation to benefit the employer class. **Moreover**, in view of the hue and cry already started by various Employers' organisations against this part of the recommendation on compensation, which, according to them is too high (?), there is serious doubt whether at all the Govt. will accept this part of the recommendation, or even if accepts, will ensure enforcement of the same. One must not fail to note that even in many PSUs, a big section of employees thrown out of job through VRS have not yet been paid the compensation amount in full, and in many cases, even the statutory dues like provident fund and gratuity have not been released even after four/five years of retirement, despite several intervention in Parliament.

Thirdly, implementation of any labour law, particularly beneficial part of it depends mostly as to how the organised workers could assert for

such implementation by exercising their rights through concerted action. The Commission has made atrocious recommendations regarding curtailment of labour rights, and also on rapid casualisation of workforce, which if implemented by the Govt., would act in marginalising the trade union movement in a big way. In that background, all such recommendations on compensation are destined to remain as mere showpiece in the statute book.

FOR THE SMALL UNITS

The Commission recommended that all establishments employing up to 19 workers would be thrown out of the purview of the usual labour legislations. For the establishments employing less than 20 workers, the Commission proposed a separate legislation titled, "The Small Enterprises (Employment Relations) Act 2002" the "indicative draft" of which has been annexed to the Report.

It is a nefarious design to push out a section of workers in some organised establishments with huge investments but officially employing less than 20 workers. These employees had so long been entitled to get some coverage of the existing labour legislations like ID Act, Factories Act, Minimum Wages Act, Payment of Wages Act etc., an also of the social security related ones like ESI, EPF, Maternity Benefit etc. They will all be taken out of the purview of these legislations, making their service condition more fragile at the hands of their employers. **According to the proposed legislation, the employers posses absolute right to lay-off and retrench workers or close down establishment at their will, by paying a compensation of 20 days of wages per year of service. Those serving for less than five years will be entitled for 15 days' wage per year of service as compensation.** (Appendix II, page 416-417)

It is interesting to note that, as per the proposed Act on Small Enterprises, the Employer has been given practically complete freedom to lay-off of workers any time, and "if the lay-off continues for more than 45 days, it shall be lawful for the employers to retrench the workers."

Not only that, the Law on Wages prescribed by the Commission has kept these "small enterprises

employing below 20" out of its coverage (Appendix III, page 432). And the proposed Act for the small establishments lays down that "The State Govt may fix the minimum rates of wages in respect of the enterprises covered under this Act." (Appendix II, page 410). These two aspects taken together would **clearly imply that the minimum wages in the Small Enterprises, which the concerned employers are obliged to pay, will be well below the "National Floor Level Minimum wages"**, as conceived under the Law on wages. The commission has also expressed its "strong belief" that there "should be a reasonable wages keeping in view the needs of the workers and his/her family". **Can hypocrisy go further?**

Further, the presumption that the small enterprises employing smaller number of 19 workers or and below are all also small in their profits and turnover is not always correct. Many highly mechanised/ computerised firms operating with less than 20 workers, particularly in Information Technology Sector, are having both investment and turnover in terms of several crores of rupees. Those firms definitely do not deserve the "special dispensation" the Commission has conceived for the small enterprises.

The nature of provisions for implementation of the said Act, as proposed in the draft itself surpasses all limits of mockery. "Self certification" by the employer regarding compliance of the Act has been made the lifeline of the enforcement of the Act. The fate of any complaint regarding violation of the Act by the workers or their trade unions will wholly depend on the "intention or will", good or bad, of the Chief Inspector, who will be given all the powers of a civil court. And the provisions are so made in the Act that **"No court shall take cognisance of any offence under this Act unless it is filed by the Dy Chief Inspector or the Inspector appointed under this Act"** (Appendix II, page 424). The Commission has made full-proof arrangement to kill the rights of the trade unions and workers, even to file a complaint to the court on violations of the Act, **just to confer on the employers full freedom for violation of labour rights. Faithful indeed!**

WHOLESALE CONTRACTORISATION

The theme of the Commission's recommendation in this regard is that 'organisations must have the flexibility to adjust the number of workforce based on economic efficiency.' The recommendation of the Commission has been so stipulated that the very concept of 'permanent perennial work' as envisaged in the existing Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act has been given a complete go bye and deployment of contract labour has been allowed in almost all permanent work in any establishment except the "core" jobs i.e., the direct production/service job in case of a manufacturing/service enterprise. Such jobs may constitute hardly 15 to 20 percent jobs in any enterprise. The Commission has deliberately ignored the fact that most of those permanent perennial jobs termed as peripherals are inseparably linked with the so-called 'core production/services activities', without which the core activities cannot at all be accomplished. But still the Commission recommended deployment of contract labour in those permanent/perennial jobs, in total departure from the provisions of the existing statute, to benefit the employers.

But even the 'core' jobs as defined by the Commission are not spared from the contract system. The Report of the Commission has explicitly noted: "The Commission is conscious

of the fact that in the fast changing economic scenario and changes in technology and management. ... there cannot be a fixed number of posts in any organisation for all time to come. ... We would therefore recommend that contract labour shall not be engaged for core production/service activities. **However for sporadic seasonal demand, the employer may engage temporary labour for core production/service activity.**" (Para 6.109) And obviously, the right to decide on such sporadic situation or seasonality would vest only with the employers and a long rope is given to them to deploy contract workers even in so called core jobs, whenever they like.

By this recommendation, the Commission has sought to give free hand to the employers to create such a situation in the workplace that on the same jobs under the same roof, two sets of workers would be working with two different sets of service conditions, wages, job security etc., to start with. This will create a situation of unhealthy discrimination in the workplace and thereby vitiating the environment. Besides, it will help the employers to exert tremendous undue pressure on worker's earned rights and benefits deliberately putting the workers' side in a disadvantageous position.

(More reports in the next issue)

THE UNPROTECTED TOILERS

Despite the claims to progress that India has made since Independence, the bulk of the country's workforce remains outside the purview of any meaningful social security mechanism. That an estimated 370 million workers who are outside the formal economy are unprotected is a sad statement about how the country has cared for its workers. The misplaced priorities of the past are clear from the fact that the organised sector constitutes a thin eight per cent of the total workforce, leaving the overwhelming majority to fend for itself. What makes the situation even more painful is that the workers who are outside the ambit of protection are spread across a range of occupations that contribute a significant portion of the national economy, agriculture being a major example. With the distortions in India's labour market seldom reflected in the broad economic performance figures, there can be no cause for comfort from the improvement in the nation's economy over the past five decades. Further complicating the present scenario is the new trend of industries in the organised sector outsourcing work and resorting to contract labour. The changing role of Governments, resulting in their moving away from job-creating activities, is bound to make matters worse.

(Editorial comments in "The Hindu")

REALITY CHECK ON DEVELOPMENT

P. Nagarajan

Neoliberal economic policy prescriptions have strangled many economies, protracted socio-economic crisis and widened the gap between rich and poor nations. Devising social development strategies to bridge the gap in the distribution of wealth and improving the productive capacity of the people in developing nations will go some way in narrowing the gap between rich and poor nations, says P. Nagarajan.

THE development problems of developing countries have preoccupied and perplexed economists and policymakers for more than six decades. An outpouring of development literature has produced more heat than confronted the development challenges of improving human welfare.

It is disturbing to note that development efforts have failed to lift the vast majority of the population from poverty. The development failure is largely due to the reckless application of inappropriate economic models to the developing world, and paying little attention to the institutional environments is long overdue. Advances in development economics, as paradigm shifts, can occur only when the existing conceptual models of development have broken down and can no longer convincingly explain underdevelopment. Development economics is in disarray, resulting from increasing globalisation and liberalisation of trade, finance and investment, and the consequent end of active state-led development. The time is ripe for a new paradigm by expanding the idea of development and human welfare.

Economic conditions have deteriorated in more than 100 countries in the past decades. Yet the myth of development has been created in so-called developing countries, focussing on weak conceptual frameworks of human welfare and its measurement. The widely used indicators of GNP per capita and the UN's Human Development Index (HDI), which includes GNP and such indicators as life expectancy and literacy rates, suggest steady improvement. These flow variables do not reveal what is happening to a country's stock of

wealth that consists of physical, human and the natural capital of soil, forests, bio-diversity, etc. From the long-term perspective, the wealth of nations and its distributions are crucial for the development and enhancement of human welfare. In a recent study, Prof Partha Dasgupta of Cambridge University, points out that the average growth rate of wealth per capita has declined in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sub-Saharan Africa and China in the past decades. This suggests that the productive bases have shrunk in these countries, which are home to 50 per cent of the world's population. World poverty may be far worse than we are lead to believe. The improvements in the standards of living in the developing world may have been grossly overestimated. "The implications of these results should be heart-breaking: The Indian sub-continent and Sub-Saharan Africa, two of the world's poorest regions - comprising a third of the world's population - have over the past decades become poorer," concludes Prof Partha Dasgupta.

Neoliberal economics has had a powerful influence in shaping the socio-economic policy matrix, by enshrining economic growth at any cost as the grand economic policy objective. Also, growth has become an end in itself. Equity issues have been swept under the carpet with fervent faith in the so-called 'trickle down' income mechanisms. However, the growth process over the decades has inexorably widened the income gap between rich and poor nations, and within the countries. This has extensive consequences for the improvement of human welfare.

Given a polarised world economy undergoing the transformation from an industrial era to a knowledge-based, innovation-driven new economy, development problems remain more daunting than ever. Knowledge has emerged the most critical factor of production in the developed world, and all sectors of the economy have become knowledge-intensive. For example, the raw material used per unit of industrial output has

been steadily falling. In Japan it has fallen 40 per cent in the past decades. This has broad implications for most developing countries that belong to the so-called 'Old Economy'.

Developing countries that rely on exporting raw materials and basic products would be severely disadvantaged in the new world economic system as a result of the falling demand and prices of raw materials. Their terms of trade would deteriorate in the New Economy.

In addition, in the New Economy, an increasing exodus of 'skilled human capital' from the developing world to the developed world should be considered as free 'exports'.

This free transfer immensely benefits the recipient countries, while the developing countries lose scarce human capital worth billions of dollars. This is a grave concern for Africa. Of course, this raises an interesting question: Who is giving aid to whom?

Neoliberal economic policy prescriptions, arising from the so-called Washington Consensus, for the developing world, have strangled many economies, causing some protracted socio-

economic crises. By tossing out the Washington Consensus policy strategy and without devising a country-specific development policy, neither can the dire economic problems of these countries be addressed nor justice delivered to the victims of policy errors.

With or without growth, there are winners in these countries. They invariably comprise the top one-fifth of the population. This causes a grotesque concentration of income in most developing countries.

The fundamental goal of healthy economic development must be to improve the quality of life for the masses by improving productive capacity - labour, land, capital, and technology. This can be achieved by ensuring water, food, shelter, sanitation, health, employment, and primary education to all. Devising social development strategies to bridge the gap in the distribution of wealth among the people is essential.

(Courtesy: Business Line, August, 12, 2002. The author is Emeritus Professor of Economics, University of Prince Edward Island, Canada.)

WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A GREAT BETRAYAL

Vandana Shiva

The World Summit on Sustainable Development organised in Johannesburg from August 26th - September 4th, 2002 was supposed to have been the Earth Summit II - ten years after the first Earth Summit was held in Rio de Janeiro during 1992.

Instead of Rio + 10, WSSD became Doha + 10. Ten months ago, the Ministerial Meeting of W.T.O. was organised in Doha to salvage the W.T.O. negotiations for a new enlarged round which had failed in Seattle

due to citizen protest and a walk out by smaller countries who had been marginalised and excluded in the negotiations. The implementation document of WSSD mentioned Doha and WTO 46 times at one stage and Rio only once. The draft had been introduced undemocratically by the U.S. and E.U., and with minor modifications was reintroduced by South Africa. There was no rebellion by Governments against the surreptitious substitution of the sustainability

agenda of Rio with the commercial and corporate agenda of W.T.O.

PRIVATISATION - POVERTY - PRIVATISATION

The struggles of the poor in the South are related to their access and rights to natural resources - land, water and biodiversity, and hence are intrinsically environmental and ecological struggles. Globalisation was offered as the solution to poverty, and decisions that were aimed at robbing the poor of their remaining resources and

hence making them poorer such as privatisation of water, patenting of seeds and alienation of land, were being offered as measures for 'poverty alleviation'. While the landless people and the movements against privatisation marched for environmental and resource rights, globalisation pundits kept repeating the mantra that the poor could not afford the "luxury" of their natural capital - they needed globalisation.

Globalisers do not see that globalisation would rob the poor of their resources, make them the property of global corporations, who would then sell water and seeds at high cost to the poor thus pushing them deeper into poverty, and over the edge of survival. During PBS/ BBC debate, the industry spokesman clearly said that imposing private property rights to natural resources was their first priority. Globalising the non-sustainable, unethical, iniquitous systems of ownership, control and use of natural resources was the main agenda at WSSD.

The corporate hijack of the Earth summit was the overall outcome. WSSD had mutated into W\$\$\$D.

U.N. PRIVATISED

But the implications go further than the hijack of one summit. These are dangerous trends for democracy. The substitution of multilateral legally binding agreements (Type I outcomes) by so called Type II outcomes in the form of public private partnerships are reflections of the privatisation of STATES and privatisation of the U.N. The U.N. of "We the People" was

transformed in Johannesburg into the U.N. of "We the Corporations". It appeared to be an auction house where the Earth herself was being put up for sale..... That is why we withdrew our consent to the outcomes.

TOWRADS GLOBAL APARTHEID

When I had the opportunity to address the opening of the Civil Society forum with President Mbeki, I talked of how a global apartheid was being created by globalization after South Africa had fought its domestic apartheid. President Mbeki made reference to the "global apartheid" in his draft political declaration at the end of the Summit. He had intended to say: "From the African continent, the Cradle of Humanity, we declare our responsibility to one another to the greater community of life, and to future generations..... This is a mirror of our global existence. If we do nothing, we risk the entrenchment of a form of global apartheid. Unless we act in a manner that fundamentally changes their lives, the poor of the world may lose confidence in the democratic systems to which we are committed, seeing their representatives as nothing more than sounding brass or tinkling symbols."

The U.S. forced South Africa to change that text and remove all reference to "global apartheid". It thus contributed to the Summit being nothing more than "sounding brass or tinkling symbols."

Only the Governments of Norway and Ethiopia spoke up

against attempts to make the multilateral environment agreements (MEAs) of Rio subservient to the trade rules of W.T.O. and to dilute the proposals on corporate accountability that the Friends of the Earth campaign had successfully introduced in the text.

The only other 'victory' was the women's alliance of ministers and the women's caucus preventing the removal of language relating to human rights in the context of health.

In an age supposedly characterised by a clash of civilisations, the "clashing civilisations" - the U.S., the Holy See, the Islamic countries were amazingly unified in seeing human rights in health as a threat to all shades and colours of patriarchy.

The tragedy was that all "victories" were merely success in preventing further regress - in terms of corporate accountability, multilateral environmental agreements and women's health rights.

Instead of Governments committing themselves to conserve water and defend and uphold water rights of all their citizens, they were selling off water in privatisation deals, even though water is not the property of the state, but the commons cared for and shared by communities. The privatisation of water commons is illegal and illegitimate in common property law, natural law and moral law. This is why there were protests against water privatisation through out W\$\$\$D.

The police attacked one such

protest on 24th Aug with stun bombs, injuring three people..... Johannesburg made it clear that the real clash of cultures is between cultures of life and cultures of death. The anti-poverty movement, the justice movement, the sustainability movement, the ecology movement are actually one movement, the movement to defend the resources for sustenance and right to sustenance as a natural right - a right that is not given by states and cannot be taken away by greedy corporations. Corrupt deals on pieces of paper cannot extinguish that natural right.

MORAL DEGRADATION

The moral degradation of the ruling elites was also evident in the privatisation of life through biotechnology and patents. Southern Africa has been made a victim of drought and famine under the joint impact of climate change and structural adjustment programmes. The World Bank has forced countries to destroy and dismantle their food security systems. Faced with severe drought, lack of food security is creating conditions of famine. More than 300,000 people face starvation. Famine caused by western powers is now being used to market GMOs through food aid. Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique have refused to accept GMOs in food aid. The WHO was mobilised to force African countries to accept GM food. The U.S. Government made the force feeding of Africans with GMOs a major issue. When Colin Powell, representing President Bush,

kept insisting on African countries importing GM food from U.S. in the closing plenary of the Earth Summit, he was heckled by both NGOs and Governments. African farmers had come to Johannesburg with alternatives - small scale, indigenous-based on farmers' rights to land, water and seed. The Earth Summit in Johannesburg in 2002, organized 10 years after the Rio Summit, which gave us the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Bio-safety Protocol, was also reduced to a marketplace for pushing biotech on Africa. Hundreds of African farmers and government representatives condemned the U.S. pressure to force GM contaminated food aid. As civil society representatives from Africa stated,

"We, African Civil Society groups, participants to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, composed of more than 45 African countries, join hands with the Zambian and Zimbabwean governments and their people in rejecting GE contaminated food for our starving brothers and sisters: We refuse to be used as the dumping ground for contaminated food, rejected by the Northern countries; and we are enraged by the emotional blackmail of vulnerable people in need, being used in this way..... Our responses is to strengthen solidarity and self-reliance with in Africa, in the face of this next wave of colonization, through GE technologies, which aim to control our agricultural systems, through the

manipulation of seed by corporations. We will stand together in preventing our continent from being contaminated by genetically engineered crops, as a responsibility to our future generation."

"EARTH, NOT FOR SALE"

There were in fact not one Summit but many. There was the hijacked Summit at Sandton, the richest suburb in Johannesburg which was an appropriate symbol of a Summit that became a market for the earth resources. There was a limp official NGO gathering at NASREC. At a school, St. Stithians was the celebration of the People's Earth Summit, and in Soweto, children gathered for a Children's Earth Summit. The landless people and the small farmers had their own Summits. The alternative Summits were planning a people-centered, earth-centered agenda for the future. In the midst of corruption, they were creating courage and truth. In the midst of hopelessness they were creating hope. In the midst of violence they were creating non—violence.

When we, the civil society, walked away from the official process on September 4th and withdrew our consent, we did so in peace, in confidence and joy. We were brutally assaulted by the police of the apartheid era..... As we said in our statement issued from the People's Earth Summit, "We are outraged that the World Summit on Sustainable Development, instead of being an Earth Summit, which reinforced ti

commitments made in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro to protect the Earth and strengthen the rights of the poor has been subverted by Governments and corporations for their own ends

at the expense of civil society and the Earth".

"We refuse to collaborate with laws and systems of governance that deny the most fundamental birthrights of people and our

responsibilities within the Earth Community and future generations."

"We reaffirm that another world is possible" and we shall make it happen."

WATER MARKETS EXCLUDE THE POOR

Sudhirendar Sharma

"HOW is it that water which is so useful that life is impossible without it, has such a low price, while diamonds, which are quite unnecessary, have such a high price?"
- Adam Smith

Within the context of globalisation, Adam Smith has been acknowledged. In other words, from the 1992 Dublin Conference on the Environment to the 2000 Hague World Water Forum, the commodification and privatisation of the world's water has been presented as the only solution to universal access and environmental sustainability. If unnecessary, diamonds can fetch a price, why not lifesaving water?

The World Bank has relentlessly spearheaded a campaign to push the Dublin principle - that water is an economic, rather than social, good. On the plea of improving access and sustainability of dwindling supplies, water trading and promotion of private water rights have been pushed onto developing countries. Though aid-receiving countries have yet to accept water as an economic good, the World Bank is forcing the argument on developing countries through its water sector reforms.

An internal assessment by the

World Bank acknowledges that a large external constituency of stakeholders still wants to maintain social water pricing. But it is unwilling to give up and is indeed working to convince political leaders in several nations to move away from the concept of free water for all. The World Bank and its allies are pursuing a multi-pronged strategy to privatise water in the developing world.

THE POLICY DISGUISE

Strategic alliances between international financial institutions and global water companies have been turned into an effective strategy..... The broader public interest objectives of the multilateral banks and UN agencies have helped rationalise the economic motive of the major water companies in this unholy alliance. Where the IMF and the World Bank see an end to water poverty through these partnerships, private companies see incredible profits.

Water is indeed a big business. The entire water sector, including wastewater treatment,

is estimated at \$200 billion. According to a 1999 OECD summary of Environmental Business International statistics, water utilities account for \$73.2 billion out of the total global environmental market of \$453 billion for goods and services. However, these figures seem a gross underestimation if water is considered as an input to agriculture and other industrial applications. The industry estimates global trade in water to be close to \$7 trillion.

Unbelievably, the industry survives on the patronage of water-stressed consumers, whose numbers are likely to touch three billion, from the present 1.1 billion, in the next two decades. On the one hand there are cash-strapped municipalities struggling to maintain supplies and, on the other, governments are finding it hard to raise \$31-35 billion annually to provide universal access to water in a shrinking international aid environment. Since the historic Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, governments of the North have reneged on

promises to contribute 0.7 per cent of their annual Gross National Product (GNP) to bring developing countries at par. According to OECD, official development assistance dipped to \$53 billion in 2000 from \$69 billion in 1992. Actual aid spending as a share of GNP slipped to a shocking 0.2 per cent in 2000.

The World Bank and the IMF have also slashed funding. The national co-financing of World Bank water projects was at its lowest during the 1990s.... In addition, the World Bank is pressing for full cost recovery to realise debts and address budget deficits.

Significantly, the full cost recovery principle is a disguise to promote privatisation. Because it is easier to manipulate poor economies to set the trend, IMF imposed conditions of full cost recovery and/or privatisation in 12 of its 40 loans granted in 2000. Even if these countries were to raise foreign direct investments from sources other than the IMF and the World Bank, a seal of approval from these international financial institutions is an unwritten prerequisite. Consequently, these governments are forced to toe the line.

THE BACKDOOR ENTRY

Although the privatisation of water utilities has backfired in some countries, a strategy of incremental privatisation has been developed to overcome public resistance and facilitate the backdoor entry of private companies. Since expansion and maintenance of public

infrastructure have not kept pace with the rapid growth in demand, third party mediation is sought to raise the necessary funds for investments in the sagging public sector. Called Public-Private Partnership (P3), a typical P3 involves a joint venture between an MNC water company and the local government in which the former contracts to design, build and operate water-treatment and supplies for a pre-determined period. This will force governments to provide a congenial regulatory environment for the growth of the investing company and eventually prepare to hand over the water utility to the private sector.

In the last decade, over \$25 billion has been invested in P3s worldwide, over 95 per cent being in the developing South alone. Development agencies and financial institutions often underwrite these forays by MNCs in the developing countries. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has already initiated public-private partnership in ten Asian capitals, and the German Development Bank (KfW) has pumped in nearly \$400 million into 26 public-private partnership projects across Albania, Montenegro and Jordan.

The main beneficiaries of the P3 are a handful of globally operating, market-dominant, multi-utility companies. Suez and Vivendi, water companies from France that together control more than 50 per cent of the global water market, netted a \$10-billion profit last year.

Corporate growth is the usual story of mergers and acquisitions. No wonder, therefore, that Vivendi is a conglomeration of more than 3,000 companies worldwide. In effect, there is little choice when the governments opt for public-private ventures.

The water sector is attractive not only because of high profits offered by a monopoly in a vital supply area, it gives the multi-utility concerns leverage for taking over other municipal services as well.

The privatisation of water services has not had a successful track record thus far. Though it has been criticised for its anti-poor policy advice, the World Bank argues that increased cost recovery and privatisation will actually expand access to clean water. The multi-donor World Commission on Water for the 21st Century is convinced that "if the poor have to survive they must buy water for their daily needs".

But privatisation critics say the Bank's calculus is flawed. Higher tariffs for water mean the poor have to use less or go without. In Ghana, where privatisation has been in full swing, price increases (95 per cent) have already forced many people to cut down water consumption drastically. Public health officials link such reduced access to increased health risks. In South Africa, enhanced water tariffs forced people in the Kwagulu-Natal region to consume polluted river water - the resultant cholera outbreak claimed some 32 lives in 1999. Cut off from municipal systems,

the poor are forced to buy water off the back of a truck and often get diseases responsible for some four million deaths per year.

..... World Bank sponsored studies indicate that urban poor already pay five times the municipal rate for water in Abidjan; 25 times more in Dhaka; and 40 times more in Cairo.

However, it is not clear if the poor can sustain paying the increased tariff for long. They might be paying so much that they can afford to buy cups of water to drink but not 40 litres per day, the minimum necessary to meet basic human needs on a daily basis.

By the inefficient handling of water resources and by allowing the municipal infrastructure to crumble, governments the world-over have made themselves and their poor citizens vulnerable to the onslaught of forces out to reap a huge windfall. It is a choice poor governments will find hard to make - choose the interests of the poor and lose, or raise resources for infrastructure and shun the poor? The World bank suspended a \$46-million loan to Paraguay for not privatising its water sector. However, for accepting its pre-condition to raise water tariffs by 95 per cent the World Bank approved a similar loan of \$110 million to Ghana in July 2001.

Developing countries' governments lack the capacities for effective negotiations. Reform agenda is rarely seriously examined. In contrast, most governments literally follow

the dotted lines, mortgaging the interests of the poor in the process.

The argument that the private sector brings substantial additional investment holds little water either. To reduce their own risks, operators use low-interest loans from donors and development banks without which generating profit may not be possible. Furthermore, private companies are extremely prone to bribery and cronyism.

THE NEW ROUTE

Once the reforms are implemented, it is impossible to undo them. On the contrary, international trade and investment agreements, within the purview of World Trade Organisation, help codify these reforms and bind them into a multilateral framework for comprehensive application, opening a new route to water privatisation. To date, much of the debate on the GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) on water has focussed on drinking-water.

Of all the WTO agreements, water resources are likely to be most directly affected as a result of GATS. For instance, GATS does not acknowledge conservation as a legitimate exception to justify interfering with the rights of the foreign service providers. GATS clearly favours trade in services by minimising the capacity of governments to regulate or otherwise intervene in the market. But article 1:2 of GATS promotes 'cross-border' trade in services as well..... Thus, GATS has become a means of

achieving corporate presence across territories.

THE WAY OUT

Alternative approaches are essential for a comprehensive solution to the water-crisis. Public sector needs to be reformed to meet the challenge of privatisation, and correct deficiencies with structural and financial reforms.

Further, community-owned and managed systems need patronage and State support.... Privatisation is narrowing the space for the full-realisation of potential benefits of such initiatives.... Also, public suppliers need to be given capital on low-interest rates.

Interestingly, crucial decisions about water privatisation and cost recovery are made without the knowledge and consent of citizens. Forced to sign on dotted lines, democratically elected governments in the developing world are at risk of survival on account of their reduced reliability.

Be it the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg next week or the World Water Forum next year, national governments will have to confront businesses to swing the sustainable development agenda in their favour.

Unless countries are permitted to find their own solutions and to keep basic human services such as water under their control, sustainable human development is unlikely to be achieved.

(A slightly edited version of an article by the author, who is a water expert attached to the Delhi-based The Ecological Foundation. Courtesy: Business Line, 23 August, 2002)

RAVINDRA VARMA COMMISSION AGAINST LABOUR A FEW MORE HIGHLIGHTS

FREEDOM TO UNILATERALLY CHANGE SERVICE CONDITIONS

The Commission has, by its recommendation, conferred absolute rights on the employers to change the service conditions of the workers at their will.

It has recommended that section 9A of the Act requiring the employer to give prior notice for change in service conditions will not be applicable in respect of changes mentioned in item 11 of the 4th schedule of the ID Act. The Report says "There need be no statutory obligation for the employer to give prior notice, in regard to item 11 of the 4th schedule for the purpose of increase in the workforce, as is the position now under section 9A." (6.82, page 348). Its recommendation also envisages, that notice of change issued by an employer as per provisions of section 9A, should not operate as a stay order (to the proposed changes) under section 33..." This means that the employers will be allowed to effect any change in the service conditions of the workers, in wages, allowances, working hours etc, as they like, just by giving the notice and the workers will have no other alternative but to go in for time-consuming litigation process for the remedy of the same. This tantamount to imposition of conditions of slavery on the workers.

DRASTIC CURTAILMENT OF TRADE UNION RIGHTS

The experience of the trade union movement is that proper implementation of labour laws, howsoever beneficial those may be, depends mainly on the organized assertion by the trade union movement. The Commission also understood this. And that is why, while making laudable generalised statements in its Report (and consciously not in the form of recommendations) regarding 'living wages', 'all embracing social security as a fundamental right', and also on 'rights of the workers and the trade unions to organize and collective bargaining' etc, the Commission, in a most meticulous manner acted in drastically pruning the rights of the workers and the trade unions in all respects right from formation of trade unions to the rights to collectively represent, agitate and strike.

As per Commission's scheme of things, no trade union would have the right to represent any collective or policy matters except individual cases unless it is recognized by the management.

VIRTUAL BAN ON STRIKE

Only the recognized union will be entitled to give call for strike that too after obtaining 51% support in favour of strike through a strike ballot. The unrecognized unions will not be entitled even to go for a strike ballot. In the so called socially essential services, strike has been totally banned even after a strike ballot. And in other sectors, after the notice for strike ballot is issued, if the matter is taken up by conciliation by the labour deptt, followed by adjudication or arbitration, strike cannot be resorted to unless the whole process is completed. "Go slow" and "work to rule" will be considered misconduct and will attract punitive action.

The Commission virtually recommended a total ban on strike through various stipulations, both direct and indirect, in its voluminous report. And by way of debarring the so called unrecognized registered unions from any collective actions and agitation, it has virtually proposed to strip the overwhelming majority of the trade union movement off all their trade union rights.

(A NEW CITU PUBLICATION ON THE SECOND NATIONAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR BOTH IN ENGLISH AND HINDI IS BEING PUBLISHED BY THE CITU CENTRE, WHICH WILL BE AVAILABLE BY FIRST WEEK OF OCTOBER)

REPORTS & EVENTS

CHATTISGARH: CITU STATE COMMITTEE MEET

On 15th August last Chattisgarh State Committee met at Raipur and has decided to carry forward the resistance struggle against extreme exploitation of working class and join the mainstream nationwide movement as decided in Workers Assembly held in Delhi on 15th July 2002.

The State Committee has given particular emphasis in organising the workers in the unorganised sector who are poorest of the poor and are most vulnerable. The target areas are anganwadi, beedi workers, rice mill workers, loaders,

rickshaw pullers, masons and such others. The state unit has also decided to strengthen the unions in public sector units like steel, electricity and other major private sector units of cement, aluminium, steel, etc.

A programme has been drawn with state leaders of other participating unions of "Workers Assembly" to make the nationwide movement against labour law 'reforms' and other derogatory steps against working class, a great success. State Committee has also decided that

a series of TU classes will be held in the state. On 15th Sept a workshop was organised in Bhilai. It was decided that the campaign programme as decided in the workers assembly will be carried out intensively throughout the state. State Committee has recorded that there has been greater participation of the workers in different action programmes on various issues, specially mentioned about the excellent preparation by coal workers for 7-days strike last August, which was eventually withdrawn following the Govt's categorical assurance.

MADHYA PRADESH CITU TO INTENSIFY STRUGGLE

MP State Committee of CITU met in Bhopal on 13th and 14th September. The main items of the agenda were (1) overhauling the organisation and (2) intensify the struggles in various fronts.

The State committee has noted that of late the attacks on the working class have intensified many fold. Lakhs of workers have been retrenched from Dainik Betan Bhogi workers to highly organised ones. In many areas almost all the existing industries have closed down, textile industry has almost wiped out, cement factories are also closing down rapidly. Beedi and Anganwadi workers are facing severe repression. Even in some modern industries, workers are

being retrenched at will.

State CITU has drawn up a programme to make the call of National Assembly of Trade Unions (15th July call from New Delhi) a grand success and also drawn up plans to further the struggles by Anganwadi workers, retrenched Dainik Betan Bhogi workers, Beedi workers and others workers in unorganised sector.

To strengthen movement against 2nd Labour Commission, a long drawn education programme has been chalked out. Next phase of movement against fundamentalist forces has also been drawn up. Special efforts are being made to organise state wide united rallies on 18-23rd Nov 2002.

State Committee also decided to hold to classes for workers in different sectors especially in unorganised sector. It expressed satisfaction at the excellent preparation of coal strike in August 2002 which was withdrawn as Govt of India backed out from their privatisation move.

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REPORTS & EVENTS

WORKERS PARTICIPATION! IS IT STILL ALIVE?

A 2-day Seminar was organised in Mumbai on August 29-30 by FES and Maharashtra Institute of Labour Studies to discuss Workers Participation in the German model of Co-Determination. It is strange that such workshop/seminars are still organised where learned experts struggle hard to explain what is meant by participation. In this era of so called globalisation all the labour rights are being trampled merrily by employers. All the

statutes have been given a good-bye. Thousands upon thousands of workers are losing their jobs or have to work for unlimited hours with less than half wage. Such work-shops come out with high sounding hollow valediction that add insult to the workers' injury. P.R. Krishnan and Ashok Vasishth represented CITU in the workshop. They criticized that the govt and the employers are against participation by workers. They are bull-doing the workers rights and

facilities to implement their policies of LPG. The unions cannot 'participate' in the running of the industry with the management if that means accepting degradation of the lives of workers. They asserted that first of all the Govt must change their policies of LPG and the employers and the govt must accept the responsibility, as a matter of principle, to improve the quality of life and social security of the workers. Or else the talk of 'participation' is useless.

AGAINST MINERAL POLICY OF INDIA

All India Mineral Development Corporation Workers' federation (AINMDCWF) organised a National Convention on "Mineral Policy of India" on 3rd Sept. 2002 at Nagpur and list of those participated in annexed separately. Federation President Gurudas Dasgupta presided. The Convention discussed in detail about present scenario in Mineral Industry and its relevance in overall national economic growth. The adverse effect of changes brought in by way of amendment in the "Mines & Minerals (Regulation & Development) Act 1957" in the year 1994 sequel to New Mineral Policy announced by the then Union Government in the year 1993 were also noted. As a result, 13 minerals which were reserved for Central Govt. were de-reserved for private sector, 15

minerals which were subject to permissions./ approval by Central Govt for State Govts. To lease out land for Exploration and Mining. Mohd. Tajuddin from CITU, WCL, Nagpur, BR Saini from AITUC HCL, Ramlal Yadav, from INTUC Bhilai KP Sui from TISCO (INTUC), Shafique Khan AITUC, Mohd. Amir Ali from Hutti gold Miens, Karnataka, Sukuram Kashyap from INTUC Bailadila Iron Ore Mine, RD Tripathy from INTUC Bhopal, Niranjan Singh from BMS Panna, DS Keer from MECL Nagur, Gazaffar Nawab from AITUC, Prabhunath, NMDC Hyderabad spoke.

Thereafter, the following Resolutions were passed.

1. To build up effective campaign and agitation against privatisation, dis-investment and

closure of number of public sector units in the Mining Sector and to step up agitation for resolution of long standing demands of the workers in public sector, and to take up campaign demand of security of job in the miens of TATA Company and also build up strong agitation for enforcement of labour laws and payment of statutory dues in the unorganised sector workers working in the miens of the country.

2. An action Committee comprising of the following with Gurudas Dasgupta as Chairman, S.Q Zama as Convenor was formed. Mohd. Tajuddin is a member from CITU.

3. A sustained public awareness drive would be held in each and every mineral miens by all the unions and workers jointly and observe 8th October as protest

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day by holding meetings, rallies etc. to secure demands.

4. Next Convention will be held at Bhopal on 10.12.2002 to hosted by INTUC.

Demands

1. Stop privatisation of Mineral Industry.

2. Stop reckless closure of Mines

3. Withdraw amendments of 1994 in Miens and Mineral (Regulation & Development) Act 1957.

4. Stop unscientific, unsafe and selective mining in Mineral

Industry.

5. Stop exploitation of worker in a scattered and unorganised Mineral Mining Industry and provide legislative protection to the workers including Contractor workers.

(Report from S.Q. Zama)

DELHI: DEMONSTRATION BY HOTEL EMPLOYEES

The employees of Hotel Hyath Regencies, a five star Hotel, organised under the banner of Asian Hotel Employees Union, New Delhi, have long been in struggle against illegal and vindictive termination of 25 union leaders and activists on concocted charges. The termination of the leaders and activists have been resorted to by the management immediately after the union submitted their charter of demands.

The terminated employees along with many others have been sitting in dharna in front of the Hotel since last two years braving all attempts of the management to demolish their dharna site and demoralise them using the agencies of NDMC and the police who have repeatedly attacked the dharna pandal, removed flags, banners etc and confiscated their mike set etc. On 17th August 2002 a militant demonstration was held in front of the main gate of the hotel by

members of the Asian Hotel employees union which was also joined by more the 250 workers from Ryan International School, Bigjos, JP Industries, Airport employees union etc. The demonstration was addressed by Com. Mohanlal General Secretary, Delhi CITU, Com. H. C. Pant, general Secretary of the office and establishment union of CITU, Sudhir Kumar, President of FMRAI and Com. Chandre Bahadur, General Secretary of the Asian Hotel Employees Union.

COMRADE ABUL BASAR

We record with deep regret the sad demise of Com Abul Basar, a member of the CITU General Council and a stalwart of the working class movement in West Bengal, on 8th September, 2002, after a prolonged ailment.

Com Basar was a dedicated champion of the cause of the toiling masses for more than five decades. His contribution in organising the unorganised sector workers, the tailoring workers in particular in Kolkata - 24 Paraganas region was immense. He was an undaunted fighter throughout his life - in the fight against extreme poverty and hardship, as a retrenched worker, as a contract worker and also in the struggle for organising the unorganised sector workers in extremely difficult conditions. He braved repression, imprisonment and what not; his undaunted spirit had been an eternal source of inspiration to all comrades. His simplicity in lifestyle and ever smiling accessibility to all will be ever remembered. Even with extreme ill health at the age of 82 he remained active till he was admitted to hospital where he breathed his last. His death is an irreparable loss to the working class and democratic movement.

The CITU Secretariat and 'The Working Class' pays tearful homage to the memory of Com Abul Basar and convey heartfelt condolence to the bereaved comrades and his family members.

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PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEES' STRUGGLE.

Nearly 300 members of CITU conducted a militant demonstration in front of Ryan International School, Vasant Kunj in South Delhi on 17th August in support the employees of Ryan International School, in their struggle for reinstatement of eight of their colleagues.

The employees of three branches of Ryan International School were organised under the banner of Ryan International Employees Union for several years and was affiliated to CITU recently.

Repeated efforts of the employees union for a negotiated settlement

could not succeed due to the adamant and hostile attitude of the management.

In spite of prior intimation about the demonstration no responsible personnel of the management was present in the school at the time of the demonstration. Copy of the memorandum was therefore pasted on the door of the office of the school. The union will intensify agitation if necessary by going on strike, declared Com. Bhati, the General Secretary of the union.

The demonstration was addressed by Com. Mohanlal, General Secretary CITU, Delhi, Com. H.

C. Pant, General Secretary office and establishment employees union, Com. Virender Kumar, General Secretary MCD employees union and Com. Bhati General Secretary of Ryan International employees union.

Demonstration in front of the Big Jos and JP enterprises. Militant demonstration was conducted by more than 200 members of CITU in front of Big Jos at Safdarjang, Extension and JP enterprises, Vasant Kunj, against illegal termination of services of employees and in pursuance of charter of demands, respectively, on 17th August.

ANGANWADI EMPLOYEES' CONVENTION AT PATNA

The Bihar State Anganwadi Sevika Sahayika Sangh held a convention on 8th September 2002 in Patna, to discuss about the anti Union and individualistic activities of the General Secretary of the Union, Shanti Mishra and to take appropriate decisions to strengthen the Union. In spite of 'Teej', a festival observed by women in Bihar, around 100 anganwadi employees from all over the State participated in the convention. Shanti Mishra did not attend, in spite of being specifically asked to attend the convention. Hemalata, General Secretary, AIFAWH, Arun Kumar Mishra, General Secretary, Bihar State Committee of CITU, Manjul

Kumar Das, General Secretary, Bihar State Government Employees' Federation, SN Pandey, leader, State Government Employees' Federation, Yogendra Prasad Singh, Vice President, CITU, and other leaders attended the Convention. Sunita Kumari, Shanti Devi, and Sheela Devi, acted as the Presidium.

Inaugurating the Convention, Hemalata, told that the policies being adopted by the BJP led NDA Government were weakening the ICDS. In several States, management of the anganwadi centres was being handed over to the Panchayats. Attacks on anganwadi employees, particularly in the States where the centres

were handed over to the Panchayats were increasing. In such a situation, it was of utmost importance to strengthen the union, by uniting all the anganwadi workers and helpers. Unfortunately, in Bihar, the Union, which was strong a few years back, has become weak. The anganwadi centres have already been handed over to the Panchayats. The Union could not resist the attempts, as the State Committee was not functioning. No programme was taken to oppose the move, while in other States like Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, where the Union was strong, big struggles were conducted and the

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move could be successfully stalled. In several States, anganwadi employees could snatch some extra benefits from the State Governments. She called upon the participants to strengthen the union and fight against the anti anganwadi and anti working class policies of the Government.

Manjul Kumar Das reminded the participants that the State Committee of the Union had decided that the union would be affiliated to the CITU. The State Government Employees' Association, which was earlier organising the anganwadi employees has respected the

decision and decided to extend all help for the Union. But Shanti Mishra did not abide by the decision of the State Committee of the Union. He promised all help in strengthening the Union and told that all the district committees of the State Government Employees' Association would be directed to extend all help.

Arun Mishra told that after several anganwadi employees complained about collection of huge amounts of money by Shanti Mishra on one or the other pretexts, the CITU leadership has told her to desist from such practices and function in a democratic manner. But she

did not care to conduct regular State Committee meetings not did she rectify her ways. Even the State Conference was held around 8 years back. She did not agree to hold the State Conference. Uma Devi placed a resolution, which outlined the various anti-union and corrupt practices of Shanti Mishra and called for her expulsion from the Union. 10 anganwadi employees from all the districts present spoke on the resolution, after which it was unanimously adopted. The Convention elected an organising committee with 15 members and Uma Devi as Convenor.

ANGANWADI ANDHRA PRADESH STATE CONFERENCE

The fourth State Conference of the Andhra Pradesh Anganwadi Workers and Helpers' Union was held on 14-16 September 2002, at Rajahmundry, the cultural centre of Andhra Pradesh. An impressive procession, which wound through the streets of Rajahmundry, was held on the 14th. Around 4,000 anganwadi workers and helpers, from different districts participated in the procession. Hemalata, General Secretary, All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers, S Veeraiah, General Secretary, State Committee of CITU, and Roja, General Secretary of the Union and others, addressed the rally that followed. The Conference started with the hoisting of the AIFAWH flag by

Hemalata. The mayor of Rajahmundry, who was the Chairperson of the Reception Committee, welcomed the delegates. The local MLA, G Butchaiah Chowdhury and D Subba Rao, General Secretary of the East Godavari district Agricultural Workers' Union addressed the inaugural session. 220 delegates and observers from 20 districts attended the Conference. B Lalitamma, IN Subbamma, Ch. Bharati, G Baby Rani, and Seetamma acted as the Presidium. Roja presented the General Secretary's report. The report dealt with the various activities of the union after the last State Conference and the organisational situation, in detail. Roja emphasised the importance

of forming functional district centres of the union and effective functioning of the project committees.

Ananda Rajan, Working President of the Pondicherry State Anganwadi Staff Association, greeted the Conference and told about the experiences of the struggles in Pondicherry, whereby, they could achieve the absorption of 25% of anganwadi workers and helpers in posts created in the Women and Handicapped Welfare Department in the State. He told that this was possible by the united tenacious struggle of the anganwadi employees, together with the support from the other sections of the working class in the State, and the beneficiaries. He pointed out that the fact that the

State was small and the number of anganwadi employees small helped in achieving this.

Punyavati, President of the State unit of AIDWA greeted the Conference. She told that anganwadi employees should help in organising the women among the beneficiaries.

Veeraiah exhorted the delegates to prepare for militant struggles on their demands and against the anti working class policies of the Government.

The report was unanimously adopted after 25 delegates from all the districts participated in the discussion. 21 delegates participated in the discussion on the tasks and all of them supported the

tasks placed by the General Secretary. Resolutions demanding regular payment of honorarium, immediate implementation of the enhanced honorarium, implementation of all legal benefits for working women, Comprehensive Legislation for Agricultural Workers, against the Government's LPG policies, Roja against Communalism, etc were adopted unanimously by the Conference.

In her concluding observations, Hemalata observed that the discussions reflected the level of maturity of the delegates and expressed the confidence that the Union would grow more rapidly in the coming days. She emphasised

the importance of understanding the real impact of the Government's policies on their conditions and asked them to participate in larger numbers in the united struggles against these disastrous policies. She also warned them to be vigilant against the danger of communal forces, which try to disrupt the unity of the people.

The Conference elected a new committee comprising of 55 members, of which Lalitamma and were re-elected as the President and General Secretary. The Conference also elected the delegates to the All India Conference at Puri. Dhanalakshmi, proposed the Vote of Thanks.

LATHI CHARGE ON MUNICIPAL WORKERS IN WARANGAL

Municipal workers in several towns and cities in Andhra Pradesh organised dharnas and picketing on their demands on the 16th September 2002. They were demanding regular payment of wages, which were not paid for 3-13 months in many municipalities and implementation of the minimum wages for the contract workers. Hundreds of workers, a large number of them women, participated in this programme.

In Warangal, the police resorted to inhuman lathi charge on the picketers, including women. Even the press reporters and photographers were not spared. The General Secretary of the State

Municipal Workers' Union, Paladugu Bhaskar, the General Secretary of the District Committee of CITU, M Chukkaiah and several other CITU and Union leaders were seriously injured in the merciless lathi charge for more than half an hour. All the 300 workers were made to march to the police station with the police caning them.

The trade unions and mass organisations condemned the lathi charge and demanded that action should be taken against the CI and the SI who have resorted to it and also that the genuine demands of the municipal employees should be solved immediately.

In Hyderabad, hundreds of municipal contract workers participated in a dharna demanding implementation of minimum wages at Rs. 1,950/- per month, payment of ex gratia to the municipal workers who die in road accidents while performing their duties, etc and submitted a memorandum to the MCH Commissioner Chitra Ramachandran.

Indian Labour Conference

The 30th session of the Indian Labour Conference will be held on 28th and 29th September 2002. a detailed report on the ILC will be published in the next issue.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX NUMBERS FOR INDUSTRIAL WORKERS ON BASE 1982=100

State	Sr. No.	Centre	Month		State	Sr. No.	Centre	Month	
			Jun '2002	July '2002				Jun '2002	July '2002
Andhra Pradesh	1	Gudur	453	457	Maharashtra	38	Mumbai	558	560
	2	Guntur	468	480		39	Nagpur	499	493
	3	Hyderabad	469	468		40	Nasik	511	514
	4	Visakhapatnam	468	470		41	Pune	531	532
	5	Warangal	496	503		42	Solapur	484	486
Assam	6	D.D. Tinsukia	395	398	Orissa	43	Barbil	430	434
	7	Guwahati	478	481		44	Rourkela	416	418
	8	Labac-Silchar	374	375	Punjab	45	Amritsar	418	422
	9	Mariani-Jorhat	402	409		46	Ludhiana	431	435
	10	Rangapara-Tezpur	409	413	Rajasthan	47	Ajmer	471	478
Bihar	11	Monghyr	420	422		48	Jaipur	435	441
Chhattisgarh	12	Bhillai	408	416	Tamil Nadu	49	Chennai	512	515
Gujarat	13	Ahmedabad	479	482		50	Coimbatore	480	477
	14	Bhavnagar	498	508		51	Coonoor	474	477
	15	Rajkot	446	457		52	Madurai	458	457
	16	Surat	487	490		53	Salem	470	470
	17	Vadodra	474	476		54	Tiruchirappalli	522	530
Haryana	18	Faridabad	480	487	Uttar Pradesh	55	Agra	434	442
	19	Yamunanagar	441	452		56	Ghaziabad	478	483
J & K	20	Srinagar	542	547		57	Kanpur	461	465
Jharkhand	21	Jamshedpur	425	439		58	Saharanpur	434	436
	22	Jharua	373	376		59	Varanasi	482	491
	23	Kodarma	386	388	West Bengal	60	Asansol	452	459
	24	Noamundi	401	406		61	Darjeeling	390	393
	25	Ranchi-Hatia	428	437		62	Durgapur	552	558
Karnataka	26	Bangalore	450	455		63	Haldia	579	584
	27	Belgaum	511	519		64	Howrah	542	545
	28	Hubli-Dharwar	469	477		65	Jalpaiguri	416	421
	29	Mercara	461	462		66	Kolkata	528	537
Kerala	30	Alwaye	479	489		67	Raniganj	410	419
	31	Mundakayam	464	476	Chandigarh	68	Chandigarh	509	514
	32	Quilon	496	504	Delhi	69	Delhi	555	561
	33	Thiruvananthapuram	546	557	Pondicherry	70	Pondicherry	505	516
Madhya Pradesh	34	Balaghat	417	428					
Pradesh	35	Bhopal	512	512					
	36	Indore	492	496					
	37	Jabalpur	462	468					
					ALL-INDIA			476	481

Additional Series of Labour Bureau

State	Centre	June 2002	July 2002
Andhra Pradesh	1 Kethgudem	471	491
Himachal Pradesh	2 Himachal Pradesh	454	457
Rajasthan	3 Bhilwara	467	474
Madhya Pradesh	4 Chhindwara	433	448
Tripura	5 Tripura	437	431
Goa	6 Goa	572	578

MIND BOGGLING DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES IN CHINA

A.K. Padmanabhan

A Trade Union delegation visited Peoples Republic of China from 20th to 26th August, 2002. The delegation included A.K. Padmanabhan from CITU, S. Damle from AITUC and S.S. Hans from INTUC. The visit was confined mainly to Beijing and Tianjin industrial area which is next only to Shanghai as an industrial base. A lot of misinformation is spread in India, that Chinese labour laws are lax and the workers' condition is bad. Our objective was to see the working and living conditions of the workers, the legal and social status of the workers in the post WTO regime in China.

What is mind boggling is the rate of growth of the economy, particularly in industry and in the infrastructure. At the moment the construction activities have been speeded up very fast because China is going to host 2008 Olympic Games. Entire China seems to be on a 100-metre sprint to catch up and make it the best show so far.

Apart from the changing skyline what strikes one's eyes is the general health, hygiene conditions and clothings of the average people and workers. Improvement of their living standards draws admiration to any visitor from India.

Economic Front

Year 2001 has seen a steady progress on all fronts though many other countries have shown disastrous results. Price rise is only 0.7%, exports up by 7.0%, FDI has increased by 15%. One must remember that India's export is 30 billion Dollars and China's export is 140 billion dollars, so 7% increase for China means 32% for India in dollar terms. Overall growth of the economy has helped to create many jobs. Most of them are in the organised sector. Tianjin economic and Technological Development Area (TEDA) and Tianjin Free Trade Zone (TJFTZ) have 600 modern industrial units already commissioned. More than 3000 units will come up soon.

The Chinese recognise that the present phase of development has resulted in some regional disparities. So the new slogan is "go west". With this new thrust, the economically backward areas are also expected to develop soon and many

problems will be overcome both in the economic and social fronts.

Role of Trade Unions

All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) has 120 million members and is now seized with 3 major problems, 1) new job seekers, 2) migration and 3) laid-off workers. To grapple the problems the ACFTU has adopted a two-prong strategy, first is training and retraining and second is improvement in social security. Social insurance scheme takes care of Medical help, Pension, work related injury and unemployment insurance. The laid-off workers are divided in 3 categories, those who have left the job, those who are likely to be re-employed and those who have taken up lower type of jobs. Different types of relief are given to them. 14 million workers are getting substantial benefits under those schemes. ACFTU has been actively supporting the workers in their legal rights which have been strengthened over the years. Trade Unions run huge establishments and facilities like sanatoria, Hospitals, consumer Co-ops and canteens, all meant for the workers.

Women

In most of the industries large number of women workers are visible. In one food-processing unit, out of 3000 workers more than 2500 were women. Unlike Indian women in FTZ's where even marriage is prohibited, in China women workers get 4 months maternity leave for older women and 3 months for younger ones. They can take 9 months leave on half wage to bring up the child.

It is the Multi-nationals who resist formation of unions in their units. Coca-Cola and some other MNC's don't allow the TU leaders to meet the workers at the factory. The real situation is that the American MNC's do not want trade unions in their factories, be it in India or in China.

The underlying truth behind this impressive growth is strong domestic demand and not exports only. China could not grow by treating the workers like how we are being treated here in India. Rise of the workers living standard is propelling growth which, in turn, is generating employment. A contrast to the scenario in India.

SALE of PSU's - UNLIMITED DECEPTION

Leftist trade unions, particularly CITU, have all along been opposing disinvestment or privatisation of public sector units. If one recounts, it will be found that since 1991, in all the nationwide strike calls or central demonstrations, our main demand was opposing liberalisation and privatisation. CITU was ridiculed and blamed by the so called economic pundits and other political leaders that such a demand was raised out of the leaders' self interest who, according to them, enjoy a lot of material benefits and clout from the public sector units. Nothing can be farther from truth. But such nasty campaign helped the pro-privatisation BJP and its cohorts and also the Congress party to carry on their programme of privatisation with greater zeal. Congress party wanted to cover their actual intentions by the word 'disinvestment'. BJP Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha felt no need for such camouflage; so he boldly declared that 'Government has no business to run business' and all PSU's would be "privatised".

RSS, and its political outfits, first Jan Sangh and now BJP, were always pro-United States, pro-private sector and at the same time talked about 'Swadeshi'. Their deception starts from there. They never articulated how the U.S. style of running the economy and 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' could go together. So, when tension grew between the two lobbies, the top leadership deceived the Swadeshiwallahs by telling that globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation would eventually usher in an era of great economic development and that will be the real service to "Bharat Mata". The deception masters kept both U.S. lobby and Swadesi lobby happy in this way. There were other methods of silencing the Swadeshiwallahs, which cannot be printed.

CITU always maintained that disinvestment or privatisation was against national interests, against our economic sovereignty. Secondly, the sell-off proceeds are going to supplement budgetary deficits which is also wrong as it is like selling family silver to meet daily expenses. This process will neither stimulate investment nor will

enhance business confidence, rather will have the opposite effect. Our points have proved to be correct and the country is in exactly in that situation.

Suddenly, in the course of last few weeks it appears that the anti-privatisation lobby inside the NDA has become quite powerful and disinvestment of HPCL and BPCL, two major petroleum companies, have been put on hold. Air-India case has been deferred and NALCO case is hanging in balance after a massive popular protest.

Another round of deception has started. Now, surprisingly "national interest", "creation of private monopoly", "international blackmail" - all such talks are coming out. The fact is that it is only the question of money - who will get how much or whether will they get any share of the loot at all or not. Sale of BALCO has opened many eyes. If so many crores can flow into a particular kitchen for brokering BALCO sale, then why should others "suffer"? So all the fuss, all the gimmick will be over once the spoils are settled. There is no doubt that all these reservations about disinvestment are meant to deceive people.

Only one redeeming feature is the growing awareness among the people. Canards spread against public sector and the picture of efficiency and competitiveness of the private sector - painted by the media and hired pundits - misled a good section of the population of India, particularly the middle class. In the last few years they have seen what private sector is. The loot that is going on has left them in misery; the loot of the country's valuable assets is now as clear as day light. So they are rising. CITU took a lead in Orissa and almost everybody else had to join except BJP. 19th September Orissa bandh will be remembered for long time to come because the demand was only one 'stop privatisation of NALCO'. We are sure people will rise similarly in Andhra Pradesh to save Vizag Steel, in Punjab to save National Fertiliser. People of India will never accept Air India to be handed over to British Airways or any other foreign airlines.