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# THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

## ON TO THE CITU 11th CONFERENCE



**Towards Intensified Struggles and Class Unity**

# CITU opposes amendment permitting night work for women

The government of India has brought yet another amendment to one of the existing labour laws in favour of the employer class. The Factories Act, 1948 is sought to be amended, allowing deployment of women in Night shifts in factories and establishments. The Bill has been referred to the parliament standing committee on labour and welfare.

The proposed amendment gives blanket permission for night shift in all industries for women by changing clause 66 (1) (b) of the Act.

This amendment cannot be viewed in isolation of the other changes the government of India wants to bring about since the advent of globalisation. As in the case of every other labour law amendment like that of the TU Act, this amendment also is brought about to meet the employers demand for a more "flexible" labour market where no protective legislation is applicable, in the name of economic development. Since lifting the ban is against the ILO Convention (No.89) on Night Work which India had ratified, there is also a move to denounce the ILO Convention.

## Position of CITU

The CITU along with the other Central Trade Unions has opposed this amendment as night work is detrimental to the health of both male and female workers. The report of the expert

committee of the ILO says that night work causes digestive and nervous disorders which may be aggravated by excessive consumption of coffee, tobacco etc. They face risk of cardio vascular diseases. Night work may also be associated with increase in reproductive risks like abortion, pre term birth and low birth weight. Their family and social life also gets disturbed with lasting consequences on their family relations.

Apart from this women have to bear the double-burden of work i.e., at home and at the workplace. Women will not get any rest during the day since the burden of housework and looking after the children at present lies on them. Besides, women in our country are not safe even during the day time. They face difficulties during their travel in the night. Around 93% of women workers face sexual harassment at the work place.

Hence, CITU and other trade unions are not opposed to any idea of reviewing or revising any law including the ban on night work. But, the review of protective measures for women should be one intended to ensure equal treatment and opportunity and should be done sector specific and with proper tripartite consultation and collective decision with the approval of Trade Unions. Even at places where night work is permissible, our demand is for proper legislation and implementation of protective measures.

While opposing the ideology that 'women should not work outside or should not work at night' we must have an understanding of the social situation and the importance of protective legislations. The record of the Indian private sector and the law enforcement mechanism shows that not only protective legislation for women, but all basic labour laws are being continuously violated. Arguing that the legislation banning night work of women in industries for 7 hours at night in India, is restricting the freedom of women and the ban should be lifted, is nothing short of a deliberate effort to weaken the resistance movement against the attack on labour.

CITU has written to the standing committee to reject the amendment proposal and also sought permission for personal hearing.

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(Cover Page photo: South Korean workers demonstrate on 12th November strike day)

# THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

DECEMBER 2003

## BUSINESS AS USUAL

by UNNY



Courtesy: Indian Express

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## EDITORIAL

### INTERVENE TO END THIS PAROCHIALISM!

It was first in Assam; then spread to Bihar; thereafter engulfed Mumbai. We are painfully referring to the parochial violence that has erupted over the recruitment examinations held by the Indian Railways recently.

The chain of events that started with protest over 'outsiders' taking part in the entrance examination held in Guwahati constitutes the most shameful incidents of parochialism overtaking sanity.

The Times of India on 21-11-2003 in an editorial captioned "ASSAM MAYHEM" noted as below:

"In the ugly throwback to the dark decade of 80s, Assam is once more in the grip of intense anti-immigrant frenzy....Restoring law and order is the most immediate task facing the state government. The long term challenge is economic and has to do with a fundamental structural weakness that lies at the heart of the national economy, namely the continuing inability to produce enough decent jobs for the growing ranks of educated unemployed. For much of the economic growth in India through the 90s...the benefits have not reached the peripheral areas. Worse, this growth has coincided with a time when employment in the organised and manufacturing sector - thanks to the massive cost cutting resultant productivity gains in corporate India —has remained stagnant. Indeed, the scramble for class IV jobs that triggered the present mayhem in Assam started because there were as many as 74 lakh applicants for 20000 railway jobs that were made available..."

This was followed by yet another criminal assault at the Kalyan railway station by the gangsters of Shiv Sena, who scooped on the youngsters arriving in for a similar examination in Mumbai. The Railway ministry responded by putting off the examination, while the youth underwent most traumatic experience of their lives.

The unemployment situation in the country has assumed menacing dimensions. The youth are getting frustrated as the prospect of finding an avenue for a decent living by getting a job seems to be an eternal mirage, which they may end up chasing for life. Their disillusionment and disgust is increasingly being exploited by divisive and subversive elements and groups, operating in different parts of the country. They fall a prey to such forces forgetting that the issue of unemployment affects all communities and all regions.

The economic policies of jobless growth vehemently pursued by the NDA government at the centre is the root cause of all these problems.

The unemployed youth must be mobilised to fight these policies and on the demand for right to work. The working class and the trade union movement must intervene to end this parochialism and channelise the energies of the youth of the country towards alternative policies that will promote employment generation.

## TOWARDS INTENSIFIED STRUGGLES AND CLASS UNITY

W. R. Varada Rajan

**A**fter 24 long years, Chennai will once again be hosting the all India Conference of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) from 9th to 13th December, 2003. The previous occasion was in 1979. The Fourth Conference of CITU held at Chennai in 1979 is still cherished for two important developments, besides others. One, it was in that year the CITU took the initiative of organising an all India convention of working women, where the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women came into being. It heralded a significant step in organising the women workers into the fold of trade union movement in a big way and in developing women cadres to take leadership positions in trade unions. The second was the clarion call issued by Com. B.T.Ranadive, the founder-President of the CITU, for the formation of a confederation of all trade unions in the country to reflect the united voice of the working people of the country and launch joint movements on major policy issues of concern to the workers. Both these initiatives have relentlessly been pursued by the CITU over these long years.

The Eleventh Conference is slated at Chennai, the capital city of Tamil Nadu, which witnessed both the heroic strike by over 13 lakh government

employees and teachers as also the unprecedented state terrorism let loose by the Jayalalitha regime there. Enemies of the working class may rejoice with unconcealed glee over the totally unacceptable interference of the apex judiciary of the country declaring that the workers of the country cannot lay claim on right to strike. But, the fighting brigades of the CITU, from every nook and corner of the country, will descend in the city with a resolve to give a fitting rebuff to the powers that be that the working class will defend its unalienable right to strike, by organising more and more of intensified and militant actions. Even as the Supreme Court verdict came out with its pronouncements denying the workers their right to strike, the CITU promptly pointed out that this is not just an onslaught on workers but on the very democratic rights of the mass of the people. The subsequent dramatic events following the sentences of imprisonment delivered by the Legislative Assembly of Tamil Nadu on the news media persons, including the national daily of 125 years of standing 'The Hindu', taking umbrage under the hitherto uncoded privileges of the legislature, have proved the point beyond doubt. The working people, both in Tamil Nadu and elsewhere in the

country, stood in the forefront to defend the freedom of the Press, in solidarity with the entire media persons protesting against the draconian move of a despotic regime.

In this backdrop, the CITU conference at Chennai is meeting at a defining moment for the trade union movement in the country. With the entire spectrum of the trade union movement having unitedly resolved to enter a decisive action phase to defend the right to strike, CITU will chalk plans to carry the resistance struggle to further heights.

**REVIEW OF STRUGGLES**

The CITU Conference will, true to its tradition, undertake a thorough review of the struggles and activities since the conclusion of the last conference at Hyderabad in December, 2000.

During the period since the last conference, the CITU had come out with two important documents, after in depth deliberations in its various fora viz. CITU Secretariat, Working Committee and the General Council. The first one is a review on "United Struggles and Consolidation of Trade Union Movement", which had, after a thorough going analysis of the organisational shortcomings of the CITU at all levels, drawn up a road map for unifying the working class movement to meet the challenges of the present

times. The second one on "combating the offensive of communalism", which after analyzing the resurgence of right wing, reactionary and communal forces throwing up a formidable challenge to the unity of the working class and the people by their fascistic and genocidal onslaughts, had drawn up strategies - both for the long and short term - for relentlessly fighting the communal offensive to be carried all three fronts: economic, political and ideological.

Besides undertaking these two serious reviews, the CITU had also made consistent efforts to take up implementation of tasks outlined in the 1993 Resolution on Organisation, popularly known as Bhubaneswar document, at all levels. During this period the Government of India had mounted a serious attack on trade union and labour rights. In fact, the so called second generation reforms are based, inter alia, on the government's game plan to totally dismantle the labour laws and

impose conditions of slavery on the working class. The bartering away of the priceless assets of the economy by way of indiscriminate sale of even the profit making public sector units, often marked by scams and scandals and the constantly aggravating unemployment problem, which has assumed menacing proportions, have been the affronts thrown up by the NDA regime, with the CITU engaging itself in countering them through sustained struggles.

#### **FUTURE TASKS**

The 11th Conference of the CITU will make an introspective review of these struggles and chalk out the tasks for the future. The tasks tentatively drawn up by the CITU Secretariat for presentation to the Conference

include the following:

1. Strengthen campaign among the working class about the dangerous consequences of the policies of globalisation and placing concrete alternate policies of the democratic path of development;
2. Strive to unite the working class of all affiliations on common slogans against the IMF, World Bank and WTO dictates and launch powerful united struggle all over India;
3. Strengthen the activities of Sponsoring Committees and NPMO and develop them as genuine platform of united popular struggles to protect the national interests.
4. Expose and isolate forces within the trade union movement which seek to divide the working class and objectively

#### **PAST CONFERENCES OF THE CITU**

| <b>Number</b> | <b>Venue</b> | <b>Date</b>        | <b>President</b> | <b>General Secretary</b> |
|---------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| First         | Calcutta     | 28-31, May, 1970   | B.T. Ranadive    | P. Ramamurti             |
| Second        | Ernakulam    | 18-22, April, 1973 | B.T. Ranadive    | P. Ramamurti             |
| Third         | Mumbai       | 21-25, May, 1975   | B.T. Ranadive    | P. Ramamurti             |
| Fourth        | Chennai      | 11-15, April, 1979 | B.T. Ranadive    | P. Ramamurti             |
| Fifth         | Kanpur       | 13-17, April, 1983 | B.T. Ranadive    | Samar Mukherjee          |
| Sixth         | Mumbai       | 18-22, May, 1987   | B.T. Ranadive    | Samar Mukherjee          |
| Seventh       | Calcutta     | 13-17, Feb. 1991   | E. Balanandan    | M.K. Pandhe              |
| Eighth        | Patna        | 3-7, March, 1994   | E. Balanandan    | M.K. Pandhe              |
| Ninth         | Kochi        | 21-26, April, 1997 | E. Balanandan    | M.K. Pandhe              |
| Tenth         | Hyderabad    | 27-31, Dec., 2000  | E. Balanandan    | M.K. Pandhe              |

fulfill the requirements of the capitalist class.

5. Develop closer relationship with Kisan and Agricultural workers movement as bedrock of the popular struggles against the policies of globalisation.

6. Intensity campaign against communal forces that divert the attention of the people to parochial and fundamentalist issues and disrupt the popular unity against the policies of globalisation.

7. Develop closer relations with anti-globalisation movements all over the world while making serious efforts to make the World Social Forum at Mumbai successful.

8. Prepare for a nation wide strike against the attack on TU and democratic rights including right to strike.

9. Strengthen the democratic functioning of CITU as an independent mass organization and raise its membership to 4 million by the end of 2004.

10. Observe the birth centenary of Com B T Ranadive through a year long intensive educational campaign through trade union classes, seminars, popular lectures etc on ideological and organisational issues and on comrade BTR's teachings.

11. Involve working class more and more in political actions and in the world wide struggle against imperialist machinations and for a universal struggle for a socialist transformation of the society.

### CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

During the run up to the CITU Conference several campaign

Imperialism, Globalisation and National Sovereignty; 20 Unemployment: A TU Perspective; 3) Fight for Genuine Social Security; 4) On Child Labour; 5) Attack on Labour Rights and 6) On Unorganised Sector.

As a part of the CITU all India Conference, the seventh

Conference of AICCWW was held on 11- 12 October 2003 at Mumbai. A declaration on the tasks before the CITU on the problems of working women, emanating from the discussions during the Mumbai conference, will also be deliberated at the CITU Conference for eventual adoption and implementation. Over fifty delegates from the international fraternity, from around thirty countries, will be participating in the CITU Conference, reflecting the growing

international solidarity assiduously built up by the CITU over the years.

All the central trade unions and leaders of the fraternal mass organisations have been invited to greet the Chennai conference, which will go to further cement the unity in action against the disastrous policies of the government, which has hitherto been carried on under the aegis of all central trade unions, sponsoring committee of trade unions

### CONFERENCE AGENDA

1. Condolence Resolution
2. Presidential Address
3. Report of the General Secretary
4. Statement of Accounts for the year 2000, 2001 and 2002
5. Commission discussion on six subjects and report thereon
6. Resolutions on national and international issues
7. Declaration on the task before CITU on the problems of working women
8. Amendment of the CITU Constitution \*
9. Election of Office Bearers, General Council and Working Committee.
10. Any other subjects with the permission of Chair

*\* (circulated along with the Conference notice)*

'jathas' will be taken out from different parts of the country, all of them, after covering the length and breadth of the country taking the message of the CITU and its fight against the twin dangers of communalism and economic policies, will converge in Chennai on 8th December.

Apart from the General Secretary's report that will be debated extensively by the Conference, Commission discussions will be held on 1)

comprising both central trade unions and several industry level federations and the national platform of mass organisations.

The concluding day of the Conference will witness a mass rally in which around two lakh workers and their families will participate. Marching with red flags and festoons, the working people will loudly proclaim their resolve to relentlessly carry forward the struggles to culminate in the ouster of the treacherous NDA regime at the centre and the despotic AIADMK rule in Tamil Nadu.

### **TAMIL NADU PREPARES**

The Tamil Nadu State Committee of CITU has started preparations for hosting the Conference in right earnest. The Reception Committee for the Conference has been constituted under the presidency of the veteran freedom fighter and former President of the All India Kisan Sabha, Com. N. Sankaraiah. T.K.Rengarajan, Vice President of the CITU both at the national and state level is the general convener. Several functional sub-committees had been constituted to look after venue, logistics, reception, transportation, accommodation, catering, international delegations, rally and public meeting.

The entire CITU in the state had swung into a massive fund raising campaign throughout Tamil Nadu. The state leaders of the CITU had fanned out to all the districts

addressing huge gatherings of the CITU activists and workers, highlighting the significance of holding the 11th Conference of the CITU in Chennai at this juncture.

In all the districts of Tamil Nadu, hundreds of squads have been formed with the target of meeting 30 lakh families for explaining CITU policies against liberalisation and globalisation offensives of the central and state governments. This house to house campaign had received enthusiastic support from all sections of the people in the state. People are coming forward with their grievances

and look forward to the CITU as the champion in fighting their cause.

The CITU cadre had virtually painted the state red with extensive wall writings announcing the 11th Conference. A large volume of campaign materials have been brought out. The entire state is brimming with conference related activities by the CITU unions and cadres, joined by those from fraternal organisations as well.

Towards intensified struggles and class unity, Chennai beacons!

## **AMENDMENTS TO CITU CONSTITUTION**

The Conference notice contains certain proposals to amend the CITU Constitution.

Presently, the CITU constitution provides for holding of at least two Working Committee meetings and one General Council meeting every year. Experience shows that it becomes practically impossible to maintain the schedule and sometimes we had to hold the working committee meeting formally for just one hour prior to the General Council to meet the constitutional obligation. Many comrades expressed dissatisfaction over such a ritualistic exercise. The General Council discussed the matter at length and decided to propose an amendment to provide for holding of one meeting of General Council and one meeting of the Working Committee in a year. However, this is only the least requirement and there is no bar to convene more than one meeting also, should the need arise.

The General Council also decided that the size of the CITU Secretariat, Working Committee and General Council to be elected in the All India conference should be as under:

- \* Office-bearers: To be decided each time by the Conference (as at present)

- \* Working Committee: 125 + Office-bearers

- \* General Council: 300 + Working Committee

The General Council also decided that the representatives from each State in these Committees could be decided on the basis of membership strength proportionately.

The amendments proposed are to give effect to these decisions.

# TWO DISTURBING ASPECTS OF NDA GOVERNANCE

M K Pandhe

**T**he Vajpayee led NDA government at the centre is the most reactionary regime that the independent India had witnessed. Two most worrisome and disturbing aspects of this NDA governance is its pronounced pro-imperialist tilt and its patronage for resurgence of worst communal incendiary violence in the country.

## **PRO-IMPERIALIST TILT**

The Vajpayee Government has given a go by to India's consistent policy of non-alignment, over which there had been a general consensus amongst all political streams in the country since independence. Under the NDA rule, our foreign and defence policies have totally been subordinated to and dovetailed with the interests of US imperialism. In almost all international issues the NDA regime is virtually echoing the US line, overtly or covertly.

After the attack on the World Trade Centre on 11th September 2001, the Bush administration in the USA mounted a fresh offensive to bring into fusion a 'new world order', which is nothing but a euphemism of imperialist hegemony over the entire world, in the name of global war against terrorism. The Vajpayee government readily made common cause with the USA; it fully endorsed the US military operations in Afghanistan, ostensibly on the plea of capturing Osama bin Laden; it is also fully supportive of the continuing occupation of Afghanistan by US armed forces. The government has developed very close relations with the Karzai government in Afghanistan, which is a puppet regime sponsored and nurtured by the USA. It tried its best to promote the interests of the big Indian Corporates vying to secure construction contracts in Afghanistan.

There was worldwide opposition to the US and British imperialists' planned militarist intervention on Iraq with the declared objective of forcing a regime change in the country and on the spurious plea of destroying weapons of mass destruction. But, even as the US and Britain defied the UN authority and launched the horrendous attack on Iraq, targeting scores of civilians - including women and children, the Vajpayee government

did not raise its voice in protest. When the strong public opinion in the country forced the government to accept passing of a resolution in Parliament, it tried to dilute the wording of the resolution disapproving the role of USA.

During several rounds of dialogue between the Bush administration and the Vajpayee regime on the question of India sending our troops to Iraq to assist the occupation army of the US, the NDA government was almost willing to accept whatever was mandated by the Bush administration. Only the firm opposition of the left parties, later joined by the Congress, has till now stalled sending of Indian troops to sub serve US interests in Iraq. The NDA regime even extended berthing facilities to US warships in the Kochi port area, with scant respect to the overwhelming sentiment expressed by the people against the US operations in Iraq and its continued occupation there.

## **SHARON WELCOMED**

With the situation in West Asia hotting up due to the US backed attacks by the Israeli forces against Palestine, the Vajpayee regime was openly hobnobbing with Israeli rulers. Even as genocidal attacks against Palestinian civilians were being carried out daily, the Vajpayee government extended a red carpet welcome to Sharon and shamelessly pitched for defence deals with Israel with the US blessings. Such moves by the NDA government have alienated India from the entire Arab world. NDA government's security advisor Brijesh Mishra and Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani had openly advocated a triangular alliance between India, US and Israel, in the name of fighting terrorism.

The NDA government has been vying with its counterpart in Pakistan to please the Bush administration and secure favours from the US masters. Never before have we witnessed such a continuous stream of senior US officials visiting India, as in the recent past. The spokespersons of the NDA regime have frequently been appealing fervently to the USA to reign in Pakistan to stop cross-border terrorism, unmindful of the resultant harm of internationalising the Kashmir

issue. The Musharraf regime in Pakistan also has been competing with India in this game of wooing the USA. This has only helped the US imperialism. The strategic alliance with the US and the joint Indo-US defence exercises, in all three wings of our armed forces, entered into by Vajpayee government, pose a grave threat to even the security of the country.

When George W. Bush administration in the US has assumed for itself the role of world policeman, vested with the divine right to attack any country it chooses, the slavish attitude shown by the NDA regime is only helping the US imperialists to strengthen their stranglehold on the entire Asian region, South as well as West.

During his recent visit to USA, Prime Minister Vajpayee openly pleaded for further cementing of the strategic alliance with the US imperialists. Both governments expressed identity of views over several international issues facing the world today. The working class and the trade union movement in the country must step up the campaign against imperialist offensives, militarist, economic and ideological, and rouse the patriotic masses of the country to revive their rich tradition of anti-imperialist struggle in the coming days.

### **RESURGENCE OF COMMUNAL VIOLENCE**

Under NDA regime, the country has witnessed a resurgence of the worst communal incendiary violence, riots and lawlessness, inflicting serious damage to the secular fabric of the Indian society. The sangh parivar outfits like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal and others have been on the rampage against the minority communities in several parts of the country. The RSS has been making consistent attempts to spread hatred against the minorities by openly demanding that they must all admit that their forefathers were of Hindu origin. Saffronisation of education through official machinery, by arbitrarily changing text books, distorting and falsifying history to suit the communal designs of the parivar, imposing saraswati vandana during official functions, clandestine penetration of communal elements in the army, bureaucracy and even judiciary are some of the moves brazenly indulged in by them. The Gujarat carnage has gone down as the most despicable communal genocide perpetrated ever

since independence. It was a pre-meditated plan aimed at ethnic cleansing, masterminded by the BJP Chief Minister Narendra Modi, at whose bidding the state administration and police acted in connivance with the saffron brigade. It was simply state sponsored genocide.

The BJP hailed Modi as the role model for their future game plan. In a cruel bid to exploit the horrendous situation for electoral benefit, Modi pitched for early elections, which the Election Commission rightly turned down. The return of Narendra Modi to power after the Gujarat elections further emboldened the forces of aggressive Hindu communalism to seek to replicate 'Gujarat' model in the rest of India. Fortuitously, the verdict of the people in the subsequent elections held for the Himachal Pradesh Assembly put spokes in their wheel, at least for the time being.

The Supreme Court in the Best Bakery case had come out with a very strong indictment of the Vajpayee's prescription of and Narendra Modi's practice of 'raj dharma'; it has further stayed the proceedings in ten other cases, where the Modi regime had only tried to 'glorify' the accused, leaving the victims to the lurch.

The trade union movement must resolutely oppose the communal forces since they deliberately divert the public attention from the real issues of the nation. They seek to divide the people on communal lines to get electoral advantage. This is posing a serious threat to national unity and integrity and efforts must be made to defeat their vicious game in the country. The working class should also keep in mind that minority communalism also strengthens the hands of majority communalism. Their activities are also disrupting the unity of the democratic movement and the struggle against globalisation. The minority communal forces also receive help from imperialist agencies because both majority as well as minority communalism help the overall design of imperialism by complementing each other. It is, therefore, the utmost important task before the TU movement to fight the machinations of both shades of communalism which alone will lead to the preservation of national unity and enable the TU movement to march forward for social progress.

The preparations for the 11th Conference of CITU, scheduled to be held on 9- 13 December 2003 at P Ramamurthi Nagar, Chennai are almost complete. Over 2200 delegates including 385 women representing around 33 lakh members from different industries and sectors - organised and unorganised, public and private - are expected to participate in this Conference. Most of the State Committees have completed their district and State level Conferences. In these, the experiences of CITU in spearheading the fight for the rights of the workers, in the backdrop of the specific politico economic conditions in the particular State, have been reviewed and new leadership has been elected to carry forward the struggles.

The Conference will review the experiences of various State Committees and Industrial Federations in carrying out the decisions of the last Conference at Hyderabad. It will work out strategies and programmes for intensifying the struggles against the neoliberal economic policies of the BJP led NDA Government, which has unleashed an all out attack on the working and living conditions of the working class and to protect the hard won rights of the workers. The Conference will also take decisions for strengthening the unity of the working class and the toiling masses, defeating the communal, casteist, separatist and extremist forces.

### STRUGGLES GALORE

The Tenth Conference of CITU held 3 years ago in Hyderabad observed 'the fast rising discontent and anger against the misrule of the BJP led Government, is expressing itself in various ways - through numerous sectoral struggles all over the country, in all segments of the society and with surging spontaneity. We must take up these challenges and convert them into an opportunity to channelise the spontaneous expression of discontent of the common people into organised country wide mass actions against the anti people and anti national policies.' Efforts were made in

this period after the last Conference to put this into practice. A large number of struggles were unleashed in several sectors, where CITU took the initiative and was in the forefront in mobilising large sections of the workers.

The struggle against the anti worker policies of the BJP led Government gathered momentum with the decision of the 'March to Parliament' by the Workers' Assembly, in which the INTUC also participated. Around 3 lakh workers from all over the country participated in the 'March'. The all India General strike on 21st May 2003 evoked an unprecedented and massive response from the working class. Workers and employees across the length and breadth of the country, rising above the narrow bounds of affiliations joined the strike en masse. In several States workers belonging to the INTUC and BMS affiliated unions participated actively in the strike. Insurance, Banks, defence, pharmaceutical, State and Central Government employees as well as the anganwadi workers and helpers, beedi workers, brick kiln, construction, etc workers in the unorganised sector participated in the strike. In six States, the strike turned into a virtual bandh. Rasta Roko and Rail Roko were organised in many centres all over the country. One of the remarkable features of both the 26th February 'March to Parliament' and the 21st May Strike was the participation of a large number of women. Women workers in many industries in the unorganised sector, particularly the anganwadi workers, not only joined the strike but they were in the forefront in organising the strike. Another notable feature is that in some industrial units where the strength of the sponsoring union was negligible, the workers and the officers joined hands to make the strike a success.

The working class struggles in this period had to face the increasing attacks by the employers as well as the Government, including physical attacks and police repression. Even to protect the existing working conditions, the working class had to launch prolonged and hard struggles. Their

historic 67 days' strike against handing over BALCO to Sterlite inspired the working class throughout the country. Another important anti privatisation struggle, which achieved at least temporary victory, was the struggle of the NALCO workers. All the trade unions in NALCO except the BMS came together and resisted the move to privatise NALCO and physically obstructed the private company to conduct due diligence. The Prime Minister had to assure that NALCO would not be privatised 'for the time being'.

The countrywide strike in Public Sector units on 16th April was a landmark in the history of joint movement in the PSUs. BMS officially participated in the strike while several INTUC affiliated unions and federations participated in the strike though INTUC did not join it.

The anganwadi workers and helpers launched several militant struggles both at the national as well as State levels during this period and forced the Government to implement the rise in their honorarium with retrospective effect. At State level thousands of anganwadi employees in Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Punjab, Maharashtra etc launched militant and successful struggles against handing over the anganwadi centres to the Panchayats, for additional remuneration for additional work, for pension, reinstatement of the illegally terminated employees etc. Mention has to be particularly made of the anganwadi employees in Himachal Pradesh who sat on a continuous relay hunger strike at Shimla for 104 days and forced the State Government to withdraw its infamous Order deducting its share from their honorarium.

The struggle of the workers of the Visakhapatnam Export Process Zone, is also noteworthy. The workers were subjected to severe intimidation including arrests, lathi charge and physical attacks by the police and arbitrary fines, suspensions, dismissals etc by the management. In spite of this, after a prolonged struggle the workers earned the right to form a union, implementation of some statutory benefits and some relief from the harassment by the management.

State Transport workers in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, Coal workers, State Government employees in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Jute workers in Chittivalasa in Andhra Pradesh, Beedi workers,

Plantation workers, Stone quarry workers, Brick kiln workers, and the workers in many other industries throughout the country launched protracted struggles against privatisation, against the attacks on the existing benefits and to protect their rights. But not all these struggles ended in victory for the workers. In several instances, the struggles had to be withdrawn without achieving the demands. The workers and their leaders had to face severe hardships. The experience of these struggles shows that when the broadest unity of the workers could be achieved, and the struggles could directly involve the maximum number of workers, it was generally possible to force the management and the Government to concede at least some of the demands of the workers. Even when nothing could be achieved, the CITU could gain the appreciation and confidence of the workers that it has done everything that was possible. In many 'Save Industry' committees, CITU was the natural choice for being the convenor, although the CITU unions were small.

#### **WORKING WOMEN**

Another important development is the notable increase in the number of women as delegates in the State Conferences and their participation in the rallies on the occasion of the CITU State Conferences. The number of women elected as members and office bearers to the State Committees in the recent State Conferences has also shown some increase. In Assam, women members formed 30% of the State Committee.

In an effort to further improve the work of CITU among working women, a declaration on 'the tasks before the CITU on the problems of working women', emanating from the discussions during the Mumbai conference, will also be deliberated at the CITU Conference in a half day session for eventual adoption and implementation.

The 11th Conference of CITU will take stock of all these experiences and take decisions to broaden the unity of the working class and strengthen united struggles to face the twin challenges imperialist dictated policies of neoliberal globalisation and communalism followed and promoted by the BJP led NDA Government.

# 16TH DEC: COUNTRYWIDE STRIKE IN OIL PSUs

Swadesh Dev Roye

For the first time in the history of the trade union movement in the oil sector in our country, the workers of all the oil PUSs shall go for a day's token strike on the 16th December, 2003 opposing privatisation of any oil PSU in any form. NATIONAL UNITED FORUM Against Privatisation of Oil PSUs held on 16th November 2003 at national convention at the Noonmati Refinery township of Indian Oil Corporation at Guwahati. The convention was attended by around 150 leading representatives drawn from AITUC, CITU, INTUC, AICCTU, Shiv Sena, Maharashtra General Kamgar Union etc besides a big number of independent unions ONGC, IOC, BPCL, HPCL, Oil India, Bongaigaon Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd., Assam, Numaligarh Refinery Ltd, Assam, Kochi Refinery Ltd. IOBL, IBP, Balmer Lawrie etc. The earlier convention had noted that the mad drive for privatisation carried out by the Government is not guided by financial or operational prudence. Therefore, it would be sheer self-deception to believe that the NDA Government will change its policy of privatization or even temporarily halt it because of the Supreme Court judgment. On the contrary the onslaught of privatisation would be extended to other oil PSUs like ONGC, IOC, Oil India etc. The move of the Government to privatise the IOC has vindicated

this apprehension.

The presidium which conducted the convention included Swadesh Dev Roye (CITU), G.L.Dhar (AITUC), Raju Routh, (Hind Kishan Kargar Sena), Ramdas Khoese (INTUC), Sankar Khiani (Maharashtra Kamgar Union) and Shivaji Patil, (BPCL Refinery Employees' Union). The main Declaration of the convention proposing the strike action was moved by Swadesh Dev Roye, National Secretary, CITU. Gurudas Das Gupta, General Secretary, AITUC addressed supporting the call.

The National United Forum has been forewarning since long that the main target of the privatisation attack on the oil PSUs is the marketing network of the public sector oil companies in our country. This has been confirmed by the decision of the Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment of the Government to privatise IOC by splitting it up and disposing off a major part of its retail network. The critical international situation in the oil and petroleum sector noted by ILO as: "Owing to surplus production capacity, the refinery utilisation rate has been low. The world average utilisation rate in 1999 was 83.2 per cent, slightly down from 83.6 per cent in 1998. The highest rate was in the Middle East with 97.2 per cent; the lowest in the former USSR with 45.2 per cent." At the initial stage the

Government deliberately created an impression as if the profit making PUSs shall not be privatised. Even while the Government intensified its move to privatise HPCL and BPCL they have been making statements that IOC, ONGC and GAIL shall not be privatised. Now the NDA Government has turned the privatisation gun at the IOC and ONGC.

The IOC Board of Directors have submitted to the Oil and Petroleum Minister that, "mega American depository receipts or American depository shares of 20% of IOC equity can be launched to garner Rs,9,600 core." The subsequent development is that Ram Naik has proposed to reduce some equity of IOC or ONGC or GAIL. In the meantime the Government has announced their resolve to extract huge amount from the oil PSUs in the name of interim dividend to meet the fiscal deficit. In such a situation the convention unanimously concluded that there is no room to have any illusion that by off loading a part of the equity of IOC and ONGC, conclusive privatisation of these oil PSUs can be avoided even temporarily. Privatisation of oil PSUs in any form must be fought tooth and nail.

The convention noted that the heroic three-day strike by the workers of HPCL, BPCL & CRL in March, 2003 had galvanised the initial initiative for building up a countrywide resistance

struggle. Now it is high time to leap forward the anti-privatisation struggle jointly throughout the country covering the entire oil sector and in all the oil PSUs. The Guwahati convention has unanimously adopted the following programmes of action:

1. Submission of strike notice with massive joint demonstrations in all the oil centers/refineries/installations/offices throughout the country on 2nd December 2003, the opening day of the forthcoming

winter session of Parliament. At New Delhi massive demonstration at the Jantar Mantar Park on 2nd December, 2003.

2. ONE DAY (24 HOUR) TOKEN STRIKE ON 16TH DECEMBER 2003 IN ALL THE OIL PSUs THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

3. If the Government continues its exercise for privatization of Oil PSUs, the workers will be compelled to go for indefinite strike.

4. Any move to introduce

Bill in Parliament for privatizing BPCL and HPCL will be responded to by immediate militant struggles including strike action.

5. The next broad-based meeting of the National United Forum at Chennai.

CITU called upon the oil workers irrespective of affiliation to make the countrywide strike in oil sector a massive success while calling upon the working class in general to stand in solidarity to the striking oil sector workers.

### Against Ban on Right to Strike

## GOVT EMPLOYEES TO STRIKE ON FEBRUARY 11

The Joint meeting of the Secretariats of All India State Govt Employees Federation and Confederation of Central Govt Employees & Workers held on 20th November 2003 at New Delhi called upon the employees of both state and central govt offices and depts. to go for countrywide strike on 11th February 2004 to protest against the Supreme Court judgment banning the right to strike and also against the victimization of thousands of state Govt employees and teachers in Tamilnadu by the Jayalalitha Govt.

The statement released to press jointly by both the organization noted that "The joint meeting...unanimously resolved for a countrywide united strike on 11-02-2004 by the Central and State Govt employees, State Public Sector employees and teachers with a view to emphatically asserting the right to strike. Following the strike of Tamilnadu Govt employees and teachers from 2nd July 2003, against drastic cut in pensionary benefits etc., the Tamilnadu State Govt let loose barbaric repression on striking employees and teachers, arbitrarily dismissed several thousands of strikers. It was followed up by the Supreme Court infamous ruling denying the right to strike to the Govt employees and virtually the entire working class although the right is recognized internationally and the ILO has emphatically asserted the right to strike by Govt employees. But most unfortunately, the Govt of India has not yet ratified the relevant ILO convention no 87, 89 and 151."

The joint statement also noted that "Most unfortunately the Tamilnadu Govt has, of late, confirmed the dismissal of more than 600 employees and severely punished several hundred others, while 1,70,000 employees and teachers already dismissed have been allowed to resume duties after an ignominious undertaking forced on them." The meeting also demanded reinstatement of all dismissed employees at Tamilnadu and withdrawal of all victimization and punitive measures and urged upon both the Central and State Govts to stop retrenchment, privatization, downsizing and reduction of pension and other benefits of the employees.

It was decided that 8th January 2004 will be observed as Joint Strike Notice Day by holding joint rallies all over the country.

The Joint meeting of the State and Central Govt employees' organizations also appealed to all central trade unions, Financial sector and other public sector trade unions to join the Strike on 11th February 2004 for asserting the Right to Strike so that the strike becomes total and massive.

# THE WORLD ECONOMY TODAY

E.BALANANDAN

The world capitalist economy presents a gloomy scenario. The growth rate in the advanced economies is at low ebb. Growing Budget deficits, trade imbalances, debt burdens besides deflationary virus are haunting the developed economies. The United Nations Economic and Social Survey 2003 speaks of a persistence of a slow down in investment trade growth and rising unemployment. The Bank of International Settlements, in its annual report for 2003, observes that during the past year, "economic disappointments, interrelated developments in the geopolitical, economic and financial spheres held back growth and led to great uncertainty about the future." It also said that "the weakening of the dollar may set off fundamental changes in the global economy."

The US economic growth last year was 2.5% but

in the first half of this year it went down to 1.5%. The latest prediction for 2003 is 2.8% might be due to the interest rates reduction of last June. The US budget was in surplus of \$281 billion in 2000. In the current fiscal year there is a deficit of \$401 billion. The forecast for the next year is a deficit of \$540 Billion, which is 5% of the GDP.

Germany's GDP rose by 0.9% at an annual rate in the third quarter of 2003 while France's is 1.6%. Euro- area as a whole was expected to grow by 1.5% in 2003 however the latest forecasts put it only 0.4%. While the unemployment rate in Germany is 10.7% in France at 9.3%.

The above small description shows that the mighty US economy and the strong economies of the world are facing economic slow down and crisis. Juan Somavia, the Director General of ILO observed in the 91st ILO full assembly held on 3-

19 June, 2003 at Geneva. "The persistence of poverty is a moral indictment of our times. While there are some signs of progress, the fact remains: never have we seen so much wealth while so many continue to live in abject poverty."

## WORK DIVIDEND

"Poverty is a complex, deep-seated, pervasive reality. Virtually half the world lives on less than US\$2 a day. More than 1 billion people struggle on \$1 a day or less. And an even greater challenge lies beyond what statistics can measure - poverty breeds a growing sense of powerlessness and indignity, of being unable to think, plan or dream beyond the daily struggle to survive." That is the fate of more than 300 crores of people. He further added "To be sure, poverty is a global phenomenon that occurs in

## MID-TERM ECONOMIC REVIEW: MISPLACED OPTIMISM

The row over the Finance Ministry's mid-year economic review...has somewhat obscured the real issue at hand. Do the quarterly numbers on the state of the Indian Economy bear out Finance Minister's unprecedented optimism? Is India really shining? The answer, if one looks beyond the short term horizon, is not so clear....the puzzle about the depth and extent of our economic recovery remains unresolved. The long term trends paint a picture that is ....hardly spectacular....Even in agriculture, the rebound is relative rather than absolute. Despite 8 per cent projected growth this year, farm production will not exceed peak levels reached in 2001. What more, with public investment in agriculture drying up over the last decade, the situation is unlikely to change for the better in the foreseeable future.

The same is the case with industrial production. While Indian industry has, on the whole, done better this year than the last, the improvement is modest-from 5.8 per cent to 6.5 per cent. Compare this to blistering 18 per cent growth notched by Pakistan, and one gets a fair idea of just how well we are doing.

(Editorial, The Times of India, 19-11-2003)

every society. No nation is immune. In 20 industrialized countries, for example, over 10 per cent of the population, on average, was living below the poverty line in the mid-1990s."

The fact shows that the developing countries and the less developed countries the poverty ratio is well beyond 50 % to 80% while the corporate world was amassing huge wealth. This is the actual result of the world capitalist economy under the imperialist led globalization. It has helped the concentration of wealth in developed countries especially USA. The finance capital has been used by US monopolies for short term investment for earning quick profits putting many countries in serious crisis. The US share of world industrial production rose from 23% in 1990 to 28% in 2001, while the share of weaker nations has been dwindled. This shows the fact that the capitalist globalisation has not globalised production and prosperity. On the contrary, it has spread globalisation of "misery, poverty, hunger, disease, inequality and destruction."

The tall claims made by the captains of capitalism at the beginning of 1990s that "they are out to build a new world order, a crisis free capitalist society using the modern technological (IT) revolution" is thus exploded "within a very short span of time". The world capitalism today is facing a serious crisis contributing indescribable miseries for large majority of the world population. The notion "Crisis free capitalism" is a pipe dream.

#### **'JOB KILLING' MODEL!**

The "jobless growth" model of capitalism is now changing as "Job killing". In order to keep the profits high in every industry number of jobs is being reduced by various methods including the use of new technologies. Downsizing, outsourcing and Shifting of industries to low wage areas, reduction of welfare amenities, besides the attempt for direct wage reduction etc are becoming the order of the day. Naturally, this results in increasing working class

resistance every where.

The unemployment rate throughout the world are on the increase and reaching unbearable levels which exactly reflect in the official figures even though it is also high. In the case of America 3 million private sector jobs were lost in the last two years. Long term unemployment has been tripled which is the highest since 1994.

We have seen in Europe nationwide and industry wide strike action by industrial and service sector employees. This has been depicted by capitalist press the biggest after 1995 and in the case of Austria after the Second World War.

In America too working class actions are on the increase. The attempt to terminate overtime pay for 8 million workers attracted big protest. All the trade unions in one voice joined this action. As per the existing law the working week is 40 hours. On average they work 50 hours. Overtime payment rate is 1 ½ times and therefore the cut will result in a huge reduction in their income. The American workers are also opposing restructuring of ailing industries demanding job protection.

In other parts of the world too the working class is moving against the attacks on their rights and privileges in the name of economising production

### **EXTRAVAGANT PREDICTIONS!**

...The official assessment of the performance of the Indian economy in 2003-04 does not however completely avoid making unrealistic forecasts. The Reserve Bank of India's perspective, issued a fortnight ago, remains more sober and realistic view of short term outlook for the economy...The question is whether the overall recovery will be substantial or modest. The trends in the first half of the year were of a modest acceleration in output... The mid-term review errs in not paying more attention to how the economy performed between April and September 2003....

The flow of bank funds to commercial sector has increased more slowly so far this year than in 2002-03, the core infrastructure sectors are showing a slower growth, exports are rising at half the rate of last year and the pick-up in industrial production has been modest. The mid term review expects a substantial acceleration in industrial activity....But as of now, there is little concrete evidence of such a development...

*(Editorial, The Hindu, 19-11-2003)*

(A. K. PADMANABHAN, Secretary, CITU attended the Asian Regional Trade Union Conference held at Seoul, on the invitation of Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU). Here is a report by him. H. Mahadevan, AITUC also attended the event. -Editor)

## IN SOLIDARITY WITH SOUTH KOREAN WORKERS

**S**outh Korea, 'the land of morning calm', is in turmoil. While the working people are on the street on their demands, the mass of the people are agitating against the decision of the Government to send armed forces to Iraq.

It was in these circumstances that the Asian Regional Trade Union Conference to discuss various aspects of Imperialist Globalisation was held at Seoul from 5th to 7th November.

KCTU, the leading organisation of South Korean workers organised the Seminar.

Various Trade unions from India, Japan, Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Hong Kong and also South Africa participated in the Conference, along with the representatives of KCTU. Representatives of SIGTUR were also present.

The Conference was inaugurated by the President of KCTU Don Byunug Ho on 5th Morning.

The first session of the Conference was on 'Neo-Liberal Globalisation and the future of Trade union movement'. Representatives of KCTU and from Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand and Japan presented papers.

This was followed by a discussion in which many of the delegates participated.

The afternoon session was on 'American Hegemony, Asia and challenges of Trade Unions'. Five papers were presented in this session also. CITU representative submitted a paper on 'Anti-War struggles and tasks of Trade union movement with a focus on the case of India'.

A third session was held after Dinner, on 'Women and migrant workers in Asia and trade union response'. Four papers were presented in this session.

On the second day, two commissions were formed to discuss 'Trans National Corporations, Basic Labour Rights and Responses of Trade Unions' and on 'Public sector workers and Basic Labour Rights'. In the first session, experiences of various countries regarding the TNCs were shared. CITU

representative was one among the four who presented their submissions for discussion. The afternoon session in the commission were on 'Privatisation, Liberalisation and trade union Responses' and on 'Neo-Liberalism and the casualisation, informalisation and the poverty of workers.

Delegates from India detailed Indian experiences in their interventions.

### SIT IN SOLIDARITY

While the conference was going on, Korean workers, as part of their National Programme of Action, had conducted 4 hours strike all over the country on 6th November. The striking workers held massive demonstrations in various places including Seoul. Policemen had severely attacked the workers during these demonstrations.

The participants in the conference, decided to visit the Sit-in Centre in Seoul, in front of the Central Railway Station to express solidarity with the workers. These sit-in programmes were being held from 28th October, in various parts of the country, against the attacks on the workers.

### SEVERE ATTACKS

The situation in South Korea is very serious as the Government and employers have stepped up their offensive.

Casualisation and contractualisation has increased. The disparities between these so called irregular workers and Regular workers are increasing. More than 60% of the work force are considered as irregulars and are paid less than 50% wages.

Another offensive is that of confiscating wages and properties for participating in 'illegal strikes'. 46 unions and their leadership have been served with court orders for provisional seizure of wages and for seeking compensation for damages amounting to over 118 million U.S. Dollars. Public sector managements are also following the same line of offensive.

Five worker leaders have committed suicides,

protesting against these anti-worker policies during this year. Three of these suicides were in the month of October 2003. Another worker who tried to immolate himself on 23rd October is in a very serious condition.

It was in these circumstances, KCTU had charted out the National Programme of action with sit-ins from 28th Oct, 4 hour strike and demonstrations on 6th November, massive Rally on 9th and a General Strike on 12th November.

As the news of police attack on demonstrators came, Foreign Delegates in the conference, addressed a press conference on 7th morning and condemned the Police - repression and anti-labour policies of the South Korean Government. The delegates also met the family members of a martyr, who had immolated himself and expressed condolences.

### **SOLIDARITY NETWORK**

The session on 7th afternoon was devoted to discuss about future co-ordination among Asian Trade unions.

The need for exchange of opinions and information among Asian trade unions was accepted by everybody. A joint declaration, explaining the general situation, the repression on democratic trade unions and the attacks of

TNCs was finalised.

The declaration called for strengthening the joint response of trade unions to the present situation. It was decided to strengthen networking; to publish a Mayday joint declaration for the year 2004; to establish a working group for systematic response to TNCs and to organise an Asian Day of action against war.

### **NATIONAL RALLY**

The National rally on 9th November in Seoul was massive. The march which began after a public meeting was stopped by policemen. All the foreign delegates also participated in the Rally and March.

Policemen attacked the workers in the march and clashes erupted in various parts of the city. More than 100 workers were injured and 110 were arrested.

The General Strike on 12th November was successful. KCTU has decided to continue the struggle with strikes and Rallies. The more the attacks by the Government and employers, the necessity of united actions are also felt more.

The Asian Regional trade union conference is a step forward in co-ordinating activities at Regional level, in the struggle against Globalisation and militarism.

## **MASSIVE STRIKE PARALYSES ITALY**

Planes idled on tarmacs, trains stopped running and much of Italy slipped into a state of temporary paralysis today as a result of a massive strike to protest a proposed increase in the retirement age. Hundreds of thousands of workers heeded the call of the country's three largest labour unions and stayed away from work, and many took part in loud demonstrations that represented more than a single day's sound and fury.

Italy, France and Germany have all contemplated, plotted or instituted cutbacks in state pension programs. Their leaders have said that the global economic slowdown, fewer children and more old people are forcing them to do so. Late last month, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy said that the current Italian pension system "is not a sustainable situation."

Many Italians now retire with full benefits from the state before they turn 60. If they are 57 or younger, they can retire after paying into the state pension system for 37 years. If they are over 57, they can retire after 35 years of contributions.

Berlusconi has proposed increasing that period to 40 years for men under 65 and women under 60, a requirement that would take effect in 2008. The Italian Parliament has not yet voted on the measure. Berlusconi's first stint as prime minister, in 1994, ended after just seven months, in part because of disenchantment over his desire to meddle with the state pension system. He is nonetheless tackling the issue again, even though it entails bringing Italians a kind of bad news that contrasts starkly with his cheery campaign promises two and a half years ago. Italians elected him to do for their economy what he did for his business empire - make it bigger and richer - but that has not happened.

*(Report courtesy: FRANK BRUNI from OME, Oct. 24)*

### ORISSA STATE CITU CONFERENCE

The State conference of CITU in Orissa was held on 1st and 2nd November 2003 at Open Theatre Ground of Talcher Thermal Power Plant (NTPC). The conference began with the mass rally on 1st November at the South Balanda Coal Field which was addressed by M K Pandhe, General Secretary CITU, S Dev Roye, Secretary CITU, Janardan Pati, State Secretary of CPI(M), Bishnu Mahanty, General Secretary, Orissa State CITU, Sivaji Patnaik, Vice President, State CITU etc.

The delegates session after the rally was attended by 271 delegates and 9 observers representing from the industries, collieries, mines and other sectors. The session was inaugurated by M K Pandhe who called upon the working class in the state to heighten the united struggle against

the policies of globalisation. Recalling the heroic anti-privatisation struggle on NALCO issue, Pandhe stressed upon the urgent need for rallying the people from all walks of life in the united movement against the economic policies of NDA Govt which warrants greater organizational consolidation and initiative of CITU. Pandhe called upon to prepare for countrywide strike action in coming February against the Supreme Court Judgment banning right to strike.

General Secretary's report detailing the activities of last three years and outlining the future organizational and movemental task was placed by Bishnu Mahanty. 68 delegates took part in deliberation on the report. Speakers self critically reviewed the activities and functioning of the organizational committees at

different levels and suggested measures for improvement in organization. The speakers also stressed upon more intensive campaign about the policies of imperialist globalisation and divisive ploy of communal casteist forces. They have also shared their experience about the disastrous fall out of privatization of electricity in the state and reckless downsizing going on in every sector including the Govt deptts. The demand was raised for conversion of the Fertiliser plant at Talcher into a thermal power plant and the need for building up a statewide struggle on this issue. The conference elected a 50 member State Committee, a 15 member Secretariat with Bishnu Mahanty as General Secretary, Lambodar Nayak as President and Dushmanta Das as treasurer.

*(Report from Satyanand Behara)*

### HARYANA STATE CONFERENCE

The Haryana state conference of CITU was held on 15-16 November 2003 at Guragaon industrial town. The conference began with five thousand strong mass rally at Goshala Maidan on 15th November morning. S N Solanki, President of State CITU presided over the mass rally. The rally was addressed by Mehboob Zahedi, MP and Joint Secretary of All India Kisan Sabha, Tapan Sen,

Secretary, CITU, Satvir Singh General Secretary, Haryana State CITU, R C Jagga, leader of Sarb Karmachari Sangh, Rajkumari of Haryana State Janabadi Mahila Samity, Pravat Singh and Raj Singh both Secretariat member of Haryana State CITU besides others. The rally was attended by workers from both unorganised sectors and organized sector industries. The participation of the

women workers in the rally particularly from the unorganised sector was notable.

The delegate session commenced after the rally at BR Ambedkar Bhawan. 178 delegates attended the conference representing different industries and occupations in the State. The women delegation mainly representing the Anganwadi workers movement was sizable.

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The conference was inaugurated by Tapan Sen, Secretary, CITU. In his inaugural address Tapan Sen called upon the delegates to appreciate the urgent need for heightening and expanding the organizational capacity in the State to meet the forthcoming challenges before the movement. He has drawn attention to the desperate move of the ruling polity to strip the working people of all their rights on the one hand and create disruption among the toiling people on the other through communal and casteist ploy to weaken the rising resistance against the disastrous economic policies which is ruining the economy and the

mass of the people. Satvir Singh, General Secretary placed the Report on activities and organizational situation along with the movemental perspective in the state. The Report also reviewed the struggles conducted during last three years and the organizational reflections. Satvir Pakashma, Treasurer placed the statement of Accounts. 25 delegates took part in the deliberation on the Report and made various constructive suggestions. The Conference adopted a number of resolutions against attack on labour rights, on food security, against repressive measures and fabricated cases against the trade union movement

etc. The Conference also denounced the decision of the State Govt to retrench the master roll employees in the forest deptt and called upon the all the affiliated unions to join in solidarity to the struggles led by Ban-bibhag mazdoor union. The conference decided to hold statewide demonstration before the office of the forest deptts in all the district headquarters on 23rd December. The conference elected a 26 member State Committee with Pravat Singh as President, Satvir Singh as General Secretary and Satvir Pakashma as treasurer.

*(Report from Satvir Singh)*

### TRIPURA STATE CONFERENCE

The Tripura State Conference held on 5-7 November 2003 at Agartala commenced with a massive 30 thousand strong rally at Stable Ground on 5th November. The mass rally was addressed by M K Pandhe, General Secretary CITU, Manik Sarkar, Chief Minister of Tripura, Baidyanath Mazumder and Manik Dey, the President and the General Secretary of the State CITU.

M K Pandhe, congratulated the CITU and the working class of Tripura for the organisational advance made in the face of tremendous disturbance and terror by anti-national forces of extremist insurgents. Pandhe also lauded the frontline role of the trade union movement in the state in the

countrywide struggle.

Manik Sarkar, Chief Minister, Tripura greeted the working class of Tripura for their heroic role in defending the left front govt in the state against all odds and their cooperation to the developmental efforts of the govt despite tremendous problems of insurgency and non-cooperation of the central govt. Khagen Das MP, Chairman of the Reception Committee also addressed the delegate session.

Manik Dey placed the General Secretary's report detailing the activities of last three years and the achievements with self critical analysis of the organizational situation outlining the future task. The report highlighted substantial

advance in the organization and membership achieved by CITU despite disturbance and killings by the extremist forces while cautioning against all sorts of complacency in view of the forthcoming challenges before the trade union and democratic movement. The report also outlined the tasks before the movement. The conference was attended by 425 delegates, 12 observers and 41 fraternal delegates. 28 delegates took part in the discussion. The conference elected a 74 member state committee and 24 member secretariat with Manik Dey as President and Pijush Nag as General Secretary. Baidyanath Majumder delivered the concluding address.

*(Report from Pijush Nag)*

### ASSAM STATE CONFERENCE

**E**ighth Assam State Conference of CITU was held on 13-15 November 2003 at Guwahati. A huge mass rally at the Judges Court Maidan on 13th November marked the beginning of the conference. The participation of a large number of women workers mostly from the tea gardens and anganwadi workers was notable in the mass rally. The mass meeting was addressed by MD Amin, Vice President of CITU and Labour Minister, Govt of West Bengal, Swadesh Dev Roye and K Hemalata, both Secretaries of CITU, Hemen Das, Secretary, Assam State CPI(M), Deben Bhattacharya, General Secretary of State CITU besides others. Amal Ghosh Dastidar, President, State CITU presided over the mass rally. After the rally a huge procession of workers moved around the city to converge in the conference venue.

In the delegate session of the conference following the rally, MD Amin delivered the inaugural address. Report was placed by State General Secretary, Deben

Bhattacharya, detailing the review of activities and the organizational situation during last three years. Samir Das, Treasurer placed the statement of accounts. The General Secretary's report while dwelling on the industrial scenario in the state, impact of the globalisation and the anti-people policies of the state and central govt and the movemental activities, called upon the working class to gear up the organization and strengthen the united struggle.

Total 267 delegates representing 58726 members of CITU in the state attended the conference. Total number of women delegates was 63. 51 delegates took part in deliberation on the report and made various concrete suggestions on the movemental strategies and the organizational initiative. K Hemalata, Secretary CITU addressed the delegate session. Swadesh Dev Roye, Secretary CITU delivered the concluding address in the conference. The conference adopted a number of resolutions on right to strike, plight of the plantation workers, anganwadi workers' struggle,

opposing privatization of oil sectors and also condemning divisive violence in some parts of Bihar and Assam.

The conference unanimously elected 44 member state committee with Asit Dutta as President and Deben Bhattacharya as General Secretary.

Along with the conference cultural programmes were organized. On 15th November 2003, a seminar on "Industrialisation in Assam and Problems of Unemployment in the context of Globalisation" was held in Lakhi Ram Barua Sadan which was addressed by Swadesh Dev Roye and Amal Ghosh Dastidar. The seminar was conducted by Achyut Deka, a senior trade union leader in the state. On the occasion of the conference an All Assam Essay Competition was organized by the state committee on 1) dangers of communalism in the present education system and 2) commercialization of higher education under globalisation. The prizes to the winning candidates were distributed in the seminar.

*(Report from Deben Bhattacharya)*

### MAHARASHTRA CITU CONFERENCE

**T**he 3-day Maharashtra State Conference of CITU was held on 8-10 November 2003 at Nagpur. The conference started with a colourful procession with red flags and banner, marching

through the main thoroughfares of the Nagpur city, raising anti-communal and anti-government slogans converging into a 5000 strong mass rally at the Hindi High School Maidan in the city. A large

number of women workers also participated in the procession.

The rally was presided by Prabhakar Sanzgiri, State CITU President. M K Pandhe, General Secretary CITU was the main

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speaker. In his speech he exposed the anti-people policies of the Vajpayee government and put forward CITU line on all vital issues that the country is facing. His speech was widely published in the local media.

Prior to the conference the Nagpur City, known as Orange City, was colorfully decorated with arches, red flags, banners and wall posters with CITU demands. The slogans inscribed in the wall posters and banners gave inspiration to fight back the growing danger of communalism, to build up working class unity, and depicted the increasing number of closures and sickness in industries and demanded a halt to privatization of public sector undertakings.

The conference venue was Adhyapak Bhawan which is in the heart of the city. The venue was named after "Com. Bindhya Prasad Kashyap Nagar." 290 delegates comprising

representatives from different industries covering all districts of Maharashtra participated in the conference. Among the participating delegates 55 were women. The representatives from INTUC, HMS AITUC, NRMU, BEFI, and All India Kisan Sabha greeted the conference.

The conference adopted 12 resolutions on significant issues of national and international importance. However the main item for discussion in the delegates' session was the report of the general secretary placed by K L Bajaj. In his report Bajaj dealt the major issues confronting the working class on which the CITU organized several agitations independently as well as on the struggles conducted jointly with other trade union organizations in Maharashtra and at national level. Bajaj placed 12 points programme for future actions and struggles. 56 delegates took part in the

discussion, 9 of them were women. K R Raghu, State Treasurer, placed the statement of accounts. The main resolutions passed in the conference were on right to strike and the Supreme Court judgement on Tami Nadu Govt employees strike, against separation of Vidarbha from Samyukta Maharashtra, on problems of the unorganized labour, on danger of communalism, etc.

On the concluding day, the conference elected 56 members state General Council with Prabhakar Sanzgiri as President, K L Bajaj as General Secretary and K R Raghu as Treasurer.

The conference ended with a clarion call to the working class to fight against the anti-working class and reactionary policies of the BJP-led Vajpayee government and Congress led State government in Maharashtra.

*(Report from P R Krishnan)*

## WEST BENGAL STATE CITU CONFERENCE

**T**he Working class cannot surrender their right to strike and struggle which was earned through grim struggle and immense sacrifice, they will not succumb to any prohibition, wherever from, that may come, on the exercise of those rights, and they must combat such onslaught by asserting those rights more forcefully throughout the country-stated Comrade Jyoti Basu, Vice President CITU and the towering leader of the peoples' movement

in the country while inaugurating the eighth conference of West Bengal State CITU held at Mahajati Sadan, Kolkata on 20-23 November 2003.

The conference venue was named "Niren Ghosh Nagar" and the dais was named as "Naren Sen Manch" after the names of two outstanding leaders of the working class movement in the State, who passed away during the intervening period. The conference began with the hoisting of red flag by Haridas

Malakar, Vice President, West Bengal State CITU. The inaugural session was presided over by Md Amin, Vice President, CITU and labour Minister, Govt of West Bengal. On the occasion of the conference, red flag was hoisted in the factories and establishments at Kolkata by the concerned unions on 20th November and the cassetted inaugural speech by Jyoti Basu was played through the sound system.

A presidium consisting of Haridas

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Mlakar, Md Amin, Rajdeo Goala, Manik Sanyal, Subhas Chakraborty, Ananda Pathak, Dilip Mazumder, Shantimoy Bhattacharya and Jagadish Das conducted the four day long conference.

The post inaugural session began with the placement of the General Secretary's report by Chittabrata Majumdar. Speaking on the occasion Comrade Majumdar said that the struggles of the working class against the onslaught of the imperialist globalisation is maligned by the vested interests with distorted interpretation of so called 'millitancy' of CITU in West Bengal, which is supposedly vitiating the climate for industrialisation. He said if the investors are not violating the labour laws why should they be

afraid of? But if they want to turn the workers into bonded labour then CITU will definitely raise its voice of protest in support of the working class. He also pointed out that often negotiated settlements are cited to slander CITU as anti-workers. Comrade Majumdar, while repudiating this dubious slender campaign has cautioned the working class not to fall a prey to such malicious campaign and carry forward the fight to protect the right to collective bargaining and right to strike. Comrade M.K.Pandhe was present in the conference for all the four days and addressed the delegates and also delivered the concluding speech. He dealt with the forthcoming challenges before the trade union movement in the country and the importance of the

11th conference of CITU slated to be held in Chennai on 9-13 December, 2003. He reminded the delegates that for strengthening the united movement of the working class in the country, the CITU unions in West Bengal must continue to play important role.

The conference was attended by around 1300 delegates and 53 participated in the deliberations. On six different subjects commission discussions were conducted and 157 delegates took part in the commission discussion. While Comrades Shyamal Chakraborty and Kali Ghose were elected as President and General Secretary respectively, the conference elected 457 State Council and 191 Working Committee Members, besides 28 Office Bearers.

### Against SC ban on right to strike

## JOINT TRADE UNION CONVENTION IN HARYANA

The Haryana State joint trade union convention held at Karnal on, November 9, 2003, announced the resolve to defend the right to strike of the workers through countrywide strike action in the face of the ban imposed by the Supreme Court.

The convention was attended by hundreds of workers and the leadership of CITU, AITUC, HMS, UTUC-LS, and also the employees federations like AIBEA, BEFI, AIEA, Sarb-Karmachari Sangh, Hariyana Karmachari Mahasangh and others. Notable is that the

organizations of peasants and agricultural workers like All India Kisan Sabha also took part in the convention.

The Convention was conducted by a presidium consisting of SN Solanki, President, Haryana State CITU, Shri Nagesh (HMS), Hariprakash (UTUC-LS), Dara Singh (Karmachari Mahasangh), Sohanlal(SKS), SK Gupta (AIBEA), Zille Singh (NZIEA), Omprakash (BEFI) and others. The declaration placed in the convention endorsed the declaration passed by the National Trade Union Convention on right

to strike held on 26th September 2003. The speakers from various participating organization placed in the same voice that the attack on the right to strike of the workers is the part of the onslaught unleashed by the policy of neoliberal globalisation on the democracy itself. The speakers also stressed upon the urgent need for deciding the programme of countrywide strike action at the earliest since this inalienable right of the working class can be defended by asserting the same right through countrywide strike action. Among those who addressed the convention were

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Satvir Singh, General Secretary, Haryana State CITU, Umesh Gupta (HMS), Darshan Singh

(AITUC), Eswar Singh Rath (UTUC-LS), ML Sehgal (Karmachari Mahasangh), N P

Munjal (AIBEA), Azad Singh Malik (SKS). Satpal Singh (Kisan Sabha) etc.

### STATE LEVEL WORKSHOP ON ORGANISATION IN BIHAR

**A**t the initiative of Bihar State Committee of CITU, THE state level workshop on organization was held at Begusarai on 8-9 November 2003. Fifty leading comrades from the State Committee, district committees and state level unions numbering around fifty took part in the workshop.

The programme was presided over by Chandi Prasad, President Bihar State CITU. Kanai Bannerjee, Secretary, CITU delivered the inaugural address and guided the workshop. In his inaugural address, Kanai Bannerjee stressed upon the urgent need for improving the organization of CITU for the working class movement to be able to meet the tremendous challenge before it. A proper appreciation of the goal of CITU and the ideological content therein is the precondition for unleashing the

much required initiative for all round improvement and expansion of the CITU organization, Bannerjee stated. He referred to the organizational tasks laid down in the Bhubaneswar document on organization and subsequent task resolutions on the same in line of which organizational initiative has to be taken for improvement, expansion and consolidation.

Arun Kumar Mishra, General Secretary of Bihar State CITU placed before the workshop session a detailed report on the organizational profile of CITU in Bihar in the background of general industrial situation in the state. The report highlighted the dominance of unorganised sector occupations in the Bihar economy along with a small segment of organized industries. The CITU is active in both the sectors in the state and must plan its activities to expand

the organization effectively in the vast unorganised sector, and consolidate in a few organized sector units, the report emphasized.

All the participants representing various sectors took active part in the deliberation conveying their experience and understanding on the overall situation and priorities and making useful suggestions about the organizational action plan. The workshop decided to step up activities in the electricity, transport, Khehgaon unit of NTPC for consolidating the organization. In the unorganised sector, the occupations in beedi, construction, private transport and Anganwadi were identified as priorities before the state committee. Chandi Prasad while delivering his presidential address conveyed thanks to comrades and workers of Begusarai.

### KSRTC EMPLOYEES STRIKE

**A** 24-hour token strike was observed on 12th November, 2003 by the state road transport employees of Kerala State Road Transport Corporation. The strike was total to bring the entire fleet of KSRTC to a grinding halt. The entire workers went on strike and all KSRTC buses were off the

road. CITU, AITUC, INTUC, BMS and other independent unions participated in the strike. The independent union affiliated to Kerala Congress (B), whose nominee is the Road Transport Minister, also called for the strike. The strike was called in protest against the Congress-led United

Front Government's move to privatize the nationalized routes and downsizing and closing 30 depots throughout the State paving way for privatization. Some of the depots were opened and strengthened at the time of Left Front Government rule in Kerala by providing financial assistance

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from MLA, MP fund and fund from local bodies.

Release of 21% DA to employees, bus body building utilizing the workshop facilities, regularization of employment of the PSC recruits and dependents of the deceased workers dying in harness and lifting of the ban on employment and promotion were the other main demands of the workers. The workers recruited through PSC are being paid empanelled daily wages by the corporation disobeying the orders

of Hon'ble High Court of Kerala upon a petition filed by the CITU.

The total permanent employees and daily wages employees also participated in the strike.

Prior to the strike statewide campaign was conducted by Joint Action Council (JAC) of CITU, AITUC, BMS and other independent unions. K K Divakaran, General Secretary, KSRTEA(CITU) and Convenor of JAC, warned the government of further indefinite strike action in the coming days if the

government did not settle the issue. The agitated employees took out protest marches in all districts. In Thiruvananthapuram the march was inaugurated by P K Gurudasan, General Secretary, Kerala State Committee of CITU. K K Divakaran also spoke on the occasion.

Meanwhile 'Save STU Day' was observed in all States by road transport workers as per decision of the national convention of All India Road Transport Workers Federation, which was held at Chennai on 3rd September, 2003.

### APSRTC STAFF & WORKERS HOLDS CONVENTION

As per call given by All India Road Transport Workers Federation to observe 'Save STU Day,' APSRTC Staff & Workers Federation organized a well attended State convention on 7.11.03 in Hyderabad. The convention was inaugurated by R P Singh, IPS, Commissioner of Police, Hyderabad.

In his opening address R P Singh emphasized the need to strengthen the public transport system in India. He said that the tax on STU buses be reduced as they are operating with service motto. The private operator will never operate buses on loss making routes. He suggested that the workers and the management together work hard to safeguard the organization.

Y Satyanarayan, chair Professor, Administration Staff College of India, while speaking on the

occasion said that tax on APSRTC buses has to be reduced drastically. He has submitted a proposal to the State govt in this matter which if accepted, will benefit the APSRTC to the tune of Rs 140 crore per annum by way of reduction in taxes. He attributed the high fare structure in APSRTC is one of the reasons for the fall of the occupancy ratio. He said that according to the survey conducted by the McKinsey company there were 38 buses per one lakh population in the State, in the year 1997 as against world average of 125.

M A Gaffoor, vice president of CITU, AP State, criticised the State government policies which resulted in losses to APSRTC. He criticized the State govt policies which is ruining the public sector undertakings on the dictates of the

World Bank. He appealed to the workers to launch a massive campaign and struggle to save RTC with the support of the public. Others speakers also emphasised the need to strengthen APSRTC. M N Reddy, union president presided. R Lakshmaiah General Secretary, placed a resolution proposing to organize conventions in all the districts and hold rallies and dharnas before the collectorates in the first week of December. The resolution was passed unanimously.

#### ATTENTION READERS

Commencing from September' 2003 issue of the Working Class, we have started giving running numbers for the pages for Vol. 34, 1 - 28 for No. 1, 29 - 56 for No. 2, 57 - 84 for No. 3 and 85 - 112 for this No. - Editor

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### Against Privatisation and Outsourcing

## COAL WORKERS' MASSIVE DHARNA AT NAGPUR

A massive dharna was staged by thousands of coal workers before the headquarter of Western coal Fields Ltd at Nagpur on November 13,, to denounce the nefarious bid of the Govt to privatize the coal mining. All the trade unions affiliated to AITUC, CITU, INTUC, HMS and BMS joined the dharna.

The Govt of India is making hell bent effort to privatise coal mining sector. In this direction a Bill was introduced in parliament. But in the face of seven days' strike threat

by the unions, the Govt had to agree not to pursue the bill for the time being. In this situation, the Govt and the Coal India management have taken the route of outsourcing the coal lifting through contractors in a big way in different coal mines of the country. The entire trade union movement in coal industry has denounced this move of outsourcing as a ploy to privatise through backdoor and decided to go in for countrywide strike action if the Govt does not relent from

such move of largescale outsourcing. The dharna was addressed by the leadership of trade unions of all affiliation viz., Md Tajuddin from CITU besides M M Deshkar, SK Jama, C B Frank etc from INTUC, AITUC, BMS and HMS. They declared that on the same issue, a massive demonstration will be held before the Coal India headquarter at Kolkata on 20th December 2003 where coal workers from all over the country will participate in several thousands.

## A P STATE CONVENTION OF WORKING WOMEN

The State Convention of the Andhra Pradesh Coordination Committee of Working Women was held on 2nd November 2003 in the Municipal Kalyana Mandapam in Visakhapatnam. 143 delegates from 21 districts out of the total 23 districts in the State attended. They represented 19 sectors. Senior woman trade union leader and former member of AICCWW D.Sarada hoisted the CITU flag, starting the proceedings of the Conference. The chairperson of the Reception committee and the Public prosecutor C.Mahalaxmi welcomed the delegates who came from different parts of the State.

Hemalata, Secretary of the All

India Coordination Committee of Working Women addressed the delegates.

She called upon the working women activists to take more initiative to fight against these attitudes. She also urged them to be more conscious of their responsibilities as members and office bearers of the committees at various levels and raise the issues of working women and plans to organise them in their respective committees.

Roja, Convenor of the State Coordination Committee of Working Women placed the report of activities and the future tasks before the Convention. 35 delegates from RTC, Medical & Health, Beedi, Anganwadi,

Municipal, Contract workers, Teachers, NGGOs, Coffee plantation, Unorganised Sector etc participated in the discussions.

S.Veerai, General Secretary of the State Committee of CITU addressed the delegates. He said that leadership is not any body's gift; women should come forward and fight against the discriminations in and out side the union or association and take their due place. He also told that it was important to fight against the globalisation policies as they are leading to job losses and aggravating the unemployment situation.

A new executive committee of 43 members with P Roja as the convenor was elected.

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

| State          | Sr. Centre |                    | Month    |           | State         | Sr. Centre |                | Month    |           |
|----------------|------------|--------------------|----------|-----------|---------------|------------|----------------|----------|-----------|
|                | No.        |                    | Aug.' 03 | Sept.' 03 |               | No.        |                | Aug.' 03 | Sept.' 03 |
| Andhra Pradesh | 1          | Gudur              | 471      | 469       | Maharashtra   | 38         | Mumbai         | 583      | 583       |
|                | 2          | Guntur             | 511      | 504       |               | 39         | Nagpur         | 510      | 509       |
|                | 3          | Hyderabad          | 501      | 502       |               | 40         | Nasik          | 534      | 534       |
|                | 4          | Visakhapatnam      | 492      | 488       |               | 41         | Pune           | 557      | 556       |
|                | 5          | Warangal           | 529      | 528       |               | 42         | Solapur        | 502      | 504       |
| Assam          | 6          | D.D.Tinsukia       | 419      | 419       | Orissa        | 43         | Barbil         | 439      | 440       |
|                | 7          | Guwahati           | 501      | 500       |               | 44         | Rourkela       | 436      | 438       |
|                | 8          | Labac-Silchar      | 390      | 389       | Punjab        | 45         | Amritsar       | 436      | 438       |
|                | 9          | Mariani-Jorhat     | 436      | 434       |               | 46         | Ludhiana       | 441      | 446       |
|                | 10         | Rangapara-Tezpur   | 432      | 431       | Rajasthan     | 47         | Ajmer          | 486      | 486       |
| Bihar          | 11         | Monghyr            | 459      | 458       |               | 48         | Jaipur         | 454      | 454       |
| Chhattisgarh   | 12         | Bhillai            | 442      | 444       | Tamil Nadu    | 49         | Chennai        | 536      | 536       |
| Gujarat        | 13         | Ahmedabad          | 491      | 487       |               | 50         | Coimbatore     | 490      | 495       |
|                | 14         | Bhavnagar          | 512      | 508       |               | 51         | Coonoor        | 499      | 493       |
|                | 15         | Rajkot             | 456      | 455       |               | 52         | Madurai        | 482      | 485       |
|                | 16         | Surat              | 489      | 491       |               | 53         | Salem          | 487      | 493       |
|                | 17         | Vadodra            | 476      | 474       |               | 54         | Tiruchirapally | 573      | 573       |
| Haryana        | 18         | Faridabad          | 501      | 510       | Uttar Pradesh | 55         | Agra           | 459      | 460       |
|                | 19         | Yamunanagar        | 465      | 467       |               | 56         | Ghaziabad      | 501      | 502       |
| J & K          | 20         | Srinagar           | 578      | 579       |               | 57         | Kanpur         | 475      | 483       |
| Jharkhand      | 21         | Jamshedpur         | 460      | 458       |               | 58         | Saharanpur     | 460      | 460       |
|                | 22         | Jharia             | 402      | 400       |               | 59         | Varanasi       | 510      | 508       |
|                | 23         | Kodarma            | 408      | 410       | West Bengal   | 60         | Asansol        | 478      | 479       |
|                | 24         | Noamundi           | 438      | 440       |               | 61         | Darjeeling     | 429      | 430       |
|                | 25         | Ranchi-Hatia       | 440      | 440       |               | 62         | Durgapur       | 567      | 565       |
| Karnataka      | 26         | Bangalore          | 476      | 480       |               | 63         | Haldia         | 590      | 593       |
|                | 27         | Belgaum            | 542      | 544       |               | 64         | Howrah         | 557      | 552       |
|                | 28         | Hubli-Dharwar      | 495      | 496       |               | 65         | Jalpaiguri     | 424      | 429       |
|                | 29         | Mercara            | 479      | 480       |               | 66         | Kolkata        | 541      | 535       |
| Kerala         | 30         | Alwaye             | 488      | 488       |               | 67         | Raniganj       | 432      | 435       |
|                | 31         | Mundakayam         | 490      | 493       | Chandigarh    | 68         | Chandigarh     | 533      | 535       |
|                | 32         | Quilon             | 519      | 526       | Delhi         | 69         | Delhi          | 575      | 573       |
|                | 33         | Thiruvananthapuram | 571      | 563       | Pondicherry   | 70         | Pondicherry    | 547      | 544       |
| Madhya Pradesh | 34         | Balaghat           | 452      | 449       |               |            |                |          |           |
|                | 35         | Bhopal             | 532      | 532       |               |            | ALL-INDIA      | 499      | 499       |
|                | 36         | Indore             | 514      | 513       |               |            |                |          |           |
|                | 37         | Jabalpur           | 499      | 501       |               |            |                |          |           |

## Additional Series of Labour Bureau

| State            |   | Centre           | August 2003 | September 2003 |
|------------------|---|------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Andhra Pradesh   | 1 | Kethgudem        | 513         | 508            |
| Himachal Pradesh | 2 | Himachal Pradesh | 470         | 474            |
| Rajasthan        | 3 | Bhilwara         | 490         | 487            |
| Madhya Pradesh   | 4 | Chhindwara       | 454         | 460            |
| Tripura          | 5 | Tripura          | 439         | 441            |
| Goa              | 6 | Goa              | 598         | 589            |

# LOOT OF WORKERS' MONEYS LEGITIMISED!

Closely following the footstep of the apex court judgment banning right to strike by the workers, the Apex Court has pronounced yet another judgment which has hit the workers straight in their stomach. The Supreme Court after keeping the judgment reserved for more than two years since the completion of hearing in May 2001 has ultimately come out upholding the "Employees Pension Scheme 1995" which was totally opposed by the mass of the workers at the grass root level throughout the country, notwithstanding the servile support to the scheme by a section of national leadership of some major Central Trade Unions. In fact CITU has been the leading trade union centre which firmly opposed the disastrous scheme and organized countrywide strike, which despite opposition by the leadership of four major trade union centers, was responded to by the workers cutting across affiliations.

There had been numerous court cases in various high courts of the country against the retrograde scheme. At the Supreme Court level, the number of petitioners was around 80 unions representing almost all vital sectors covered by the scheme. The employees, for whom the so called pension benefit was meant, had themselves opposed the scheme en masse and demanded its withdrawal. The apex court while putting a stamp of approval on the retrograde scheme turned a blind eye and deaf ear to the contentions of the employees.

The Employees Pension Scheme 1995 offered pension to the separating employees by way of diverting almost half of the inflow to their provident fund towards pension fund (employers' contribution to provident fund @8.33% of wage). The money that is being taken away from the workers' provident fund is many times more than the so called benefit coming back to workers in the name of pension of all forms (including family pension and child pension etc.) The workers are not getting back even 10 percent of the total fund-generation, they are being compelled to forego as diversion to pension-fund. This is a matter of simple arithmetic and any body can verify the

same. Thus, this scheme is by far the biggest loot on the workers' life-time savings in PF. Unfortunately that loot stands legitimised following the apex court judgment upholding the scheme. The retrograde Employees Pension Scheme 1995 has been operative since last eight years. The balance sheet of the operation of the scheme shows that many workers are not getting pension at all despite making contribution for pension as per the scheme. This is exposed by the data released by the Employees Provident Fund Organisation itself.

The scheme was made operative in April 1995. Since that time, till March 2002 around 1.16 crore workers ceased to be member of EPF owing to retirement or other kind of separation and became entitled for pension. But only around 9.34 lakh workers are being paid pension till that date meaning thereby that more than 90 per cent eligible workers are not at all getting pension despite making contribution to pension fund out of their PF. This means that in around ten percent cases the concerned workers are being looted of their 90 percent contributions to pension fund as they are getting a meager pension compared to their contribution, and for the rest 90 per cent retired/separated workers, their entire contribution to their own pension fund has been digested by the Govt. Besides, only three valuations, that too at a marginal rate, have taken place in last seven years and rest four are overdue.

The neoliberal policy regime envisages loot on the workers and bonanza to corporates. The Employees Pension Scheme 1995 is consistent with the liberalized policy paradigm. The upholding of the said scheme of loot by the Apex Court despite being shocking is not surprising at all. The working class movement must comprehend the situation in totality, identify their enemies in the system and fight resolutely for reversal of the disastrous policy regime.

## WHITHER PRODUCTIVITY LINKED WAGE!

In a productive system, with its relation to production, it is the labour power that determines the value of the products. It is the sweat and toil of the working class which brings profit to the capitalist class. In India, we are living in a capitalist system of society and the question of productivity needs to be considered in the socio-economic background of the society. Linking wages with productivity has nowadays become a common slogan and demand of the employers.

No responsible trade union will ever discourage the working class to raise production and productivity. But the issue of its linkage with wages is altogether a different matter, which cannot be isolated from various other factors that influence production and productivity.

The loss of mandays is one of the important factors. Let us look into the scenario in the state of West Bengal itself. During last three years upto 2002, mandays lost due to lock-outs had been many times (five times, 14 times and 11 times respectively) more than that due to strikes. This reveals that the onus for major loss of mandays in the State and hence loss of productivity is the other side indulging in lock-outs and suspension of work etc.

Productivity depends on many other issues. The trade union movement in our country has been consistently fighting for a national wage policy and to determine a need-based-minimum wage with scientifically norms. No such policy has been framed so far. Rather, the address by the Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, in the recent Indian Labour Conference, reveals that the burden of the whole crisis shall be passed on to the shoulder of the working class. In the era of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation, sermons are showered upon the working class to raise production and productivity by sacrificing wages, by increasing workload and even by de-unionising themselves. Is that the golden mean to raise productivity, the employers are aspiring for?

In West Bengal, what is our experience? In Jute industry, which employs about 2.5 lakh workers, the tripartite agreement is deliberately flouted by the managements. But the Jute industry has produced more than 17 lakh tons. The workers have given the productivity, but how did the employers reciprocate? Same is the condition in engineering and textile industry where D.A. is not paid to workers despite there being industry-wise settlement.

The condition inside the factory beggars description. Workers are to produce in an atmosphere, which is detrimental to their health. Factories have become maiming grounds where accidents are a regular phenomenon. No safety measures are adopted by the management and statutes in this regard are thrown to the wind.

In the background of rapid and unprecedented development in the field of science and technology, the existing machineries need thorough change, which some of the employers are doing. But, how to accommodate surplus labour? They cannot just be thrown to street. There is no consensus on the issue. The question of environment has also come to the fore, which again needs to be addressed. As such, we are opposed to the concept of productivity linked wages. For effectively addressing the issue of productivity, a concrete policy of need-based wages has to be ensured first. We should all make our best endeavour in that direction.

Within the framework of existing social system, following steps, if followed, would contribute towards improvement of productivity.

1. Workers at the plant level should be taken into confidence on the issues of production and productivity.
2. Joint Committees at plant level to be constituted;
3. Dialogue with the trade unions, both at central and unit levels, should continue at regular intervals and
4. Improvement of working conditions and environment and adequate safety measures should be taken up with all seriousness.

*(Text of speech delivered by Santasri Chatterjee, Secretary, West Bengal State CITU, in the workshop organised by Bharat Chambers of Commerce on 3rd November 2003 at Kolkata)*