



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

PROTESTING RAILWAY'S PRIVATISATION



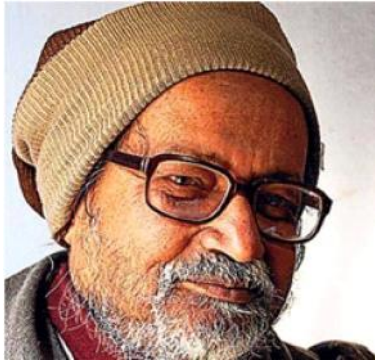
At Chittaranjan Locomotive Works (CLW), Chittaranjan



At Integral Coach Factory (IFC), Perambur, Chennai

Condolence

Comrade A. K. Roy



CITU is deeply grieved on the passing away of Comrade A. K. Roy, the veteran leader of CITU and coal workers; three times M.P. from Dhanbad, thrice MLA of Bihar Legislative Assembly championing the cause of the workers and down-trodden in the parliamentary forums; at the age of 81 in the BCCL hospital at Dhanbad.

Comrade A. K. Roy joined full time in trade union movement in his early youth giving up career of a qualified engineer and job in FCI in Sindri. He was one of the pioneers and architects of coal workers movement, from its private ownership days, in Dhanbad-Jharia coal belt; fought for the workers and displaced people of Dhanbad-Bokaro-Hazaribagh industrial region of present day Jharkhand.

Comrade A. K. Roy was associated with CITU, since its inception, had been its one of the oldest general council members; and was the patron of CITU Jharkhand state committee till his last breath.

Comrade A. K. Roy's demise is big loss to the working class movement and of CITU in particular. CITU expressed heartfelt condolence paid respectful homage to the departed leader.

A Fitting Reply to Amit Shah's MPs Horse Trading

Even sitting in Union Home Minister's chair in the Ministry's office in New Delhi, BJP chief Amit Shah conducts trading of MPs and MLAs of other parties.

This was revealed when CPI(M) Rajya Sabha member and leader of women's democratic movement in Tripura, Jharna Das Baidya met Amit Shah in the Home Minister's office on 16 July to submit a memorandum containing descriptive details on the complete absence of the rule of law due to ruling party BJP's goons, police and administration nexus subverting democratic process during the ongoing process of Panchayat election scheduled to be held on 27 July. In 85 per cent of Panchayats seats, except the ruling party no other party was allowed to submit even nomination papers under physical attacks, including murders, threats and intimidation mainly targeting CPI(M).

In the meeting, before Jharna Das could even hand over the memorandum and open discussion on it, the Home Minister of India started saying that Communists are finished everywhere and that CPI(M) is finished in Tripura; and then asked Jharna Das to join his party.

Jharna Das immediately responded by saying that she came to meet the Union Home Minister, not the BJP chief; that, she did not come to discuss her personal matters, but to discuss on the serious problems of the people of Tripura; and that, so long a single CPI(M) member is alive, the ideological struggle against your party will continue.

The embarrassed Amit Shah had to apologize saying 'sorry' to the CPI(M) MP Jharna Das Vaidya; and assured her that he would soon visit Tripura and look into the issues raised by her.

Later, Jharna Das, with CPI(M) MP T. K. Rangarajan, revealed these facts before the press.

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Resist Selling of India

India's land and its movable and immovable properties are to be sold to the corporates; and India's sovereignty is to be mortgaged to the foreigners. This is the layout of union budget 2019.

It is being done under guise of creating "5 trillion rupees economy", as announced by the union finance minister during budget speech 2019. This 'Rs.5 trillion economy' is a big hoax. It is meant for the domestic and foreign corporates to earn super profit and, for that, pro-corporate 'labour reforms' has been proposed in the budget.

In the background of failed Modi-1 government in all fronts, the country facing serious fiscal deficit and wobbling economy; Modi-2 government is now in the selling spree of national assets, created by the hard work of the working people of India. Airports have been handed over to Adanis. Rail, the lifeline of crores of underprivileged daily commuters in India, is being converted from governmental service to the people to a profit making enterprise for the corporates.

The prime land of railways and huge land assets of all to-be-sold PSUs are being targeted. Budget proposed technology hubs for agri-products in dispersed locations targeting agricultural lands to control and open supply line for supermalls and multinational food makers.

Modi government appointed High-Powered Committee of Chief Ministers for Transformation of Indian Agriculture' headed by Maharashtra CM Fadnavis. On the outcome of the committee meeting, Fadnavis said on 18 July, *"From effective use of technology, digitization of entire process from sowing to marketing...were discussed..."* *"There is a need of boosting private investment in the agricultural sector and promoting contract farming"*, PTI quoted him saying.

India's sovereign bonds are now open for sale in foreign markets opening India to the hazards of global economic crisis. On the other side is facilitating foreign companies' entry through FDI route –100% immediate in insurance intermediaries and to further increase FDI in insurance, aviation, media and single brand retail. PSUs compulsory minimum 25% equity disinvestment has been raised to 35% for entry of MNCs through FII route.

Failed corporates are heavily relying on insurance driven public funding for survival and takeover of national assets and resources; while the government is handing over social services to the insurance companies. PM Fasal Bima Yojna, Ayushman Bharat health scheme etc are the big emerging markets for the insurance brokers. Therefore, 100% FDI in insurance intermediaries proposed for the entry of foreign brokers to play havoc with Indian agriculture and people's health.

In this centenary year of the first central trade unions, let us recall more-than-100years of struggle and sacrifices of the Indian working class for their livelihood, rights and for national independence

from British rule. The working class struggle taught us that for the working class of India country's sovereignty, unity and interests are supreme.

Let us uphold that banner; Resist selling of India; Free India from its foreign and domestic corporates control.

Decisions of CITU Secretariat Meeting

New Delhi; 17-18 June, 2019

1. The Secretariat finalised a yearlong plan to celebrate the golden jubilee year of CITU.
2. 16th conference of CITU will be held on 23-27 January 2020 at Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The General Council (GC) meeting of CITU, being held at Hassan in Karnataka on 7-10 August, 2019, will finalise the details of the conference.
3. All state committees should complete their conferences before the all India conference.
4. All states must send unions' affiliation renewal with annual returns up to 2018 to CITU centre before 31 July, 2019 so as to enable the GC meeting to finalise about the delegation to the conference.
5. All state committees are requested to complete their quota on P. R. Bhawan and Ghaziabad building funds as per assurance made in the extended secretariat meeting, held in January 2019.

Govt. Cuts Small Savings Interest Rate **Livelihood of Millions Affected**

CITU, in a statement on 29 June, strongly condemned the BJP-NDA's Modi-2 government for cutting interest rate of small savings further by 10 basis points for current FY July-September quarter. This decision is going to hit hard millions of common and poor people, senior citizens and superannuated persons by way of sharp fall in returns and earning on their lifetime savings which is the major means of their survival.

Government also announced to take quarterly such decision on interest rates of small savings creating instability in the livelihood of those dependent on it.

Government's decision is designed to divert common people's savings from the state-run secure small savings instruments to the speculative instruments, including share markets. It is Modi government's dole of cheap capital to the private investors.

CITU demanded its withdrawal; and directed its affiliates and appealed to entire TU fraternity to raise their strong voice to condemn this.

| Small Savings Schemes | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Instruments | Rate of Interest (2019) (in %) | |
| | 1 July – 30 Sept. | 1 April – 30 June |
| Savings Deposits | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| 1-Year Time Deposit | 6.9 | 7.0 |
| 2-Year Time Deposit | 6.9 | 7.0 |
| 3-Year Time Deposit | 6.9 | 7.0 |
| 5-Year Time Deposit | 7.7 | 7.8 |
| 5-Year Recurring Deposit | 7.2 | 7.3 |
| 5-Year Senior Citizen Saving Scheme | 8.6 | 8.7 |
| 5-Year Monthly Income Account | 7.6 | 7.7 |
| 5-Year National Saving Certificate | 7.9 | 8.0 |
| Public Provident Fund Scheme | 7.9 | 8.0 |
| Kisan Vikas Patra | 7.6 (Maturity – 113 months) | 7.7 (Maturity 112 months) |
| Sukanya Samriddhi Account Scheme | 8.4 | 8.5 |

(Courtesy: BusinessLine; 28 June, 2019)

INDIAN RAILWAYS PRIVATISATION

Resist Privatisation of Indian Railways: CITU

Immediately on 9 July, CITU strongly opposed Modi government's privatisation move of Indian railways, including 100 days action plan within it, proposing –

(1) To operate private passenger trains, mostly the premier trains, and floating tenders within 4 months; (2) within 100 days to handover two passenger trains to be operated by IRCTC; (3) Leasing out prime railway land to Rail Land Development Authority for commercial purposes; (4) Hiking railway fares beginning with 'Give It Up' campaign on subsidies withdrawing from railways being a public service to cores of underprivileged, hardworking Indian daily commuters to a profit making business for domestic and foreign corporates; (5) Corporatisation of the 7 production units, including the associated workshops, into the 'Indian Railway Rolling Stock Company', as a first step to outsource production to the private players killing public sector's indigenous manufacturing capacity.

CITU called upon the people and its unions and federations to oppose and unitedly resist the move.

Railway Privatisation in the Parliament

Raising the issue, at Zero Hour in Rajya Sabha on 2 July, CITU leader and CPI(M) M.P., T. K. Rangarajan strongly opposed government's decision of corporatisation of railway's all vast production, including maintenance, units, and closure of railway printing press units and said that this is the route for privatisation to favour the corporates including foreign investors. Through his brief intervention, CITU national secretary and CPI(M) M.P. E. Kareem informed the House that the workers at Chittaranjan Locomotives are in agitation and workers in Rai Bareilly unit are on strike in protest against the government's decision.

Opposing the move, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi also mentioned about government's attempt of backdoor privatisation of Modern Coach Factory in her Parliamentary constituency Rae Bareilly saying that this would cause uncertainty among the employees and huge unemployment.

Rail Anti-Privatisation Struggle: A People's Movement

On 18 July, CITU gave call to all its units, unions and federations to immediate launch countrywide united struggle to resist any form of railways privatisation and convert it as People's Movement.

To begin with, CITU suggested to urgently holding broad-based People's Convention uniting all trade unions of all affiliations, other mass organisations of all toiling sections including Kisans, agricultural workers, women, youths, students; organisations of professionals, self-employeds, cultural activists; other progressive and democratic forces; and all CITU affiliated / associated railway workers unions, including DREU, AILRSA and railways factory unions, and those who are prepared to join.

The conventions are to be followed by mobilisation of all sections of the people protesting before railways establishments and other programmes as may be decided locally.

Lakhs of handbills for the people should be printed and distributed at CITU's initiative. CITU is proposing to publish booklet on railways soon covering all aspects of railways privatisation.

Countrywide Protest

Railway workers in its production units, including Diesel Locomotive Works (DLW) at Varanasi, Chittaranjan Locomotive Works (CLW) at Chittaranjan, Modern Coach Factory (MCF) in Rae Bareli, Rail Coach Factory (RCF) at Kapurthala and Integral Coach Factory (ICF) at Perambur in Chennai have already launched agitation with black flag demonstration, some of them on strike, and several railway unions have also launched protest movement against rail privatisation. Other production units are Diesel Loco Modernization Works (DMW) at Patiala and Rail Wheel Factory (RWF) at Bengaluru.

Led by Chittaranjan Locomotive Works Labour Union (CITU), workers brought out protest rallies and staged demonstration before the factory office. Workers of MCF at Rae Bareli are staging demonstrations during breaks and 2,500 workers staged demonstration before the director general of personnel's visit.



Workers of DLW at Varanasi went on strike for days. Half-naked workers of DLW Mazdoor Union and of AICCTU jointly held a protest demonstration during Prime Minister's visit in his constituency on 7 July.

Workers of Kapurthala brought out huge rally and staged black flag demonstration. Huge demonstration at ICF gate at Perambur halted work in the factory. In Chennai, all trade unions struggle

committee led a 5000 strong workers procession and demonstration before IFC gate on 5 July addressed by CITU, INTUC, BMS, HMS and LPF leaders.

Despite threat of disciplinary action by Railway Board through all zonal management, All India Loco Running Staff Association (AILRSA) members resorted to 24 hours hunger strike on 15-16 July at all divisional headquarters joined by the leaders of various trade unions, within railways and outside, and addressed the striking employees including NFIR general secretary Raghavaiah at Renigunta; A. Sampath, ex MP, DYFI Kerala state secretary A. A. Rahim and general secretary of Confederation of Central Government Employees and Workers (CCGEW) M. Krishnan at Thiruvananthapuram; BEFI leader C.P. Krishnan, AIDEF general secretary C Sreekumar, AGS of DREU Baby Shakeela at Chennai ; CITU state leader R Ajay Kumar at Vijayawada and others.

Dakshin Railway Employees Union (DREU) staged protest demonstrations at Chennai, Madurai, Salem and Trichy.

All India Railwaymen's Federation (AIRF) and its affiliates observed weeklong 'Black Day' programme from 1 to 6 July. Led by its general secretary Shiv Gopal Misra and its affiliate NRMU's general secretary Venu P Nair led a massive protest March in Mumbai on 1 July.

Western Railway Mazdoor Sangh of National Federation of Indian Railwaymen (NFIR) also brought out protest March from Churchgate in Mumbai on 12 July.

Steel Workers Protest

Against Sale of SAIL's Special Steel Plants

In a statement on 5 July, CITU condemned BJP-NDA government's move to privatise SAIL's all the three special steels plants - Alloy Steels Plant (ASP), Durgapur in West Bengal, Salem Steel Plant (SSP), Salem in Tamilnadu and Visheshwarya Iron and Steel Ltd (VISL), Bhadrabati in Karnataka; and welcomed the steel workers strike and agitation against this move; and called upon the working class of the country to unitedly resist such move of the Government.

Despite serious financial stress, the ASP is manufacture special quality alloy steel for defence and for precision engineering work. Salem Steel produces stainless steel of high quality and so also the Bhadrabati plant.

Dictated by the ministry, SAIL issued notification on 4 July inviting 'Expression of Interests' from the prospective foreign and domestic buyers in private sector. This is a move to hand over entire market of special steels, including stainless steel, to the corporates and transferring huge national assets to private hands on a platter against national interests.

BJP-NDA government, in its previous term, tried their best to privatize these three plants but failed due to countrywide resistance struggle by the steel workers, particularly in Durgapur, Salem and Bhadrabati.

As soon as the news of floating the tender notice spread, SSP workers at Salem resorted to 24 hours lightening strike and steel workers in Durgapur organised protest rallies and road-blockades on 5 July. SSP, ASP and VISL workers and the entire workforce of SAIL and RINL are rising to the occasion to protest and resist. United trade union movement has also resorted to solidarity actions.

Strike Salem: On 4 July, Modi government floated global tender for strategic sale of Salem Steel Plant along with other CPSUs. Opposing this, Salem Steel Plant workers resorted total strike and staged demonstration before the factory gate. CPSU workers of BHEL in Ranipet and Trichy units staged demonstrations in solidarity with Salem steel workers.

Protest at Durgapur: Due to workers joining the protest demonstrations at factory gate on 5 July, the work in the plant stopped from the morning shift itself. Agitating workers blocked the road which was lifted after 5 hours after police intervened.

SWFI Protest: In response to the call of SWFI (Steel Workers Federation of India) of CITU, all trade unions protest demonstrations were held on 12 July inside the ASP premises and in front of GM office. Such protests were staged in all SAIL units in different parts of the country.

TU Joint Protest in Chennai: On 18 July, all trade unions held a massive 20.000 strong joint rally and demonstration in Chennai against the sale of the Steel plants particularly of Salem. A huge procession was brought out from the Chepauk Stadium with flags and banners of all trade unions. The rally joined by government employees and supported by different political parties. CITU state president A. Soundararajan and general secretary G. Sukumaran; LPF, INTUC, BMS, LLF, OBC Assn. and Congress State president K. V. Thangabalu, ex-MP and other leaders were present.

100 Years of Struggle & Sacrifice

50 Years of Fight for Unity of the Working Class

The Path before Us

Tapan Sen

We are at a very crucial juncture - in the aftermath of the 17th Lok Sabha elections in which the same RSS led Modi government returned to power with a larger and decisive mandate. This poses a big challenge for the entire working class movement, rather the entire society of commoners, in economic, political and social fronts.

Lok Sabha elections were preceded by almost continuous united trade union actions along with independent campaigns and struggles by CITU for around two and half years. In addition, the peasant and agricultural workers' organisations were also active in their united agitations during this period. Besides, there had been numerous industry/sector based actions and agitations including strikes. In continuation to this, the joint convention of central trade unions and federations held on 5th March 2019, unanimously adopted a 'Workers Charter' and called for the reversal of the very direction of economic policy regime and for the ouster of the 'anti worker, anti people, anti national' Modi government. This was the first time that a political call for ouster of the extant government was given from the joint platform of central trade unions and federations. CITU played an important role in this.

However, this call did not materialise as it could not be effectively taken down to reach the mass of the toiling people through our conscious and proactive organisational intervention at the micro level. Our call for 'reaching the unreached' and 'linking the issues with the policies and exposing the politics that promotes such policies' could not be effectively implemented even in our stronger areas. This needs serious introspection without which we will not be able to advance.

Serious Self-Introspection is the Need of the Hour

This gives us a concrete lesson. Struggles alone cannot automatically generate political consciousness to identify the enemies at the political level, although workers' active involvement in united struggles is the first and inescapable prerequisite for attainment of such consciousness. Generating political consciousness among the working people, which inescapably includes their identifying the exploitative capitalist order as the root of all ills and evils within which the political agents in governance have been operating, is a task to be taken up separately and consciously and executed seriously by the advanced detachment of the working class movement who are in fact leading the struggle, consistently and continuously. We have to search within ourselves to what extent we were conscious as well as focussed in our actions and activities, about this task, to what extent we could internalise in our understanding the urgency for linking the issues being faced by the working people with the neoliberal policy regime and expose the politics that promotes the said policies and carry the realisation to the consciousness of the common workers and people. The problems lie not only in our organisational shortcomings in reaching the mass of the common workers with this specific consciousness related project, but in the very realisation on the urgent necessity

of taking up this focussed task for committed execution among ourselves in every tier of our organisation. There can be no short-cut to this basic task.

2019 general election was altogether a different political battle in the background of the fascistic onslaught of the ruling classes on people's rights and livelihood, on the national economy as a whole, on the unity of our people and the integrity of Indian society, on the democratic institutions and on the basic tenets of the Constitution. All these are integrally linked to one another and in turn engineered by the discredited neoliberal order to protect itself in the midst of the systemic crisis. This can be fought only by reorienting our work with a clear political focus based on working class ideology, with wider and comprehensive approach and micro level planning and its execution. It is with this understanding that CITU had collectively concretised its tasks in the electoral battle.

As a working class organisation, having a wider access to the people, all our grass root level units were supposed to carry on intensive campaign among the mass of the workers and workplaces utilising the joint 'Workers' Charter'. Though it was a joint trade union charter, it had a serious political content focussing on the reversal of the policy regime towards alternative to neoliberalism. The same exercise also were to raise the issues directly faced by the workers, link them with the neoliberal policies, aggressively pursued by the Modi government, and expose its game plan of communal polarisation and disruptionist machination on the society to weaken and disrupt unified understanding about the root of their sufferings. We were to widely utilise our 'talking points' and 'pamphlets' on different issues to equip our lowest level cadres to fulfil this task.

We have to self critically examine to what extent we could discharge our tasks as a working class organisation and to what extent we could carry CITU's class understanding to the mass of the people. This is essential to prepare ourselves and the working class politically and organisationally for the forthcoming battles. Our political-ideological understanding and the concerned documents, including the Kozhikode document on organisation, must guide us in that direction.

The All Round Onslaughts are Destined to Mount

The Modi government, which proved its commitment to the big corporate and business houses, international finance and imperialism in its previous avatar, by suppressing all voices of dissent and attacking the basic democratic rights of the people, can only be expected to be more aggressive and brutal this time. The brute majority in Parliament along with the lukewarm approach of the major opposition parties towards neoliberalism are weapons already in their hands, through which the government would arrogantly seek to suffocate and suppress democratic processes and institutions more and more.

The Union budget reflected such arrogance of the polity in power with a bigger majority. When the country's economy has been slipping into continuous slowdown, with virtual stagnation in employment generating investments in real economy, consistently increasing unemployment rate pushing employment *rate* in the country to a 45 year low, budget proposals have not at all bothered to address any of these basic problems of the people in any manner whatsoever. The basic problem of squeezing the size of the domestic markets because of declining consumption level owing to deepening impoverishment of the common people leading to cut in the existing capacity utilisation in industries and services and fanning increasing losses in jobs and livelihood putting in motion the vicious circle of slowdown-crisis-impoverishment-contraction of effective demand-further slowdown" found no attention in the budget exercise at all.

The budget remain focussed in showering more concessions and exemptions to big-business-corporate lobby while slashing down expenditure on welfare and social welfare and services and aggressively pursuing privatisation of national assets and production centres on a platter, all aimed at a single objective of speeding up of transfer of more resources from millions of people to handful of big-business corporate-landlord lobby-thereby pushing up the income inequality in the entire society to an obscene level-deepening the crisis further. That is what neoliberalism is all about.

Real Import of the Project of the Ruling Class

We need to understand the real import of such arrogance in the economic policy regime and its ramification on the economy and the people and its reflection in the political and social fronts.

Last five years' of BJP rule is a commentary of continuous and consistent decline in all economic parameters and indicators. Despite continuing liberal concessions to corporate class, both foreign and domestic, investment, including capital goods and other core and strategic sector marked a consistent decline. Manufacturing sector is at its lowest. Unemployment and job losses are at its peak showing no signs of improvement. Average income of the working population marked a virtual stagnation, reflecting a decline in real terms. Only increase is visible in the wealth and margins of the super-rich and big business/corporate lobby taking the income-inequality to an obscene level. The big landlords are also joining the corporate club both in respect of their cooperation and connivance. They are changing the mode of production towards greater corporatisation and consequent change in production relations through multi-pronged routes like contract farming etc. With consequent destructive impact on petty production in agriculture, the process of reverse transfer of land to big landlord/corporate lobby has started taking place, provoking multiplication of the army of landless hapless rural proletariats in a big way.

In totality the process of deindustrialisation of the national economy has become more pronounced. This is getting aggravated further with the desperate privatisation drive by this arrogant Govt, pliant to imperialist pressure, and outsourcing domestically produced manufactured items to foreign companies. This is already put in motion in respect of defence production, rolling stock requirements of railways along with liberalisation of import. In addition, this is leading to the destruction of indigenous manufacturing capability of our country's economy perpetually. The national economy is being pushed towards a greater disaster, towards perpetual dependence on international finance capital and imperialist power.

Further the systemic crisis of the neoliberal capitalist order has another crucial reflection in the economic policy scenario. Owing to recessionary trend worldwide and also in our country, the profit level in usual production/real economy has been coming under serious stress owing to capacity utilisation and market-contraction problem. The present economic policy regime, in order to supplement and compensate the private corporate under stress, adopted two way-measures. One, through aggressive labour law reforms both by executive and legislative measures to further change the entire employment profile of the economy towards almost total temporarisation to cut down the labour cost perpetually, imposing conditions of slavery on the working people. And two, through facilitating the expropriation of national assets/resources including land by the private corporate lobby through multi-pronged routes. The hell bent move for privatisation of resource-rich as well as asset-rich PSUs, focused initiative of pushing down the Govt shareholding in profitable PSUs to below 51% and thereby transferring their control to private hands, massive outsourcing in most of the PSUs, move of aggressive

corporatisation of railway production units, major ports and Ordnance factories for the purpose of ultimate privatisation, closure of railway printing presses and also central govt printing presses, the aggressive move to restructure the land acquisition rules in favour of corporates, complete deregulation of mining sector, both coal and non-coal, handing over of oil-fields discovered by oil-PSUs with huge investment for private exploration including by foreign agencies, are some of the measures for such expropriation, rather loot of national assets and resources by the private corporates, both foreign and domestic.

This is in fact, the real face of crony capitalism which is perverted as well as corrupt, focussing on speculation along with illegitimate expropriation or loot of national resources and assets, over and above cruel exploitation of the workers and the people. *This* dominates over the productive economic activity; big business/corporates gain, mostly illegitimately; the nation and the people continue to lose. Huge defaults in bank loans (public savings) of around Rs 10 lakh crore and legally writing off of its major part thereby legalising the corporate theft, through Insolvency and Bankruptcy procedure, huge default in direct tax (Rs 5.84 lakh crore in last five years) are the brazen examples of such illegitimate gains by the big capitalists, over and above the tax concessions showered on those pilferer community, at the cost of the national economy and the people.

Further it must also be taken note of that, the crisis of the economy has put the mass of the populace across the sector in tremendous sufferings and they are coming out in protest through various agitations, actions and mobilisations all over the country. In that background, the ruling class is getting increasingly intolerant to democratic expression of the masses and such intolerance of theirs is being sought to be asserted in two main ways. One is to divert the peoples' attention from the real cause of their sufferings through aggressive divisive machination and communal polarisation to distort and/or hijack the democratic verdict in their favour with the support of the corporate class, media and state power; the other is to gradually undermine and trample the democratic process itself, since diversionary tactics may succeed once or twice but cannot forever and people cannot be fooled for all time to come. In fact with the deepening of systemic crisis of the neoliberal order, it is bound to be more uncomfortable and intolerant to democracy itself tending increasingly towards authoritarianism with fascistic aggressiveness.

That indication has already been started pouring in since this BJP regime came into power in 2014. And the RSS, with its hindutva ideology and the project of 'hindu rashtra' which is itself fascistic in nature has been meticulously working with the direct patronage of the state power to spread their disruptive influence in every segment of society, be it education, culture, community lives, games & sports, scientific and social institutions and what not. All these are aimed at communal divisive polarisation and keeping alive an atmosphere of fratricidal conflicts to reign on political governance by default and destroy the secular democratic foundation of our nation.

We Have to Meet the Challenge; and We Can Do It

Therefore, the challenge is much bigger before us. The challenge is not merely for defending the labour and trade union rights of the workers, the democratic and human rights of the people and the country's economy. We have to combat simultaneously the onslaught on the entire society carried on by the political agents of neoliberalism in governance with well-articulated fascistic and hegemonistic intent. At the same time, we have to combat the diversionary and divisive machinations of RSS and BJP. The working class has to be in the forefront of this combat and they have to take a lead and initiative in rallying the mass of the

people from other sections of society in the united struggle with continuity against all attacks and machinations on the rights and livelihood of the people and their unity, on the farmers and agricultural workers, on land rights, on the economy and on the society.

The most crucial task before us therefore, is to further widen the unity of the working class movement and heighten the struggle towards offensive intervention championing not only the demands of the working people but the toiling class in entirety including the issues of social repression in which the toiling class is the biggest victim with the workers-peasants alliance remaining at the core of such broader alliance. We have to widen our alliance to embrace the suffering population in entirety both economically and socially. This broadest alliance for struggle has to be built up on the premise of uncompromising battle against neoliberalism and its socio-political instrumentalities to sustain it in the midst of crisis.

We Will Fight, We Will Win

In essence, our struggle must and intervention must be on both directly against the onslaught on the working people, the national economy and the society as a whole and simultaneously against the politics and ideology behind such all round onslaughts including its authoritarian, fascistic and divisive dimension. One, is through organised united action on the ground while consistently broadening the platform and heightening its level, and other through reaching every doorstep of the working people and the people in general, both preceding the action and as follow up to the same, exposing the very politics of neoliberalism combined with divisive and disruptionist machinations on the society along with authoritarian attacks on democratic rights and progressive values. The working class has to built up and lead simultaneously both the struggles, physical and political-ideological, and not one or the other.

We are heading for stupendously challenging situation, but that is not insurmountable. That gives an opportunity as well, to reinvent the leading role of the working class in the political battle against the exploitative system and its peripheral instrumentalities. We have re-orient ourselves ideologically, politically and organisationally in all the tiers of our organisation while engaging in this battle. There might be retreat or even defeat in the last round of battle but we have a war to win. Our ideology is the biggest and most effective weapon at our command. We must equip ourselves to have full command on its usage and effective application. It is just not appropriate tactics at a given situation; it is one of deciding a tactics having positive directional linkage with our strategic goal, enshrined in our Constitution, so that tree is not missed in our frantic quest for wood.

In this centenary year of the emergence of the first national trade union centre and the fiftieth year of foundation of CITU, we have a rich history of heroic struggles by the working class against all adversities and brutalities right from the colonial days and its legacies and lessons with us. We have the history of many successes in defending the course of united class struggles from the danger of derailments and deviations through many ups and downs, fighting against collaborationism, revisionism, reformism and various forms of divisive provocations by the exploiting class and its political agents. We have the rich legacy at our command of the last fifty years struggles for total unity of the working class in action following foundation of our CITU by the great stalwarts like com B T Ranadive, P Ramamurty, Jyoti Basu, Samar Mukherjee, M K Pandhe and many others who ideologically guided, charted and physically led the movement through the historic path of "Unity and Action". That rich history of struggles and sacrifices, which we proudly inherit, will inspire and give us confidence to unitedly confront and combat. We will definitely overcome.

Indian Trade Union Movement and Proletarian Internationalism

Swadesh Dev Roye

The establishment of early industries and the emergence of the modern working class in India, the struggles and sacrifice of the working class in the country and the national and international historical political events influenced in shaping the trade union movement in India. Some of the significant events have been captured briefly in the article by J. S. Majumdar.

The inherent instinct of class sense, the spontaneity driven movement including strike struggles by the modern working class during the period prior to the formation of trade unions, influence of national political struggles integral to the national liberation struggles and also international events particularly the great October Revolution, it *et all*, contributed in the formation of the first Central Trade Union in India.

Proletarian Internationalism

The concept of proletarian internationalism was distinctly perceptible in the first Central Trade Union in India. Lala Lajpat Rai in his presidential address to the foundation Congress of AITUC on 31st October 1920 said, *"The workers of India are joining hands and brains not only to solidify the interests of Indian labour, but also to forge a link in the chain of international brotherhood"*. Further advancement towards international solidarity of Indian working class is traced in the observation of May Day in 1927. This development was articulated thus, *"It signified that the Indian Labour movement had begun to consciously associate itself with the international labour movement and declaring the commonness of its aims and objectives."* It is necessary to note that evidently, AITUC in its early years pursued the path of class struggles and proletarian internationalism.

The Last Year of the First Decade of Foundation of AITUC

The period witnessed two very significant but conflicting developments. The rising tide of militant class struggle of the working class and consequently, from around 50,000 unions membership strength shot up to 2,00,325, the Girni Kamgar Union was obviously in the top leading position. Behind these spectacular developments, the contribution of the Leftwing leaders has found place in the trade union history of the period: *"Communists were able to get the leadership of the strike because they guessed correctly the mood of the workers and put themselves forward as vigorous champions of their cause [...] They were tireless in their work, fearless in their attitude and steadfast in devotion. These qualities paid them dividend and they became unquestionable leaders of the working class."* (V B Karnik)

On the other side, this period also marked by the extreme atrocities by the imperialist rulers. The height of Government onslaught was marked by arrest of 19 top leaders of AITUC including S.A. Dange, Muzaffar Ahmed, S V Ghate, K N Juglekar, S S Mirajkar, Radha Raman Mitra, P. C Joshi, G. Adhikari were charged with the infamous 'Meerut Conspiracy Case'.

Class Struggle versus Class Collaboration

The obvious intensification of class struggle and militant movement, as noted above, and the well recognised role of the adherents of Class Struggle made the class collaborationists within the leadership of AITUC desperate to split the TU movement. *“There arose distinct trends of left and right, of radicals and moderates, as became evident at the 10th congress of AITUC held at Nagpur, November 28 to 1st December 1929.”*

The speech of the Chairman of the Reception Committee, R. S. Ruiker narrated the barbaric atrocities of the Government, *“The last year has witnessed a series of repressive measures, starting with the Trade Disputes Bill, the Public Safety Ordinance, the Meerut Trial, the attempts to stifle the Grini Kamgar Union, the Goondas Act, the Criminal Intimidation Bill, the prohibition on legitimate TU meetings at Calcutta in the Jute Workers’ Strike, and the Girni Kamgar Union in Bombay and the most recent prosecution under the (in)famous Section 124-A of the IPC (sedition) of Comrade B.T. Ranadive of Bombay, a most intrepid and bold champion of the Bombay textile workers, (emphasis added), the uncalled for interference of the police in the Golmuri strike.”*

One must not miss to carry in mind that capitalism had been under the clutch of unprecedented crisis and the capitalist markets had been passing through ‘Great Economic Depression’ during the period under discussion. In that situation abandoning the path of class struggle would have been nothing but blatant betrayal to the working class and at the same time suicidal as well. In this background the class collaborationists engineered the first split of AITUC they (class collaborationists) launched the ‘Indian Trade Union Federation supposedly with those unions *“which desire to work on purely trade union lines”* – an euphemism for class collaboration.

The then President of AITUC Jawaharlal Nehru in his speech in the ill fated congress of AITUC had said, *“We are often accused of preaching class war and of widening the distance between the classes. The distance is wide enough, thanks to capitalism, and nothing can beat the record of capitalism in that respect [...] The class war is none of our creation. It is the creation of capitalism and so long as capitalism endures it will endure.”* No illustration, rather leave it to one’s own comprehension. It is intriguing that split in the trade union movement both in the national and international sphere occurred mainly out of conflict between class struggle and class collaboration.

Foundation of WFTU

Founded on 3rd October 1945 at the Paris Congress, the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) has been truly the first unified international federation of trade unions. The foundation of the WFTU was a turning point in the world working class movement. Right from its very foundation the new world trade union organisation has been characteristically different from those which had previously existed. *“The WFTU is the Child of Unity, of the workers’ joint struggles against fascism, of the will to build peace and to liberate colonial people, of the struggles for better living conditions, the battles against exploiting monopolies and warmongers”*, with these words the founding General Secretary of the WFTU, Louis Saillant characterized the foundation of the WFTU. The lone central trade union of India at that time, AITUC, was represented by S. A. Dange and he was elected as one of the Vice Presidents in the foundation congress of WFTU.

Imperialist Conspiracy to Destabilise WFTU

Founded on the fundamentals of Class Struggles, the WFTU, from the outset, was a part of the broad anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist movement which developed in many parts of the world with the ending of World War II. The imperialist powers knew that without breaking the solid international unity of the working class, achieved with the foundation of WFTU, it would not be possible to push through their evil design to divide the working class all over the world. How the

State and money power was deployed by the US imperialist in dividing the trade union movement in Europe and elsewhere surfaced subsequently. For example, Thomas W Braden, director of the section of international organizations of the CIA between 1950 and 1954 wrote in 1967 for the Saturday Evening Post: *"In 1947, the communist CGT staged a strike in Paris which threatened to bring the French economy to a standstill. It was feared that the government would fall ... In the midst of this crisis, Irving Brown appeared. [This man was the Director of the notoriously famous American Institute for Free Labour Development which was financed by large US consortium and was one of the largest post-war operators of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)]. With funds from the Dubinsky trade union (AFL – Ed.) the "Force Ouvriere" was organized as a non-communist trade union. When the money ran out, he turned to the CIA. Thus, the secret subsidies to free trade unionism began ... without which post-war history could have followed a very different path ..."*

Class Collaborationists Separated From WFTU

In the year 1947, what came to be known as the notorious *"Truman Doctrine"*, the US imperialist proclaimed itself something of a 'World Policeman' assuming the right to intervene against any government in the world which was not quite to its liking. At the same time, General Marshall the then Secretary of the State of USA presented to the United States Congress with his plan for so called reconstruction of Europe later came to be known as 'Marshall Plan'. Actually the Marshall-plan was a scheme which would bring capitalist Europe under the economic and political tutelage of the United States, as it soon did.

The split occurred at the Executive Bureau meeting of WFTU at Paris on 19th January 1949. The British TUC President Arthur Deakin read out a letter demanding *"suspension of all WFTU activities for a period of 12 months"*, failing which the British TUC would withdraw from the WFTU. James B Carey from the US was more direct and blunt: *"It is no use pretending that the WFTU is anything but a corpse. Let us bury it."* The motion was rejected and following this decision of the Bureau, Arthur Deakin, James B. Carry and E. Kupers (Netherlands) walked out of the meeting.

The class collaborationists, who split the WFTU, launched International Confederation of Free Trade Union (ICFTU) in December 1949 in London. The French government backed up the splitters by closing the international headquarters of the WFTU in Paris, forcing it to re-locate in Vienna. Capitalist all over the world hailed the split in the WFTU particularly in the United States.

Although the immediate cause for formal split in WFTU was the opposing stand on 'Marshall Plan', the basic differences over a range of questions had emerged within the WFTU even before the Marshall Plan surfaced. The point of main contention was centering round opposing the hegemonic design of the imperialist powers and role of trade union movement.

Merger of ICFTU and WCL

In early November 2006, in Vienna, two organizations of common ideological mooring but operationally competing – the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and World Confederation of Labour - came together and founded the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). The whole perceptions of both the constituents behind the event were that the capitalist globalization of political institutions and the globalization of business and markets must be complemented by the globalization of trade unions. These were, obviously, class-collaborationist approach and these trade unions and their merger constituted a reformist challenge to the international trade union movement, particularly to class-oriented WFTU, which was founded with a revolutionary vision.

Set-back of Socialism and WFTU

After the dismantling of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, the WFTU had been considerably weakened. The political and ideological development in the former Socialist countries also very seriously affected WFTU. It (WFTU) grossly deviated from the policies of class struggle and muted the campaign and propaganda for social transformation for complete emancipation of people from capitalist exploitation. Imperialist powers hatched multipronged conspiracies, from outside and inside, to destabilise WFTU. Obvious financial problem also impacted the functioning of WFTU. The General Secretary of TUI Transport misappropriated the entire assets of the organisation.

However, as solar-eclipse cannot permanently eclipse the sun, the imperialist machinations, obviously, failed to detract WFTU permanently from its foundation pledge of class orientation and commitment to the working class. The Havana Congress of WFTU put it back to the track. We shall deal with the developments within WFTU since the Havana Congress later in this column.

Foundation of CITU

The background and perspective which created the compulsion of the foundation of CITU have been narrated in the articles of M. K. Pandhe and Hemalata. However, it would be immensely worthwhile to note the unique commonality of factors and ground reality which led to the split of AITUC in 1929 and foundation of CITU in 1970 and also the split of WFTU in 1949. On the entire given situation, working class was under tremendous attack of the crisis-ridden capitalist class warranting powerful unity of the working class and intensification of class struggle. But the class collaborationists abandoned the path of class struggle and collaborated with the capitalist class and the ruling polity of the time and shockingly compromised the concerns and the issues of lives and livelihood of the working class.

However, there were dissimilarities as well. These were, either, class collaborationists splitting and leaving the organisation or class collaborationists compelling the followers of class struggle to leave the organisation. The latter situation led to formation of CITU. However, to repeat, the common points at stake were to counter the attack of the capitalist class on the lives and livelihood of the working class by building unity for struggle through the path of class struggle.

CITU Committed to Proletarian Internationalism

The slogan, the perspective and the path of struggle proclaimed by CITU at the foundation conference have been: 'Unity & Struggle', fight for replacing the present bourgeois-landlord regime by a democratic regime of the people through the path of class struggle respectively. We may reiterate that class struggle has three components: Economic, Political and Ideological. Under this comprehensive understanding one must realise that class struggle and proletarian internationalism are co-related, supplementary and complementary.

We have already traced above the rich heritage of class struggle and international outlook of the Indian working class movement since inception, albeit the subsequent period of compromise and the consequent developments including the formation of CITU is certainly reckonable. It is, therefore, a logical point that CITU has been carrying forward the rich legacy of class struggle and proletarian internationalism.

Early Days of CITU's International Relations

CITU's international relations since beginning can be divided into different periods. In the early days it started mainly with the Socialist countries. One of the most early CITU delegation abroad was BTR's visit to attend the national conference of the TU Organisation of North Vietnam

(prior to complete liberation and unification of Vietnam) in February 1974. J. S. Majumdar attended the TUI (Oil, Chemical & Allied Industries) conference in May 1975 in Poland. After liberation of Vietnam, WFTU organized a 'World Conference against Chemical and Bacteriological Weapons' at Ho Chi Minh City in 1978. J S Majumdar attended the conference. Vimal Ranadve attended the World Working Women conference in 1979 at Sofia. In 1989 CITU delegation attended the conference of the Central Trade Union of Bulgaria, also in the same year CITU received a delegation of COSATU which was a recognition of CITU's strong solidarity with the fight against apartheid and the liberation struggle of South African people. CITU played leading role in organising a rousing event under the banner of Indian Trade Unions against Apartheid to celebrate of release of the legendary leader of South African liberation struggle Nelson Mandela at New Delhi on 24 February 1990. In January 1990, M. K. Pandhe and E. Balanandan visited Cuba at the invitation of CTC, Cuba.

Although CITU was not formally affiliated with WFTU, still ever since its formation, CITU has been maintaining very close relations with WFTU in as much as it had been attending all the meetings and conferences and implementing various programmes of the WFTU. The last Moscow World Trade Union Congress of WFTU held in September 1979 was attended by CITU delegation composed of, amongst others, M. K. Pandhe, P.K. Ganguly, A. K. Padmanabhan. During the period, a 30 member delegation of CITU led by Pandhe visited Moscow and another mission was the lecture tour to Moscow by R. Umanath both at the invitation of the Soviet Union trade union – AUCCTU.

The Decade of Leap Forward

The decade of 2000-2010 witnessed a leap forward in the international relations of CITU. During this period the bi-lateral fraternal relations expanded in a very big scale. During this period CITU conducted many historical international events in India. The participation of international delegates in the conferences of CITU during the period was distinctly noticeable.

The international section of the Report of the General Secretary to the 10th conference of CITU held on 27-31 December, 2000 at Hyderabad noted, "*CITU has taken big strides in developing its international relations since its 9th conference. As one of the major trade union centres which has remained in the forefront of the struggle against globalisation and liberalisation in recent years, CITU has participated in almost all major international conferences, seminars and meetings to forge solidarity among working class and oppose the onslaughts of World Bank, International Monetary Fund and multinational corporations.*" The understanding of CITU in this regard has been that unless we forge close links with our fraternal organisations abroad, interact with them and learn from their experiences, we cannot succeed in advancing the TU movement in our own country.

Participation in World Conference of Oil & Natural Gas Workers at Paris

Today's strong international relations of CITU and for that matter PGWFI has its origin with the World Conference of Oil & Petroleum workers jointly hosted by FNIC-CGT France, OCI Union of Mediterranean, Libya and IEMO, Paris was held at Paris on 18-20 October, 1999. From India the only delegation was from CITU consisting of Swadesh Dev Roye, T. S. Rangarajan and Swapan Mitra. 140 Delegates from 36 countries attended the conference.

This conference really gave huge exposure to us before the world oil & petroleum sector trade union movement. As a follow-up of the Paris conference, the 2nd World Conference of Oil & Petroleum Workers was held at Kolkata on 08-10 March 2003. This was a landmark event of Oil & Petroleum workers organized by us. The conference achieved resounding success in all the

respects. 124 delegates from India and abroad participated in the conference. Jyoti Basu, the then Union Oil & NG Minister Ram Naik and number of CITU Secretariat members including the President and the General Secretary attended the conference.

As a corollary to the aforementioned international conference at Kolkata, the foundation conference of the PGWFI held at Haldia in November 2005 a big international delegation consisted of 19 fraternal delegates from Britain, France, Russia, Egypt, Greece, Libya, Tunisia and Bangladesh participated in the conference.

Apart from the above noted international activities, CITU conducted many more noteworthy international events. One of the major events co-hosted by CITU was International Coalminers' Conference in Kolkata on 14-16 December 2007.

Yet another very important event, hosted by CITU, was 8th Congress of Southern Initiative on Globalisation and For Trade Union Rights (SIGTUR), held on 19-23 April, 2008 at Kochi. Earlier, in Kochi the conference of International Energy and Miners Organisation (IEMO) was hosted by CITU and Pandhe was elected as the Co-President of IEMO in the conference.

12th Conference of CITU: A Solid Milestone

So far as CITU's policy perception on proletarian internationalism is concerned, the 12th conference of CITU, held at Bangalore on 17-21 January 2007, has been a most significant milestone for more than one reason. A policy paper, under the caption 'International Trade Union Movement,' was presented for daylong deliberations under the framework of Commission exercise in the conference. More than 350 delegates attended and more than 50 delegates participated in the deliberation. A.K. Padmanabhan presided over the session and Swadesh Dev Roye presented the paper as the Rapporteur of the session. Along with the outcome of the deliberations of the Commission the Policy Document on the international relations of CITU was adopted by the plenary session of the conference.

International Delegation in the 12th Conference

The other ever shining achievement of the 12th conference was the presence of all time high number of countries and foreign delegates in the conference. 51 international delegates representing 27 countries attended the conference. The countries represented were Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, China, Cuba, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Libya, Mauritius, Mexico, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Syria, Thailand, U.K., USA, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Venezuela.

The all India 12th Conference of CITU has witnessed a new dimension in the matter of participation of fraternal delegates from abroad. The most significant was the participation of delegates from Cuba, Venezuela, China and Vietnam. Our neighbouring countries were represented in full strength in the conference. A significant number of countries from Africa and Arab world were represented. The presence of delegates from the newly emerged TU centre of USA, following a split in the AFL-CIO, was a notable feature. Similarly the delegation from Europe was extensive and many developed industrialised countries of Europe were represented. In fact, the British TUC participated in our Conference for the first time.

The presence of the newly elected General Secretary of the WFTU, George Mavrikos was a matter of great encouragement to the delegates of the conference. The ILO contingent included the Director and Senior Specialist from the Sub-Regional Office of South Asia, New Delhi and two Worker Members on the Governing Body of ILO was a notable feature.

Exclusive Session with International Delegates

Apart from many bilateral discussions with the individual delegations from different countries on the sidelines of the conference, an exclusive session with the total foreign delegates and the Secretariat of CITU was conducted. In his opening remarks M. K. Pandhe elaborated the understanding of CITU on matters pertaining to the issues and struggles in our country and our perception on the question of international unity of the working class.

15th Congress of WFTU in Havana

The 15th Congress of WFTU was held from 1 to 4 December, 2005 at Havana, Cuba. After continuous all round deterioration of the state of organisation of WFTU after the fall of USSR, as already discussed earlier in this column, the 15th Congress was a turning point. Resuming with the 15th World Trade Union Congress, the WFTU has been in a course of organizational rejuvenation, broadening its collective and democratic functioning and intensification of its activity for all issues concerning workers struggles internationally.

Most importantly Ideological strengthening of WFTU has been put into priority areas of activities through trade union education, seminar on national and regional level, trade union training schools in the central offices etc. In the process, young workers have been receiving priority attention and the working women as well. At the same time resolute campaign, propaganda and struggles against all machinations of imperialism have become the symbol of WFTU today; and, so too, the doctrine of class struggle.

Regular and effective functioning of all the collective bodies as stipulated in the Constitution of the WFTU and also by the democratic and collective principles of the Organization have been ensured. Steps have been taken to continuously improve the functioning of the Regional Offices and the Sectoral Forums - Trade Union Internationals (TUIs') of the WFTU. Even before taking affiliation of WFTU formally, the CITU has been doing its best in matching with the renewed initiative of the new leadership.

CITU Affiliates with WFTU

The CITU General Council meeting, held at Nashik in 2010, adopted a resolution to affiliate CITU with the WFTU. GS WFTU visited CITU centre, New Delhi to formally acknowledge the decision of CITU. Following is the quote from the Report of the General Secretary, CITU to the 14th Conference of CITU, *"Since our 13th conference many significant developments connected with our international relations and activities have taken place. The most momentous event of the period is our formal affiliation with the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). Without going into a detailed discussion it may be mentioned that a protracted discussion was held at the levels of the full Secretariat, Working Committee and General Council of CITU on the issue of formal affiliation to the WFTU. A high level CITU delegation visited WFTU head quarters in November 2010. The Secretariat in its meeting in November 2010 decided to make the proposal for affiliation to WFTU to the general council scheduled to meet in Nasik in January 2011."*

"The Nasik general council meeting adopted a resolution to affiliate CITU with WFTU. Appreciating the importance of CITU's affiliation with WFTU, Comrade George Mavrikos, General Secretary, WFTU personally visited CITU headquarters in February 2011 despite his busy schedule and preoccupation with the preparation for the 16th Congress of WFTU at Athens and ceremonially received our application for affiliation. The decision to grant affiliation to CITU was announced by Comrade Mavrikos on the floor of the 16th Congress of WFTU at the Athens which received thunderous applaud by the Delegates of the Congress."

Our presence and contributions in the various forums of WFTU i.e., Secretariat, Presidential Council and World Trade Union Congress and different Trade Union Internationals (TUIs) is visible in the international working class movement. Almost in each of the TUIs, CITU representatives are in the Secretariat. Our Comrades involved in various international forums and holding various offices have been successfully discharging their responsibilities and bringing reputation to the CITU. The most important forum of WFTU – the World Trade Union Congress and annual Presidential Council meetings, the presence and participation has been receiving international appreciation. And there is not an iota of exaggeration in the matter.

Undoubtedly, commitment of CITU on working class ideology, its adherence to class struggles and militant character in fighting for the causes of working class are factors which have brought accolade for CITU internationally.

Both National and International Struggles are Correlated

To understand the importance of the international unity of the working class today, it is necessary to understand that under imperialist globalisation, the transnational capital has been moving every nook and corner of the world. The multinational companies have been dominating the world economy. The main features can be traced in the huge concentration and centralisation of capital, internationalization of production, transnational monopoly, and imperialist control over constantly developing new technology with huge capacity of mass production.

In this situation, the international unity of the working class movement has attained an unprecedented urgency warranting fight against neo-liberalism in both domestic and international levels. The ruling classes of the imperialist camp follower nation states are, after all, implementing the prescriptions of the imperialist agencies. Today the basic thrust for strengthening the international unity of the working class must be in the anti-imperialist directions.

We must remember that “Globalization is both an imperialist and a class phenomenon.” These developments clearly confirm that ‘Class Struggle and Proletarian Internationalism’ are integral and pre-requisites to fight the onslaught of finance capital driven imperialist globalisation. Any degree of conscious or unconscious dilution in discharging our duty towards international fraternity of the working class shall imply compromise in respect of the doctrine of class struggle.

CITU today enjoys very high esteem in the world trade union movement. At each and every levels of our organisation we must understand that CITU's commitment for class struggle and for proletarian internationalism is keeping the flag of CITU flying high. Continuous expansion and strengthening of our international relations is the touchstone of our commitment to class struggle.

Successful accomplishment of this basic task only shall enable us to continue to play the crucial catalytic role in uniting the working class in the struggle against finance capital driven imperialist globalisation and to counter the class battle pushed by the capitalist class all over the world, particularly in the present era of continuing systemic crisis of capitalism.

While celebrating the occasions – ‘50 years of CITU’ and ‘100 years of First Central Trade Union’ in India, let us re-dedicate ourselves to the birth pledge of CITU – Class Struggle and Proletarian internationalism with the objective of Unity and Struggle.

Unity and Struggle of State Government Employees

Subhash Lamba

Struggle for Rights

For the British, government employees were only an instrument for exploitation and to rule over the masses. They made all attempts to keep the employees away from agitation and, for that, imposed strict rules. Despite these, the government employees formed organizations and build movement on different occasions. Government's first attempt to suppress these activities was through a resolution in 1873 banning the employees from 'publishing, managing and editing of newspapers'. Then, through a Home Department circular in 1890, employees were banned from participating in political activities, as they did in 1876, and to speak or write on government policies. As the number of employees was large in India, government was alert of their danger from the employees due to ongoing independence movement. In 1904, the British government prepared a code of conduct. Later, its provisions were made stricter banning the employees' participation even in demonstrations and strikes.

These undemocratic rules were not annulled even after independence in 1947. Rather, these were incorporated in Article 310 of the Constitution in line with British Constitution. Under Article 311(2)(C) of the Constitution, a government authority can demote and dismiss an employee without a show cause and without giving an opportunity for self defence.

Past 70 years experience shows that these provisions were used mainly to prevent trade union movement, as political conspiracy by the ruling party and to harass the employees. Article 311(2)(B) has been used again and again to dismiss the employees and their leaders from services in West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Kashmir, Haryana and in other states. After the strike in railway in 1974, employees were attacked by railway authorities under its provisions. This section is still being used against the agitating employees.

Recognition of Employees Organizations: Britain's Postal Employees Union was the first to get recognition in 1899. In India, the question of government employees organizations' recognition came up in 1906 after the formation of the Indian Telegraph Association; and, after many struggles, the Government of India issued a letter recognizing employees' organization on 13 October, 1921. For this a 'Table of Rules' was prepared.

Right of Negotiation: In Britain, recognised organizations, by the concerned departments, have right to negotiate on behalf of its members. But, in India this right of negotiation was denied and a policy of suppression was adopted. After a countrywide strike in 1960, this right was given to employees in 1966.

Growing Movement and Building Organisation

Under the impact of the First World War and as a result of the Russian Revolution in 1917, not only the workers union was formed in India, but the Central and State government employees organisations were also formed in different parts of the country. First was in West Bengal – the All Bengal Ministerial Officers Association formed in February, 1920. Two other organizations of the employees were also formed in Bengal. On 4 June, 1920, the employees of Director and Secretariat in the Writers Building jointly formed Writers Building Association.

Likewise, in other States, organizations of the State government employees were formed. But, these organisations were lacking higher level of consciousness. Before independence, in some sections of government employees, militant movement started taking shape. For instance, in 1946, during the revolt of Royal Indian Navy, lakhs of workers went on strike in Bombay supporting the revolt. These actions further intensified the independence movement. On the other side, Post & Telegraph employees went on countrywide strikes consequent to which First Pay Commission was constituted. These two heroic struggles inspired all State government employees to adopt the path of struggle.

After India became independent in 1947, the State government employees resorted to strike in Madras presidency. Thereafter, State government employees militant struggles took place in Bengal. Before independence, on 26 February 1946, the workers of Fire Service started a direct action (strike) against the retrenchment of 800 employees which continued for 11 days and ended in victory. The workers of Bengal government press started strike on 8 January, 1946 demanding overtime allowance. On 3 January 1948, rationing employees observed a pen down strike. On 9 March, 1949, railway employees announced their countrywide strike.

After independence, there was widespread resentment among the employees all over the country against Pay Commission's formula and standards of wage fixation. In addition to the issues of wages and price rise, the employees were also agitated against the authoritarian code of conduct adopted by the British. Inspired by militant struggles of industrial workers, State government employees also started trade union activities in different States. At that point of time, dearness allowance and revision of pay scales were the main slogan of the employees. The government invoked code of conduct to suppress employees' agitation, but failed. In comparison to the Central government employees, the conditions of the State government employees were pathetic. There was no change in their old and arbitrary pay scale and service conditions. Growing resentment among employees gave rise to State government employees' movement.

But, struggles were led by different State level organizations without having countrywide contacts. Within the states also, unity among different sections of employees was yet to take shape. Based on State level common demands of different sections of employees, united forum was constituted for statewide struggles, but it was not strong. This was the developing stage of the unity within the State. These, however, brought the employees out of the narrow confines and developed their trade union consciousness. From struggle experience, the employees started realising that their issues and demands were linked with country's economic and other policies; that their problems and injustice were direct consequence of the economic and social policies. In these policies, the State government employees were totally neglected.

As a result, to fight these policies, the leaders of employees in various States started thinking about constituting an all India forum. Meanwhile, attempts were made to have a co-ordination between the State government employees of South and North, but it remained unsuccessful. In fact, for building an all India forum, building an all India struggle of state government employees was necessary. In the given the situation, forming an all India forum was not easy. Yet, NGO Association of Andhra Pradesh and its top leader Sriramulu made special attempts to form an organization. During 1958-59, they established contact with all State government employees organizations and evolved consensus on a national level organization to co-ordinate and unite all State level struggles.

Finally, in the conference, held in Hyderabad on 23-24 January 1960, All India State Government Employees Federation (AISGEF) was formed. In the next conference in March 1961 in Hyderabad, Sriramulu was elected as its General Secretary. In this conference 13 States participated. The debate revolved round issues of price rise, need based minimum wage, promotion, leave and abolition of the provisions under Article 311(2)(A),(B),(C). Thereafter, all India activities were conducted regularly.

At present AISGEF's membership is 60 lakh and it is leading the State government employees of whole country. Women constitute one third of the national executive of AISGEF.

Broader Unity with the Working Class

Versailles Peace Treaty after First World War accepted workers rights and, as a part of the League of Nations, International Labour Organization (ILO) was formed in 1919 giving recognition to the workers organizations; and employees' organization too got recognition.

In 1946, the revolt of Indian Navy was supported in a big way through strike by the workers of Mumbai and in the same year, countrywide strike of Post and Telegraph employees was supported by AITUC. At the 15th ILC, certain criteria were decided to fix the need based minimum wage. This excited the workers for intensifying their struggles. As the central government policies seriously and adversely impacted employees, workers and the common people; united struggles by them became necessary to oppose government's repression and policies.

On 28 August, 1974 a national convention was held by the Central Trade Unions (CTUs) in which AISGEF actively participated. On 18 April, 1977, an All India Trade Union Convention was organized by all CTUs and national federations. In February, 1978, Bihar Non-Gazetted Employees Federation organized a national convention on the abolition of Section 310 and 311(2) A,B,C in which eminent jurists, leaders of CTUs and MPs of different political parties participated. The demands of abolition of these Articles and for employees' trade union and political rights were raised in this conference. This was the first such opportunity when a conference was organized by a trade union especially on the issue of democratic and Constitutional rights.

General Strike for 'Right to Strike': In Tamil Nadu, against the anti-employee policies of the Jayalalitha government, the employees and teachers went on strike on 2 July, 2003 and Jayalalitha government dismissed 2 lakh employees. After that, in August 2003, the Supreme Court declared government employees strike as illegal. Opposing the judgement of the Supreme Court and the attack on employees in Tamil Nadu, countrywide strike was held on 24 February, 2004 in which around 5 crore workers and employees participated.

Joining CTUs, the AISGEF participated in 17 strikes pursuing joint charters of demands. The AISGEF is committed to strengthen struggles in future by joining CTUs movement. In the recently held 17th general election, the power is captured by the extreme rightwing forces. In this situation, the government employees, facing serious challenges, must build big movements and accordingly, prepare the strategy.

Unity and Struggle

Since its inception, with the concept of Unity and Struggle, AISGEF has advanced. Today, it has elected state committees in 26 States and Union Territories. The Federation, while organizing State government employees, also established co-ordination with the Confederation of Central Government Employees and Workers. On the basis of struggle, the Federation has been successful in getting all Central Pay Commissions implemented in States and defended the right to strike. Further, it has contributed towards the wider unity of employees and workers by joining the agitational activities called by the central trade unions of the country and it has also participated in all nationwide strikes. The Federation through its solidarity actions against the repression of State governments in West Bengal, Tripura, Haryana, Tamilnadu, Maharashtra etc. has forced the State governments to negotiate with agitating organizations. The Federation with wider unity has struggled against anti-people policies of neo-liberalism of the Central and State governments and for saving public services.

(Subhash Lamba is the national President of AISGEF)

STATES

Punjab

Punjab Roadways Contract Workers Strike



Contract workers of PUN BUS union of CITU were on strike on 2-4 July bringing entire Punjab Roadways public road transport system to a grinding halt across the state. Bus depots remained completely deserted. Striking workers brought out rallies, staged dharna and demonstrations. Mass meetings of the striking employees in different parts of the state were addressed by the state and district leaders of CITU and the Union. Main demands are for ending the contract system and regularisation of their jobs, implementation of the 'equal pay for equal work' judgement of the Supreme Court, etc. Punjab CM responded to AIRTWF memorandum supporting the demands and the strike of the transport contract workers advising and forwarding the memorandum to the transport minister and informing AIRTWF accordingly.

On 3 July, the PUN BUS contract workers union held a massive state level rally at transport minister's home town Malerkotla. After the rally, the workers organised a march to transport minister's residence.

Ultimately, the transport minister, who was in Chandigarh, gave a written assurance through the local administration of holding meeting with the Union and CITU on the striking workers demands on 9 July. In view of the proposed discussion, the Union deferred strike till the outcome of the proposed discussion.

(Inputs: Raghunath Singh and R. Lakshmaiah)

INDUSTRIES & SECTORS

Social Schemes

Countrywide Protest by Anganwadi Employees Against Muzaffarpur Children's Death;

10 July All India Protest Day

Responding to CITU's Anganwadi employees federation, AIFAWH's call, lakhs of Anganwadi employees in 22 states - Assam, Tripura, West Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand in the East; - Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir and Rajasthan in North; - Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and Gujarat in West and - Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Karnataka and Kerala in South - resorted to countrywide protest on 10 July against more than 150 malnourished children's death triggered by Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) at Muzaffarpur in Bihar; and observing All India Demands Day raising slogans "No more Muzaffarpur; For Malnutrition Free India; For Strengthening ICDS; and For Fulfilment of the Promise of Freedom".

Throughout the country on that day, the agitating workers, before holding rally and public meeting, condoled to the death of the innocent children, who lost their lives in Muzaffarpur. At Muzaffarpur, hundreds of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers participated in protest rally. Recently held Anganwadi Bihar state union's conference decided to organise yearlong campaign in Muzaffarpur against malnutrition and to strengthen ICDS beginning on 14 August.

This was first national level protest against the new NDA-BJP government against such a national tragedy in a situation where the supplementary nutrition to children were not provided and salaries of Anganwadi employees were not paid for months together in many states including in Bihar.

Before and during last Parliamentary election, RSS-BJP had been carrying on misleading campaign through social media about increasing their wage to Rs.18000. But, Modi-2 government's budget, even in the aftermath of Muzaffarpur tragedy did not increase allocation for ICDS. Further, many states are yet to pay the increased wages as was announced by PM Modi in September 2018. Many state governments are opening pre-schools in schools, thus taking away children from Anganwadis. Direct benefit transfer and centralized kitchens are also being attempted in some states.

The 10 July Demands Day include demands to – Make ICDS permanent; increase budgetary allocation for ICDS; pay minimum wage not less than Rs.18000; social security and pension benefits to Anganwadi employees as recommended by 45th ILC; No privatisation of ICDS; no involvement of corporates companies and corporate NGOs in ICDS; Strengthen ICDS; Convert Anganwadis into Anganwadi-cum-crèches; increase allocation for nutrition; strengthen and retain the pre -school education in ICDS.

An Appeal

Rush Fund to Assam Flood Victims

On 18 July, CITU made an appeal to the workers of the country to stand in solidarity with the people of Assam, who are facing devastating floods, and extend all possible help to the flood victims. CITU Assam State Committee is fully involved in rescue and relief operations.

30 out of total 33 districts of Assam are flood-affected; 36 human lives have been lost till 18 July; 54 Lakhs of people are displaced; 90 percent of Kaziranga National Park is under water; water level in Brahmaputra has been rising above the danger level across the state. Roads, bridges, culverts and many other infrastructures have been damaged at various places.

CITU called upon all its state committees, federations and affiliated unions to urgently raise funds and send the immediately to the Assam state committee of CITU through money transfer to their bank account given below under intimation to the CITU Centre.

Details of bank account of Assam state committee of CITU

Assam State Committee of CITU
Account Number: 0303010014036
UBI Branch ULUBARI
IFSC- UTBIOULU319

Tapan Sen
General Secretary

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Protesting against ASP, SSP & VISL Sale

(Report page 7)



Blocking entry at ASP, Durgapur (Left) and st SSP, Salem (Right)



In solidarity at BHEL, Trichy



Joint Trade Union Rally in Chennai

PROTESTING RAILWAY'S PRIVATISATION

(Report page 5)



At Diesel Locomotive Works (DLW), Varanasi



Mumbai



Chennai



By DREU at Chennai & Madurai



24 Hours Hunger Strike by AILRSA at Anara & Nagpur