

AITUC 44.
cong

24th SESSION
OF THE
ALL-INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS



Report & Resolutions



CALCUTTA, MAY 27-29, 1954

C O N T E N T S

| | |
|---|----|
| APPEAL TO ALL WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS FOR UNITY | 1 |
| REVIEW OF THE 24TH SESSION — <i>by S. A. Dange</i> | 5 |
| PREPARATIONS AND PROCEEDINGS | 15 |
| PRESIDENTIAL SPEECH OF V. CHAKKARAI CHETTIAR | 29 |
| GREETINGS TO THE SESSION | 36 |
| REPORT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY | 43 |
| I. Vigilance against Warmongers | 43 |
| II. Economic Condition | 46 |
| III. The Struggles | 51 |
| IV. Fight for Living Wage | 62 |
| V. Labour Laws — Some Gains and Losses | 65 |
| VI. Trade-Union Rights and Democratic Liberties | 69 |
| VII. Trade Union Unity | 73 |
| VIII. International Solidarity — WFTU | 77 |
| Conclusion | 79 |
| REPORT ON ORGANISATION OF THE AITUC | 81 |
| Centre | 85 |
| State TUCs | 87 |
| International Solidarity — WFTU | 88 |
| RESOLUTIONS | 90 |
| On Martyrs | 90 |
| Condolence Resolutions | 90 |
| On Affiliations | 91 |
| On WFTU | 91 |
| Greetings to the AUCCTU Congress | 91 |
| Thanks for Hospital Aid | 92 |
| On Unemployment | 92 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| On Rationalisation and Speed-up | 96 |
| On Peace | 100 |
| On Trade-Union Rights and Democratic Liberties | 103 |
| On Industrial Relations | 106 |
| On Social Security | 108 |
| On Discrimination in Granting Passports | 113 |
| On French and Portuguese Possessions in India | 114 |
| On Contract Labour | 115 |
| On Industrial Housing | 115 |
| On Railwaymen's Demands | 118 |
| On Cotton Textile Industry and Its Workers | 123 |
| On Jute Industry and Workers | 127 |
| On Plantation Industry | 131 |
| On Handloom Industry | 134 |
| On Coal Miners' Demands | 136 |
| On Manganese | 137 |
| On Petroleum Workers | 137 |
| On Silk Industry Workers | 138 |
| On Railway Collieries | 139 |
| On Calcutta Tramway Workers | 142 |
| On Motor Transport Workers | 142 |
| On Bank Employees' Movement | 146 |
| On Insurance Employees | 148 |
| On Working Women | 150 |
| On Teachers | 153 |
| On the Condition of the Multi-purpose Construction Project Workers | 156 |
| On Civil Employees | 158 |
| On Retrenchment of Civil Supplies Employees | 160 |
| On Defence Industry Workers | 160 |
| On Cement Workers | 162 |
| On Motion Picture Employees | 163 |
| On Electricity Supply Workers' Demands | 165 |
| On Leather Workers | 167 |
| On Burnpur Workers | 169 |
| On Kolar Gold Fields | 170 |
| On Mica Industry | 172 |
| On Shellac Industry | 172 |

| | |
|--|--------|
| On the Lower Grade Staff Employees of Universities and other Educational Institutions | 174 |
| On Hotel Workers | 175 |
| On Central PWD Workers | 176 |
| On Harbour and Post Trust Workers | 178 |
| On Beedi Workers | 178 |
| On Shop and Commercial Employees | 179 |
| On Rickshaw Workers | 181 |
| On Coir Industry | 181 |
| On Gold Smiths | 184 |
| On Tile and Brick Workers | 184 |
| On Plywood and Tea-chest Workers | 185 |
| On Building and Road Construction Workers | 187 |
| On Glass Industry Workers | 187 |
| On Municipal Workers | 188 |
| On Cashew Workers | 191 |
| On Refugee Rehabilitation | 191 |
| On Neiveli-Lignite Mining | 192 |
| On Printing and Dyeing Industry | 193 |
| On Agricultural Workers | 193 |
| On AITUC Film | 194 |
| On Committee to Report on Amendments to the Consti- tution | 194 |
| On Working Committee | 194 |
| On Trade-Union Press | 195 |
| ERRATA | 96 |
| APPENDICES | |
| Office Bearers Elected at the 24th Session | 197 |
| Statement of Accounts — 1952 | 200 |
| Statement of Accounts — 1953 | 201 |
| Record of Important Struggles and Disputes | 202 |

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APPEAL TO ALL WORKERS & TRADE UNIONS FOR UNITY

[Adopted by the 24th Session of the AITUC]

The Twenty-fourth Session of the All-India Trade Union Congress has provided a broad platform for the exchange of reports and experiences by 830 delegates from affiliated unions and 69 fraternal delegates from non-AITUC unions, together representing workers of every industry and occupation and of every State in our vast country.

This pooling of reports and experiences has confirmed the grim reality confronting every worker and employee in India today—the reality of growing mass unemployment, of rationalisation, retrenchment and lay-offs, of starvation wages, of concerted attacks by the monopolists on the most elementary trade-union rights.

This reality knows no barriers between worker and worker. All are suffering and starving. The jobs, wages and rights of all are imperilled.

But experience also confirms that against this capitalist offensive a mighty new force has arisen in our country—the united will and capacity of the workers to resist, by action, the onslaughts of their exploiters and to defend their common class interest.

This growing unity in action also knows no barriers. Workers of all unions and no unions, of those affiliated to some national centre or independent, have written a glorious page in the history of militant working-class action. Such is the lesson of the Burnpur steel workers, of the Calcutta struggles against the British Tramway monopolists, and for bonus and teachers' demands. Such also is the story of employees in banks, defence industries and others, who have conducted joint struggles in a new way.

The Twenty-fourth Session of the AITUC is also aware that the entire working class of India shares a common hatred

of the imperialist warmongers, the colonial enslavers of the Asian and African peoples. It shares the common indignation against the nefarious attempts to ensnare India in the imperialist was plans by such means as the US-Pak Military Pact and retention of French and Portuguese pockets on Indian soil. The Indian workers are filled with horror at the implications of the Hydrogen Bomb.

On the basis of its deliberations, the Twenty-fourth Session of the AITUC, therefore, proclaims its firm conviction that the workers of India, motivated by these common problems and common desires and sentiments, can unite in defence of their rights as workers and as human beings.

Life has proved the invincible power of the class unity of the workers, forged in the common crucible of suffering and exploitation. Life itself is teaching the workers that unity of action is the path they must inevitably take if they are not to go down.

Now, therefore, a great responsibility rests upon the leaders and functionaries of all the different trade-union centres and organisations at all levels. Will they give organised expression to the deep-seated urge of the workers for unity, or will they still refuse to join hands? Which will reign supreme—loyalty to 'rival' flags, or common loyalty to the worker and his interests? Such are the questions life poses before all trade unionists without exception.

We appeal to all leaders and workers, all functionaries and members, of the INTUC, HMS and UTUC organisations and of all independent unions and federations:

Brothers! Let us unite in common action to defend the workers' interests;

- Unite against retrenchment and unemployment;
- Unite against schemes of rationalisation and speed-up;
- Unite for higher wages and social security measures;
- Unite to secure equality of wages and rights for working women, the most oppressed section of our class;

- Unite to secure the rights of working class youth to work, education and culture;
- Unite to defend the rights of all trade unions to organise and mobilise the workers;
- Unite to defend the right of all workers to strike; and
- Unite for Peace and against the imperialist war conspiracies, against the Hydrogen Bomb and the US-Pak Pact, against foreign pockets on Indian soil and for national independence of all colonial peoples.

We believe there is no problem facing the workers today which cannot be solved provided the workers are united. We believe there is no attack on the workers' rights which cannot be defeated by united resistance.

This Session appeals to all workers—organised and unorganised—to build up and develop unity of action in the factories and departments, in the chawls and bustees, and to set up united committees capable of winning the workers' demands. Let the workers take the cause of unity into their own hands, let them act and struggle at the place of work—this is the path to victory.

Brother workers who are yet unorganised! We appeal to you—do not stand outside the common fraternity of trade-union members. The trade union is the workers' only weapon with which to defend his bread, without it he is helpless and disarmed. The trade union alone is the common bond which makes the working class capable of fighting and defeating its exploiters. So join in your thousands, join the unions of your own free choice—but join you must, so that the workers' united front may become strong and invincible.

Forward, brothers! When the workers themselves are determined to unite for defence of their jobs, wages and rights, the forces of unity shall and must prevail over the forces of disunity and division. Let us go forward with this firm confidence.

Brother trade unionists of every organisation! We extend to you our hand of fraternal co-operation. Let us eschew all sectarian prejudices against one another, let us help the workers to find their way to unity and victory. Let us pledge that our loyalty to different flags and unions shall never be more precious to us than common loyalty to the exploited worker and his cause!

Forward together! For security of employment and adequate wages!

For social security and an end to retrenchment and rationalisation!

For trade union rights and democratic liberties!

For Peace and Freedom!

Long Live the Unity of the Workers of India!

REVIEW OF THE 24TH SESSION

by S. A. Dange

The 24th Session of the All-India Trade Union Congress met in Calcutta from May 27 to 29. On May 30, two lakhs of workers, men and women, assembled in a mighty colourful rally to hear the conclusions of the Congress.

The 24th Session was meeting five years after the last session in 1949 which was held in Bombay. The repression that was launched after that session by the Government and employers against our trade unions and leading workers had made it impossible to hold a session earlier.

But meeting after five years, the session showed that the AITUC had not been destroyed by the repressive forces. Not only that. It showed by some of its features that the AITUC had made advances in many fields.

In the very preparations of the Congress and the vast concluding rally, the AITUC showed that it was a mighty organised force in the working-class movement, that the workers of India trusted it to defend their interests.

More than one lakh workers and middle-class employees in Calcutta had contributed to the preparations of the Congress by providing men and money. Even ordinary citizens, art centres, social service organisations and others had rendered help in holding the session, though many of them had no organisational relationship with the AITUC. Never before in the history of the AITUC had such mass-participation been seen in the preparation and organisation of the Congress.

What kind of masses and mass leaders had come to the Congress? They were people, who had carried on heroic struggles, had faced police firings, suffered imprisonment and beatings. There were delegates and observers, some of whose friends and relatives had been killed or hanged or were held in prisons, disabling them from attending the Congress.

These delegates numbering 830 had come from all provinces and all industries. Every trade and every part of our country was represented at the Congress despite the fact that for some, it meant travelling four thousand miles to come and go back.

Though the main business was carried on in Hindi, some eight languages needed to be used during the session. And the two speeches of the women workers that shook the session will not be forgotten.

Such was the composition of those that came and deliberated. The Bengal Committee of the AITUC evoked praise from every one for holding this Congress—the biggest ever.

WORKERS WILL DEFEND FREEDOM AND PEACE

The session deliberated on a number of questions affecting the country, the working class and the people.

The problem of peace and freedom was very much in the minds of the delegates. From Calcutta, where the Congress met, within twenty-five miles there was the border of East Pakistan, where a military dictatorship backed by American guns had been established by overthrowing a democratically elected Government.

There were present at the Congress many workers, from ports and docks and river transport, whose homes were in Pakistan and who had begun to feel the hand of the warmongers and who had been made victims of pogroms by disruptors of working-class unity.

There were present at the Congress friends of the workers of Pondicherry, where the French had shot down workers demonstrating for freedom. It established a direct bond of solidarity between us and the heroic people of Viet Nam.

The exploding of the hydrogen bomb by the Americans and the threat it caused to the safety of the people of Asia had made everyone conscious of the fight for peace and freedom of Asia from the imperialist warmongers. The Congress affirmed the denunciation of the hydrogen bomb and the demand for its banning made by Premier Nehru.

At the same time, it called for active vigilance and movement by the working class in defence of peace and freedom, whose cause was so well taken up by the working people of the Soviet Union and China, whose might and consistent policy of peace, democracy and freedom had stalled the plans of the warmongers.

The Congress supported the liberation movements of Pondicherry and Goa and declared its sympathy and solidarity with the people of Africa and Malaya struggling for freedom from the British imperialists.

The Congress noted the fact that even international tension and preparations for war obstructed trade and good economic relations between countries and this had adverse effects

first and foremost on the working people and the peasantry, as is seen in the effects of the deadlock over trade between India and Pakistan. It, therefore, called for free and friendly trade with all countries and especially with countries outside the Anglo-American bloc.

GOVERNMENT'S CLAIM OF PROSPERITY BELIED

Reviewing the economic conditions of the country and the people, what did the Congress find? It found that the claim of the ruling classes that their economic policies, as embodied in the so-called Five-Year Plan, had led to improvement in the economic conditions of the people, was not borne out by facts of life.

Though the various Ministries quoted figures to show the rise in the indices of production, their own figures of employment exchange and their own admissions had shown that unemployment had been continuously growing in the country and had assumed serious proportions. The fight against unemployment, the struggle to get unemployment relief by lakhs of people showed that life for the masses had not improved.

This unemployment was not merely of the rural poor coming to town. It was positively a product, in a large measure, of the existing employed persons being thrown out of employment by capitalist measures of rationalisation, retrenchment and closure of factories. The Congress noted the fact that despite the Government's promises to take measures to relieve the situation, nothing substantial had been done so far.

In such a situation, it was amazing to find employers and the Government making active preparations to introduce large-scale rationalisation measures in several industries, and particularly in cotton textiles and jute.

While the Government had most callously refused to give unemployment relief of Rs. 50 crores as demanded by the AITUC, it was prepared to advance Rs. 100 crores to the employers to carry out rationalisation which would lead to further unemployment and misery of the workers.

Delegate after delegate came and related how rationalisation and retrenchment was already being carried out in engineering, jute and cotton textiles, in coal mines and plantations, in government departments, in defence industries and even in schools and hospitals, where the pupils per teacher and patients per nurse were being heavily increased.

The Congress noted the fact that these measures were not taken by the employers and the Government because they were suffering losses. In fact, rationalisation was taking place

exactly in those very industries and areas where figures for 1953 show that the employers have reaped more profits than in 1952.

Closures of large-scale establishments were taking place not due to failure of business as such, but due to sheer robbery by and corruption of many of the employers concerned, as was proved in the case of very big factories in Bombay, Banaras, Calcutta and other places.

Only some of the small-scale employers could plead business losses and competition from big houses as the cause of their closures.

Hence the Congress demanded a ban on closures, immediate unemployment relief, ban on rationalisation and utilisation of State funds to help employers in rationalisation measures.

The Congress also protested against the Supreme Court preventing the State from taking over factories which are closing down due to obvious corruption, and demanded that the law and Constitution be suitably amended to permit the State to take over such concerns in the interests of the workers and the people.

Trade unions of all shades of opinion outside the AITUC had also declared against rationalisation, closures and unemployment.

The Congress called upon the workers to forge united struggles on these issues. Fight against hunger and unemployment dominated all thinking and delegates drew lessons from the examples set by the workers in Italy and France, as pointed out in the reports of Comrade Saillant and Di Vittorio at the World Congress of the WFTU.

The employers tried to get the support of the general public in their attack on the wages and working conditions of the workers by saying that rationalisation and reduction in wages would lead to lower prices and enable them to sell the goods for which there was no market at the present prices. It is the duty of trade unions to fight this canard of the employers.

It was shown by examples that in the present conditions, high prices were not due to workers' wages and that cut in wages or rationalisation have not led to cheaper goods for the people or larger markets. High prices today could be brought down only if the hold of the big monopolists over the market and our economy were controlled. Tea prices had risen despite the cut in the workers' wages, and sugar prices were high despite the cut in sugarcane prices paid to the peasants.

The Congress had to point out that the problem of markets could never be solved by looking to foreign exports. Markets

could be found inside the country by relieving the millions of peasant masses from the burden of rent and interest and thus making them prosperous buyers of our factory goods. Radical land reform for peasants and living wages for workers alone could solve the problem of markets.

Hence, the Congress called upon the trade unions to support the peasants in their struggle for land and lower rents and taxes; and the peasantry to help the workers in their fight against the employers.

While thus riveting attention of the workers on the conditions of their life and work, the Congress did not forget to note that our industrial development and many of our industries were cramped due to foreign competition and the fact that the main arteries of our industrial life were in the hands of British capital.

We, therefore, demanded protection to Indian industry from foreign competition and protection to small-scale industry from the competition of the big houses in such a way that our economy is developed further without laying any heavy burdens on the people or by making the rich richer.

STRUGGLES UNITE THE WORKERS

Had the AITUC unions done anything to defend the workers and realise their demands? Had our leadership in the factories made any gains and shown the way to the future?

The delegates felt pride in saying that the AITUC unions had stood by the workers, had led their struggles in many States and many trades and had made gains, though not unaccompanied by some failures also. But the gains were more than failures.

In the last three years they had fought the onslaught of retrenchment and closures, of rationalisation and wage-cuts. They had fought for extracting bonus from the big profiteering employers and had sided with the people in their fight against enhancement of taxes and rates.

By hunger-marches, gheraos, stay-in-strikes and big general strikes, by determined resistance against police atrocities and gangster attacks, attacks by tribunals and courts—innumerable big and small battles had been fought. And in these battles, hundreds of AITUC workers in co-operation with other workers had fought and won, suffered shooting and jails. The story of these struggles is a volume by itself, an indelible record in the memory of our working class.

Who could forget the big Calcutta battle against the enhancement of tramfare by the British company, a battle in which not only workers, but the whole city went on a general

strike, in which even the children played heroes, and ultimately they won?

Who would forget the recent teachers' strike and the gains made by the struggle?

The gheraos of the engineering workers won the Pooja Bonus and put the jute workers into motion.

Lakhs of tea plantation workers fought for restoration of wage-cut and the ameliorative measures of the Plantation Act and got them.

Handloom workers of Madras marched hundreds of miles rousing the countryside and won relief from the Government and friendship from the people.

The one-day general strike of Bombay textile workers against cut in food subsidy and another one against rationisation and firing on the workers on the eve of Independence Day, 1953, slowed down the Government and the employers in their offensive.

The steel workers of Burnpur had set the brightest example in history, in which 15,000 of them, when betrayed and opposed by their union leadership, had established the most democratic organ of struggle by electing an Action Committee straight from each department of the factory. Eight of them fell to the police bullets while defending their democratic rights and wage demands.

The Congress took note of these and many other struggles, as in the Hyderabad and Bihar mines, in the coir and bidi trades of Travancore, Madras, etc., in canal project works of Punjab and Orissa. The battle of the tribunals conducted by the bank employees will remain memorable.

These struggles of the last three years were notable for their tremendous sweep, for the variety of forms they assumed, for the unity that they forged between the workers and other sections of the people. Unity with all people, unity of all organisations, unity of the working class in action was the key note of these struggles.

Disunity in the working class was the diabolical weapon with which ruling classes weakened the workers in their struggle. The division of our trade-union movement into four centres had weakened it very much.

These struggles of the last three years were showing the way to overcome this disunity. In many struggles, the workers established their own united committees for common demand and forced the various national TU leaderships to come on a joint platform to help them. Unity in action from below was the main form of forging unity from above.

And some measure of unity has been achieved on tr

levels. Though the four centres have not united or come together except occasionally, united trade federations, in defence, oil and petroleum, cement, banks, insurance, have come into existence, in which unions in those trades have joined together irrespective of their other affiliations. And such unity has been effective as is shown by the defence workers and bank employees.

Can we then say that these struggles have helped to bring the divided workers nearer to unity? Yes, we can say that. Workers have united in action in their places of work and are moving their central leaderships also to think of unity and act. Unity from below and in action must still remain the main path towards full-fledged unity.

Can we say that these struggles have won gains for the workers and have not been in vain? Yes, we can say that many of the struggles have won wage increases and bonus, have halted, at least temporarily, retrenchments and closures and have moved the Government to think of measures to alleviate the miseries of unemployment.

The legislation to pay compensation for lay-offs and for retrenchment, while leaving to the owners the freedom to retrench, has given some partial relief to the worker. The gains in the Provident Fund law and Sickness Insurance, perforated though by many shortcomings, are the positive fruits of these struggles. Our struggles have not been in vain was what they told.

GOVT.-EMPLOYER ATTACK AGAINST TU RIGHTS

Seeing the growth in the strength of the workers, the successes of their struggles and the growing feelings of unity in the trade-union movement, the Government and the employers are now directing their main offensive against the trade-union rights and democratic liberties of our workers.

It will no longer be an attack on the AITUC unions alone. Wherever workers, under whatever flag, do unite, organise and struggle, their trade-union rights are attacked. Meetings are banned, union offices are seized, workers are imprisoned without trial and tortured, union leaders are victimised and hounded, false cases are framed against hundreds, and whole unions smashed.

Registration to AITUC unions is denied, even arbitration when demanded by us is refused under the law.

The workers of the AITUC are prevented from establishing solidarity with their international brothers. Even at this session, the fraternal delegates wishing to come to India from

other countries were denied visas. Delegates of the AITUC wishing to go abroad are denied passports.

Government officials refuse to give recognition to unions of their own employees and under the threat of dismissals and the Security Rules prevent their employees from joining any democratic activity or organisation.

Innumerable examples of attacks on trade unions, not only of the AITUC but even of the INTUC and HMS, were cited in the Congress. Laws ostensibly made to encourage and protect unions were being used to foment company and government-sponsored unions and to destroy the genuine trade-union movement.

The Congress called upon the workers to defend trade union rights and democratic liberties. The destruction of genuine trade unions and their rights is only a prelude to the destruction of all democratic rights of all people.

The Congress called upon the workers to defend the victimised workers and the persecuted union organisers and leaders who were the special targets of attack at the hands of the employers. To destroy the leadership and behead the whole organisation first and thus disarm and defeat the worker is the game of the ruling classes. This game has got to be foiled. Rally to the defence of the persecuted, to the defence of trade-union rights and democratic liberties was the decision of the Congress.

No doubt the AITUC had advanced in strength and influence, struggles had been fought and some gains made. But were there no shortcomings and failures, errors and mistakes? Yes, there were and many of them.

Some of our people had not shown enough readiness to forge unity in action, when workers acted under other leaderships. Unity was still hampered by political considerations and organisational posts and positions in some cases.

Not enough enthusiasm was being shown in building a united organisation, when the AITUC leaders were in a minority or had no decisive say. Not enough initiative was shown in dealing with specific trade problems and issues and building all-India trade federations, where the workers united more easily and readily, than in central organisations.

Except in strike struggles, not much interest was shown in utilising the existing laws to secure to the worker his rightful benefits. Housing and social work embracing all aspects of the life of the worker such as entertainments, sports, literacy, etc., were no concern yet of the majority of our unions.

Not enough sustained activity was shown to capitalise the gains of struggles to build stable unions, funds, offices, mem-

bership and cadres. Thousands become active in struggles and then are lost.

Except for the Central Trade Union School, no sustained attempts were made to hold schools and give ideological and practical training to trade-union militants. The Centre and the provinces and the unions were not actively alive to each other's needs. Not enough help went to the unions from the Centre and not enough care was taken by the unions to feed the Centre. The experiences of each were not the common inheritance of all.

In some cases not enough alertness was shown to forge links with other masses and the big failure was inability to ally with the struggling peasant masses.

While these failures, no doubt, have affected our work, if one were to ask what is the biggest failure and the key slogan to overcome it, the Congress concluded that the biggest weakness of the trade-union movement is that those who are organised in trade unions of all the four organisations are a very small fraction of the total working force and the unorganised are a vast sea. While the organised initiate and lead struggles, it is the unorganised who decide the final outcome.

Hence the key slogan that emerges is: Go to the workers and tell them to join a union. Join any union you like, but join and be organised. That will move the working class into action, that will unite and organise it and make it a solid force.

Hence the Congress called upon the unions not to be content with its six-lakh membership, but hold the target of ten-lakh membership for the next session a year hence. Fully paid, stable, active, conscious ten-lakh membership will make the AITUC unions victorious champions of the interests of the working class. Defend the victimised and persecuted and organise the unorganised were the resounding slogans of the Congress.

THE APPEAL FOR UNITY

In all these tasks, the Indian working class had the mighty World Federation of Trade Unions, with its eight crore members, as its friend and ally. The Congress was proud to be to the WFTU and through this international organisation declare its solidarity with the workers of the whole world.

Only loyalty to the internationalism of the working class, irrespective of the differences of nationality, race, creed, caste or language, could defeat the game of the capitalists and imperialists to divide the working class of the world and make one section fight another and thus serve its enemy. The Congress noted with gratitude the help given by the international wor-

king class to the Indian trade-union movement and expressed fraternal greetings to the WFTU and the trade unions of the Soviet Union, China, the People's Democracies, France, Italy, Indonesia and other countries.

Having deliberated on all these and the demands in each trade and the tasks of the trade unions in relation to wages and work, unity and organisation, the Congress elected its new leadership. Though the AITUC has many political groups the election of the office-bearers and the Working Committee took place unanimously and took a further step towards unity.

In the end, all the three days of deliberations were summarised and crowned with an Appeal to all the workers in India. In this appeal joined the large number of fraternal delegates and observers, who had come to the session, in response to our fraternal invitation, though many of them belonged to the INTUC, HMS and UTUC unions. Many were there who had no affiliation. All of them joined in this great Appeal to the millions of our working men and women.

And when the musicians and artistes with their various instruments, tunes and dresses merged into one chorus of harmony, the Congress resounded with the last words of the Appeal:

Brother trade unionists of every organisation! We extend to you our hand of fraternal co-operation. Let us eschew all sectarian prejudices against one another, let us help the workers to find their way to unity and victory. Let us pledge that our loyalty to different flags and unions shall never be more precious to us than common loyalty to the exploited worker and his cause!

Forward together!

For security of employment and adequate wages!

For social security and an end to retrenchment and rationalisation!

For trade union rights and democratic liberties!

For peace and freedom!

**LONG LIVE THE UNITY OF THE WORKERS
INDIA!**

PREPARATIONS AND PROCEEDINGS

The 24th Session of the All-India Trade Union Congress was held at Calcutta from 27th to 29th May, 1954. On 30th evening a mass rally was held attended by over 2 lakhs of people to explain the decisions of the Congress.

The 24th Session of the AITUC was meeting after a long interval of 5 years since its 23rd Session held in 1949 in Bombay.

Reviewing the period between the 23rd and the 24th Sessions, S. A. Dange, General Secretary of the AITUC, told the Session that—

“The 24th Session is meeting five years after the last session in 1949 which was held in Bombay. The repression that was launched after that session by the Government and employers against our trade unions and leading workers had made it impossible to hold a session earlier.

“But meeting after five years, the session shows that the AITUC had not been destroyed by the repressive forces. Not only that. It shows by some of its features that the AITUC has made advances in many fields.”

The same point was also stressed in the Presidential Speech of Chakkarai Chettiar. He said:

“It is only in the beginning of 1952 that our unions after a long period of suppression, including total ban on many of our unions, have been able to revive and very soon they have been activated. I must say to the credit of our unions that we have recovered much sooner than might have been expected, from the terrific repression the workers faced and the large-scale victimisation that took place in this period, particularly of TU activists.”

On the revival and activation of the affiliated unions and also of the provincial centres the urgency of calling the session came to the forefront. In its meeting in August 1953, the Working Committee of the AITUC decided to call the session in the early part of 1954 and the Bengal TUC was requested to undertake the task of holding the session. The General Secretary issued a circular in the middle of January proposing the session at the end of April. But on account of

the preparations, etc., that were to be made for May Day many of the TUCs suggested postponement. The arrests etc. on account of teachers' strike in Calcutta also called for a postponement. Hence during the third week of March the final date to hold the session from 27th May at Calcutta was communicated to provincial centres and affiliated unions. While communicating this decision and asking them to prepare for the session the General Secretary in his circular to all the PTUCs and the unions had asked "to publicise the session before factory gates, in meetings, through pamphlets and trade-union papers of the provinces" and also "to ask all workers irrespective of union membership or affiliations to send delegates or observers to the session as the AITUC session is not only of the AITUC-affiliated unions but of all." It was with this in view that the preparations were made for the session. A Preparatory Committee of 60, including the members of the Working Committee of Bengal Provincial TUC, was formed on March 21, 1954, in a meeting of the representatives of the trade unions in Calcutta. The Preparatory Committee also appointed different Sub-Committees such as Finance, Propaganda and Organisation, Pandal and Accommodation, Press and Publicity, etc. At the start on behalf of the Preparatory Committee 40,000 leaflets in Bengali, Hindi, Urdu and Oriya were distributed in Calcutta.

For popularisation and preparation of the session the Central Office published three issues of a special bulletin. The first bulletin contained an appeal entitled "AITUC Appeals to all men and women workers, young and old, skilled and unskilled workers in all industries, trades and professions" signed by the President, V. Chakkarai Chettiar, four Vice-Presidents, S. S. Mirajkar, Satyapriya Bannerjee, S. S. Yusuf, Bhagwan Thorat, and the General Secretary, S. A. Dange. The appeal invited all workers "who are in the unions of the AITUC or in the unions of other central organisations or in no unions at all" because "we want the representatives of the whole working class in India to meet irrespective of political or organisational differences and to deliberate on the worsening conditions in which it lives and works at present and the future that awaits it. Such a great united rally of all that is best, tried and tested in the trade-union movement is necessary at this juncture, because the ruling classes and the employers have in recent days attacked our wages and working conditions, our trade-union and democratic rights and are aiming at further offensives."

The appeal categorically stated that "united thinking, united action can halt the offensive of the employers as was recently seen in many areas and trades as for example in tea,

coal, teachers, etc. United struggle does win. Not everywhere is the story of set-backs. Therefore we must take the correct road to victory." The appeal ended with the request to all "men and women delegates, observers and friends" to come to the session "to plan peace, to defend our right to work and living, and trade-union and democratic rights, our country's freedom and sovereignty."

The bulletin also contained instructions from the General Secretary "to all State Committees and affiliated unions", and also to all trade-union secretaries and functionaries to popularise the session and make preparations for it.

Through the third bulletin drafts of some important resolutions to be placed before the session such as on unemployment, on rationalisation, on social security, on industrial housing, on working women, on railwaymen's demands, on French and Portuguese possessions in India, on peace, on defence industry workers, on motor transport workers, on teachers, were circulated for prior discussion.

This prior circulation of the drafts of the important resolution of the session for discussion among the workers evoked great interest and enthusiasm even among workers who were not members of the AITUC unions. Hence at many centres, especially in the city of Calcutta, workers straight from the mills, factories, offices, etc., came and discussed these resolutions and put forward their suggestions with the feeling that the findings of the session will not be confined to the views and experience of the members of the AITUC but that of all participating workers. And in Calcutta alone the Reception Committee had sold 5000 copies of draft resolutions in English and other languages.

This feeling of the mass of workers was evidenced not only from the discussion the workers had on the resolutions but also from the enthusiastic cooperation and participation of thousands of workers in the Preparatory Committee to make the arrangements for the session.

The working class of Calcutta really made the Congress their own. The engineering workers, tramway workers, bus workers, jute workers of Hoogly, Howrah, etc., the Titaghur Paper Mill workers, the middle class employees—all collected money and helped in person to make the arrangements for the session. One of the outstanding instances is that of the workers of Jaya Engineering Works. These workers collected by doing overtime work Rs. 1,101 and contributed to the session. And in honour of these workers the Congress presented them with a Banner. The Indian Fan workers collected two annas from each worker. All the fans for the session were secured by the workers free of cost. The Titaghur Paper

workers collected and contributed Rs. 300 towards the session. While greeting the session, Nagina, representative of the Paper Mill Workers' Union, thanked the AITUC for the support it had given to their prolonged struggle. The middle class employees from offices in the Chowringhee and Dalhousie Square area collected and contributed Rs. 3000.

Mass enrolment of members of the Reception Committee was enthusiastically undertaken by the workers. The response that was received from the workers and employees could be seen from the following figures.

Out of a total of 7,000 Reception Committee members 4,500, i.e. 64.3%, were workers, 2,000, i.e. 28.6%, were office employees and only 500, i.e. 7.1%, were from other sections of the people.

The Reception Committee's total collections for the session amounted to Rs. 18,428-6-0.

1,40,000 workers donated for the Conference out of which 65,000 purchased two-anna coupons and 45,000 donated small coins from one pice to one anna. This was possible on account of the intensive campaign conducted in popularising the session. In West Bengal alone over 2000 meetings, street corner meetings, gate meetings and *bustee* meetings were held covering more than 7,00,000 workers.

To the success of the session the Reception Committee received help from various organisations. The Kashi Viswanath Seva Samiti provided free supply of drinking water during the entire session. The People's Relief Committee gave all medical help. The Proprietors of Bangabasi and Khalsa Colleges, Digambar Jain Dharmashala and Phulchand Dharmashala provided accommodation for delegates. Help was received from the Calcutta Corporation. Hundreds of men and women volunteers, day and night worked for the success of the conference.

The 24th Session of the AITUC was held from 27th May 1954 in a huge and spacious pandal, the biggest to be seen erected in recent years in the city of Calcutta with a sitting capacity for over 10,000 people.

According to the report of the Credential Committee submitted to the session, the total number of affiliated unions of the AITUC was 937 with a total membership of 6,55,940. And to the session had come 825 delegates representing 295 unions with an aggregate membership of 3,21,932. Besides these regular delegates, 65 fraternal delegates and 5 observers representing 41 unions with a membership of 42,005 attended and participated in the session. Among these were representatives from unions

affiliated to the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS), the United Trade Union Congress (UTUC) and independent unions and federations.

On 27th, 28th and 29th the delegates' session, attended on an average by five to ten thousand visitors, was held. On 30th evening a mass rally was held attended by over 2 lakhs of workers and other sections of people. The rally was presided over by the Vice-President of the AITUC, S. S. Mirajkar. It was addressed by S. A. Dange, General Secretary, and Satya-priya Bannerjee, Ranen Sen and Haldulkar—all Vice-Presidents of the AITUC. Before the rally, workers from various localities had marched to the maidan with flags and festoons. Large number of women participated in these processions.

Every night during the session and also in the public rally cultural programmes were performed by the Bengal Branch of the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA). One of the special features was the orchestra played by the talented artistes of His Master's Voice Workers' Union, affiliated to the INTUC. The union also had donated Rs. 200 towards the success of the session.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SESSION

On 27th with the Flag Hoisting Ceremony by the Vice-President of the AITUC, S. S. Mirajkar, the session began at 8-30 a.m. After Flag Salutation, homage was paid to the numerous working-class martyrs, who had fallen victims in defence of the rights and privileges of the workers, by laying wreaths on the beautifully-erected Martyrs' Tomb.

Thereafter the proceedings of the session began. Satya-priya Bannerjee, Chairman of the Reception Committee, welcoming the delegates, fraternal delegates and visitors etc., said: "The response that we received at the hands of the workers and employees of Calcutta was unique. I cannot find words to express this unique response, the magnificent enthusiasm that we saw in them when we approached them for funds and other help." He also told the session the great response the Reception Committee received from various organisations and also from the citizens of Calcutta. He ended his speech emphasising that "the task that confronts us cannot be fulfilled unless we are able to forge a united trade-union movement. We have to strive for it because that is our fundamental aim."

Due to ill-health the President of the AITUC, V. Chakka-

rai Chettiar, could not attend the session. In his absence the senior-most Vice-President, S. S. Mirajkar, presided. Presiding over the session Mirajkar said that Chakkarai Chettiar, though unable to be present at the session, had sent his written Presidential Address and that he would read out the speech.

After the Presidential Speech was read, messages received from the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions of USSR, All-China Federation of Trade Unions, and many other fraternal working-class organisations of Europe and Asia were read out amidst repeated cheers and applause. Messages were also read from N. M. Joshi, and from the United Trade Union Congress, the Bank Employees' Federation, Union of Post and Telegraphs, the All-India Kisan Sabha, and many others.

After the messages were read resolutions were moved from the Chair paying homage to numerous working-class martyrs and also expressing condolence on the sad demise of Shanta Mukerjee, Vice-President, and S. V. Deshpande, ex-General Secretary of the AITUC, and Hariharnath Shastri and R. S. Ruikar of the INTUC and the HMS respectively.

After the condolence resolutions, on the proposal of the General Secretary, the session appointed a Resolution Committee of 17 with K. T. K. Thangamani as Convenor. It also appointed a Credential Committee of 5 with K. P. Gopalan as Convenor. The session also passed a resolution authorising the Working Committee to affiliate unions with a membership of below 250 on payment of Rs. 10 and unions with membership between 250 and 500 on payment of Rs. 15 as affiliation fees notwithstanding the relevant clauses in the Constitution of the AITUC.

The evening session started with the opening of an exhibition by S. S. Mirajkar. The Reception Committee had arranged an exhibition depicting the life and struggles of workers with photos, charts, posters, etc. It provided an opportunity for thousands of workers to see, through pictures, the struggles of the tramway workers and teachers and also the working and living conditions of different sections of workers in India as well as that of other countries, especially the Soviet Union, China, etc.

After the opening of the exhibition, S. A. Dange, General Secretary of the AITUC submitted his report to the session.

The Report was discussed by the delegates.

Ramanarain Upadhyaya (UP), Shrinivas Misra (Orissa), K. K. Warriar (T-C State), Abdul Rezak (Gujarat), Haldul-

kar (MP), were some of the representative speakers from the provinces.

After the discussions the session asked the General Secretary to finalise his report in the light of the discussion.

The first resolution that was taken up by the session was on peace, moved by Makhdoom Mohiuddin. In moving the resolution he stressed the existing danger of war today and the urgent necessity to strengthen the forces of peace. He pointed out how the working class stands to be benefited by peace and peaceful development of industry and also how the struggle for peace is closely linked with our day-to-day struggle for better working and living conditions. The resolution was carried unanimously.

On 28th the session started at 12-30 p.m. S. S. Yusuf, Vice-President of the AITUC, presided over the session.

The resolution on French and Portuguese possessions moved by Govind Rajan (Tamil Nad) was supported by K. P. Gopalan (Malabar) and Chitre (Bombay).

In moving the resolution Govind Rajan said that the trade unions in Pondicherry could not send delegates to the session due to heavy repression going on there. He said that the working class in French India stood at the head of the liberation movement and that they expect the full support of the working class of India in the struggle.

K. P. Gopalan said that two working-class leaders of the AITUC were shot dead by the French in Mahe. He said that "if the Government of India takes a positive attitude to the freedom movement, the people of Pondicherry, Mahe and other pockets will themselves surely get rid of the French imperialists." Chitre placed before the session the terrific repression let loose by the authorities in Goa against the Goan people and asked for the full support of the entire working class to the liberation movement.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

The next resolution which was moved before the session and debated by a large number of delegates was on unemployment. The resolution was moved by Raj Bahadur Gour (Hyderabad) and supported by Satyapal Dang (Punjab), Satyanarayana (Andhra), Gulabrao Ganacharya (Bombay), Ramani (Tamil Nad), Krishnan (T-C State), Sushil Bose (Bengal), Hemen Ghosh (Bengal), Sakir Ali (Bhopal), Suryanarayan Rao (Karnatak). All the speakers gave vivid descriptions of the extremely grave unemployment situation in the country and asked all the workers to conduct united strug-

gles to prevail upon the Government to ease the unemployment situation and give unemployment relief.

The importance the whole session attached to this burning issue could be seen from the large number of amendments tabled and the scores of delegates eager to speak on it. With a view to finish the session according to schedule the President had to request only the representative speakers from each province. Out of over 50 amendments many were accepted by the resolution committee.

One of the amendments debated and rejected by the session was the one moved by M. N. Bose (Calcutta) demanding "nationalisation of key and heavy industries as well as bank, insurance, transport and plantations, should be given immediate effect to in order to obtain partial relief in respect of the terrible problem of unemployment."

After discussion this amendment was put before the session and was rejected and the resolution as amended by the resolution committee was passed.

The next resolution that came before the session and was passed was on housing moved by Jagannath Sirkar (Bihar) supported by N. N. Manna (Delhi).

The resolution on rationalisation was moved by K. K. Warriar (T-C State) and seconded by Homi Daji (MB). A large number of delegates spoke on this resolution condemning the schemes of rationalisation, carried on by the employers and the Government, resulting in large-scale retrenchment and increase of work-load.

One of the most important speeches on this resolution, which evoked thunderous applause at the session, was that of Sunil Panna, a fraternal delegate from the WIMCO Union affiliated to INTUC. He said "that the sale of WIMCO matches has not come down. Nor has the price. Yet under the plea of economic crisis the management is resorting to rationalisation and increase of work-load, thus throwing out hundreds of workers. We are on strike to resist this attack." He also said that when he went to other workers requesting them to support their struggle some of them remarked that yours is an INTUC union, the Government is yours, why not go to your own Government. "I told them that even if the Government is mine, when it attacks the workers, I will oppose and fight. Hence in this common fight of the workers against the attacks of the employers all workers could and should unite."

Another fraternal delegate, Munshi Narayan, from Delhi Cloth Mill United Committee told the session how work-load

is being constantly increased by the employers and the workers are resisting it.

Akbar Ansari, another delegate from jute industry, told the session that in his mill since 1943 to 53, 1,300 workers were retrenched. He also told how united action could stop the offensive of the employers. Recalling an experience of united action he said that when a *Durwan* was given notice of retrenchment in his mill, united demonstrations and meetings by the AITUC and INTUC unions forced the employers to withdraw the notice.

The resolution was carried.

The resolution on social security was moved by G. Sundaram (Bombay). It was supported by Satyanarayan Reddi (Hyderabad), Arvind Ghoshal (Bengal), Haldulkar (MP), Ghanashyam and Asaram (Delhi).

Dr. Majumdar of Calcutta Medical Association, an independent organisation interested in the sickness insurance scheme, speaking on this subject, told the session that the Government is trying to create the impression that the medical profession is not cooperating and demands too much to be of service to the workers. This is totally wrong. It is only the unrealistic approach of the Government that has complicated the scheme. The medical profession is fully aware of its responsibilities towards the workers and is always prepared to serve as best as they could.

The resolution on working women was moved by Shantaram Pai (S. Kanara) and supported by Anokhi Gupta (Bengal), Valli Ammal (Tuticorin textiles), and Usman Bibi (Calcutta jute).

Valli Ammal told the session the disabilities suffered by women workers and asked the trade unions to give special attention to the problem of working women.

Usman Bibi made one of the most spirited speeches of the session. Giving instance of the fighting experience of women workers she said that unless the women workers are made to move along with the male workers in defence of their rights, the struggles of the working class cannot be successful.

The resolution on trade-union rights was moved by Raj Bahadur Gour (Hyderabad) and supported by Md. Ismail (Calcutta) and Swami Kumaranand (Rajasthan). The speakers gave innumerable instances of the mounting attacks on the rights of the trade unions, including dismissals, framing of false charges on TU workers, posting of police near the machines in factories and mills, banning of trade-union meetings, etc. The resolution on industrial relations was moved by Homi Daji, supported by Raj Bahadur Gour.

The resolution on the trade-union press was moved by G. Sundaram. All the resolutions were carried unanimously.

One of the most important documents that came up before the session was the *Appeal to all workers on trade-union unity*, moved by Indrajit Gupta (Bengal), supported by Ajit Biswas (Bengal) and Makhdoom Mqhiuddin (Hyderabad). It enjoins all workers and trade unions to unite in common action to defend the workers' interests. The appeal was adopted amidst continuous applause.

The session amidst thunderous applause passed the resolution moved from the Chair greeting the Congress of Soviet Trade Unions; expressing solidarity with the WFTU, recording thanks for hospital aid rendered by the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian trade unions.

It also passed the resolution condemning the policy of discrimination adopted by the Government of India and other State Governments in giving passports to AITUC delegations to go abroad and visas to representatives of the WFTU and national centres affiliated to it to come to India.

In between the regular sessions, a number of trade groups such as textiles, plantations, miners, cement, dock and port, etc., met and discussed their special resolutions and common problems. These resolutions were adopted by the session.

Next the elections of the Office Bearers and the General Council took place. During the elections only the AITUC delegates participated. The office bearers including V. Chakkarai Chettiar as President and S. A. Dange as General Secretary, and a General Council of 99 members were elected by the session. The new General Council co-opted 11 members thus bringing to total strength of the General Council to 110. The General Council also elected 18 members to the Working Committee leaving 2 seats to be filled up later. The session also unanimously passed a resolution authorising the General Council to elect not more than ten members to the Working Committee in addition to 20 provided in the Constitution.

SUMMING UP

After the elections were over the General Secretary, S. A. Dange, summed up the achievement of the Session and pointed out the outstanding conclusions and tasks as follows:

“What have we achieved in this session?”

“What we have seen in the course of these various preparations for this session is the unity of the workers at the bot-

tom. Irrespective of their political affiliation, workers have come forward and given their contribution. This unity has been shown in the various struggles of the workers against retrenchment, unemployment, for bonus, etc.

“The thousands of militants who have been thrown up by these struggles should be organised and we should go ahead in organising the unorganised sections of workers taking this as our capital. Therein lies our future success.

“Those who thought five years ago that by means of the Detention Act and by letting loose repression on our unions, they would be able to crush our organisation, are now seeing that the AITUC has not been suppressed. On the other hand, we have gone ahead to hold our 24th Session right here, after five years.

“The people used to say—what about your Congress? What is your membership? You want our membership? Count the people here and count the membership represented here by them. Our membership is over six and a half lakhs. Not only that. There are several thousands outside who are with them, who fight unitedly with them in their day-to-day struggles. In the course of battles these ranks do not depreciate from 6 lakhs to 600 but they grow in the course of these battles.

“Ours is a vast country. To hold the Congress of a workers’ organisation in such a country which stretches over 2,000 miles is not an easy job. It costs a lot in money for the workers to travel all this distance and come to a meeting. In spite of this, workers have come in hundreds, spending money, and met here in this session.

“People ask—how many workers were represented at this Congress? Tell them that here are represented 3,20,000 workers, which is 50 per cent of the membership of the AITUC. In which other Congress is 50 per cent of the membership represented? This is a great achievement of this session.

“What have we done at this session? We have evolved a new leadership of our organisation. We have taken stock of the past and putting the perspective clear before us, we have elected our leadership which will lead us in the coming struggles. That is the organisational leadership—constituting the General Council and the Working Committee. It is this leadership which will run the AITUC and lead the various trade unions.

“From the report and criticisms made on it we have come to realise that we must function our organisation properly. Keeping this criticism in view, the new leadership will make

all efforts to improve the functioning of our organisation and take us ahead.

"Yesterday, we had told the fraternal delegates that they should not come in the closed session today from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. when we would be electing the members of the Working Committee and the General Council. Our enemies took this to mean that there was a great amount of disunity amongst us. They hoped that there may be clashes amongst us. But their hopes have been belied. They have been proved mistaken. We finished the elections by 4 o'clock without any such clash. Those who were expecting a clash and split—the Government and our enemies—all of them have been disappointed at the smooth way in which we have conducted this election. We comrades here—having different political opinions and belonging to different political parties—sat together and decided to have a united leadership for the AITUC, which will maintain the unity of the workers in their struggles irrespective of their differing political opinions.

"We have to carry this unity forward. If we could sit together and resolve these differences and come to unanimous decisions in six hours time, then I am sure if we sit with the INTUC and its leadership for a longer time, we will be able to achieve unity with them also.

"Taking this unity forward in the actions that lie ahead, we will be able to take the working class forward.

"Today ours is an organisation with a membership of over six and a half lakhs. What is the leadership of this organisation going to do? The 825 delegates who have come here should resolve to mobilise at least 10 militants behind each of them; that will give us 8,000 militants for the AITUC. With these militants surely our organisation will be able to go ahead.

"We cannot rest content with this six and a half lakh membership only. A majority of the workers are today outside any trade-union organisation. Our slogan for the coming period should be to raise the membership of the AITUC to 10 lakhs by the time of the next session. This is what we have to achieve in organisation.

"We have had many difficulties in the past. We have also committed mistakes sometimes in our attitude to other organisations. But again and again we have corrected our mistakes and offered the others our hand of unity. The HMS and the UTUC have again and again rejected this offer of unity from our end.

"We have to fight for unity from the bottom. But while carrying on this fight, we should not claim ourselves to be the only spokesmen of the working class. This approach should

be given up. Our offers for unity to the HMS, UTUC and others were not without their effects. They have often forced the leaderships of these organisations to change their tone.

“What is our greatest achievement in this period? We have seen that even those who are not with us and who do not agree with us on many issues are coming to unite with us in the course of struggles. We should take this unity forward and go ahead. The fight for unity is a very hard and long battle. We of the AITUC face our biggest problem with the INTUC and HMS as to how to conduct ourselves in our dealings with them. And in this regard we have been found lagging behind many a time. We are facing this problem on the railways. The top leadership of the Indian National Railwaymen’s Federation does not allow our comrades to work in their unions. We have to solve this problem and find ways of working among railwaymen. This is not the problem in the railway workers alone—it is there in other industries also.

“You cannot achieve unity by mere shouting. The working class today has come to the realisation that even if the central organisations do not unite, they should unite in their respective trades. They have come to the slogan—let us unite in trade federations which will not be affiliated to any of the central organisations. They have got such trade federations in several industries—petroleum, banks, insurance, defence, etc. Our General Council will have to consider ways and means of co-operating with them.

“The General Council will also have to plan out how to carry on the fight against victimisation, retrenchment, unemployment, etc. How to utilise the existing legislation to the advantage of the workers? We will have to fight against such Acts as the B.I.D. Act.

“All this will require unity. We must have our eye on the *neutral worker* whom we should try to bring with us in action.

“Retrenchment comes in different ways in different industries. If the trade groups do not know how it affects each of them, we will not be able to do anything to defend the workers. We will, therefore, have to hold trade conferences of the different industries. The Working Committee will have to plan the holding of such conferences. It will have to study their problems—the problems of the textile industry, engineering industry and so on—and give appropriate slogans for each trade on an all-India basis. Only then we will be able to bring in the neutral worker with us in this fight. I have not enough time to say anything more.

“Unity is our key slogan; struggle in defence of the rights of the workers is the way through which it is achieved. And

we shall be able to build unity if we fight on the side of the workers.

“Remember the victimised worker. Several workers have paid with their lives before the working class could win the demands it has got today. Who constitute a large part of our trade-union organisers? It is these victimised workers who have been subjected to severe hardships. The employers’ axe first falls on them. They seek another employment in the same place and if they do not, go to another place, with their whole family. And there they start union work and the whole process begins again.

“The employers attack the trade-union organisers precisely in order to deprive the working class of its militant leadership. We have to unite to fight against this attack.

“There are cases pending against several of our union workers. Money is required for their defence in the courts. Of course, the WFTU is with you in giving whatever aid it can from time to time. But we also have to collect funds and organise defence of these comrades. It is our bounden duty to stand by them.”

PRESIDENTIAL SPEECH OF V. CHAKKARAI CHETTIAR

Dear Comrades,

I cannot express to you adequately my deep regret and disappointment at not being able to attend the Conference and take part in the proceedings. My present state of health does not permit me to undertake a trip to Calcutta.

However, I am sending this short message. It is to be regarded not as a speech but as a statement containing my greetings to comrades and my views on the present situation concerning labour and our organisation in particular. I am also suggesting what should be our immediate policy.

The General Secretary will place before you facts and figures as regards the present position of AITUC and its activities, both at the centre and in the provinces. I shall content myself with offering you a few impressions that I have gathered out of my experience in the South, particularly in Tamil Nad.

It is only in the beginning of 1952 that our unions, after a long period of suppression including total ban on many of our unions, have been able to revive and very soon they were activated. I must say to the credit of our unions that we have recovered much sooner than might have been expected, from the terrific repression the workers faced and the large-scale victimisation that took place in this period, particularly of all our TU activists.

This has strengthened my conviction that our organisation has a firm hold on the loyalty of the rank and file of the mass of workers in our country. The reason for this attachment to our organisation is that the rank and file of workers is conscious that we will support its demands without reservation and will not betray the cause of labour to employers and government for any consideration, however tempting and attractive it may be. It is also felt by workers that the leaders of the organisation whom they have deliberately elected are actuated not by personal motives of self-aggrandisement but they are motivated by one absorbing desire to advance the interests of labour and protect their fundamental rights. So long as our leaders work on these lines, so long also our orga-

nisation will go on adding fresh laurels and maintain its hold on the loyalty and allegiance of workers.

Leaders of our unions have consistently and courageously abstained from dividing the ranks of labour even in the face of gravest provocation. On many occasions, owing to the disruptive activities of rival trade-union leaders and certain political parties, workers have been strongly tempted to start rival unions. But our leaders had said to their credit "We shall not succumb to provocation, nor shall we yield to temptation."

We have utilised every available opportunity for bringing together trade-union leaders of several political views on the same platform and for rallying the ranks of labour irrespective of their trade-union or political affiliations in a common struggle for the defence of workers' interests. On such occasions, we have formulated resolutions acceptable to all as far as possible and speakers at these meetings and rallies were selected, irrespective of their trade-union affiliations.

We have also tried to co-operate with other organisations and leaders in discussions with government officials, labour ministers, in adjudication courts, on committees of enquiry and in tripartite conferences. I shall mention here one instance in which I was personally concerned. Government of Madras instituted a Textile Enquiry Committee to enquire into and report on various issues concerning conditions of labour in the various textile mills in the Madras State. On this committee I was appointed as one representing the unions affiliated to AITUC. Leaders of INTUC and HMS were also represented on the committee. On every issue, where divergence of opinion was apparent, I strove my best to overcome these differences and get HMS and INTUC representatives present a common front. It is no doubt true that in evolving this unity, a good deal of compromise had to be gone through. But the unanimity of the labour representatives had its effect on other members of the committee and whatever advantageous recommendations have been made by the committee are due to this unanimity among the labour representatives.

It is another thing that these recommendations have not been implemented by the managements during the last one year. Government, of course, took shelter under the plea that after all it is an enquiry committee and its recommendations are not binding on anybody.

In this connection, I cannot but refer here to the fact that a large number of adjudication awards which are favourable to workers have not been implemented by employers, who have openly flouted the law. The various State Governments have repeatedly pointed out that they cannot compel manage-

ments to implement these awards beyond filing prosecutions in courts, which could result after all in the imposition of fines of a few hundred rupees on the managements. When we demand that on such occasions, the Government should take over the management of these concerns, we get the reply from the Government that law does not allow such a course. This is a strange reply from the Government who, if they were inclined to do so, could any day bring in legislation allowing them to take over management in such cases and having passed a legislation overnight.

The most notable, if not notorious, instance is that of the Madras Electric Tramways, which has ceased to function, throwing out of employment hundreds of workers. Stoppage of tramway services in a city like Madras has caused and is still causing considerable inconvenience to the general public, not to speak of the unemployment to the tramway workers. The Government, in spite of protests from the public and trade unions, has not so far chosen to take over the trams and run them.

All these things have confirmed my opinion and I want to state it without any reservation. I say both at the Centre and in the States, the policy towards labour has not altered a bit, in spite of numerous declarations to the contrary by so-called responsible leaders and Ministers. Here, I want to acknowledge the fact that the representatives of labour, both in the Union Parliament and in the State Legislatures have been fighting for the cause of labour in face of thickest opposition from the Government. All honour and glory to them and our devout wishes that they will continue this fight without flagging till the aims of labour are realised.

In this connection, I shall advert to the oft-repeated declarations of the Labour Minister in the Union Parliament and ex-labour leader, Mr. V. V. Giri, that adjudications will not benefit the TU movement and negotiations and agreements between labour and the industry must take its place. What the Labour Minister forgets is that labour in this country does not enjoy the right of collective bargaining. Without ensuring this right and not making a caricature of it as it is being done in the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, all talk of adjustment of relations by means of negotiations is a fraud and deception of workers and the public. To what extent the proposed bill regulating industrial relations will go towards solving this root problem of industrial relations, remains to be seen. One thing is very certain: if the proposed bill is nothing more than a rehash of the 1951 Bill, known as the Black Bill, and attempts in a meek way to impose upon the working class unions the fascist model, the entire Indian

working class will resist and such a bill will face with the same fate as the 1951 Black Bill met with.

Experience has shown that the Government has always thrown itself on the side of employers. Unless the Government gives up this attitude, no negotiations will succeed.

Today, even the imperfect provisions of the existing Industrial Disputes Act are not fully carried out. We know that even while adjudication proceedings are pending, the *status quo* is not maintained by managements and victimisation of trade unionists is resorted to, in order to compel trade unions either to withdraw their demands altogether from the adjudication tribunals or to lower their demands.

From all the existing signs, it is clear to me that deliberate and concerted attacks will soon be launched on trade-union and fundamental rights. It behoves us all to stand as sentinels on the walls and take warning betimes. We have to prepare to repel all such threats and invasions of our long-cherished and dearly won trade-union rights and privileges. I appeal to all affiliated unions and members, to the entire working class and to all trade unions to close up their ranks and stand united in this hour of peril.

It is quite possible that legislations disguised as blessings and meant for the good of labour will be introduced, but which, in actual practice, confine our fundamental rights within very narrow limits. Hence, the necessity for vigilance and unity of action in trade-union centres.

Therefore, I am emphasising at great length the importance of unity and solidarity. I am appealing not only to the industrial labour but also to the middle-class employees such as those working in banks, oil companies, insurance companies and other companies. One must on no account allow the most important of our rights to be snatched or abridged, namely, the right to strike. If this weapon is snatched away from our hands or curtailed in any way, we shall be left without adequate safeguards. I, therefore, warn the AITUC to be prepared to defend this right against any measures that may be introduced by the Government and which might threaten this right in any manner. As this is the only powerful weapon in the armoury of labour, we must guard it with the greatest care. Of course, when I say this, I am not giving a handle to our enemies to say that we shall resort to this weapon on any and every occasion. It is a matter of common knowledge that our unions and leaders have been very cautious in invoking the aid of this weapon for defending and promoting the interests of the working class. It is only after all other means have failed to move the employers that a strike is usually undertaken. Strike involves considerable

suffering, reducing the workers and their families to the verge of starvation. I am confident, therefore, that this right to strike will seldom be abused.

I believe that unity is the foundation of the trade-union movement and the strike weapon its chief cornerstone. To use a figure of speech from Bible, I must say that upon these foundations alone can the revolutionary socialist movement be built. We individuals and trade unions are but the living stones of this grand edifice that will grow in the course of years into a living temple for the habitation of all the future generations of humanity. We have been saying time and again that we have achieved political freedom. But the political freedom will be worth little if parallel to it, labour does not achieve economic democracy and freedom. It is in this direction that we have to re-orientate our policy and activities.

One of the most insidious dangers that has confronted the labour movement today is from the much-lauded rationalisation schemes accompanied by retrenchment of labour. It is equally well-known that these schemes of retrenchment and rationalisation are used as weapons of terror for victimisation of trade-union activists and for attacking the standards of living and conditions of service of employed workers.

The AITUC has declared in unmistakable language that no rationalisation resulting in such retrenchment and victimisation will ever be supported by labour but will be resisted at all points with all the united strength which it can command.

In many industries such rationalisation schemes are being secretly and slowly undertaken already, resulting in considerable retrenchment.

The only justification for honest rationalisation is increased productivity. But if on the other hand, its obvious effect is retrenchment of labour, it cannot obviously be designated as rationalisation but irrationalisation.

The declared aims of the Government and the authors of the Government's Five-Year Plan are aimed at increased production and increased purchasing capacity of workers. If these conditions cannot be fulfilled, any national planning is bound to increase unemployment and distress. The available capital in the hands of capitalists should be used not for this kind of rationalisation in existing industries but for starting new industries—particularly the basic industries, and provide employment for all labour.

At present, our trade unions are obliged to confine their activities to the bare minimum of safeguarding the existing rights and living conditions. I feel that the time has come for a wider vision of trade-union activities which must embrace spheres of education and social welfare. It is only then that

our labour movement will be firmly rooted in the class. In order to do this, the financial resources of our unions will have to be multiplied many-fold. We must fight for statutory recognition being given by the Government to such activities by trade unions. In the Soviet Union and People's Republic of China and other democracies, trade unions are recognised as an integral part of the social, political, and economic life of the country. We must insist on the Government accepting our demand that trade unions must be consulted and have their full voice in all matters affecting our national life, such as national planning, social reconstruction, etc.

At present, we have the tripartite conferences where capital, labour and Government sit together and confer and seek agreement on particular questions. My experience has been that these tripartite committees or conferences are more *bi-partite* than *tri-partite*, because, on several occasions, I have found that both the representatives of the Government and the employers join hands in an unholy alliance against labour. This state of things is, I am afraid, going to continue for a long time, unless we make it clear to the Government and capital that labour will not co-operate in the carrying out of any scheme in the evolvment of which it has no effective voice.

Another matter which engages increasingly the time and talents of unions and their leaders, is the labour policy in the wider political and economic field. At one time, in Britain too, political action by trade unions was not held in high favour and the judgement in the Court of law denounced political action by trade unions. This led to a crisis in trade-union movement. But the organised strength of the working class forced the Parliament to introduce legislation authorising and sanctioning political activity by trade unions. Today, the trade-union movement in Britain is the strongest political organisation of the Labour Party. I am not saying all this with a view to upholding the British Labour Party as a model for us.

But even so, our trade unions will have to undertake responsibility of political action in the coming days, as for example, during the general elections to the legislatures.

I am going to conclude these brief remarks and all I have to say can be put in two words: *ORGANISE* and *UNITE*. Organisation and more organisation, together with united moves will accelerate our progress and crown our efforts with success. It may be that we are now treading a flat monotonous place with painful and weary steps. But our goal is on the mountain tops where labour shall be rewarded with its proper dues and shall not bow its heads in humble submission.

to imposed authority and rule. This goal has inspired not only the dreams but the activities of toilers ever since the human spirit glimpsed a new order. Today, it is no longer a dream but a reality for over one-third of humanity. What our brothers in the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China and other countries have achieved, we, in the rest of the world, can surely achieve. We shall cherish them and unceasingly work for them. Today, in India, the political freedom we have won has to be preserved and protected and enriched with the achievement of contentment and happiness for all. While doing so, let us not forget the wider problems facing us in common with the rest of humanity. Dark anti-human forces of imperialism and fascism are seeking to bring back the reign of brutal forces and impose colonial bondage on the whole of humanity. They threaten humanity with fiendish weapons of atom and hydrogen bombs. The AITUC has nobly responded to the call and made it abundantly clear that labour in India will not suffer these dark forces to triumph and trample underfoot human brotherhood and the noblest achievements of human endeavour.

Already signs of weakening of the imperialist forces in face of a volley of world opinion are seen. This great upsurge of Indian labour, both urban and rural, has made its own voice heard from New Delhi to Washington, New York, Moscow and Peking. Let us go forward with this good work which will end in the materialisation of our cherished hopes.

LONG LIVE AITUC!

INQUILAB ZINDABAD!

GREETINGS TO THE SESSION

From Louis Saillant, General Secretary, World Federation of Trade Unions

IMPOSSIBLE TO TAKE PART WITH ITS REPRESENTATIVES IN THE WORK OF YOUR 24TH SESSION. WFTU SENDS ON BEHALF OF 80 MILLION MEMBERS WARM FRATERNAL GREETINGS. WFTU WISHES YOU SUCCESS AND EXPRESSES TO YOU ITS CONVICTION THAT STRENGTHENING UNITED ACTION AND TRADE UNION UNITY WILL ENSURE FURTHER SUCCESS IN THE STRUGGLES OF INDIAN WORKERS AGAINST REPRESSION AND UNEMPLOYMENT, FOR BETTER LIVING CONDITIONS, FOR TRADE UNION RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATIC LIBERTIES AND FOR FRIENDSHIP AND LASTING PEACE BETWEEN PEOPLES OF THE WHOLE WORLD.

From All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, USSR

ALL UNION CENTRAL COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS SENDS FRATERNAL GREETINGS TO THE 24TH SESSION OF THE ALL INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS STOP WE SINCERELY WISH AITUC FURTHER SUCCESS IN STRENGTHENING ITS RANKS AND CREATING TRADE UNION UNITY IN THE COUNTRY, IN IMPROVEMENT OF LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE, IN THE STRUGGLE FOR PRESERVATION AND CONSOLIDATION OF PEACE IN ASIA AND THE WHOLE WORLD STOP

From All-China Federation of Trade Unions

GLAD TO HEAR YOUR ORGANISATION WILL SOON CONVENE TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION. ON BEHALF THE CHINESE WORKING CLASS THE ALLCHINA FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS TO YOUR CONGRESS AND THROUGH YOU TO INDIAN BROTHER WORKERS WARM GREETINGS. WISH TO SEE FRIENDSHIP OF CHINESE AND INDIAN WORKING CLASS AND LABOURING PEOPLE INCREASINGLY STRENGTHENED AND CONSOLIDATED AND THAT THEY JOINTLY STRUGGLE AGAINST AMERICAN IMPERIALIST WAR POLICY FOR LESSENING INTERNATIONAL TENSION IN DEFENCE OF ASIAN AND WORLD PEACE.

From Shvernik, President, All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, USSR

AUCCTU HEARTILY THANKS INVITATION AITUC SESSION STOP DUE TO HOLDING AT SAME TIME CONGRESS SOVIET TRADE UNIONS SENDING DELEGATION CALCUTTA APPEARS DIFFICULT AND WE ASK ACCEPT OUR MESSAGE GREETINGS TO SESSION.

From Confederation Generale Travail, France

IN THE NAME OF THE FRENCH WORKERS WE SEND OUR WARM GREETINGS TO YOUR CONGRESS AND WISH SUCCESS TO THE DELI-

BERATIONS OF THE CONGRESS FOR THE DEFENCE OF YOUR DEMANDS AND RIGHT OF THE WORKERS FOR THE DEFENCE OF PEACE.

From Chairman, General Confederation of Labour, Viet Nam

BEHALF VIETNAM WORKING CLASS VIETNAM GENERAL CONFEDERATION TRADE UNIONS SENDING WARMEST GREETINGS 24TH SESSION AITUC WISHING EVERY SUCCESS FOR STRENGTHENING UNITY INDIAN WORKING CLASS FOR DEFENCE TRADE UNION RIGHTS DEMOCRATIC LIBERTIES STOP SUPPORT AND SYMPATHY OF INDIAN WORKING CLASS AND PEOPLE GREATLY INSPIRED ALL WORKERS DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC VIETNAM IN THEIR STRUGGLE AGAINST FRENCH COLONIALISTS AMERICAN INTERVENTIONISTS FOR NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE UNITY DEMOCRACY AND PEACE LONG LIVE UNITY WORKING CLASS ASIA AND WORLD.

From Italian Confederation of Labour

FIVE MILLION WORKERS ORGANISED IN THE ITALIAN CONFLABOUR GREET MOST FRATERNALLY 24TH SESSION ALL INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS WISHING IT FULLEST SUCCESS STOP WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE CONGRESS WILL MARK A NEW POWERFUL STEP FORWARD OF THE INDIAN WORKING PEOPLE IN THEIR STRUGGLE FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR CONDITIONS OF LIFE FOR TRADE UNION UNITY FOR DEMOCRACY AND WORLD PEACE WE SEND OUR EXPRESSIONS DEEPEST SOLIDARITY.

From Central Council of the Trade Unions, Czechoslovakia

IN HONOUR OF YOUR 24TH SESSION PEOPLE UNITED IN ONE GREAT REVOLUTIONARY TRADE MOVEMENT ARE SENDING YOU THEIR COMRADELY GREETINGS STOP THEY EXPRESS THEIR SINCERE WISH THAT YOUR GREAT FIGHT AGAINST COLONIAL OPPRESSION AND EXPLOITATION AND FOR CONTINUAL BETTER LIVING STANDARD OF YOUR WORKING PEOPLE AND FOR WORLD PEACE IS SUCCESSFUL STOP MAY WE ASSURE YOU OF OUR SUPPORT IN YOUR STRUGGLES STOP LONG LIVE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY OF ALL WORKING PEOPLE STOP LONG LIVE PEACE STOP

From the President of Central Council of Polish Trade Unions

IN THE NAME OF CENTRAL COUNCIL OF POLISH TRADE UNIONS WE SEND YOU DEAR COMRADES ON THE OCCASION OF YOUR 24TH SESSION OUR WARM FRATERNAL GREETINGS AND WISH YOU FRUITFUL DEBATES AND SUCCESS IN YOUR STRUGGLE FOR RAISING LIVING STANDARDS OF INDIA WORKING MASSES WISH FOR PEACE IN ASIA AND WORLD OVER STOP WE ARE DEEPLY CONVINCED THAT WORKING MASSES OF INDIA FACING ATTEMPTS BY AMERICAN IMPERIALISTS TO PATCH UP AGGRESSIVE BLOC AGAINST ASIAN PEOPLES WILL INTENSIFY THEIR STRUGGLE TO FRUSTRATE THESE CRIMINAL PLANS OF WAR AND AGGRESSION STOP STRUGGLE OF WORKING MASSES OF INDIA AGAINST AMERICAN IMPERIALISM AND COLONIALISM IS OF FOREMOST AND UNIVERSAL IMPORTANCE STOP WORKING MASSES OF PEOPLES POLAND WHICH ARE ENGAGED IN BUILDING THEIR NEW HAPPY LIFE AND WHICH ARE VIGOROUSLY DEFENDING PEACE ARE GLAD TO WELCOME EVER IMPROVING CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC

RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR NATIONS AND TIGHTENING OF FRIENDLY BONDS UNITING OUR TRADE UNION ORGANISATIONS STOP WE WELCOME STRIVINGS OF WORKING MASSES OF INDIA FOR UNIFICATION OF TRADE UNION MOVEMENT UNDER MILITANT BANNERS OF WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS WE WISH YOU SUCCESSSES IN YOUR STRUGGLE FOR THE GOOD OF THE PEOPLE OF INDIA FOR THEIR INDEPENDENCE AND CAUSE OF PEACE STOP

From Stelian Moraru, Rumanian Trade Union Council

RUMANIAN WORKING PEOPLE SEND ARDENT FRATERNAL SALUTE PARTICIPANTS TO CONGRESS STOP NOT HAVING RECEIVED VISAS ARE SORRY PREVENTED BEING AMONG YOU STOP WISH FULL SUCCESS CONGRESS WORKS REALISATION INDIAN WORKERS UNITY AND EXPRESS SOLIDARITY WITH INDIAN WORKING PEOPLES STRUGGLE FOR BETTER LIFE DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS LIBERTIES DEFENCE FOR PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP AMONG ALL PEOPLES.

From the Presidium, Hungarian Trade Union Council

IN THE NAME OF HUNGARIAN ORGANISED WORKERS WE SEND WARM FRATERNAL GREETINGS TO YOUR CONGRESS ON MAY 27 HUNGARIAN ORGANISED WORKERS FOLLOW WITH DEEP INTEREST AND SOLIDARITY THE FIGHT OF INDIAN WORKERS AND ARE CONVINCED THIS CONGRESS WILL HELP FORWARD YOUR STRUGGLE FOR BREAD INDEPENDENCE AND PEACE WE WISH GREAT SUCCESS WORK OF THE CONGRESS.

From Eiler Jensen, President, De Samvirkende Fagforbund (Dutch T.U. Centre)

We are in receipt of your letter of 2nd April and thank you for your kind invitation to send a fraternal delegation to the 12th Congress of your organisation.

Unfortunately time does not permit us to accept the invitation to be represented on this occasion. We ask you, however, to accept our sincere and cordial greetings and our best wishes for the success of your Congress and for the future work of your organisation.

From Arbeidernes Faglige Landsorganisasjon I Norge (Norwegian T.U. Centre)

We thank you very much for your invitation but are sorry to inform you that owing to comprehensive collective bargainings at home it is impossible for us to send a representative to your Congress, at that time.

We take however pleasure in greeting your Congress and convey our best wishes for a prosperous progress of the Trade Union movement in India, and we hope that the resolutions passed by the Congress will be of benefit to all Indian wage-earners and will also be incentive to the Trade-Union work all over the world.

From T. Prakhov, President, Central Council of Trade Unions of Bulgaria

On behalf of the workers and employees of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, the Central Council of Trade Unions sends fraternal greetings to your Congress and through you, to all the working people of India.

The Bulgarian working class follows with a keen interest the fight waged by the Indian working people. We highly appreciate your contribution to the cause of peace in Asia and the whole world. The grand strike in Calcutta aroused the sympathy of all the Bulgarian working people.

We are convinced that your Congress will take decisions such as to contribute to the realisation of full trade union and national unity—the best barrier against the growing capitalist offensive—for winning and defence of trade union and democratic rights and liberties, for a better life for the toiling Indian workers and peasants, for national independence and friendly relations with the Great Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China and all the peace-loving peoples. We wish your Congress might give an impulse forward to the cause of peace in Asia and the whole world.

Long live friendship between the Indian and Bulgarian working people!
Long live the camp of Peace and Democracy!

From All-Indonesia Central Organisation of Trade Unions

ON BEHALF 2 1/2 MILLION MEMBERS WISHING YOUR CONGRESS GREAT SUCCESSES IN STRENGTHENING UNITED ACTIONS FOR BETTER LIVING CONDITIONS AND FULL NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE STOP STRENGTHEN UNITY OF ASIAN WORKERS AND PEOPLE TO DEFEAT AMERICAN WAR EFFORTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND SAFEGUARD PEACE—SENTRALBIRO

From Burma Trade Union Congress

On behalf of the Burma Trade Union Congress and expressing the deep feelings of all the working people of Burma, I convey to the 24th Session of All-India Trade Union Congress our ardent fraternal, militant greetings.

For more than a century Burma and India had suffered together under the iron heels of British Imperialism. But the British Imperialists had occupied India quite earlier than Burma. Indian workers had learned much more about the cunning and cruelties of Imperialist Capitalists. So, in their struggles for better life and national independence, workers and people of Burma had much benefited by the help and experience of Indian brothers. Moreover, as the majority of the workers in the industrial enterprises, in Burma at the early stage of British domination, were Indian nationals the general character and form of trade-union movement in our country is almost the same as in India. Both had the same hardships to suffer and the same problems to solve. For example, when the First World War and the Russian Revolution brought class-consciousness to the world proletariat, especially colonial workers and when the fight for higher wages, dearness allowance, bonus and shorter hours of work began to figure in the demands of the Indian workers from 1917 onwards, we have in Burma the Drillers Strike in the oil fields in 1916-17 and Clerical Staff Strike at Ynangyaung in 1918-19. Again when the Bombay workers demanded 10-hour day and threatened to strike in 1920, the workers of Burma had waged a mammoth strike in the petroleum refineries in 1920-21.

Now too we understand that Burma and India face the same problems in the trade-union movement. Trade-union unity has been disrupted. Wages of the workers are too low to cover their cost of living. Workers have got no security for their future, bad and inadequate housing, unemployment, etc., and facing the threat of Imperialist aggression.

It is believed that this historic Session will give the workers of India the best way out from these troubles.

In the great and wonderful task which lies before the working class and toiling masses of India, in the struggle for trade-union unity, for im-

proved living standards, for national liberation and for peace, the Burma Trade Union Congress wants to emphasise that the workers of India can count upon the full support of the working people of Burma.

You can be sure that we shall be with you in your struggles; you can be sure that workers all over Burma, who have the same problems as you have are ready to give a helping hand so that by the united strength and solidarity of the working class a new future can open up soon.

In the name of the Burmese working people, who are intensely struggling for a better life, national independence, peace and democracy, let me again greet the working people of India through the delegates now attending at this session. I wish this national congress entire success.

LONG LIVE THE AITUC!

LONG LIVE THE UNITY AND SOLIDARITY OF THE WORKING PEOPLE OF ALL COUNTRIES!

LONG LIVE PEACE!

From N. M. Joshi

I wish the Twenty-fourth Session of the All-India Trade Union Congress, a success. I hope the present attitude of the trade unions, refusing to meet each other, will disappear and as suggested by me some time ago, they will find occasions to stand on the same platform in the interest of the working class in the country.

From United Trades Union Congress

I thank you most heartily for your invitation to be present at the 24th Session of the AITUC and also to address a few words. It would have given me the greatest pleasure if it were possible for me to comply with your request but I am too ill to leave my bed. My mind goes back to the days of February 1947 when at this very Park I presided over the 22nd Session of the AITUC. That was the last united congress and it is a matter of infinite regret that the working class is represented today not by a single organisation but by several. Equally painful is that many unions and federations are not affiliated to any of the central organisations. There have been two splits in the AITUC but labour was never divided as it is today. I have therefore learnt with very great pleasure that you do not propose that this Session of the AITUC should consist only of its affiliated unions. I am in full agreement with the aim you have expressed to make the Congress a National Congress of the entire Indian Working Class. There may be ideological and other differences among us but we are all agreed that if capitalism, which has become very powerful today, is to be successfully combated labour must be united on the broadest possible basis. I have been trying for this end with all sincerity and earnestness these seven years. There have been earnest efforts also from your organisation. If our efforts have not been crowned with success it is because many of us have not been able to place working class interests above party interests and have been wanting in that spirit of sacrifice and self-negation which is so essential, particularly in these days, to bring about unity in the working class. Labour offers the broadest platform on which all of us may take our stand. There is no other platform, political or otherwise, on which there is agreement on the widest scale. The task before us is tremendous and we must be prepared to cultivate cordial friendship among us and scrupulously desist from recrimination.

First of all we must create an atmosphere of unity by completely eliminating hatred and dislike. I regret very greatly the advent of a new spirit of political untouchability which has taken the place of social untouchability.

The approach must be human rather than political. There must be a psychological revolution, a consciousness of the danger that threatens the very existence of the labour movement in this country. Let us keep this constantly in view and never be swerved from it by any consideration, political, personal or otherwise.

Having served the AITUC almost since its birth I need hardly tell you that nothing would give me greater pleasure in the evening of my days than to see labour once more united under the banner of one single organisation.

—MRINAL KANTI BOSE

From Sheel Bhadra Yajee

I wish a great success to the 24th Session of the AITUC.
With Revolutionary greetings to all the delegates.

From K. Ramamurthy, Secretary General, Union of Post & Telegraph Workers

WISHING SESSION SUCCESS CONVEY WARMEST GREETINGS TO DELEGATES.

From All-India Kisan Sabha

All India Trade Union Congress, the premier organisation of the Indian working class, has a long and glorious tradition of struggles for the just demands of the working class.

We hope that the Conference will take necessary steps to forge and consolidate working-class unity through struggles for immediate demands, for trade-union and civic rights, and for the security of national independence and sovereignty.

All-India Trade Union Congress has been a great source of inspiration to the All-India Kisan Sabha, the national organisation of Indian peasantry and rural workers.

We wish your Conference every success.

N. PRASADA RAO
General Secretary.

From All-India Bank Employees' Association

On behalf of the All-India Bank Employees' Association representing 60,000 bank employees of India, we heartily greet the 24th Congress of your organisation.

Your Congress is being held at a time when the employers in our country, specially the foreign firms and their Indian counterparts, are mounting a planned offensive against the working people in the form of large-scale retrenchment, rationalisation and increase in workload, cut in wages and other benefits, victimisation and drastic curtailment of trade-union rights and to disrupt the unity of the working people and also at a time when the Government is coming out more and more with policies and action helping the employers to the detriment of the employees. We have watched with interest and satisfaction the efforts of your organisation and its constituent bodies to fight this offensive of the employers and to expose and defeat the anti-labour policies of the Government, and at many places and provinces our constituent units and provincial bodies have had occasions to join in united activities to the above ends.

We, the bank employees, are experiencing the attack of the banklords and the effects of the Government's pro-employer policy. The judgment of the Labour Appellate Tribunal and the Government's move before the Labour Appellate Tribunal and also its latest move postponing the operation of the Appellate Tribunal's award bears out the extreme pro-employer, anti-employee bias of the Government.

The bank employees in the past had fought and are fighting against all these attacks and have achieved some successes and have built up a united all India organisation namely the All-India Bank Employees' Association.

Through our experience we have come to realise the great and overriding importance of unity and organisation if the working class has to achieve success in its struggle against the class enemy. And we are proud to declare that we have been able to build up a united organisation of all bank employees in the country. But we realise that in the present situation, not only the bank employees but the working class as a whole must stand and act unitedly to beat back the offensive of the employers and the Government and to go ahead in their fight for better human existence. But unfortunately Indian working class stands divided and the existence of 4 trade union centres is hampering the development of unity among them. We strongly feel that in the interest of the working class in general as also in our own interest all the four central trade union organisations should merge into one single organisation. In this respect of bringing about overall unity among working class and trade unions, your organisation has a positive role to play. We have noted with satisfaction your call to all trade union organisations to join your conference and we fervently hope that the deliberations and decisions of the Congress will help a great deal to achieve the much-needed unity of the working class and to chalk out a plan and programme to counter the attack of the employers and to secure employment, fair wage, economic uplift and social justice for the toiling millions of India.

We thank you for your kind invitation and wish your Congress a grand success.

PRABHAT KAR
General Secretary

From West Bengal Association of Democratic Lawyers

The West Bengal Association of Democratic Lawyers greets the AITUC on the occasion of its 24th Congress. The said Association declares its unstinted support to the AITUC and wishes it success in its noble cause.

VICE PRESIDENT

From Chairman, Konnagar Municipality

This 24th Session of the All-India Trade Union Congress which is going to take place on the 27th, 28th, 29th and 30th May 1954 is of immense historical importance when considered against the background of the ill-motivated scheme of rationalisation which is the other name of retrenchment in a capitalist set-up of things and purposive onslaught on the trade-union rights, earned through ages by the struggling working class of India. I earnestly desire its complete success.

With greetings,

TARAK DAS CHATTERJI

REPORT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Comrade President, Delegates, Observers and Friends,

We begin our work with paying homage to the memory of those who have fallen in battle for the defence of the interests of the working class and the people. Scores have been shot dead in police firings, while they were defending the just struggles of their brothers. Some have been hanged by the vengeful verdict of the law which rules to defend this rotten social order.

All homage to those workers in French India who have died in the struggle for liberation from the French imperialists.

We express profound sorrow at the death of Comrade Shanta Mukherjee, Vice-President of the AITUC and of Com. S. V. Deshpande, one of the ex-General Secretaries of the AITUC, in whom we have lost valuable workers for the cause of the working class.

We will pledge that the cause in which these fighters have fallen shall be carried to a successful end.

Comrades, this Twenty-fourth Session of the AITUC is meeting after five years. The last session met in May, 1949. The repression that the unions of the AITUC suffered, in which many were illegalised, made it impossible to hold another session for a long time.

It was only after the General Elections of 1952 that conditions were created in which we could hold an *ad hoc* Convention in May, 1952 at Calcutta. After that Convention our unions and State Committees re-organised their work on a better footing and clearer understanding.

I do not propose here to give you a long report of this period. The numerous struggles fought in various industries and trades, the demands and achievements made are set out in detail in the various trade and industry reports we have published separately for this Session or before, which I would request you to study. I shall here give a brief survey.

I

VIGILANCE AGAINST WARMONGERS

We are meeting at a time when all the people of Asia, and we as a part of them, are feeling proud at and rejoice in

the defeat that the imperialist warmongers are suffering at the hands of the Asian nations. All people rejoice particularly at the defeat of the American imperialists in Korea at the hands of the Chinese and Korean people. The recent defeat of the French imperialists in Viet Nam heralds to the world that the millions in Asia, who have for centuries been robbed of their wealth and toil, are going to overthrow the yoke of foreign exploitation and win their lands for themselves. All that wealth of mines and forests, fields and factories, rivers and mountains, which these foreign imperialists have been grabbing and exploiting with our labour, enriching themselves and keeping us in poverty, shall be liberated from their clutches. "*Throw them out*" is the slogan everywhere and in India too.

The imperialists, angry at the loss of their loot, are threatening to annihilate all struggling, toiling humanity with the fiendish power of the hydrogen bomb. But their very first experiment, which killed the poor Japanese fishermen and the tribal people of the Marshall Islands, has roused the people to indignation and has multiplied thousandfold the movement to preserve peace, ban war and such weapons of mass destruction as the atom bomb, etc.

This indignation of the people against the American warmongers and their allies has been so universal, so above party politics that Prime Minister Nehru, on behalf of the Government of India, launched the severest condemnation of the hydrogen bomb, demanded its banning and has asked for the cessation of hostilities in Viet Nam as a step to peace.

The workers in the AITUC unions certainly feel glad at these progressive steps in the Government's foreign policy. At the same time, our people cannot shut our eyes to the fact that those very imperialists, like the American, the British, the French, etc., have their fingers on the most vital spots of economic, military and technical arteries of our country's life. The Americans everywhere are penetrating through Technical Aids and with all their diplomatic immunity they have the free run of our country. The British, of course, retain their big economic hold in all strategic and economic industries. Even a College of Administration, to teach our Ministers how to govern, is proposed to be run by one American Professor Appleby!

Can we imagine that all these agents of imperialism will not use their control over these arteries of our life to suit their purpose of war and profits, despite the fact that the Government of India disapproves of their war schemes? Even as we are meeting in this Session, the French and American

Military personnel are using the aerodromes in India to go to the East to attack the Viet Minh.

Even as we are meeting, the workers, peasants and people of Pondicherry, Mahe, Yanam, etc., are battling to throw out the French imperialists from our soil. Several of the people of these settlements who have boldly led the attack have been shot and imprisoned by the French police. This has rightly aroused the anger of our people. The people of Goa are struggling to free themselves from the fascist rule of the Portuguese administration. It is necessary that we intensify our campaign and act more boldly to liberate these territories and unite them to their homeland.

The unions of the AITUC must not remain content only with the Government's declarations, but must go further and actively demand the expulsion of these imperialists from our country. It is not enough to demand, as Pandit Nehru did, to throw out the American UNO Observers from Kashmir. The people must demand the cleaning out of the British and the Americans from the nerve-centres of our economy also.

The danger of keeping friendship with these warmongers and giving them any quarter is seen in Pakistan, whose people are our own brethren and were our own countrymen but seven years ago.

The Americans, in order to extend their hold over Asia, to enhance their profits from our labour and to blackmail us in joining with them have enmeshed Pakistan in the US-Pak Military Pact. This Pact, contrary to the expectations of the imperialists, enhanced the efforts of our people to further strengthen the movement for peace and friendship with Pakistan and to foil the game of inciting war between the two countries. The US-Pak Pact as a means to aggression against India and the Soviet Union and as a means to enslave the people of Pakistan must not be allowed to succeed in its aims.

Seeing that the people of East Pakistan have voted against such mortgaging of their freedom and life, the reactionaries in Pakistan are trying to drown the people's unity in East Pakistan in a new civil war of Bengalis and non-Bengalis.

This vile conspiracy of the imperialists directed specially against the working-class forces, in which hundreds have died, may also be tried in India, because the imperialist conspirators there have their accomplices here also.

Even recent experience teaches us that the Anglo-American imperialists, by fomenting tension between us and Pakistan, hamper our trade, as in cotton, wheat, bidi, pan, jute, etc., render our workers unemployed, create economic difficulties for both the peoples and the Governments and make it

easy for the imperialists to further penetrate with their aids and loans in our economy.

By raising the false bogey of communism, they have been preventing the growth of our trade with Soviet Union, China and the People's Democracies. They are afraid that if our economic difficulties are eased by trade with these countries, to whom international trade is not a means of solving their crisis and capturing markets, but is a means of mutual benefit and equal exchange, the game of imperialists in using us for war and profits will be over.

Hence, it is necessary that our working class, in alliance with all people, consciously understand these events which affect our daily life and build a movement for peace and friendship with all, and a movement to expel the warmongers from our country.

In all factories and fields, in all cities and other areas—

- * **Organise vigilance against the warmongers, who will want to poison our country's life with strife and war!**
- * **Campaign for solidarity with the people of Pakistan!**
- * **Organise demonstrations to demand banning of the tests of Hydrogen Bombs!**
- * **All support for the Viet Minh!**
- * **Raise help for the fighters of Pondicherry and Goa against the French and Portuguese imperialists!**
- * **Friendship and trade with all, including the Soviet Union, China and the People's Democracies!**
- * **Peace with all!**

II

ECONOMIC CONDITION

Let us now look into the problems of daily life of our people. In the matter of the economy of our country, the Government assures that "the face of the country is changing and changing for the better" (Budget Speech, 1954).

That the economy is changing for the better and hence life is also getting better is sought to be proved by pointing out the index of production, which is shown to be rising for the last three years and has beaten all records.

With 1946 as 100, Industrial production has grown to:

| | | |
|-------|-------|-------|
| 1951 | 1952 | 1953 |
| 117.2 | 128.9 | 135.1 |

These indices no doubt show very good results. And in certain commodities like cloth, the production of 4,900 million yards has beaten all records. The cloth supplies per head in 1952 were 15 yards and in this we have reached the pre-war position.

But such a picture of production indices creates unjustified illusions about the country's economy and the Five-Year Plan that is expected to build it. The production indices are deceptive indices. They hide the essential fact that vast sectors of production have been in crisis or are ruined, while large capacity of production built up for the purpose is lying unused. The indices are made by a few dominating lines of production and are based on selective totals.

No doubt cloth went up but lakhs of handlooms have been ruined and their production is at a standstill. The whole leather tanning industry was at one time closed down. Coir has been in crisis for over two years. Tobacco and bidi are still suffering. And thousands of looms in the jute mills are being deliberately kept under seal.

The Government of India has been a party to curtailment of production in tea and has also connived at the cut in sugar production. Large capacity of production of agricultural implements and tools, of diesel engines, of electric motors, which are meant to help agriculture is lying idle. All this story is not reflected in the comfortable indices of production.

Some sectors of production have grown and are growing by large-scale units ruining small-scale producers. Such has been the case with cloth, with soap, with tools and implements, etc. But that is only a partial picture.

In reality, many lines of production have failed to develop or are facing crisis because of the following reasons.

Some are suffering from competition from *foreign* imports, such as in diesels, electric motors, engineering products, defence industries, etc.; some from the competition of the big monopoly syndicates ruled by British capital such as in soap, cigarettes, tea, motor cars, etc.; some because of the hold of *Indian monopoly* rings (as in sugar, jute, cloth). Some suffer because of the *taxation policy* of the Government as recently shown in art-silk, foot-wear, etc.; some because of the *trade policy* of the Government, which confines trade mainly to the Anglo-American markets, affecting products like jute, shellac, mica, manganese, etc.

Thousands of our workers from all over the country can tell you how production is being held up or ruined due to these causes. No amount of planning will succeed in really benefiting the people unless, the hold of British monopoly

capital and their trade is broken and the hold of Indian monopoly capitalists brought under democratic control.

While many big employers in India admit the ruinous results of British and American competition and desire protection, while many small employers admit that they are ruined by big monopoly rings, yet they will not combine in order to plan a national economy and force the Government to change its course, in the interests of national economy. Rather than do that, they will cut workers' wages and raise consumers' prices, in order to keep up their profits.

All of them, big and small, and the Government, despite their differences, combine to complain that production is not growing because what is produced is not selling and it is not selling because of high prices, whose sole cause is said to be the *wages and benefits* paid to the workers.

Thus they try to set the consumer against the worker and get his sympathy for attacks on the workers' wages.

But it can be shown that *in today's conditions of monopoly control, prices have no reasonable relation to wages and the high prices of today are not made by high wages.*

In our own country we can show periods when despite high wages, prices have gone down and despite low wages, prices have shot up. The high prices of today are not of our making. Then who makes them?

The people who are committing this crime of inflicting high prices and cost of living on society and starving it despite the increase in production are the big monopolists, both Indian and foreign, and their henchmen in the governing circles, who own or control the product, the finance behind it, the market for it and the factories that are used to produce it. Monopoly capital is the criminal that is holding society at ransom.

What kind of monopolists have we, and what do they do? They control large-scale industry, trade and finance. They increase or curtail production to extract maximum profits. And until the anarchy and crisis of their system throws them in a crash, they dictate prices to society and control its consumption, work and living.

The biggest private monopoly capital in industry is the steel, cement, tea, coal, sugar, jute, cotton and oil. The most important commodities of our life are in their grip.

Who decides how much of these and at what price, when and where tea and sugar, cement and steel, oil and jute, coal and cotton shall be available to those who need it? The gigantic capitalists, who having combined in huge syndicates, dictate all this to society. Hence the famous names in the roll of honour of capital like Tata and Birla, ACC and Sugar Syndicate, IJMA or the Mining Syndicates, etc.

Have we instances where these monopolists have dictated prices, have starved the consumer and cheated him of crores, without even a pie of it going to the workers' wage-rise? Countless are the examples. The scandal of the *Sugar Syndicate* is well-known and even some sections of the bourgeoisie are ashamed of having been found at it. Once they produced so much that they demanded export of sugar. Then they curtailed production and raised prices, until the people's clamour made the Government go in for imports of sugar. But then the Government itself joined in the hunt for profits by looting the consumer by high prices. In the name of reducing prices for the consumer they cut prices for the peasants' sugarcane. But sugar prices did not fall but rose even more.

The Tariff Board of 1950, in its inquiry, wrote that "the Sugar Syndicate deliberately launched on a policy of creating psychology of scarcity in the market in order to bring about an excessive rise in the level of prices." And the Bombay Sugar Merchants' Association wrote: "The public was being exploited by the monopoly of a single selling organisation."

And in all this the ministerial circles of UP, Bihar and the Centre had a conscious hand. Only the peasants' strike unmasked this game. Glory to the peasant strikers and their victory.

Take the example of another commodity of people's consumption—*Tea*. Tea fell in price last year. The planters' monopoly demanded a cut in wages so as to sell more tea to the people at lower prices. The State helped them to impose 30 per cent wage cut. It suspended the Plantations Labour Act that might have benefited the workers to some extent, in order that the big British Planters and the few small Indians may reap more profits.

What is the result for the consumer? Tea production in quantity has been curtailed. Even the Government openly joined in the scheme of curtailing production from 622 million pounds in 1952 to 608 million pounds in 1953.

Did the reduced wages lead to reduced prices? Not at all. Prices before the wage cut were 44 d. per pound in 1951, and 36 d. in 1952. After the wage-cut, they *increased* to 49.4 d. in October 1953. Who says that lower wages lead to lower prices for the consumer?

It is because of this that the cost of living does not go down and make life easier for the people. The cost of living index in *Bombay* in each year (with 1939 as 100) was as follows:

| | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|-------------|
| 1946 | 1950 | 1951 | 1952 | 1953 | 1954 (Jan.) |
| 246 | 298 | 314 | 321 | 346 | 346 |

This shows the grip of monopoly capital and landlordism on our life.

Thus it can be seen that rising production has not reduced prices. Similarly rising production has not increased employment. On the contrary, the ruin of small industries, the closures of several factories and establishments has led to increase in unemployment.

The aggravation of unemployment has been admitted by the Government. When workers' representatives in the Parliament demanded unemployment relief, the Government only promised to spend 175 crores more on the Five-Year Plan, which was expected to create more employment. But there is no relief in the situation so far.

The employers and the Government plead that more people from rural areas are being thrown into the towns. That lack of sales in foreign markets forces the employers to close factories or reduce wages or impose rationalisation.

There is no doubt about the fact that our goods cannot find sufficient markets inside the country and that hundreds of our ruined peasants have to go into the towns in search of employment. What then is the remedy?

The only cure for this is to stop eviction of the peasants, reduce their rents and taxes, and hand over land to them. That would stop them from pouring in search of work in towns and also make them solvent enough to buy goods. Then our industries will find a vast home market. That will also be a cure for unemployment.

The spokesmen of the Government promise land reforms. But the big landlords have been powerful enough in stopping radical reforms. Some concessions have been wrung by the peasants but they are not enough to solve our national problem. Unless the monopoly of the feudal landlord is broken neither the worker will be free, nor economy develop, nor can industry prosper. And neither will the peasants be saved from the high prices of the goods they have to buy from the towns.

The interests of the working class and the peasantry are directly linked up with each other.

One might ask if the Government's Five-Year Plan will not resolve the problems?

The AITUC has already expressed its opinion on the Five-Year Plan. We do desire planned economy. We want irrigation, multi-purpose schemes, power houses, fertiliser plants, steel works and so on. We also know that the whole country will have to mobilise its man and material power to build the country's economy. The AITUC certainly does not

like to see that the schemes under the Plan should prove a failure or that the country should suffer.

Our main quarrel is that the schemes under the Plan are so made, the agencies that execute it are such and the methods followed are so highly bureaucratic, that the Plan will not build up the maximum good of the people, but will build the maximum profits and power of the monopolists and their State agencies. All the difficulties that the Plan is meeting with proceed from these fundamental moorings of the Plan.

The Plan has been so often discussed that it is needless to go into it here again. Last year's crisis of unemployment, the criticism of the Plan in the Parliament and the subsequent paltry revisions have laid bare its main weaknesses.

From where do these proceed? From the fact that the wielders of the Plan are the same classes who live on people's toil and are interested only in their narrow selfish interests—that is the big landlord and monopoly capitalist classes.

It is because of this that in the name of building capital for the Plan, unbearable tax burdens are imposed on the people, against which they revolt. Levies are imposed against which the peasants revolt. Wage increases and bonus are denied and rationalisation and increased work-load is imposed, against which the workers revolt. Small industrialists and traders are sacrificed at the altar of big monopoly, against which they revolt. Foreign monopolists are allowed to compete with Indian industrialists, against which even they complain. And in order to suppress all this, the State machine assumes dictatorial powers, democratic rights guaranteed in the Constitution are suppressed and the police baton becomes the ruling law. It is no wonder that the Government is now demanding that criticism of the Ministers and public servants be made a cognizable offence.

Such is the economic condition of our country, which, we the organised working class, in co-operation with the peasantry and the people, have to struggle against and change.

III

THE STRUGGLES

Though the economic policies of the Government hit large sections of the masses and benefit only a handful of the rich, those who have first stepped into struggle in defence of their rights and standards of living are the working people.

In the struggles following the end of the war a number of gains were made, the chief one being a rise in the money

wages, rise in the bonus payments, securing dearness allowance where it did not exist or an upward revision of the rates to meet the rise in the cost of living. Though it cannot be said that there was absolute improvement in the real wages of the workers even in large-scale industry, a big section did succeed by its offensive struggles in recovering the fall in their real wages, which had been imposed on them by the war and post-war crisis and the rise in the cost of living. This recovery, however, was incomplete and was to some extent halted with the stabilisation of the rule of the Congress Government and the disruption they caused in the ranks of the working class after coming to power.

Large sections of the toiling people really believed that the Government would resolve their economic difficulties by wise measures of relief.

The vast grabbing of profits carried on by large-scale employers, speculators, bankers and landlords, the boom of the black-market and the Korean War, was soon followed by a recession. Very soon, hundreds of small-scale producers closed. Whole lines of production stopped, leading to unemployment of several lakhs.

Workers in small-scale industries were asked to accept wage-cuts which they rightly resisted. Workers in large industries were asked to accept less bonus, retrenchment and rationalisation. But they resisted these attacks of the employers by determined strikes, hunger-marches, gheraos and stay-in-strikes.

Men and women marched together and fought together, the women proving the most militant fighters.

The AITUC gave a call for big demonstrations against unemployment on August 15, 1953, which was responded to everywhere. Even employed workers struck in defence of the unemployed, some on that day, some on another.

In some cases, the workers forged a mighty united front of all citizens in defence of their common grievances. The whole town of Calcutta went on a complete political general strike as on 15th July 1953 on the tramfare issue.

The struggles are too numerous to be completely catalogued in this Report. I can only refer to a few of them leaving the rest to a diary (see Appendix).

Bengal

The most outstanding of these and the most successful ones were fought in the *State of Bengal*. The struggle of Tramway workers, in alliance with the citizens of Calcutta, against the attack of the British monopoly in Tramway Trans-

port will ever remain a good model of heroism and of unity in struggle, unity among the workers and theirs with the citizens, as shown on July 15, 1953. Even when police and military forces occupied the whole town and imprisoned thousands, the workers and people fought and won their demand for no increase in fares.

Another outstanding struggle was that of the *Burnpur* Steel workers, a determined resistance to retrenchments and lockout, and for bonus payments. There the official INTUC union betrayed the workers and joined with the employers. Eight workers were shot dead when they went to the police officials to demand the release of the arrested workers.

That struggle gives us a model of unity from below, the democracy of the workers in action functioning through an Action Committee elected from every department. When the official union leadership failed, the departmentally elected action committee or factory committee, that most democratic form of trade-union functioning and forging a democratic organ of struggle, was brought into full force by the heroic *Burnpur* steel workers. Their demand to elect their own union chiefs and executive, their right to hold their own elections and remove their reactionary President and take hold of the union office was put down by the use of police force. Their loyalty to their victimised comrades was so solid that four hundred of them have been maintained by the workers' contributions for a whole year.

Bengal gave another model of the middle-class teachers' struggles. Old and young, men and women, the teachers who had never stirred out of their school room and peeped out of their text book, when fired by an aim, desperate due to poverty and led by militant good leadership braved the police, squatted on the streets for days, faced tear-gas bombs and rallied all the citizens to their just cause. Correct trade-union practice and sober leadership negotiated well and in time and foiled the game of the Government to smash the struggle. They ultimately won their demand for an increase in dearness allowance.

The big achievement of this period in Bengal has been that the jute workers have moved into action under the AITUC inspiration. The marches and gheraos for Pooja Bonus by jute and engineering workers are a new phenomena. When the big jute worker has moved, it means the Bengal working-class movement has taken a stride. And along with them, the skilled workers of engineering have also gone into action laying the basis for a united federation of engineering workers.

The Titaghur paper workers fought a most dogged strike

for 160 days. Maritime workers, bank, office and bus transport employees, in fact, almost every section of the working class in Bengal had to go into action in defence of their wages, against unemployment, against victimisation.

In most of these actions the leading force was the AITUC leadership, which functioned in unity with other organisations. Unity from below was the main driving force here, while a formal unity from above also helped in some cases.

But in Calcutta, we have found that in some of these struggles, some forces crop up, who, in the name of defending the workers' struggle take to destruction of tram cars, or buses, which are in no way connected with the disputes. Such acts have evoked criticism from the people, who see no useful purpose in such destruction. The AITUC has to make its stand on such actions clear to the people and say that such anarchist destruction in strike struggles is foreign to working class ideology.

Maharashtra

Next to Calcutta, the big city of *Bombay*, also saw some heroic struggles, as for example, the one-day strike of all textile mills of the city in protest against the firing on Kamala Mill workers on the eve of Independence Day celebrations. The strike called by the Mill Mazdoor Union of the AITUC within 24 hours of the firing and carried out successfully, shows that among the Bombay workers, there exists an alert class consciousness, which can act swiftly and unitedly.

The earlier strike of August 7, 1953 called in support of retrenched workers of the Khatau Mill succeeded only partially.

Bombay is a big centre of engineering industry. There have been struggles in individual concerns. But there has not been such a vast mobilisation and unity as in Bengal engineering.

The strike of the Laxmi Rattan Engineering workers in August 1953 for the reinstatement of victimised trade-union workers is remarkable. It won the demand despite police arrests and gangster attacks.

The workers of the famous Estrella Batteries after 10 days' united action also won. But the big monopoly employers of Walchand Hirachand persisted in the lock-out of their large motor works and persecuted the workers severely.

The lockout of the big *Satara Engineering Works* was remarkable for the militant action of the workers and the consequent occupation of the plant by five hundred armed policemen.

Bombay's Port and Dock labour also is having skirmishes

with their employer, the Central Government, and have made headway in winning concessions.

Assam

Struggles worth paying attention to have taken place in Assam and West Bengal Tea gardens, where over two lakh workers went into action, mainly under the INTUC and HMS leadership and won concessions.

Bihar

Coal miners of Bihar and Bengal, the most oppressed sections of workers, have developed some confidence after the last CPC award, and expected the Government tribunals to solve their problems. When the employers and the Government did not move and when some of our unions led a few collieries into action, the INTUC, whose Mining Federation is recognised by the employers also gave notice of a general strike. A vast mobilisation was going to be afoot when the Government gave them a new Tribunal to adjudicate their claims.

The workers of Tinsplate won profit bonus.

Punjab

The strike by the 16,000 Bhakra-Nangal Dam workers of Nangal in January, 1954, shows the heroic resistance of the women workers and the solidarity action by other workers. Following the refusal of the Government to grant the *Holi* festival holiday, and the arrests of some workers, there were demonstrations by 3,000 workers, and the strike continued for 4 days. Women picketed the trains carrying black-legs and the sweepers of the Colony went on strike demanding release of the arrested. There was lathi-charge on workers, police pickets were placed inside the workshops and Section 144 was promulgated. The campaign for the reinstatement of arrested workers is continuing.

In the Surajpur Cement Factory, PEPSU, when one worker was hit by the foreman and the workers protested, the management called in police who lathi-charged the workers. 1,900 workers went on strike for two days supported by the women in the colony. The foreman apologised and the personal dignity of the worker in his working place was vindicated.

There was a prolonged strike for two months in the Pearl Hosiery, Ludhiana, for bonus. Brutal repression was let loose. 215 were arrested, including important TU leaders. There

was a sympathetic strike by the 5,000 hosiery workers in the locality. The kisans around came in demonstration and with their support free gruel centres were opened for the affected workers. The strike ended in a compromise and no worker was victimised.

Like Bengal, in Punjab too, the District Board teachers numbering 13,000 went on strike for one month in 1953 for wage increase. The action was province-wide. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Union Minister, intervened and some concessions were given to the teachers.

Uttar Pradesh

The May Day 1953 was observed by workers of the textile mills by going on strike, which enraged the millowners and the Government.

When the paid-leave wages were stopped by the employers as a penalty for the 'illegal' May Day strike, the workers resisted and the Government intervened to beat down the workers and posted police all over the mills.

The workers of a textile mill in Banaras, when the mill threatened to close under plea of losses, took over the running of the mill and showed how workers could run a mill economically and better than an employer. This is a new experience.

And the famous *Firozabad* bangle and glass workers won a good victory by their struggles.

The strike for 32 days by the 11,000 workers of Swadeshi Cotton Mills for bonus and multiple shifts brought all the unions and parties together. The multiple shift was changed and the bonus issue was referred to the Labour Appellate Tribunal.

Rajasthan

The Kisenghar Mills employing 2,000 workers closed down in November 1952. When the workers marched to the Council Chamber and later surrounded the Chief Minister's house hundreds were arrested. Subsequently the lockout was lifted.

Tamil Nad

The hunger march by the 200 handloom weavers from Ramnad to Madras, a distance of 400 miles, their wholesale arrest on reaching Madras and deportation to their villages, roused the whole State and unleashed a big movement of the handloom workers for immediate relief. The hunger-marchers

were accorded welcome wherever they went and when they were arrested in Madras, it evoked universal anger. As a result of this, relief centres were started for handloom workers, the principle of subsidy and free loan was accepted and implemented when the 'cess fund' was instituted.

In almost all the textile centres, namely, Coimbatore District, Madurai, Trichy District, Salem District and North Arcot District, many stay-in strikes were frequently resorted to demanding compensation for involuntary unemployment resulting from closure of factories due to power shortage. The workers were paid advance loans and finally the issue was referred to a Special Tribunal for adjudication. Since the publication of the Award, there have been strike actions in Rajapalayam, Cauverynagar and Coimbatore. In all these actions, the workers affiliated to all three central TUC organisations combined without reservation.

In the three spinning mills owned by Harvey Mills Ltd. in Madurai, Singai and Tuticorin, employing 30,000, the campaign for bonus continued for two months. This united all sections of workers and culminated in the stay-in strike in April 1954 of 15,000 workers in Madurai and 7,000 workers in Tuticorin. The Government intervened and one month's bonus was paid in advance and the issue was referred for adjudication.

In the *Plantations*, 30,000 workers refused to accept wages protesting against the deduction for recovering the advance payment. The police repression could not cow down the workers, but helped only to unify the INTUC and AITUC workers.

The hunger-strike for 27 days in April-May 1954 of a bus worker, Subarayalu, against victimisation and the subsequent daily demonstrations by the thousands of textile workers forced the Government to withdraw its previous order and reopen the question of dismissed workers.

Karnatak

The closing of the Ooregaum Gold Mines, in Kolar Gold Fields, throwing out nearly 3,500 workers evoked a wide protest organised under the initiative of the AITUC workers. All the unions affiliated to the three central organisations and the political parties joined the campaign which forced the Government to appoint an "Enquiry Committee" whose findings have given benefits to the workers and also have resulted in absorption of nearly 1,500 workers in other mines.

The closure of Arsappa Silk Factory and the Plywood factory employing 1,500 workers likewise resulted in a joint action which forced the management to reopen. The role of

women workers in the prolonged Satyagraha campaign was remarkable.

The militant struggle of women workers in Mangalore cashewnut factories in gheraos resulting in stoppage of immediate offensive by the employers is noteworthy.

The 5,000 tile workers in 32 tile factories went on a complete strike action for 10 days, in spite of intimidation by the hired goondas and managements, and compelled the Government to intervene and refer the issue of bonus for adjudication.

Hyderabad State

The strike of 3,000 workers of Shahabad Cement Factory in January-February 1952 lasting 48 days demanding the recognition of the union and wage increase, dearness allowance and reinstatement of victimised workers, despite curfew and Section 144, forced the Government to refer the issues to an Industrial Tribunal.

The heroic strike struggle of 1,500 gold miners at Hutti in November, 1952, resulted in an increase of wages and the construction of quarters for workers.

The determined strike struggle of 15,000 workers of Singareni Collieries during June-July, 1953 for wage increase, enhancement of D.A., better working and living conditions, etc., lasting 28 days evoked a wide response from all the workers in the State. Donations were sent to the fighting miners from all workers. The peasantry in the adjacent areas, though stricken with scarcity conditions, collected large quantities of foodgrains to feed the strikers. The Government agreed that the dispute would be referred to an All-India Tribunal and some benefits were achieved.

The State-wide strike of 5,000 workers of Road Transport lasting 16 days resulted in the demands being referred to the Industrial Tribunal and the Factories Act was enforced in the workshops and Depots.

Andhra

The 10 days' stay-in strike of 5,000 Chirala Tobacco workers brought forth the support of the Municipal Councillors, MLAs, and MPs. A number of sympathetic strikes also took place.

The Hemalata Textile management locked out the 850 workers for forty days. During this period the workers were fed by the peasants.

In British India Tobacco Co. of Guntur, 2,000 workers went on strike for 45 days for wage increase. 15,000 workers

in the other Tobacco Companies went on sympathetic strike twice. The peasants collected foodgrains for the workers.

In the Hindusthan Shipyard Co. 3,000 workers went on strike for 12 days against the retrenchment of 800 workers. The people showed their support through a sympathetic *hartal*. Although the issue was referred to a Special Tribunal, the workers got only compensation.

There were also widespread struggles by the Municipal workers including the 43-day strike of 700 workers in Guntur. There was a Province-wide strike of Municipal workers for the implementation of House Rent Allowance which was originally sanctioned.

Malabar

The Wynad plantation workers numbering 25,000 went on strike for 10 days during 1953 as a protest against the cut in the food allowance and against increase in work-load. The Chief Minister intervened.

In Pappinicherry Aaron Mills employing 1,300 there was a lock out for six months and the peasants collected foodgrains for the workers.

The 12,000 handloom weavers' strike lasting two months for wage increase evoked widest solidarity action despite arrests and repression. This action has brought all the unions together and put a stop to further attack on the conditions of workers.

Travancore-Cochin

We can mention the two outstanding struggles, namely, the heroic struggles of coir workers of Alleppey and the strike of harbour workers of Mattancherry, where the police interference resulted in the death of two workers. The doggedness and perseverance of the striking workers evoked universal sympathy and admiration.

Madhya Bharat

24,000 textile workers struck for three days in May 1952 against the closure of the Rajkumar Mills. This was followed in July by a satyagraha lasting 5 days, initiated by the INTUC union. The mill was reopened after two-and-a-half months of closure.

1,800 Hukamchand Mill workers at Indore, struck intermittently for 34 days in 7 weeks. The struggle started as a protest against bad materials and low wages, later became a struggle against victimisation. It culminated into a stay-in

strike. The police attacked strikers in the night and drove them out.

Trade Federation Struggles

Apart from struggles waged in different areas, some struggles embracing all the workers in a trade, extending over the whole country have also taken place in a most successful manner.

The united federations of trade unions, representing all tendencies and affiliations are growing as a powerful force in unifying the workers.

The complete one-day general strike of defence industries on June 30, 1953 has been remarkable for its sweep and unity. It has been helpful in making the Government of India partly heed to the demands of the defence workers.

Another noteworthy all-India struggle is that of the bank employees. For five years they have been doggedly fighting through strikes and tribunal after tribunal. All the bankers are intent on defeating their unity, but their determination has proved stronger than the machinations of the employers. The Government of India must be warned not to worsen the conditions of the bank employees.

* * *

These are but a few of the struggles in some of the organised industries. Apart from them, the struggles that have been waged by workers against closure of factories, against retrenchment and increased workload, against attempted wage-cuts, have been innumerable and have embraced all industries, both big and small, and even those that may be termed cottage industries, such as bidi, cigar, tanneries, coir and cashewnuts. A remarkable feature of these struggles was that the workers displayed a genius for initiating new forms of struggle, suited to the situation obtaining in each locality and even in each unit. Equally remarkable was also the fact that the workers displayed a keen sense of awareness of the concrete situation and flexibility and knew when to take the offensive and when to retreat.

A third and important feature of the struggle was the unity of the workers forged before and during the struggle. In the face of the offensive of the employers, workers, irrespective of the trade union centre they might belong to, and irrespective of even the fact that some of them did not belong to any union, came together and fought with determination, with no other thought except that of their demands and the need for victory.

Out of these struggles grew the consciousness that the struggle against the growing menace of unemployment is a common struggle of the entire working class, and could be fought successfully only by the common action of all the workers in India.

All these heroic struggles have not been fought vainly. They have yielded gains. The call given by the AITUC for a general strike on August 15, 1953, against unemployment, received great response by the workers—to whatever trade union they might belong. In many centres, there were strikes and in many others, no strikes could take place because it was declared a holiday. In all centres, however, the rallies and demonstrations were of an unprecedented nature.

It was this growing solidarity and determination of the working class that compelled the Government of India to come out, in October 1953, with an Ordinance, which was later enacted by Parliament, amending the Industrial Disputes Act, which provided for payment for lay off of an aggregate period of 45 days in a year and payment of a certain gratuity in the case of retrenchment.

The series of strikes in the plantations led ultimately to the Government and the planters agreeing to the application of the suspended Plantations Labour Act, which gave some amenities to the workers. These strikes also partly restored the cut in wages in the West Bengal Plantations.

The demand for unemployment relief put forward by the AITUC in its eight-point programme for overcoming unemployment was replied to in the Parliament by the Government increasing the grants on the Five-Year Plan for immediate works.

The Government was persuaded to take over certain mills, which threatened to close under the plea of losses, as in Sholapur. But the Supreme Court has ruled out such taking over, thus hitting the demand in its very principle.

These struggles halted the offensive of the employers for a time and those who were planning to retrench or rationalise or close down were forced to hold over their schemes.

As a result of these struggles, the Government has moved for curtailment of imports of some foreign goods, in order to prevent closures of some factories, as in water pumps and diesels.

Many of these struggles have made the Government give relief to small industries as in handlooms. Many have helped employers to secure big loans from the Government, and tax concessions to keep them going.

And above all, they have built the solidarity and confi-

dence of the workers who have gone into action in their capacity to fight and win.

IV

FIGHT FOR LIVING WAGE

Some of the struggles and gains have been noted. But we have to take serious note of the fact that the most vital part of our demands—i.e., *wages for our work*, a living wage that will truly pay for all the labour that we do for the capitalists and will represent a just share of the product, as far as is possible under the capitalist wages system—has yet to be attained. This major task on the question of wages remains to be fulfilled.

The wage structure of our industry has to be reorganised and improved in all essentials, because today, as it is, it is a very erratic structure.

The first thing to be fought for is a *national minimum* throughout the country, below which no wage shall be paid in any organised industry.

The first industry to fight for a national minimum was cotton textiles where a basic wage of Rs. 35 since 1939 was being fought for. As a result of these struggles, the minimum in various centres, which were at a ridiculously low level were revised upwards.

Even then the Governmental Tribunals which dealt with this demand have kept varying minimums and hence refused to establish a national minimum. While Bombay pays Rs. 30 minimum, next door Ahmedabad pays Rs. 28 and West Bengal pays only Rs. 20.

The Government of India pretended to move towards a minimum wage by instituting the Minimum Wages Act for the sweated and unorganised industries. But this Act apart from its periodical postponements has not been instrumental in raising wages to the accepted normal minimum, but has in cases reduced wages. The minimum, as is usual with the employers tended to be made the maximum. The AITUC, at the Mysore Tripartite Conference disapproved of the four categories of Minimum Wages proposed by Government as a compromise between the demands of workers and employers. The lowest category there is Rs. 1-2 which in today's conditions is ridiculously low.

By their report of the CPC Commission and its application of a national minimum in their services, the Government has unwittingly helped to blow up the theoretical opposition to a national minimum. The basic CPC minimum is paid everywhere in all centres, despite variations in conditions in several

sectors of State capital. Variations in rent and other prices are provided for in the allowances, but a basic minimum of Rs. 30 has been accepted. We must demand an upward revision of the basic wage.

A national minimum has got to be fought for, because that brings about uniformity in the conditions of the working-class wages throughout the country and prevents the capitalists from playing one centre or one sector against another. It helps to eliminate competition within the ranks of the workers themselves and thus unifies them.

Our wages in industry have no relation to living costs and the minimum that we have been speaking is not a *living wage*. It is the minimum below which the most unskilled worker must not be paid, if he is not to starve. The minimum spoken of here is of the starvation level and not a living wage. The fight for the living wage has still to be fought, even in the most advanced centres. For example, in Bombay textiles, where a Government Committee decreed Rs. 30 as minimum on 1938 prices, it held the living wage at that time to be Rs. 58. If this was the living wage, one can easily see that the minimum was surely on the starvation line.

As a result of the agitation launched by the railway workers and other Government concerns, the question of merging DA with basic pay was taken up by the Gadgil Committee. But nothing in this line has yet been done in large-scale industry. By splitting wages in a number of categories such as dearness allowance, attendance bonus, production bonus, profit bonus, etc., the employers create unhealthy competition, encourage wrong consciousness on the question of wages, and by such devices as production bonuses, impose speed-up on the workers.

In India, the feudal form of *payments in kind* has invaded the realm of bourgeois wages system also. Hence in a number of industries, payment of a part of wages or dearness allowance in kind was introduced in the first World War and was since continued, as in tea, coal, etc. This system inhibits the freedom of the workers in the matter of organising his expenditure as he likes and prevents him from fighting for a living wage in accordance with living costs. Though in times of scarcity such a system of payment in kind is welcomed by the worker, yet it is not a system which is healthy for our class as a principle. This problem recently came up in the plantation industry, where the planters used the conversion of payment of wages and DA in rice to cash payment in order to impose a wage cut on the workers. The same trouble exists in coal mines also.

In order to strengthen the workers' unity and clarify his

consciousness in regard to his wages relation with the employer as one of his rights and dues following from his creative labour, these adjuncts and forms of payments have to be consolidated without inflicting any loss on any worker.

In order to arrive at a clearer understanding of this problem on the basis of data on wages in various areas and trades, I propose that the AITUC should appoint a Commission of its leading trade-union workers to work out the national minimum and the reorganisation of the wage-structure.

The next important demand on which almost the entire working class in India is agitated is that of halting *rationalisation* and retrenchment as apart from the general unemployment.

Since 1950 the employers have been planning attacks of rationalisation and retrenchment, as they feared that direct attacks on wages would be severely resisted.

This offensive of the employers was fought back by whole factories coming out in defence of the retrenched workers or whole areas coming out in defence of a closed factory. That the attack was a concerted move is now clear from the report of the Jute Working Party and the now open demands made by the Cotton Textile Millowners.

Rationalisation and increase in workload have been carried out in textile mills in Coimbatore, Madurai, Madhya Pradesh, Calcutta, Bombay, Ahmedabad, Kanpur, etc. The workers in many places have led heroic strikes and have halted the offensive in some places. The resistance of the workers has now prompted the employers to demand direct help from the Government in their plans of beating down the workers and increasing their profits.

Why is rationalisation demanded? Are those industries in losses? The jute mills, cotton mills, tea plantations, engineering concerns, iron and steel—all these large-scale monopoly syndicates are making huge profits. There are mills on record which in the last year have made three to six times their last year's earnings. To give just a few examples from cotton textiles which want 80 crores from the Government to help in rationalisation. The Kohinoor Mills in Bombay of Killick Nixon & Co. declared a gross profit of Rs. 65.22 lakhs this year, which is three times that of last year. The Buckingham Mills of Binny & Co. of Madras made a gross profit of Rs. 124.59 lakhs, that is more than six times that of last year, which was 20.73 lakhs. The Calico Mills of Ahmedabad earned 71.18 lakhs this year compared to 45.67 lakhs last year. The Madura Mills of Harvey & Co. have made 102.13 lakhs this year compared to 90.48 lakhs last year. Thus they de-

mand rationalisation not to cut losses but to increase profits still further.

Rationalisation is canvassed on the plea of cheapening the prices of goods. Every industry that has pleaded this excuse to get the consumer's support and carried out rationalisation, has no record of having reduced prices of its product. The textile mills have been rationalising since 1927 on a large scale, but cloth is today dearer than it was before rationalisation.

Rationalisation is not a measure to benefit the public or the worker. It is a device to ruin the small-scale producer at the hands of the big one; it is a device to strengthen the monopoly giants, to create more unemployment and bring that as a pressure on the employed and to multiply profits. Under the capitalist order, rationalisation does not lighten the labour of man nor cheapen the goods for the people. Therefore, it must be resisted.

If the workers are united round this and resist together, they will attain success. And unity on this issue is capable of being forged, there being no class of workers or trade unions that will willingly accept rationalisation.

Though the Government of India has lent its support and are prepared to advance the crores needed by the monopolists to carry out rationalisation (Rs. 40 crores demanded by jute, over 80 crores by cotton, etc.), even the INTUC is not ready to support the scheme in its full strength at this stage.

The working class must take advantage of this and unite in the struggle against rationalisation.

Another very important aspect of our work is the fight for housing. Government is out to give lavish loans and subsidies to the employers for building houses. The price of land, steel, cement and wood are put up so high by the monopoly owners that the houses that are built become costly and the rents beyond the capacity of the worker to pay. Thus here the land and capital monopolists come in our way. In spite of this the trade unions have to mobilise and if possible themselves become builders of houses and of co-operatives for building them.

Thus, we can say that the main objectives of the trade unions in the economic field centre on these four pillars: *The Fight for Wages, Work, Housing and Health.*

V

LABOUR LAWS — SOME GAINS AND DEFEATS

This period saw also the advance in the struggle for social security measures and significant gains in that struggle.

The demand for social security measures became more and more insistent towards and after the end of the Second World War. The Government could no longer ignore it and it came forward in 1948, with the "Employees' State Insurance Act". But under the pressure of the employers, the State Insurance Act of 1948 was put in cold storage till 1952.

In 1952, it was made applicable to Kanpur, Delhi and a few towns of the Punjab. A schedule was drawn up for gradual extension of the Act throughout the country in all centres with a concentration of 2,000 or more workers, by the end of 1955. But the employers are stalling its further progress and the Government is aiding them.

This Act provides for sickness benefit, maternity benefit, disablement benefit in case of accidents arising out of and in the course of employment, and dependants' benefit in case of deaths due to accidents arising out of and in the course of employment.

For the first time, it is recognised by law that the worker, as the producer of wealth of society, is entitled to medical care and maintenance during periods of illness. This is a distinct gain won by the working class after years of struggle.

Apart from this, the other benefits, viz., accident benefits and maternity benefits had already been won through the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1923 and the various State Maternity Benefit Acts. The Insurance Act has only brought the administration of all these under one central authority.

While under the State Maternity Benefit Acts and Workmen's Compensation Act, maternity benefits and accident benefits were the exclusive responsibility of the employers, and were payable without any conditions as regards service, etc., the Insurance Act makes them payable only on condition that the employee has paid a certain number of contributions during a certain preceding period.

Secondly, even in the case of sickness benefit, the Act does not recognise the full obligation of the State or the employer to provide for medical care and maintenance in respect of *all* workers. But it makes it conditional upon the employees making a minimum contribution.

Thirdly, the scale of payments of benefits is pitifully low—never exceeding 50% of the employees' daily earnings and even this is restricted to a maximum of eight weeks in a year.

The greatest drawback in the whole scheme is the top-heavy bureaucratic administration. The Government refuses to recognise the vital role of the trade unions in the management of the social security schemes. Out of 38 members of the corporation set up under the Act for administering the Scheme, 24 will be Government officials, and only five will be

persons, who in the opinion of the Government are "representatives" of employees!

The experience of the working of the Act during the last two years in Kanpur, Delhi and Punjab, has clearly demonstrated that it can never succeed, unless the trade unions and employees are allowed a direct and major share in its administration and unless the representatives of the workers are directly elected by the insured workers themselves.

The struggle for democratisation of the administration of Social Security schemes, is thus a vital part of the struggle for social security.

Inadequate and extremely defective as this scheme is, its extension to other Centres is opposed by the employers who find willing support in many of the State Governments. In the face of these obstacles, there is danger that the Act may not be extended to the other centres in the near future, despite the declarations of the Union Labour Minister.

The Provident Fund Act of 1952

The Government also enacted in 1952 the Provident Fund Act which introduces a compulsory Provident Fund Scheme in the textile, cement, engineering, cigarette, iron and steel and paper industries.

In the absence of old age pensions, and any other security measures against unemployment, the Act provides for some savings against the future. But, even this meagre provision is not available for all the workers. Even in the six industries to which it is applicable, it covers only those factories employing 50 or more workers.

The biggest drawback of the scheme is that the workers are not entitled to get the employers' contribution in full till after 20 years of membership of the fund. The Government collects from the employer his full contribution, but completely deprives the worker of that contribution if he ceases to be a member within five years. He will forfeit 50 per cent of the employers' contribution if his membership is more than 5 years, but less than 10 years; 40 per cent if his membership is more than 10 but less than 15 years, and 25 per cent if his membership is more than 15 years, but less than 20 years.

What this means in a country where there is no security of service whatsoever can be imagined. In effect, therefore, the scheme reduces itself to one of paltry compulsory savings.

The entire working class will have to carry on a determined struggle against this obnoxious provision of forfeiting to the State the money collected in the name of the worker for

no fault of his. In fact, the Government punishes the worker for its own inability to ensure security of employment.

The struggle against this becomes particularly important today, when mass retrenchment faces the workers.

An important effect of the provisions of the Act should be noted here. The Act provides that workers who have put in a service of one year become compulsory members of the Provident Fund scheme; the employees shall contribute 6 1/4 per cent out of their wages to the Fund.

If the worker loses his job and then joins another factory, his membership shall be continued, if he is already a member of the Fund in the establishment in which he was previously employed.

Under these conditions, employers refuse to entertain in employment those who have been members of the Fund. By entertaining non-members, they save their contribution to the Fund in respect of such new entrants for a period of one year. Thus, in effect, the Provident Fund card, becomes a card of non-employment.

This position can only be changed by removing the qualifying period of one year of initial service for membership of the Fund.

Lay off and Retrenchment

An important victory for the working class in its struggle for social security was the amendment to the Industrial Disputes Act, enacted in 1953 on payments for lay-offs.

This Act certainly does not recognise the responsibility of the State to provide for the maintenance of the unemployed worker in full and for the entire period of his unemployment. It only provides that in case of temporary lay-offs of workers who have completed one year of service, the employer shall pay to the worker compensation at 50 per cent of the rate of wages, for an aggregate period of 45 days in the year.

Secondly, it provides that in case of retrenchment, the workers shall receive one month's wages in lieu of notice together with a gratuity calculated at the rate of 50 per cent of his wages for each year of his service. This second provision is used by the employers now to carry out large-scale retrenchment and victimisation of trade union workers, with greater ease than before.

Nonetheless, for the first time, the working class, by its struggles, has forced the Government to recognise the need for some provision against unemployment and as such it is an important victory of the workers in their struggle for social security.

But even this meagre provision is not implemented by many employers, and the State Governments refuse to take steps to compel implementation.

Thirdly, many State Governments refuse to intervene in the case of retrenchment if the gratuity payable by the employers has been paid. Thus, this Act becomes a virtual legislation of mass retrenchment and makes any struggle against it illegal.

Fourthly, many employers take advantage of this Act and close down their factories altogether and retrench the entire complement of workers, by paying gratuity. Then they recruit workers on lower wages and emoluments, who thereby lose all benefits, such as Provident Fund contributions, leave facilities, annual holiday with pay, bonus, etc. Thus the Act is used for the purpose of carrying out large-scale retrenchment and for imposing wage-cuts and lower conditions of service on the workers.

All these clearly bring out the fact that the working class and the trade-union movement should be eternally vigilant and fight at every step, the machinations of the employers and the Government to deprive the workers of whatever gains they have won as a result of their heroic struggles.

These gains, wrung out of unwilling hands, however, demonstrate that with greater unity and determination and purposeful struggle, the employers can be beaten back and the struggle for full social security can register still greater advances.

VI

TRADE-UNION RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATIC LIBERTIES

In the whole history of the capitalist world, employers have never liked their workers to combine in a union. The early pioneers of trade unionism suffered gallows and transportation at the hands of the ruling classes.

History in India also has not been different. There are many martyrs who have fallen to the hangman and the bullet of the ruling classes in India. The workers in India too had to wage a dogged fight for the right to form a union.

Though the workers in India have won the right to strike and the right to form a union, these rights are sought to be circumscribed by so many conditions as to nullify them.

It is because the ruling classes know that the trade unions are the biggest weapons in the hands of the working class to fight for and protect their interests.

The Constitution under which we live professes to give democratic liberties to all citizens. But when it comes to the workers exercising them in their interest, these liberties are taken away from them.

Victimisation of the active trade-union workers is the biggest attack that is being launched by the employers and the Government. The trade union cannot function for the worker unless some from their own ranks do the sacrifice of giving their services for the cause of their class. The capitalists know this, and with the aim of destroying the leadership that can organise the weapon, the employers victimise workers who show any signs of union activity.

Hundreds of trade-union workers have lost their jobs for the 'crime' of doing union work and becoming the spokesmen of workers and leading their struggles.

Such victimised workers have been the pioneers of our trade-union movement. They have migrated, when victimised, from factory to factory and State to State in search of jobs. And wherever they went, they began again union work and have again been victimised. The inveterate police-hounds follow them everywhere, preventing them from securing any jobs and earning their bread.

The Government itself has been a party to victimisation. In its own offices, in railways, etc., it has promulgated rules which practically permit victimisation of any person for holding political views and doing trade-union work which any bureaucrat could declare as 'subversive activity', and punish. Recently, there was the fantastic case of an employee of the Coffee Board appointed by the Government, being victimised because as a union official he issued a Press statement. There is that famous case of the Patna insurance employee, who for years has been clamouring for his case of victimisation being heard, but with no effect.

In the well-known strike of ICI workers, several leading workers were victimised and discharged for 'misconduct', the misconduct being the statements they made before a legal Tribunal in regard to the financial dealings of the Company. So, even giving evidence before a Court leads to victimisation.

The Government employees are being slowly so regimented as not to be allowed any trade-union or democratic liberties.

The Government and employers directly interfere in the work of the unions, dictating as to who should be there and who not if they are to get recognition, as has been happening in the case of certain dock and port and postal unions.

The fundamental right of a union to run its work as its members may like without interference from the Government

or employer is being sought to be nullified by a misuse of the Registration Act.

The right of a union to recognition and collective bargaining on behalf of its members is denied and forcible adherence of Government-sponsored or Government-recognised unions is being forced on the workers through such laws as the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, the whole trend there being to suppress all other unions and make only the INTUC the sole recognised organisation in India. This sinister policy of the Government and the employers has to be fought by upholding the banner of the AITUC Unions in defence of the workers' interests.

When workers struggle, their democratic liberties are attacked. Meetings are banned. Workers are put in prison without trial, their union offices are seized, even their private houses are attacked and families harassed. Attacks by organised gangsters under the protective wing of the police and the employers have become usual in coal mines, plantations, etc.

Workers in many industries and areas have waged determined battles for recognition and re-instatement of victimised workers, violating ban of meetings, etc. These struggles have succeeded in some cases.

But unless a determined resistance is put up against the attack on trade-union and democratic rights, the progress of the working class and even other sections of the people will be impossible.

Throughout the capitalist world, the warmongers and profit hunters, are now concentrating their attack on trade-union liberties. Some reactionary leaders of trade unions, some in the INTUC and even HMS help the Government and the employers in victimising workers of the AITUC because they disagree with them. But such help only recoils on all workers losing the fight for their wages and work.

The attack on trade unions is the beginning of the attack on all democratic movements. Hence all democratic masses must stand by the workers in defence of trade union rights and democratic liberties.

The WFTU in this year's May Day made this the central slogan of the May Day rallies. It has made the following suggestions for a Charter of Trade Union Rights. It requests all trade unions to participate in the framing of this charter. It is not only a WFTU Charter but a charter of rights of all workers. The WFTU in its call says:

The trade union is an organisational power and key weapon of the workers in their action for the improvement of their living and working conditions.

Governments and employers which are now stepping up their attacks on trade union rights do so to increase the exploitation of the workers still further.

The fight for the winning and defence of trade union rights is therefore more necessary than ever if the workers are successfully to defend their bread, their dignity and their family life.

That is why the Third World Trade Union Congress considered it necessary to strengthen solidarity in the fight of the workers for trade union rights. For this purpose it decided that a Charter of the Trade Union Rights of the Workers be drafted.

The World Federation of Trade Unions wishes to associate all workers and all trade union organisations with this task, and submits for your discussion the basic principles of the Charter of the Trade Union Rights of the Workers.

1. The right of all manual and intellectual workers, whatever their age, sex, race, caste or nationality, to form and belong to trade unions and to take part in trade union activities.

2. The right of all trade union organisations to exercise their functions and powers without interference or control by government authorities or the employers, and in accordance with constitutions freely and democratically adopted by the workers.

3. The right of all trade union organisations to freely elect their leaders without interference or control by government authorities or employers.

4. The right to organise trade union meetings and congresses, and trade union demonstrations, to publish and distribute the trade union press, to collect dues and administer trade union funds, to set up and organise schools for the workers.

5. The right of the trade union organisation to take up the defence of the interests of any worker, to examine, to express an opinion and to act on any question endangering the workers' interests.

6. The right of the trade union organisation to negotiate and conclude collective agreements in the interests of the category of workers concerned, and to represent the workers in bodies dealing with questions which affect them.

7. Respect for the right to strike in its varying forms for all workers without any limitation whatsoever, and the prevention of any measures being taken against a worker who exercises this right.

8. Respect for the freedom of expression, association and assembly for the workers at the place of work, respect for the freedom of the worker to belong to the trade union

of his choice when several exist, and to read and distribute the trade union and working class Press.

9. The right to take part in any action in defence of the workers' interests, the right to protection of every worker against all discrimination in hiring, employment or wages, because of his affiliation, trade union activity or his personal opinions or convictions.

10. The right of the trade unions to take part in the working out of social and economic policy and in the drafting of legislation directly or indirectly concerning the workers.

11. The right of trade union organisations to federate on the local and national level.

12. The right of trade union organisations to join the international trade union organisation of their choice and to take part in international trade union activities and in demonstrations of international working class solidarity.

The W.F.T.U. urges all workers to discuss and study these proposals and to struggle together for the winning and defence of trade union rights.

VII

TRADE UNION UNITY

The period under review has seen the working class taking firm steps towards unity in the trade-union movement. Out of its own bitter experience, the working class has learnt that disunity in its ranks is a powerful weapon in the hands of its enemies. Out of this experience has also grown the urge for unity.

In this struggle for unity, the AITUC, its unions, and activists have stood in the forefront.

The leaders of the INTUC and HMS have, however, despite their lip service to the principle of unity, made consistent attempts to block this process of unity.

In spite of their opposition, the AITUC, and its affiliates at all levels, continued their efforts at uniting the working class and the trade-union movement. Above all, they have consistently striven for united struggles of the workers at the factory level, on every issue that affected the workers. It was this persistent struggle that resulted in the united struggles against closure of factories, against retrenchment, against curtailment or denial of bonus, etc., throughout the country. Innumerable have been the struggles which have been fought in every working-class centre, wherein workers belonging to

different unions, and to no union have come together, elected their own committees of struggle and fought together.

It is this growing urge for unity, and the urgent need for defence of their interests against increasing offensive of the employers and the Government that resulted in the formation of united All-India Federations of Trade Unions in the defence, oil, banks, insurance, air and other industries, and in Provincial Federations of trade unions in the leather and shoe, engineering and road transport industries in some States. The AITUC hailed the formation of such united federations, the merger of two federations in the Railways, and considers them as a great advance of the forces of unity in the working class.

However, we are aware that the battle for unity is still a long and strenuous one and has still to be won. We cannot therefore rest on our oars.

Undaunted by the obstruction of those that pursue the path of disruption, the AITUC will continue to lead the struggle for unity. With us, unity of the trade-union movement is not a question of tactics, it is a fundamental principle. We are convinced that today, when the working class in India is facing a great offensive, and has to discharge tremendous responsibilities to the nation and to the cause of entire humanity against the threat to our national independence and to peace of the world, unity of our class and its trade-union movement has become an urgent necessity.

We do not make any condition for unity, except the condition that the workers will be assured fullest democracy in the running of their trade unions, that they shall freely elect their trade union officials, and shall freely and democratically take decisions on all questions affecting their interests.

All the tall talk of democracy of some of the leaders who have been pursuing the path of splitting the trade-union movement stands exposed when it is seen that tens of thousands workers in Burnpur have had to struggle for months together for the simple demand for free election of office-bearers of their union, of which Mr. Michael John, the President of the INTUC, is the President.

Those who agree to abide by the decision of the workers, who believe that the workers alone shall decide their questions, can obviously have no objection to our proposal for unity on the basis of the democracy in the trade-union movement.

We want to make it clear that the democracy we fight for is not the rule of the majority, but we desire the representation of every shade of opinion in the executive of the trade unions, according to its relative strength in the workers.

We seek this because we know that that alone will ensure the examination of every view-point, so that decisions affecting the workers may be unanimous, as far as possible.

Our own experience in the numerous struggles of this period has convinced us that unity of action is possible on the basis of the defence of the interests of the workers. There is no question affecting the workers—wages, bonus, DA, unemployment, retrenchment, etc.—on which unity of action is not possible, provided we are actuated by the sole desire to defend and advance the interests of the workers.

With firm conviction in this possibility—a conviction that has been immensely fortified by our experience in the struggles of the last three years—and with the deepest faith in the workers, we shall continue to build unity of all workers in the factories and work places and their residential areas. In this struggle, we shall be guided by the observations by the WFTU, viz.:

1. to reveal the spirit of initiative, to develop this spirit among the masses, and to learn from the masses their real possibilities for action;
2. to eliminate feelings of false superiority when facts show the weakness of the organisation and the workers note the failure of this work; to be specific and objective;
3. to prove in daily actions and in the facts themselves the desire to eliminate sectarianism and opportunism other than by more or less theoretical speeches and writings;
4. to bring about the effective democratic functioning of the trade unions, to fight for trade union democracy when it is violated, to organise collective work within the trade union leadership;
5. to organise mass work and to wipe out trade union bureaucracy wherever it reveals itself;
6. to consider a trade union organisation as a non-Party mass organisation of all workers, not to restrict its forms of organisation with the aim of making it incorrectly play the role which falls to the political vanguard of the working class;
7. to find the most correct organisational forms and to draw up programmes for unity activities and of trade union demands; when the facts show that the workers are politically divided among different political parties and trends, the trade union organisation must not, by its methods of action and internal functioning, be exclusively reserved for one or the other group of workers

who are temporarily separated from the political point of view;

to take measures so that the unity composition of the trade union organisation is shown in the composition of the trade union leadership, which should include representatives of the different political trends existing;

to attach greater importance to questions of trade union recruitment and to call on the unorganised workers to take part in the mass actions planned, in order to prepare them for trade union membership; and

8. to expose to the workers all manoeuvres undertaken to hinder their unity, and for this purpose, to carry out broad work of explanation and information among the workers who are still influenced by splitters.

We know that ultimately this growing unity in the struggles and the growing consciousness of the mass of workers, resulting therefrom, will sweep away all obstacles, from whatever quarter they may be placed, and achieve firm organisational unity at all levels of the TU movement. For, who can stand before the might of a determined working class?

Experience during the last few years, particularly of the growing crisis in our country's economy, has shown also that the working class cannot advance and ensure a stable and progressive improvement in its conditions, unless the country as a whole, particularly its peasants, middle class and industries advance. It has therefore become urgently necessary to forge unity of the workers with other toiling sections of our people, with the peasants, middle classes, and even the national industrialists who suffer from competition from imperialists and monopolists.

To the credit of our trade unions, it must be pointed out that many of them have actively supported the struggles of the peasants against eviction and for better economic conditions. They have supported the struggles of the middle-class employees like teachers, etc. They have supported the demands of small-scale industrialists for protection against foreign and native monopolist competition.

Experience has also shown that the unity thus forged with other democratic classes, is of tremendous help in winning the struggles of the workers themselves.

While continuing to struggle for uniting the working class and the trade-union movement, we shall continue to mobilise the support of the working class for the demands and struggles of the peasants, middle classes and fight for the saving of our industry from collapsing under the stress of the develop-

ing crisis. In doing so, we know we are discharging a noble national task.

VIII

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY — WFTU

The bonds of solidarity between the Indian working class and the world working class have been tremendously strengthened during the period under review.

The Indian working class will for ever remember the courageous struggle waged by WFTU, which mobilised the workers of the whole world against the suppression of trade-union rights and illegalisation of the trade unions in India.

They know that it was the mobilisation of the trade unions of the whole world by the WFTU that played a notable part in saving the lives of many a brave toiler of Telangana.

They have seen in actual life, that when they go in for struggles in defence of their interests, it is the WFTU that has supported them without any reservation.

These years have shown that it is the WFTU that has courageously carried the battle for social security, against unemployment, for trade-union and democratic rights, into the social and economic organs of the UNO, into the ILO and to all platforms, where its voice could be raised.

It vigorously protested against the violations of trade-union rights committed by the governments of Venezuela, Peru, El Salvador, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Southern Rhodesia and the British Government in British Guiana. It carried on a world-wide campaign against the arrest and detention of trade-union leaders in many countries.

The AITUC has joined with the WFTU in the protest against the violations of trade union rights.

We proudly record that it was this campaign that secured the release of Le Leap, Vice-President of the WFTU, by the French Government, and of Lazaro Peneja, another Vice-President of the WFTU, who had been arrested and detained by the Cuban Government.

They have seen that it is the WFTU that has courageously upheld the cause of Peace, and mobilised the workers of the world, including those of imperialist countries like France, against the oppression and wars that the imperialists are carrying on against the colonial peoples. Today, when the entire Indian people realise the machinations of the US imperialists against our freedom and the freedom of the Asian peoples, the Indian working class will recall the brave and persistent struggle that the WFTU carried on for years against the Korean War and the war of the French imperialists in Indo-

China, supported by the US imperialists. They will recall, that it is the WFTU that consistently championed the cause of the workers and the peoples of Malaya, Iran, Tunisia, Morocco, Kenya and all colonial countries.

Above all, the persistent struggle for working-class and trade-union unity that the WFTU has carried on since its inception is a model for the trade-union movement in our country and in every country. Despite the splitting activities of the ICFTU, it has extended its hand of unity in action to the ICFTU and its trade unions.

The Conference on Social Security it organised in February 1953, to which were invited all people interested in the problem, was a resounding success. That Conference and the resolutions on the Principles of Social Security adopted therein, have served as powerful weapons in the hands of the workers of every country, irrespective of their trade-union affiliations, as a powerful weapon to fight the growing menace of insecurity.

The last Conference of the WFTU, to which were invited representatives of all trade unions, whether or not they were affiliated to the WFTU, made it a rally of the entire working class of the world, discussing their problems and coming to unanimous decisions. The WFTU has truly shown that there is no question of the trade union movement which cannot be solved by democratic discussion and on the basis of defending and advancing the interest of the workers. It has further shown that unity of the workers and its trade-union movement is the most powerful weapon in the struggle for the defence of the workers.

In contrast to this brilliant record in the service of the workers, what have the leaders of the ICFTU got to show? They can only show their attempts at splitting the trade-union movement in every country, their attempts at breaking the strikes of workers as in the case of the Canadian seamen's strike and the strike of the British seamen in solidarity with their Canadian brothers. They can only boast of their attempt to drag the working class behind their masters in their adventures in Korea, Indo-China and in their brutal repression of the colonial workers throughout the world.

This anti-working class policy is bound to meet with failure. The contradictions between their masters—the American, British and other imperialists—have already begun to reflect themselves inside the ICFTU.

The leaders of the INTUC and HMS, which are affiliated to the ICFTU, and some of them—particularly those of the HMS—who carry on a slanderous campaign against the WFTU, should read the signs of history and take lessons from

historical experience. The working class will march forward, forging and steeling its unity, and any attempt to change this course of history is bound to flounder.

CONCLUSION

I am sorry I cannot give you a more exhaustive report. I know many problems that require a discussion have not been posed here. But I hope that after we have had discussions and after you have given the Congress your rich experience, we shall be able to put that all before the workers of India.

The vast gathering that has come here, the many friends from the unions of the INTUC, HMS and UTUC and those who are not in any trade union centre, that have kindly responded to our invitation and have come to see this Congress, the thousands and lakhs that have participated in the preparations for this Congress show that all over India there is tremendous urge for unity and workers all over the country expect us to tell them what to do in order to make life better.

What shall we tell them in the briefest words? If all our workers and friends ask us as to what is the key slogan of the day that will mobilise, organise and unify us all, I would say, the slogan is:

Everyone to be in a Union. Join in, one and all. Join any Union of your choice, but join. To organise the unorganised is the key organisational task of today.

The greatest weakness from which we all suffer and of which the employers and the Government take advantage is that even taking the total membership of all the four organisations, the unorganised outside the unions is a vast sea.

They being in no organisation, the small organised numbers are unable to meet the offensive of the employers. All the organisers of all the four centres, instead of sniping at each other, must help each other to guide the worker into any union of his choice he may want to join. That will be the greatest strength of the trade union movement.

If that is the key task of organisation, it follows that we must build and strengthen the AITUC and the greatest international of the workers, the WFTU. Unity cannot come by weakening the AITUC but by strengthening it.

And for what immediate aims do we raise our banner? For the defence of the interests of the working class, of the interests of all people, and of the country. Hence, after thanking you all who have come, men and women workers,

from all trades and industries, I close my report with the following written on our banner to work for and fight for and win.

- (1) *Forward to the unity of the working class!*
- (2) *Forward to the solidarity of the working class and the peasantry and all toiling people!*
- (3) *Every worker in a union to organise the unorganised!*
- (4) *Defend the right to work and social security!*
- (5) *Down with unemployment and rationalisation!*
- (6) *Boycott machines that bring unemployment!*
- (7) *Resist wage-cut and retrenchment!*
- (8) *Unite to win unemployment relief and stop closures of factories!*
- (9) *For a living wage and a national minimum!*
- (10) *Unite to defend trade-union rights!*
- (11) *Unite to defend democratic liberties!*
- (12) *Defend the special rights of working women and working youth!*
- (13) *Fight against victimisation, the main weapon of the enemy to smash unions!*
- (14) *Down with Anglo-American warmongers!*
- (15) *Victory to the people of Viet Nam!*
- (16) *Withdraw all troops from Asian soil!*
- (17) *Down with US-Pak Military Pact, and all for friendship between the peoples of Pakistan and India!*
- (18) *Join with the peoples of French and Portuguese pockets in India in their fight for liberation!*
- (19) *Long live the unity of the workers of all languages and States of India!*
- (20) *Long live the international solidarity of the working class of all lands!*
- (21) *Long live the World Federation of Trade Unions!*
- (22) *Long live the All-India Trade Union Congress!*
- (23) *Long Live Peace!*

REPORT ON ORGANISATION OF THE AITUC

Since we met in the last Convention, has the AITUC, and its unions, made an advance and if it has, how is it to be measured? It can be stated in answer to this question that the AITUC has made an advance in several areas and sectors of industry. That advance can be measured by the important struggles that have been led by the AITUC unions of which mention has already been made in the earlier part of this report. The leadership of the AITUC unions in West Bengal, Bombay, Tamil Nad, Andhra, Hyderabad, Punjab, Travancore-Cochin, Malabar, has had wide bases and also deep roots. In other parts of the country such as Bihar, UP, Madhya Pradesh, Madhya Bharat, Assam, Orissa, Rajasthan, Gujarat, the AITUC unions exist, function and lead struggles in some units of some of the industries. But in these parts, it cannot be said that it has got such wide bases nor deep roots as in the others.

The advance of the AITUC has also to be measured by the acceptance it secured for its slogans and advice among workers and trade unions which are not affiliated to it and are neutral in the matter of organisational affiliation. It can be seen from the reports that are available from the conferences of the State TUCs that in some States, large numbers of friendly observers from such unaffiliated unions were present at these conferences. The presence of such friendly observers only means that at the time of united action, these sections of workers will not oppose joining hand with the workers of the AITUC for the common cause. This is certainly a step forward compared to the total disruptionist attitude that some top leaders of the HMS and INTUC adopt towards the AITUC unions.

Another measure of advance is that the AITUC unions have been helpful in bringing about organisational unity in several trade federations. The AITUC rendered active moral and organisational help in the formation of trade federations, embracing unions of all affiliations and shades of thought, in the defence industry, in banking, etc. The AITUC advised its unions, friends and sympathisers to put no conditions for unity, except that the organisation shall work for the defence of the workers' interests. The AITUC was confident that once

unity is achieved with the conscious understanding of the workers, it will grow and become a mighty force. And it has to be said to the credit of some of the unions and leaders in these federations that they too took a helpful attitude in bringing about unity. These united federations have however yet to take unity to all their ranks in concrete work and understanding.

The advance of the AITUC in some centres can be measured by the fact that in order to achieve common action in support of common demands, the trade unions of all affiliations including unaffiliated ones have been able to establish in some areas local trades councils for a limited purpose. Such has been the case in Delhi, Madras and in some parts of Andhra.

The advance of the AITUC can be measured by the fact that in some cases, where the AITUC formerly would have countenanced hostility, its help and advice have been welcomed. Such has been the case with Burnpur workers, who now consider us as their friends.

The advance of the AITUC is also seen in the fact that in some trades where we had no good functioning unions before, except a little foothold, we have been able to integrate ourselves with the workers and participate in their struggles. As everyone knows work in the far-flung tea estates, hill areas and in the coal mining regions is extremely difficult and hazardous. The comrades of the AITUC have, however, built genuine trade unions in some centres of these industries, despite ferocious opposition from the employers and governmental agencies and despite the various difficulties involved in the work in these areas. The AITUC has done some good TU work in the coal mines in Bihar, Hyderabad and Nagpur, and in the tea gardens of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling and some plantations in South India. From these few points, one can see how far the AITUC has been successful in making some advance.

What is the position of those national centres who maintain an attitude of hostility to the AITUC or refuse to unite on any platform with it? Have the INTUC and the HMS advanced or retreated?

The organisations of the INTUC have also registered an advance.

They have made headway in the tea plantations and mining. They have stabilised themselves in the Bombay State textiles. They have retained a foothold in engineering. Despite its failures, the INTUC still retains a following in Madhya Bharat, UP and Bihar, though it has failed to strike any roots in Punjab.

Why has the INTUC been able to register an advance?

Some people still think that it did so only because of governmental support, legal recognition by employers and finance.

It is no doubt that these factors have been of great help to the INTUC, because its top leadership pursues, in the main, policies helpful to the Government and also the employers.

But it would be a totally wrong understanding to think that the INTUC has not got a mass following of its own or that it is not at all amenable to the pressure of the masses.

The leadership of the INTUC in the last two years has taken positions of opposing the tea planters' offensive against the workers. It decided to give notice of strike in the coal mining areas. It called a strike in Assam gardens and in some places in the South. It conducted the copper strike at Maubhandar. At one stage, it joined in a common resistance in the Kanpur textile struggles for bonus.

There is a tendency to think that all actions of the INTUC leadership are mere manoeuvres, done in collusion with the employers and State to cheat the workers or secure a popular base. Such a reading is not borne out by facts.

There is no doubt that it is the deliberate policy of the employers and the Government to build up the INTUC as against the AITUC. Adjudications demanded by the AITUC unions are refused while the same demanded through INTUC are granted. Even if a union fulfils all legal requirements, it is denied representation while the INTUC is given one. Yet even in such cases, it would not be correct to say that the INTUC has no base of its own at all or that we need not reckon with it in our work.

While the INTUC has registered an advance in some respects, it has also suffered retreat. The factional quarrels of the INTUC in Bengal, in Burnpur, etc. have been disrupting it from within. But on balance, as yet its gains in organisation have been more than its losses.

The HMS has suffered a further set-back in this period and except for its middle and rank-and-file leadership, the whole of the top leadership has almost deserted the trade-union front. The advocacy of productivity and rationalisation by some of their leaders was a severe blow to the ideological influence of the HMS. The pro-American and pro-British policies of other top leaders increasingly isolated them from their militant cadres, who still retained their early enthusiasm of fighting for socialism and against the bourgeoisie.

The open quarrels among its leadership, one section supporting the American-sponsored Moral Rearmament Movement and the other attacking it, but attacking in favour of ICFTU, showed to the ranks the retreat of honest socialism and the anti-working class face of 'Democratic Socialism' in

its leadership. The top HMS leadership has been at pains to liquidate itself into the INTUC and thus freeze the efforts of those of its militants who still desire to uphold the banner of their early HMS.

But this does not mean that, down below, there are not HMS unions or good cadres and leaders still ready to build their unions. They exist as a sizable force in Tamil Nad, U.P., Hyderabad, Bombay, Travancore, Bihar, etc. and we must forge unity with them in struggles.

Such is the position of the three main central TU organisations in India.

Are there any ideological and tactical drawbacks that are holding back the further advance of the AITUC? Is the line followed by the AITUC not in conformity with the wishes of the masses or the needs of the situation? Experience of the struggles led by the AITUC and experience of situations in which the AITUC has grown and advanced shows that it is not ideological, or tactical lag or mistakes in the general policy that is holding back the AITUC.

The first obstacle in the way is the tremendous handicaps under which the AITUC cadres have to work. The State, the employers, the law—all are against them and hamper even legal TU work in a number of ways. Even tribunal awards or orders given by Courts in favour of the workers have to be enforced by threats of strikes or actual strikes. And even in such struggles, it is the workers who are attacked by the State rather than the employer who is at fault.

Another obstacle is the ferocious offensive of the employers and the State against the cadres of the AITUC in the form of *victimisation* of militant workers and TU leaders in the places of work. Non-recognition and victimisation make organisation at places of work very difficult.

The AITUC cadres have to overcome this difficulty by adopting various means of approach to the workers, according to varying conditions.

The AITUC also suffers from lack of trained cadres. These have to be taken and trained from militant workers. To prepare a ground for this, the AITUC centre organised a Central TU School of two weeks' duration in Nagpur in August-September 1953. But it was not followed up by provincial schools in all the States. There are reports that only Gujarat, Tamil Nad and the Punjab held some sessions to convey the Nagpur school lessons. But, on the whole, this work has not been satisfactorily done both by the Centre and the State offices.

There is still a serious under-estimation of the value of day-to-day union work especially in the matter of realising

for the worker the benefits to which he is entitled under the law.

Any number of non-TU lawyers are making prosperous living by only doing work in Tribunals, in accident compensation, in provident fund work, payment of wages, sickness insurance, maternity benefits, etc. Every union, in an industrial centre at least, can organise this work through its own agency and become a centre of activity despite non-recognition. In fact, this must become an effective weapon of organisation.

If we act up on these few points, we can register still greater progress in organisation.

CENTRE

Trade meetings

The Centre of the AITUC in this period has been able to help the State committees and individual unions to some extent, but this has not been done systematically and continuously. Representatives of the Central office have paid personal visits to the States and also invited comrades from the States in order to learn their problems and evolve slogans in consultation with them.

The Centre has had consultations with comrades from big industries, like railways, tea plantations, coal, oil, insurance, banks, air, defence, iron and steel, seamen, jute, road transport, coir. But organised link with all industrial centres has been very weak and many problems in these industries are pending discussion.

State TUC visits

Apart from concrete guidance on each trade, we tried to visit the States and their conferences, but such visits were few and far between. For this, the Centre was handicapped by lack of enough personnel and pressure of work. We could avail of the services of Comrades Satyapriya Bannerjee, Aruna Asaf Ali, P. Ramamurthi, Ranen Sen, S. S. Mirajkar and Jyoti Basu and myself for visiting the State TUCs. Visits were paid to almost every state and every big industrial centre. We hope more comrades will lend their help in this work. Comrade President was unable to move about due to his illness. The late Comrade Shanta Mukherjee, until her illness and death, was also giving all her energies to the organisational work of the AITUC.

After this session, steps have to be taken to see that per-

sonal consultations between Centre and State functionaries develop on a larger scale.

Aid

In many struggles fought by our workers, the international working class, represented by the WFTU, has rendered relief. Burnpur workers, victimised railwaymen, coal miners in Bihar and Hyderabad, Satara engineering workers, Tita-ghur paper workers, coir strikers in Alleppey, have been given small aids as tokens of international solidarity and expression of sympathy with the sufferers.

Central publications

The WFTU helped us to publish the *Viswa Mazdoor*, Hindi edition of the Central organ of the WFTU. But it is regrettable to note that its circulation is not satisfactory and we are running into huge losses.

The AITUC should have its central bulletin; but it has not been possible for want of finances and organisational support from the unions.

Pamphlets

In the 1952 Convention at Calcutta, many comrades had undertaken to write pamphlets on trade union subjects. None of those who had promised, fulfilled it, except the writer on jute.

Subsequently, the Centre requested other comrades to undertake the work. So far, we have published ten pamphlets and reports in a year. They are now on the stalls at this session.

Trade Reports

In this session, we have been able to give you a number of printed reports. Some came so late that we could not print them. Some were cycloed. For some, we could not even do that. We hope we shall be able to let you have them all in print after the session, if there is a demand for them and comrades are able to pay the price.

Statements

The Central office issued a number of statements and circulars, whose record is separately available. It is regrettable, however, that we were not able to express ourselves on each important happening, which should be made possible in the future, with a better functioning of the Central office.

Tripartite Committees

The AITUC has been given representation on several

tripartite committees. The record of this is separately available.

But in this respect, I have to point out that our State committees and trade unions do not provide us with enough number of comrades who can do the work in these committees. Hence many a time, the same persons have to appear on different committees or sometimes no one is sent to represent the AITUC. From the proceedings of the Naini Tal and Mysore Conférences, the Tea Plantation Committee, the Provident Fund and Sickness Insurance Committee and so on, comrades can see that it would be harmful for the workers if we neglect the work on these committees.

Working Committee

The Working Committee met only once in Calcutta on 17-19th August 1953. Its report is separately printed.

Membership, etc.

The statement on this question is incomplete. We have been unable to give to the Government a complete statement on this question, pending verification at this session.

But even the statement we gave has been so twisted by them to suit governmental policies that the INTUC is given first place, HMS second and the AITUC third in order of membership.

The audited statement of accounts is given herewith.

Comrades are requested to give us here a complete statement of their membership, number of unions and dues paid, so that we can successfully challenge the Government figures. The figures given must be of genuine membership and functioning unions.

STATE TUCs

Many State TUCs and almost every union has led struggles and won demands. But the linking up of the whole movement through the province to the Centre and the Centre to the World Federation is not being done properly.

Recently a few provinces have held their conferences and made some good reports. The report of the Hyderabad TUC is a volume by itself and quite useful. The Bengal TUC, the biggest unit and one that has fought biggest battles, has not yet made any report, because it is awaiting its annual conference. Punjab has been quite well organised and has been sending reports. Tamil Nad has the distinction of translating and conveying to the workers in their language the main publications of the AITUC. Bihar has now been reorganising its work paying attention mainly to the steel and coal unions.

Andhra, Madhya Bharat, Bihar, South Kanara, Gujarat do function and keep contact with the Central office. But the biggest blank spots have been Bombay and UP from whom no reports were made to the AITUC and where State Committees have not been functioning. The strengthening of the State TU centres is one of the key tasks before us. This session is expected to lead to improvement in this matter.

State TU periodicals

The remarkable feature of this period in the work of several State committees is the publication of small periodicals in their own language, devoting themselves mainly to question of TUs. Some are official organs of the State committees and some, though political papers, serve the TUs mainly. Such periodicals are published even by some unions and trade federations.

State TUCs of Tamil Nad and the Punjab and the Regional Council of South Kanara have their own periodicals.

The federations of oil workers, banks, post and telegraph (not affiliated to any centre), Darjeeling tea, TU workers in Itarsi in Madhya Bharat, Malabar TUs have their TU papers.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY — WFTU

The working class of no country can remain aloof from its brothers in other countries, if it has to successfully struggle for liberation. International organisations of the working class have been built since the days the workers began their battles with the bourgeoisie in the last century.

Today, the international solidarity of the working class of the whole world is represented by the World Federation of Trade Unions.

At the end of the last war, trade union centres of all countries of the world were in the WFTU. But the splitters in the British and American trade unions, at the order of their bourgeois masters split away from the WFTU.

Though the split was regretted, yet it did not weaken the WFTU. The failure of the Marshall Plan and the worsening of the life of the workers by the warmongers, who openly supported the ICFTU as their tool of disruption, showed to the world the correctness of the line pursued by the WFTU in defence of the workers' interests.

The WFTU, despite the splitters, pursued the line of working for unity. It has extended its hand of unity in action to the ICFTU and its trade unions.

The AITUC has the proud privilege of belonging to the

family of WFTU in which sit the best sons of the working class from all over the world.

The employers in India, the leaders of the INTUC and HMS and the governmental circles do not like the WFTU. They do not want our workers to have real international solidarity with the workers of the world.

The Government denies passports to our delegations wishing to visit the international conferences of the WFTU. They do not permit its representatives to visit our country.

The leaders of the INTUC and HMS openly slander the WFTU and help the employers and the Government in preventing the AITUC from joining in the work of the WFTU.

The Government permits the INTUC and HMS delegations to go to the ICFTU conferences. The ICFTU Secretaries and Presidents have been given all facilities to come to India and hold conferences; but these facilities are denied to the WFTU representatives. Mr. Oldenbruck and Omer Becu, President and Secretary of the ICFTU, have been in this country, holding schools, conferences, etc. But Comrades Saillant, Bosi and Vittorio of the WFTU are taboo to the governmental bureaucrats. This policy of discrimination against the WFTU has got to be changed.

The leaders of both the INTUC and HMS in their reports to their conferences have made slanderous attacks on WFTU.

It is the duty of the working class in India to fight the slander against their international organisation. The Third World Congress of the WFTU last year has shown how the militant working class of the world, even when not affiliated to the WFTU, participated in its deliberations and arrived at policies calculated to unify the workers of the world, in defence of their standard of living, in defence of their TU rights and in defence of national freedom and democracy. Let us hold aloft the banner of the international solidarity and unity of the workers, the banner of WFTU.

The Trade Internationals of the WFTU have given us guidance and help on trade levels. The national centres of various countries have honoured the AITUC with invitations to attend the celebrations and functions.

The AITUC is glad that our friends from China, Comrades Li-Chi Po and his colleagues while passing through India honoured us with a visit to our offices.

The AITUC is glad to record that the trade unions of Hungary have donated to the AITUC a big X-ray plant and the trade unions of Czechoslovakia have donated to us a big mobile dental hospital for the service of our ailing workers.

We thank them all for this help and expression of solidarity.

RESOLUTIONS

(Adopted by the 24th Session of the All-India Trade Union Congress, at Calcutta, May 27-29, 1954.)

On Martyrs

This 24th Session of the AITUC pays its homage to the countless Martyrs who had laid down their lives for the cause of the working-class movement. In the period following the last session, the Government unleashed heavy repression on the democratic movement. The trade-union movement faced the brunt of this attack because it stood at the forefront of the democratic movement of the country. Thousands of workers in every working-class centre were mercilessly attacked. Hundreds were tortured in police lockups and hundreds were shot down. Even those who were detained in jails were not spared and beastly firing was resorted to in various jails such as those in Salem, Nasik, Calcutta and Subarmati. The AITUC is proud that our workers faced these inhuman tortures and the brutal terror bravely and held aloft the banner of the working class. By their undaunted heroism, they have demonstrated that no terror, however beastly, can crush the working-class and democratic movement.

By their martyrdom they have written a new page of selfless heroism and sacrifice in the history of the working-class and democratic movement in the country.

The AITUC pledges that it will tirelessly strive to carry forward the glorious traditions they have laid down.

Condolence Resolutions

1. The 24th Session of the AITUC places on record its deep sense of grief at the passing away of Comrade Shanta Mukherjee, Vice-President of the AITUC and Comrade S. V. Deshpande, Ex-General Secretary of the AITUC. In their passing away, the AITUC and the working class have lost two of the most indefatigable workers of the trade-union move-

ment, who till the last breath of their lives toiled despite failing health to build the AITUC.

2. The 24th Session of the AITUC places on record its sense of grief at the passing away of Comrades R. S. Ruiker and Hariharnath Sastri, both one-time office bearers of the AITUC. In their passing away, the workers of our brother organisations, the HMS and the INTUC, have sustained a serious loss.

On Affiliations

Notwithstanding the relevant clauses in the Constitution of the AITUC, this Congress authorises the Working Committee to affiliate unions with membership below 250 on payment of Rs. 10 and unions with membership between 250 and 500 on payment of Rs. 15 as affiliation fee to the AITUC.

On W.F.T.U.

The Twenty-fourth Session of the AITUC regrets that the representative of the WFTU has been prevented from greeting the Congress in person due to Governmental obstruction.

The AITUC is proud to be amongst the eighty million workers affiliated to the WFTU to discharge its task of improving the conditions of the working class, in maintaining peace and friendship among all peoples, in defence of national freedom, democracy and socialism.

The AITUC expresses its gratitude to the WFTU and its various Trade Union Internationals of Textiles, Mining, Chemicals, Engineering, etc. for the help it has rendered to the workers in India and their trade-union organisations.

Greetings to the AUCCTU Congress

The AITUC sends fraternal greetings to the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions of USSR, whose session is going to meet in Moscow on 5th June, 1954.

The working class of the Soviet Union has been in the forefront in the struggle for the liberation of the workers, for the freedom of all nations and people, for defence of peace, democracy and socialism.

The working class of the Soviet Union, by successfully

building socialist society has shown how socialist society free from all class divisions, free from the landlord-capitalist economy can grow from prosperity to prosperity and can make mankind free from unemployment and crisis. In the Soviet Union, the trade unions enjoy full freedom to determine wages and working conditions, full freedom to manage their social security funds, to participate in and supervise factory management and full democratic rights.

The AITUC greets the Soviet working class as the beacon-light of the world's working class.

Thanks for Hospital Aid

The Twenty-fourth Session of the AITUC expresses its most heart-felt thanks to the trade unions of Czechoslovakia for donating a mobile dental hospital and to the trade unions of Hungary for donating an X-ray plant, for treatment of our ailing workers.

It is regrettable to note that the Government of India refused to forgo their heavy customs duties though this hospital equipment was donated as a charity and for free relief of all sick and ailing, who would be able to avail of it.

On Unemployment

The AITUC views with great concern the rapid growth of unemployment in our country causing acute distress to millions of men, women and children and resulting in colossal waste of valuable creative manpower. The situation has so deteriorated, that deaths due to starvation are being reported in some part or other of our country. The Government has so far refused to undertake an unemployment survey and the actual state of unemployment is kept in the dark. Yet, the statistics published from month to month by the Employment Exchanges, though confined to the main industrial cities and utilised by no more than a fraction of the urban unemployed, show that there has been almost a 100% increase in the number of unemployed persons on the Exchange live register, from 2,88,971 in December, 1951, to 5,39,278 in February 1954.

The number of educated unemployed is also rising rapidly. As per Exchange figures alone it has risen from 1,15,964 in December 1952 to 1,50,086 in December 1953 and this steep increase has occurred six months after the Five-Year Plan

was revised to curb unemployment. The number of teachers unemployed has risen from 6,926 in December 1952 to 11,411, in December 1953.

Unemployment among skilled and semi-skilled personnel also is alarmingly on the increase. In December 1952, it was 46,728 and in December 1953 it had stepped upto 52,504 as per Exchange live register figures. Many engineers and qualified technicians remain unemployed while it is worth noting that the Government complains lack of trained personnel and continues to import large number of foreign experts and personnel.

The AITUC further notes that hundreds of cottage industries as well as small and medium factories are closing down due to financial stringencies, vagaries of the export-import policy of the Government, foreign and Indian monopolists' competition and due to the deterioration of the already low purchasing power of the people. This is adding to the army of unemployed and ruining the home market and the Government has no policy to help and protect them. The foreign and Indian monopolies are not only minting increasing profits and the foreigners exporting crores and crores of rupees out of our country, piling misery on our people and ruining our economy; they are also resorting to more and more rationalisation, speed up and increased work-load, thus aggravating further the unemployment problem. The ever-growing unemployment situation is taken advantage of by employers to attack the present living standards of the employed workers and to lay hands on their hard-won rights. Thus the employers are using the big stick of unemployment to impose wage-cuts, to increase work-load, etc. The Government as an employer is setting the pace to private employers by its policy of large-scale retrenchment in its own Defence Establishments, Collieries, Civil Supplies Departments, etc., without providing alternative jobs to these retrenched men. As a result of this, even the Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Act whose proclaimed aim is to grant some retrenchment or lay-off relief, has resulted in direct encouragement to private employers to go ahead with their retrenchment plans without let or hindrance.

The AITUC condemns the Government's latest move to encourage the textile mill owners in their scheme of rationalisation which would involve the loss of jobs of more than a lakh of workers and intensification of work-load on the remaining workers to ensure higher profits to the textile bosses. Further, the Government by its schemes of "Time motion study", "Training within Industry", "Productivity Centre",

etc., is giving vicious lead and inspiration to foreign and Indian Big Business in India, threatens lakhs of workers with loss of livelihood.

The AITUC indicts the Government for its active assistance to the monopolists in their scheme to increase and maintain their profits by means of intensification of labour, rationalisation, retrenchment, temporary closures, lay-offs, etc., which still further aggravate the unemployment crisis.

The AITUC wishes to point out the utterly false character of the claims made by the Government about the capacity of the Five-Year Plan to provide jobs to the unemployed. The fact of the matter is, during the first three years of the Five-Year Plan, the number of persons who secured jobs through the Employment Exchanges have declined from 33,425 in December 1951 to 12,695 in February 1954, i.e., a drop of nearly 66%.

The AITUC further notes the failure of the Government to make any advance in this direction even after it announced its decision in the Parliament to 'tackle' the unemployment problem by revising the Plan and providing special funds to finance additional employment.

No doubt, workers, middle-class employees, teachers, journalists and their unions have begun to move in opposition to closures, retrenchment, rationalisation and in support of the demand for relief to unemployment and the adoption of policies capable of stopping retrenchment, etc., and creating new avenues of employment. The passing of the Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Bill, last December, though extremely inadequate and affecting a fraction of the workers, was principally due to the pressure of the working-class movement which forced the hands of the Government to concede the principle of relief for those involuntarily unemployed. What, however, is wanted is a more united and determined struggle against retrenchment, closures, rationalisation, etc., and for basic change in the agrarian, industrial and commercial policies of the Government, so that the movement assumes provincial and all-India proportions, together with the other sections of the people, to force the Government to make more substantial concessions.

The AITUC wishes to reiterate its belief that the immediate effective method of paving the way to solving the unemployment problem and bringing the sufferings of unemployed and their dependants to an end is to undertake a plan for genuine relief of the people and undertaking schemes of production which depend for their implementation mainly on our national resources, men and technique and not on foreign

capital which robs and enslaves us, effectively abolishing landlordism and distributing land to the peasants, banning evictions and confiscating British capital, in order to create avenues of employment which would help the building up of a modern prosperous economy serving the cause of the toiling masses.

The AITUC at the same time holds that immediate steps are required in order to render succour to suffering mass of unemployed and to arrest any further increase in the unemployed and outlines the following for immediate action:—

- Introduce unemployment insurance scheme for the unemployed immediately;
- Reduce prices of all consumer goods by 30%;
- Ban all retrenchment, lay-off, and closure of factories and introduction of rationalisation at the cost of employment;
- Give State-aid to small and medium industries and take over mismanaged factories; and reopen all closed concerns by suitable amendment in the Constitution of India;
- Provide free rations to the unemployed workers and their families;
- Reduce rents on peasants and taxes on the people to enable them to buy goods and thus find market;
- Execution of public works, small irrigation and river-valley projects all over the country, both to help peasants to fight drought and floods and to relieve unemployment;
- Distribute free of charge all Government waste lands to unemployed and landless peasants;
- Ban export of profits by foreign monopolists out of the country, break the big monopoly rings, smash their managing agencies and put a ceiling on their profits at 6½%;
- Trade with all countries including the USSR, China and other People's Democracies;
- Expand Indo-Pak trade by removing border difficulties;
- Enforce 44-hour week in all industries, and ban overtime work, introduce additional shifts, thus ensuring work for the unemployed and living wage for all.

The AITUC welcomes the recent legislation passed by the Parliament—Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Act, 1953—to secure payment of some relief to workers for retrenchment and lay-off as a victory of the working class. It, however, considers the relief given to be inadequate and demands relief for the entire period of unemployment to all those who lose

their jobs as also those who have not been able to secure a job in order to enable the unemployed and their dependants to keep body and soul together until jobs are found for them. The AITUC holds that it is a responsibility of the employers and the Government to undertake an Unemployment Insurance Scheme and provide social security.

The AITUC reiterates its demand that the Government commence a special session of tripartite Indian Labour Conference to discuss exclusively the problem of unemployment in the country and to devise the ways and means of solving the same.

The AITUC supports the Unemployment Relief Bill moved by Com. A. K. Gopalan in the Parliament and steps taken by many other members of Parliament and appeals to the workers all over the country to demand its acceptance by the Government and Parliament.

The AITUC calls upon all unemployed and employed to unite for realisation of the programme outlined above.

The AITUC further appeals to the working class, peasants and middle-classes to jointly fight against the menace of unemployment, defeat the rationalisation offensive, win immediate relief and campaign for enforcing the anti-unemployment programme.

On Rationalisation and Speed-up

The 24th Session of the AITUC severely condemns the various measures and forms of rationalisation introduced or contemplated by the employers in various industries in India with the help and support of the Government.

For the last six years, the monopoly owners have been carrying on speed-up and intensification of work under various forms and now under the spurious plea of tiding over the crisis of the industry, the offensive of rationalisation is being launched on a national scale.

At different centres and in different industries, the scope and character of the offensive is different.

In the *Cotton Textiles*, new machinery has replaced the entire process like roving, etc., throwing out thousands into the ranks of unemployed. Double-side working in Ring Frames is another common feature widely introduced. And now textile magnates are preparing schemes for installing automatic looms which, if carried out, will throw over 1,25,000 weavers out of employment.

In the *Jute* industry, the powerfully organised employers dominated by the British managing agencies have secured the

Planning Commission's sanction for a Rs. 40 crore 'modernisation' scheme which will result in the retrenchment of 50,000 workers. Already, during the last five years, the workers' strength has come down by about 25,000 as a result of installation of new machinery in the spinning and other sections and by other ways.

In the *Engineering* industry, intensification of labour is being carried out through various 'productivity' schemes aimed at making the same number of workers do a greater amount of work within a given period of time. This is an inevitable prelude to mass retrenchment.

Whatever the form and method of rationalisation and intensification of work, the attempt is to extract more work from workers retained in employment and to reduce the wage bill.

Today, with unemployment rapidly rising to huge proportions, the Government, instead of preventing this offensive of the employers, only helps them in various ways. It has made available British and American experts in rationalisation and productivity. The Government itself by introducing rationalisation in its own undertakings such as port, PWD, railways and defence factories, sets the pattern for the other employers. It further supports the employers by dittoing the owners' argument for rationalisation. And the Five-Year Plan, which by making rationalisation conditional upon fictitious safeguards, only legalises the offensive of the employers and this, when the Government itself is partly responsible for the high cost of commodities by levying excise duty and other taxes on raw material and finished goods.

It is stated that the introduction of automatic machinery and rationalisation or asking workers to work on more machines than before even without introducing new automatic machines will lead to reduction in costs and thereby make things cheaper for the people to buy and make possible larger exports. Thus, they argue there will be more markets leading to more factories and does give work to those who are unemployed at a later date.

But this can deceive no one. The textile mill owners have carried out rationalisation as far back as 1927. But the cloth did not become cheaper nor did employment increase. Rationalisation inevitably leads to restriction of the scope of employment which in the absence of industrialisation and rapid expansion breeds unemployment.

This itself leads to further reduction in the purchasing power of the people and therefore the market for the industry. In fact, the efforts for rationalisation are based on the refusal

to limit the fabulous profits of the magnates, refusal to cut down top-heavy and wasteful expenses of management rampant with speculation and fraudulent practices and also the refusal to carry out the necessary social and economic changes which can put more money into the pockets of the peasants, the working class and the middle-class employees. This alone can really and effectively solve the crisis of markets that our industries is facing.

The real game of the monopolists can be seen in the case of jute industry whose production they deliberately restricted by sealing off looms and reduction of working hours, in order to bolster up prices and then use the argument of high prices in order to retrench workers in the name of cheapening jute goods.

The workers refuse to accept heavier work-loads and unemployment to fatten the fat purses of employers who seek only to get rich on the toil of the workers. Our workers today live and work under deplorable conditions. Their wage at best is on the starvation level. The dearness allowance falls far short of the rise in the cost of living. There are no social security benefits, or provisions against sickness and old age. Under these conditions, rationalisation and work-load will mean, besides unemployment, back-breaking labour and abnormal sapping of the life of the workers, general deterioration in health and higher incidence of accidents. Therefore, workers throughout the country, in Ahmedabad and Bombay, Kanpur, Bengal and in Coimbatore, in Madhya Bharat and Madhya Pradesh, workers in all industries and of all opinions have doggedly offered resistance to these schemes of rationalisation in every shape and form.

It is to increase the profits that capitalists resort to rationalisation and not for catering to the needs of the people or to lighten the toil and improve the condition of the workers. The proposed measures of rationalisation will not only create unemployment; it is against the interest of the nation as a whole. It will strengthen the power of the monopoly groups in the country, who alone can command the necessary capital resources. It will lead to the ruin of small industries and traders without any benefit to the country or the people of any class except the monopoly groups.

The AITUC, therefore, as the defender of the interests of the working class and in the interests of the nation as a whole cannot lend any support to these schemes of the employers in jute, cotton, tea, coal and engineering, etc., to make more profits by imposing more miseries on the toiling people.

The AITUC will support all technical changes which will bring benefits to the people and raise the living standards of the workers, while lightening their burden of work. It, however, cannot but oppose the present rationalisation schemes, the only aim of which is to exploit the working class and rivet it to the chains of slavery in the name of creating plenty and prosperity and cheapening goods.

We welcome the recent resolution of the INTUC opposing the scheme of rationalisation as being against national interests and industrial progress. This brings into bold relief the extent and universal character of the workers' opposition to these schemes.

The deep, spontaneous, universal and united opposition shown by the working class, irrespective of ideological, political and other differences, the dogged militancy with which the workers have fought these schemes in the past, ensure that the policy of rationalisation cannot be thrust on the working class.

The AITUC asks the Government to take note of the universal opposition these proposals have evoked and demands that:

- The Government to refuse to give any aid to rationalisation schemes;
- Put an end to rationalisation in its own establishments;
- Ban rationalisation in all industries;
- Take steps to enquire and eliminate mismanagement by checking waste, corruption, speculation and fraud;
- Reduce the burden of taxation on consumer goods.

The AITUC further calls upon the entire working class to take note of this new offensive that is prepared against their already deteriorated living standards and prepare to resist it unitedly. Towards this, it calls upon the workers everywhere in the country to close up their ranks, to strengthen their organisations everywhere and forge unity in action. Only united action by the workers and the people will help them to defend their interests and rights and a reversal of the policies of the Government and employers. The AITUC calls upon its units and affiliated unions to take every initiative to forge unity of action with all workers, irrespective of opinion and organisational affiliation.

This session of AITUC, therefore, calls upon the workers throughout the country to intensify the movement against rationalisation.

On Peace

The AITUC considers that the task of fighting for peace is a basic task of the Indian working class and is an integral part of their struggle for better living and working conditions, for trade-union rights, democratic liberties, and complete national independence.

The American warmongers, in league with the British and French imperialists, are frantically trying to draw in the territories adjoining our country in the Middle East and South East Asia into their plans of war and conquest. The developing economic crisis in the US and the successes achieved by the forces of peace in lessening international tension make the rulers of America desperate. The rulers of America are trying to spread their deadly tentacles into areas and countries which have hitherto either resisted or have not completely identified themselves with their war drive, and are trying to rekindle the flames of war in Asia.

With the conclusion of the US-Pak Military Pact and the recently announced prototype of the aggressive NATO in the SE Asian region, the danger to the Indian people's security and peace has become immediate and serious.

The continuance by the French imperialists of their colonial war against the heroic people of Viet Nam struggling for their liberation gives the pretext for American intervention in South East Asia in the guise of saving South East Asia from "Communism".

Unable to face the prospect of continued peace and the lessening of international tension brought nearer by the armistice in Korea and the Geneva Conference, the American warmongers, caught up as they are in the vortex of enveloping crisis of their economic and political policies at home and abroad, are trying their best to sabotage any chances of agreement at the Conference, trying fresh provocations and intensifying their war drive to escape from the deepening of the economic difficulties.

The Indo-Pak dispute over Kashmir is being utilised by them to further their aims of war and conquest, of building military and air bases in areas adjoining the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, of stringing together the reactionary Governments of Pakistan and Turkey and others in the Middle East in an aggressive alliance aimed against the peace-loving States and peoples living across the borders of these countries, and has thus brought the realities of the cold war and the prospect of a destructive hot war nearer to the doorsteps of India.

The existence of French and Portuguese colonial pockets on the Indian mainland further aggravates the danger to our security and peace because these pockets are being built up and used by these imperialisms with the help and under the instigation of the US imperialists as spring boards of imperialist war and conquest in Asia and thus constitute a grave risk to our independence.

The development of weapons of mass annihilation like the atom and hydrogen bombs, chemical and bacteriological weapons, etc., and their testing on Asian soil endangering the peaceful pursuit of their occupations by the Asian peoples are fresh proofs of the diabolical plans of the US ruling clique and their callousness towards the life and labour of the Asian people.

It is widely known that these policies of the American warmongers and their European henchmen are aimed primarily at the destruction of the progressive and peace-loving States of the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China and the People's Democracies of Eastern Europe; that they are aimed at subverting and frustrating the heroic struggles of the colonial and dependent countries of Asia and Africa to free themselves from the oppression and exploitation of imperialism; that they are aimed at subjugating the Indian people and destroying our independence and bringing us under the iron heel of imperialism.

The experience of the countries which have come under the influence of American imperialism and surrendered to their aims—countries like Greece, Turkey, Siam, Formosa and South Korea—shows that once such a thing happens, the working class with the rest of the population loses all vestiges of democratic rights and liberties, the right to organise trade unions and the right to strike and struggle for a higher standard of living. Hence the fight for peace and against the machinations of imperialist warmongers becomes an integral and unavoidable part of our struggles for better living and working conditions, national independence and democratic rights.

Not only that all democratic rights and liberties are forfeited, but the people of these countries become cannon fodder in their wars and testing grounds of their new and varied weapons of mass annihilation.

Again, it means the destruction of our national industries, except those which could be of immediate use for war purposes; further intensified loot of our national wealth; and unemployment and poverty for the vast masses of people.

Further, the threat of war and the hysteria created by warmongers abroad will be used by the reactionary ruling

circles in India to tighten the iron grip over the life and liberties of our working peoples, to suppress our struggles for higher standard of living and extension of democratic rights in the name of national security, defence of the country, etc.

In the name of resisting the danger of attack from Pakistan, the reactionary feudal circles in India will try to whip up communal tension within the country, disrupting the unity of the working people, create enmity between the peoples of India and Pakistan—friendship between whom is the main guarantee of frustrating the ends of imperialism against our two peoples.

The existence of international tension and insecurity give justification for the ruling classes to go on increasing the Defence Budget which consumes over 50 per cent of the national revenues. Increased military expenditure undermines our national economy. It depresses the standard of living of the people, brings more and more taxes on our daily necessities. It becomes an unbearable burden on our people. Hence the struggle against war, for peace, and against mounting military expenditure is to struggle for a higher standard of living.

The successes achieved by the peace-loving people of the world, led by the World Peace Movement, in organising the forces of peace all over the world have further given confidence and direction to the people of the world. It is clear that if we unite and act, the warmongers' game can and will be defeated. The struggle of the people of Asia—of Viet Nam, of Malaya, etc.—for national independence and democracy still further enhances our strength in the fight for peace. The conscience of humanity is being stirred by the horrors of the latest weapons of mass destruction like the Hydrogen Bomb as manifested by the recent tests conducted by the American warmongers. This, together with the realisation of the repercussions of the US-Pak Military Aid Pact emphasises the urgency of the issue and brings forward millions of our people, who hitherto have remained apathetic, into the arena of active struggle for peace and opens up vast possibilities in this direction.

The AITUC calls upon the Indian working people and, especially, unions affiliated to it, to rally round and co-operate with the peace movement in every way, to unite and mobilise wider and wider sections of people in defence of peace against the threat of war.

The AITUC supports the acts and declarations of the Government of India which help the cause of peace and lessening of international tension.

In this fight for peace, we must concretely agitate for the following immediate demands:

- Complete and unconditional ban on all atomic and hydrogen weapons, bacteriological and chemical weapons and other methods of mass extermination;
- Settlement of all international disputes by negotiation and not by force of arms;
- Immediate stopping of war in Viet Nam;
- Immediate stopping of the massacre of the African people by the British occupationists in Kenya;
- Stopping of war on the Malayan people;
- Withdrawal of India from the British Commonwealth;
- Withdrawal of American observers from Kashmir;
- Recognition of People's China by the UN;
- Merger of Portuguese and French territories in India with the Indian Union;
- Withdrawal of the imperialist armies from the soil of Asia;
- Asia for Asians.

The working people cannot allow the present civilisation, the fruit of their toil and effort of thousands of years to be destroyed by desperate and dying imperialism. The Indian working class, as the most conscious and advanced section of the people and as the custodian and inheritor of all that is good and lasting in our tradition and culture, cannot allow the imperialists to impose their yoke on our people and destroy the peace and independence of the peoples of Asia and the world.

In this hour of trial and grave danger, the AITUC is confident that the Indian working class will rise to the occasion and come forward as the champion and organiser of the entire Indian people in defence of national independence, democratic rights and lasting peace in the world.

On Trade-union Rights and Democratic Liberties

With the growth of trade-union consciousness, with the increase in the number of workers' struggles in defence of their rights, repression is let loose against trade-union activists and leaders. Today many of our working-class and trade-union workers are in jail and are being prosecuted under fictitious and trumped-up charges. It is not only the workers of the AITUC that suffer from such repression. Wherever and under whatever union the workers fight against the offensive

of the owners or in defence of their rights, the Government mobilises its forces on the side of the employers and generally helps them to defeat the cause of the workers. This session strongly condemns this anti-working-class and undemocratic policy of the Government. We greet and express our solidarity with all the trade-union leaders and workers who today are in jail or are suffering other penalties for standing up for the rights of the workers and demand their immediate release and withdrawal of cases against them.

In order to suppress the growing consciousness, unity and militancy of the working class, the employers are more and more trying to crush the trade unions and deprive the workers of their fundamental trade-union rights and democratic liberties.

Even the Government of India and the State Governments, as direct employers of lakhs of workers and employees in State-owned concerns and establishments, victimise trade-union workers, attack the trade unions in their concerns and establishments and interfere in their free working.

The government not only refuses to recognise trade unions in many of their own establishments and offices, but even refuses to allow them registration under the Trade Unions Act. Even where recognition is accorded, it is done under most onerous conditions depriving the unions of many of their democratic rights.

In order to prevent the workers from uniting and struggling in defence of their trade-union rights, even the most ordinary democratic liberties, guaranteed by the Constitution of the country, are denied to the trade unions. On the slightest signs of unified activity on the part of the workers, meetings of workers are banned in whole regions and factory areas, factories are declared "protected areas" and are occupied by police force, who prevent all trade-union or other legitimate activity, as has happened in many cases.

Wherever the workers move in action to defend their rights police interference has become a common feature. Blacklegs and goondas are given open protection by the police. The police very often enter the factory premises and assault workers.

Being thus actively aided and guided by the Government the employers are victimising trade-union workers, crushing trade-union activities, depriving workers of democratic liberties and trade-union rights, in order to carry out their plans of retrenchment, rationalisation, depression of wages, etc.

The representatives of the AITUC are refused passports to attend international conferences and fraternal delegates

from other countries are refused visas to enter the country to attend the conferences of our country.

The AITUC and its unions are generally discriminated against in giving adequate representations in the Tripartite Conferences and various other committees and are altogether excluded from international conferences or organisations like the ILO.

The Preventive Detention Act and the National Safeguarding of Security Rules 1949 have been used to victimise leaders of the trade-union movement and even to imprison them without trial.

This Congress records its emphatic protest against these measures of repression, discrimination and denial of elementary democratic trade-union rights and liberties and demands:

- The recognition of the right of all workers including Government employees, to freely form trade unions, to join unions of their own choice and have them registered and get them affiliated to any central organisation of their choice;
- Compulsory recognition of all trade unions by the employers and Government within six months of their formation;
- Full facilities and rights to all workers to freely carry on and join in the work of the trade unions without the fear of victimisation, at their places of work and residence;
- Full and unfettered rights, to hold meetings and demonstrations and complete withdrawal of section 144 and other Public Safety Measures, restricting these rights, or placing restrictions on right of assembly, speech, etc.;
- Right to strike be unconditionally recognised and all provisions of law and standing orders restricting and illegalising this right be withdrawn;
- Withdrawal of Preventive Detention Act, the National Safeguarding of Security Rules Act and other similar Acts;
- Acceptance of the right of picketing and repealing restrictive provisions regarding thereto in all laws such as Criminal Law Amendment Act and also end of the practice of providing protection to blacklegs;
- Equal treatment to all trade unions and trade-union organisations in all negotiations, conciliations and adjudication proceedings, in all Committees and Tripartite Committees and representation in international Conferences;
- Unfettered right of the workers to manage their unions, without any interference by Government.

On Industrial Relations

This 24th Session of the AITUC expresses its grave concern at the attitude of the employers and the Government towards industrial relations.

Six years of the operation of the Industrial Disputes Act and Industrial Disputes (Appellate Tribunal) Act and BIR Act have revealed quite clearly the main aim and striving of these legislations in the name of industrial peace is to virtually abolish the workers' right to strike, to make all strikes however justified, illegal and visit condign punishments on workers. On the other hand, the employers who ignore or meet with contempt the awards of the Industrial Tribunal or Industrial Law have been consistently treated with solicitude and tenderness. Even the Tribunals, including Labour Appellate Tribunal, have interpreted this anti-labour spirit of the laws by laying down that even if an employer contravenes the legal provisions prohibiting change of *status quo* or punishment of the workers in any way, it is the duty of the Tribunal to see whether the action of the employer should be supported or not.

Nevertheless the struggle of the working class for three generations and the growing TU consciousness and the heroic struggles waged by all sections of the workers, employees of the banks and insurance companies, of commercial and manufacturing concerns, etc., have inevitably led to the recognition of some of the workers' concept of social justice by Industrial Tribunals. Examples of these are that no concern which is unable to pay a minimum level of basic wage has any right to profit, that workers have a right to share in the prosperity of the concern in the shape of bonus, that the workers are entitled to annual leave with wages, that a strike, even if illegal, does not terminate the employer-employee relation, that discriminatory and selective reprisal for such strikes is illegal and so on.

The strength of the TU movement has been able to extract some concessions even under the unsatisfactory machinery of compulsory adjudication. The AITUC has always made clear its stand that the worker's right to a decent human life, to organise and associate and to exercise his right to strike in defence of his rights, are all fundamental. But compulsory adjudication as has been in force for some years is profoundly harmful to workers. As long as compulsory adjudication machinery continues, the AITUC demands the following:

- Strict and comprehensive provisions to be made for speedy and immediate implementation of awards by the employers;

- No discrimination between trade unions in the matter of representation before tribunals and in conciliation and negotiation proceedings;
- A ban on every kind of punishment and victimisation including suspension of workers during adjudication;
- Fixing of maximum time limits within which adjudication should be completed;
- Provisions for referring disputes to adjudications when demanded by the workers' organisations;
- While the principle of compensation for lay-off and retrenchment has been recognised by the Government the employers are violating this to enforce retrenchment. Therefore, the AITUC demands unconditional ban on retrenchment and closures.

In Bombay, Madhya Bharat and Madhya Pradesh the hated Bombay Industrial Relations Act is enforced. This Act denies to the workers the fundamental democratic right to be represented through representatives of their own choice. In the name of accepting the principle of collective bargaining, it gives the sole right to a union with only 15% membership to represent and bargain for all workers even though a majority do not belong to it. Even issues directly affecting the living and working conditions of workers can be raised only by the representative union, thus leaving the workers with no remedy if such unions do not choose to raise them.

The Registrar of Trade Unions is empowered to recognise or not any union as representative, and gross discrimination is practised in this regard. The Act in fact makes it extremely difficult for any trade union to function as such if its activities are not approved by the Registrar, i.e., the Government.

Strikes are totally banned on some issues and on others are limited in such a way as to virtually deny the right to strike.

The Act, besides leaving serious lacunae, gives a free hand to the employers to effect adverse changes in conditions of work or to effect closure of the mills. It legalises the absolute powers of the owners, to regulate the conditions of employment.

The total effect of this Black Act is to paralyse independent trade-union activity and ban the independent initiative of the workers and thus makes it extremely difficult to resist the attacks of the owners.

This session, therefore, strongly condemns this Act and demands its immediate repeal.

On Social Security

The Twenty-fourth Session of the AITUC reiterates its demand that all workers, manual and intellectual, employed in all sectors of industry and trade and of all callings, should have the right to the full benefits of social security solely financed by the State and the employers. Such a Social Security Scheme should provide adequate benefits to all workers for contingencies including sickness, maternity, disabilities, old age and infirmity, accidents at work, industrial disease, partial and total unemployment and death of the bread-winner.

The social security measures adopted so far have been extremely meagre and are so full of loopholes as to deny practically even the meagre benefits assured under these.

Till 1948, the only central legislation existing was the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923, though in certain States a limited category of workers secured maternity benefits and in certain well-organised industries some other benefits as well.

After 1948 the rapid development of consciousness and organisation of workers and the growth of Social Security in USSR and People's Democracies and even in capitalist countries compelled the Government of India to move in this matter. In 1948, the Employees' State Insurance Act was enacted though not enforced till 1952. The Mines Maternity Benefit Act, Mines and Mica Provident Fund Acts, and the Employees' Provident Fund Act were enacted later on, and finally, the Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Act, 1953. The Plantation Labour Act also provides maternity benefits to plantation workers.

Though the Government and the employers have been forced to concede the principle as well as certain practical measures of providing social security benefits, they have designed the scheme in such a way as to circumvent most of their obligations and shift part of the financial burdens on the shoulders of the workers by making the schemes contributory. Even these limited measures are restricted to a small percentage of workers, leaving a vast majority of workers outside their application (e.g., 10 lakhs of plantation workers, 3½ lakh miners, a large number of small factory workers, over nine lakhs of railway workers, lakhs of employees in offices and shops, Government and Municipal services, etc.).

It is an undeniable fact that for the success of social security measures, the workers and their trade unions should be given an effective hand in the administration of the scheme. But this is not done, and as a result of this, the administration

of the scheme becomes bureaucratic and expensive and does not respond properly to the needs of the worker.

Hence the AITUC demands that full social security measures should be provided by the State, financed solely by the Government and the employers, covering all contingencies, with an effective share in the administration for the workers representatives.

The main failing of some of the legislative measures so far enacted and the demands of the AITUC in relation to them are as follows:

1. *Employees' State Insurance Act*— Five years after its enactment the Act is in force only at Delhi, Kanpur and 7 cities of the Punjab. Though early implementation is repeatedly promised by government spokesmen the refusal of the State Governments to share their part of the medical costs, wrangling with the medical profession, the leisurely attitude of the Corporation and the continuous opposition of the employers, etc., have resulted in repeated postponement of the full implementation of the scheme.

Even where the scheme has been implemented, the medical and other facilities provided are so unsatisfactory that workers are forced openly to come out in opposition to the methods of implementation at various centres. The medical facilities provided by the scheme are so inadequate and the process of taking advantage of them so tiring and open to corruption that workers are rarely enthused to avail themselves of these. The facilities of medical benefits are not extended to the families of the workers. Besides, the conditions attached to the securing of certain benefits like the cash medical benefit, are so restricted and so rigidly linked with contributions that the declared object of the scheme is defeated.

It is to be noted further that before the introduction of the Employees' State Insurance Scheme, the legislative measures at the Centre as well as in the States, though restricted, used to provide benefits against industrial injuries, occupational diseases, maternity, etc., without contribution from workers. With the application of the scheme, the worker is forced to contribute slightly over 2½% of his total wages as his contribution, whereas the employers contribute only from ¾ to 1¼% of the wages.

Hence the AITUC demands that the following modifications be immediately made in the scheme:

- The exemption limit for paying contributions should be raised from Rs. 30 to Rs. 100 in view of the definition of wages which includes all cash emoluments;

- 75% reduction of contribution from those whose wages are between Rs. 100 and Rs. 150 and 50% reduction on others; and the contribution to be deducted on the basis of the actual earning of the worker;
- Medical facilities to be provided for families of insured workers.
- Option to the disabled workers to receive disablement benefit or to receive dependence benefit either in instalments or in a lump sum. Waiting period of seven days to be done away with;
- Increase of maternity benefit from 12 annas per day to the full wage including the allowances;
- Provision for benefits in cases of miscarriages;
- Cash medical benefit during the whole period of sickness and special provision for protracted illnesses like T.B., etc.;
- Provision for payment of unemployment benefits;
- Provision for supply of dentures, artificial limbs, spectacles, etc.;
- Better medical facilities, including supply of costly drugs and specialised treatment and better hospitalisation;
- Early implementation of the schemes to cover all workers including agricultural workers;
- Simplified procedure of filling forms, returns, etc.;
- Substantial representation to the workers and trade unions on the Employees' State Insurance Boards both in the Centre and in the States.

2. *Employees' Provident Fund Act*— This Act enacted in 1952 introduces a compulsory Provident Fund Scheme in the textiles, cement, engineering, cigarette, iron and steel, and paper industries.

In the absence of old-age pensions, the Act provides for some savings against the future. But even this meagre provision is not available for all the workers. Even in the six industries to which it is applicable, it covers only those factories employing 50 or more workers.

The biggest drawback of the scheme is that the workers are not entitled to get the employers' contribution in full till after 20 years of membership of the Fund. The Government collects from the employer his full contribution, but completely deprives the worker of that contribution if he ceases to be a member within 5 years. He will forfeit 50% of the employers' contribution if his membership is more than 5 years,

but less than 10 years; 40% if his membership is more than 10 but less than 15 years and 25%, if his membership is more than 15 years but less than 20 years.

What this means in a country where there is no security of service whatsoever can be imagined.

The money collected in the name of the worker is forfeited for no fault of his. This is of special importance today when workers face mass retrenchment.

Another unwholesome feature of the provisions of the Act should be noted. The Act provides that workers who have put in a service of one year, become compulsory members of the Provident Fund scheme; the employees shall contribute 6¼% of their wages to the fund. If the worker loses his job and then joins another factory, where the scheme is applicable, his membership shall be continued, if he is already a member of the Fund in the establishment he was previously employed. Under these conditions, employers refuse to entertain in employment those who have been members of the Fund, thereby entertaining non-members to save their contributions to the Fund in respect of such new entrants for a period of one year. Also workers are retrenched before the completion of one year's service. Thus in effect, the Provident Fund Card becomes a card of non-employment. This position can only be changed by removing the qualifying period of one year of continuous service for membership of the Fund.

The AITUC, therefore, demands the following immediate changes:

- The scheme should cover all workers, in all industrial establishments, plantations, mines, Government and Municipal services, etc., without regard to length of service, i.e., the minimum qualifying period of one year's continuous service be removed;
- The worker should be entitled to the full employers' contribution without regard to the length of his membership of the Fund;
- Loans should be advanced to the worker from the Fund in case of need with facilities for repayment in easy instalments;
- Local authorities should be appointed for the payment of provident fund;
- The penalising clause depriving the workers of the employers' contribution for alleged 'indiscipline' should be

deleted and no qualifying conditions should be attached to deprive the worker of employers' contribution;

- Simplification of the procedure to enable the worker to draw the amount immediately after he leaves the job.

3. *Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Act 1953*— This Act provides that in case of temporary lay-offs of all workers who have completed one year of service in all factories employing more than 50 workers, the employer shall pay compensation at 50% of wages, for an aggregate period of 45 days in the year.

Secondly it provides that in case of retrenchment, the workers shall receive one month's wages in lieu of notice together with a gratuity equivalent to 15 days' average wages for every completed year of service.

In some provinces, claims for payment of this gratuity can be filled in Court only with the previous sanction of the Government concerned.

Though this Act recognises for the first time responsibility of the employer for some compensation to the worker in case of lay-off and retrenchment, its effect is the virtual legalisation of retrenchment. Many employers are utilising this to effect retrenchment and increase the work-load. Sometimes the employers close down the factories for a few days and re-employ lesser number of workers, victimising specially the trade unionists and generally escaping payment of compensation.

The AITUC, therefore, demands that notwithstanding the limited benefits of this Act, legislation must be forthwith enacted placing a total ban on retrenchment and closures. Similarly the provision of setting off lay-off benefits against retrenchment should be deleted from the Act.

The benefits of this Amendment Act should be made applicable to all the factories and establishments without any exception.

The benefit should be paid for the entire period of involuntary unemployment equivalent to the full wage.

Lay-off, retrenchment or closure should be allowed to be made an industrial dispute in order to enable the workers to resist unjust and ill-motivated lay-off, retrenchment or closure.

Thus this Congress feels that the fight for social security is yet to be won. A comprehensive scheme of social security which includes all contingencies and covers all employees and their families at the cost of the State and the employers must be won.

The AITUC calls upon all workers and their organisations to unite in the fight for social security.

On Discrimination in Granting Passports

The AITUC draws the attention of the workers and the people to the fact that the Government of India and the State Governments in general refuse to give passports to the delegates of the AITUC to attend international conferences called by various trade union organisations in their countries. Several delegates of the AITUC, invited to attend May Day and Republic Day celebrations in China and other countries, have been refused passports.

It has been found that while passports are refused to the AITUC in general, except in solitary exceptions, the delegations of other organisations are given all facilities.

When questioned in the Parliament regarding this discrimination against the AITUC delegation, it has been stated in vague terms that the Government does not give passports to some delegations as they are alleged to have made unfavourable statements about conditions in India. This obviously means that only those who will agree to propagate the views and virtues of the Government and employers and hide the true facts of life in the country will be allowed to go outside the country to attend international conferences and celebrations.

It has also been found that delegations from abroad who come from the organisations of the ICFTU or countries of the Anglo-American bloc are given visas to enter the country. But delegations coming at the invitation of the AITUC unions are refused facilities to come to India.

The AITUC calls upon all trade unions in India to protest against this discrimination against the AITUC and the WFTU and trade unions of countries not belonging to the Anglo-American bloc. Every union, every centre should hold meetings and draw all citizens and organisations to protest against this attack on free intercourse between the peoples of various countries and especially between the workers, whose right of international solidarity has always been recognised as a force to maintain peace and friendship between different peoples, whose international solidarity has always been of mutual help to the workers in different countries organised in their own national centres.

The AITUC requests all members of the Parliament and State Assemblies to fight for this right on the floor of the legislatures.

On French and Portuguese Possessions in India

The AITUC greets the heroic people of the French and Portuguese possessions in India in their struggle against tremendous odds for the liberation of these territories from the imperialist yoke and their merger with the Indian Union.

The foreign rulers of these territories have let loose a reign of terror on these people and even villages adjoining these territories are not spared their violence. Hundreds of people have been arrested, tortured and put behind bars. All civil liberties have been destroyed. In the French possessions, hundreds of people have been beaten up, their houses pillaged and their properties destroyed. Despite all this brutal terror, the people are holding out and heroically resisting the onslaught of imperialism. In the Portuguese possessions, foreign troops have been let loose on the people. Patriots are arrested, tortured and deported to far-off places.

The struggle of these people for independence has been a part of the struggle of the people of India against foreign domination. With the end of British imperial rule in India, their struggle has intensified. But the vacillations of the Indian ruling classes in respect of taking a firm stand against imperialism gave them the opportunity to stick to their illegal possessions. It is the consistent and persistent struggle of the people of these territories that has forced the issue to the forefront again.

The existence of these pockets of alien rule on the Indian mainland is a direct and immediate threat to the sovereignty and independence of India. These possessions have been converted by foreign imperialist powers into bases for spying and sabotage and for activities against the interests of the Indian people. The French imperialists are known to be using Pondicherry as a base of activities in furtherance of their war against the people of Viet Nam.

In addition to these, the existence of these pockets is a denial of freedom for our own people living in these territories and their right to rejoin their homeland.

In these circumstances, it is of utmost importance to the whole people of India that the French and Portuguese imperialists are thrown out of these pockets and that they are cleansed of all alien hold.

The AITUC congratulates the working class of the French and Portuguese possessions on the heroic part they are playing in the struggle for emancipation and end of colonialism and in this behalf, the AITUC records with pride the heroic

sacrifices of Com. Acthuthan and Anandan who fell victims to the bullets of the French imperialists in Pondicherry.

The AITUC calls upon the Indian working class and the people to extend whole-heartedly all their support to the people of these pockets in their heroic struggle to free themselves.

The AITUC urges upon the Government of India to take *immediate* and firm measures against the deprivations of these imperialists and actively support the patriots in their struggle.

On Contract Labour

The AITUC deploras the practice of widespread employment of labourers through contractors by a large number of industries, including big industrial undertakings like railways, central and provincial PWD, mining, iron and steel, engineering, cement, petroleum and so on. It is really deplorable that the Government is the biggest employer of contract labour.

This pernicious system virtually deprives the contract labour of all rights that the working class has won through years of bitter struggles. They not only do not have any security of service in this system but are denied all the benefits of various labour legislations too. Thus the conditions of life and work of the contract labour are absolutely at the tender mercy of the ruthless contractors.

The AITUC further notes that various employers including the Government are retaining this vicious system in order to escape their legal obligations to the workers.

While greeting the workers for the successes that they have won in struggles against the contract system, the AITUC appeals to them to continue that struggle till the contract labour system is abolished in all industries.

The AITUC further demands that the Government should make all labour legislation applicable to contract labour in the same way as it is applied to non-contract labour and that no distinction should be made in respect of wages and other amenities between contract and non-contract labour.

On Industrial Housing

The AITUC notes with anxiety the acute shortage of housing in industrial centres of India and the squalid, crampy and unhealthy tumble-downs and hovels, devoid of even the most elementary sanitary facilities, in which the overwhelming majority of the workers and their families are forced to

live, falling easy prey to innumerable diseases and yielding heavy toll of precious working-class lives.

The AITUC strongly condemns the employers for concerning themselves only with earning colossal profits at the expense of the labour of the workers, while refusing to provide for even a basic need like proper housing facilities. The few quarters constructed so far are nowhere near touching even the fringe of the problem.

Even in our major industries employing lakhs of workers yielding fabulous profits, housing facilities for the workers are exceedingly niggardly. For example, in the cotton textile industry employing more than 7 lakh workers, no more than 65,000 workers have been provided with housing of one kind or another. 80% of the local miners and 60% of the jute workers have been given no housing facilities at all by their employers.

The AITUC expresses its indignation at the shameful agreement of the Government of India with foreign oil refineries making it obligatory for them to construct houses only upto 30% of their employees.

The AITUC specially deploras the fact that the record of the Government of India as an employer in regard to providing housing facilities to its employees is extremely disgraceful and a very bad example for the private employers. To take only the case of two of its departments, we find that while in the railways, over 7 lakhs of its 9 lakh employees are still without any housing facilities, no less than 30,000 of the Central Government employees working in Delhi and New Delhi alone have not been provided with quarters at all by the State.

The AITUC wishes to further record its deep sense of indignation at the fact that the Government of India has miserably failed to implement its own solemn promise to the workers, contained in the Resolution on the Industrial Policy in 1948; that it would construct 10 lakhs of houses by 1958. In actual practice, until 1951 no more than 2,500 houses were constructed in all (in Bombay, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh) under its subsidised industrial housing scheme. Even under the revised Housing Scheme finalised by the Planning Commission, which reduced the target from 10 lakhs to 1,25,000 houses in 5 years, the position today is that up-to-date loan and subsidy have been applied for and sanctioned for no more than 28,663 houses, to be completed by 1956. Thus even one-fourth of the heavily reduced target of 1,25,000 houses will not be built by 1956, not to speak of the original target of 10 lakhs of houses. Eight years after the promise of 10 lakh houses in 10 years, we shall thus have the grand total of 28,000

and odd newly built houses, i.e. 3,000 more than the revised annual target of 25,000.

The AITUC regrets to note that the record of the State Governments as well in this behalf is far from commendable. They have refused to place sufficient funds at the disposal of their Housing Departments, State Housing Boards, and the local authorities or Development Boards. Their encroachment on the legitimate sources of revenue of the local bodies has further contributed to the contraction of the building activity of these bodies. Their callousness in this behalf is highlighted by their failure to avail themselves of the subsidies and loans offered by the Union Government for housing projects. This has been confirmed by an authority no less than the Union Finance Minister himself in his Budget Speech.

The AITUC draws attention of the Government and the public to the fact that though the Government collects lakhs of rupees from the consumers of coal in the name of providing housing and other amenities to the miners, no adequate housing is yet available to the miners, because the mine owners are not prepared to spend their share of the cost.

The housing conditions of the colliery workers in the State railway collieries at Giridih also continue to be far from satisfactory.

The AITUC further notes that in a majority of cases the rent fixed for quarters constructed by the State Governments' Housing Boards and Development Bodies, with the declared objective of ameliorating the housing conditions of industrial workers and lower income group employees has been so high, that the workers are compelled to refuse to live in them. The AITUC demands that such exorbitant rents should immediately be drastically scaled down in consultation with the workers' organisations.

Further, the bureaucratic implementation of the various housing projects over the heads of workers and their organisations has led to a total disregard, in the drawing out of the plans of the colonies, the designs of the houses and their construction, of the interests of the workers and their requirements. Thus housing colonies have in several cases come to be situated far away from places of work, while the quarters constructed have failed to take into consideration even some of the basic needs of the workers. The instance of the Bhuli township and quarters constructed in Ulhasnagar at Kalyan are blatant examples of this.

The AITUC wishes to point out categorically that the high cost of construction against which have floundered many Government schemes is in a substantial measure the product

of the bounties reaped by the landlords and the monopolies ruling the iron and steel and cement industries, out of such projects at the cost of the State budget and the workers' and people's interests. In the absence of any democratic control over the schemes, they become, in the hands of profit grabbers who dominate our economy and have big pull with certain ministerial circles and persons occupying high positions in the bureaucratic officialdom, instruments to exploit the State Budget for their own selfish ends. The AITUC reiterates that unless these elements are checked effectively and democratic control over such schemes ensured, the various plans undertaken in the name of the working class and people will not yield the best results.

The AITUC knows well how utterly impossible it is for workmen themselves, due to their miserable low earnings and due to the prohibitive cost of land and building material, individually or even through co-operative venture to undertake schemes of their own housing and holds that it is the duty of the employers and the Government to provide decent living quarters for workers and their families through early and effective steps.

The AITUC is emphatically of the opinion that the planning and execution of a housing scheme on an all-India and trade level can be effective only with the active participation of workers' representatives in Tripartite Housing Boards and their close association with the implementation of the schemes at every stage and at all levels and calls upon the Government to take immediate steps to attain this end.

The AITUC proposes a housing cess on all gross profits of the employers, in order to force the employers to make their contribution towards financing the scheme of industrial housing, while the Government of India must increase its own housing funds substantially and require all the States to make sufficient annual allotments for industrial housing.

The AITUC further demands that till such time as the entire labour force is provided with proper housing facilities, the employers should be forced to give suitable house rent allowance to all workers who are not provided with quarters by their employers.

On Railwaymen's Demands

The present policy of the Railway Board and the Government of India for rationalisation is having serious adverse consequences on the service conditions of the Indian railway-

men. Through a subtle process of job analysis and retrenchment of considerable number of posts, a hidden unemployment is being created, simultaneously increasing the work-load of the working staff. The Government, at the same time, is adopting an attitude of utter disregard towards the legitimate demands and aspirations of the railwaymen and on the other hand, has started planned curtailment of the existing rights and privileges of the railwaymen. In consequence, a deep wave of resentment and discontent is spreading amongst the railwaymen.

The AITUC protests against the policy of the Government in not meeting the long-standing, just and legitimate demands of railwaymen. Railwaymen have been agitating for the redressal of their grievances for a long time, particularly in regard to adequate dearness allowance; removal of drawbacks and anomalies in the CPC recommendations and in their implementation; confirmation of staff; restoration of their rights and privileges as, for instance, in the matter of grain-shops facilities, uniforms, passes and PTOs, medical facilities, gratuity, etc., but it has failed to meet any of these major demands. On the contrary, it is continuing a policy of curbing and suppressing their rightful and legitimate trade-union activities. The hated, autocratic Railway Services (Safeguarding of National Security) Rules, 1949, under which over 600 railwaymen all over India have been victimised for their trade-union activities during the last five years since these rules were enforced by the Government, yet continue to be applied in spite of the fact that the Railway Minister in early 1952 had given an assurance to the deputation consisting of all opposition leaders in the Parliament that these rules will no longer be used by the Government. On the other hand, not only fresh cases of victimisation are taking place under these rules, but these rules have also been further tightened by replacing them by Railway Services (Safeguarding of National Security) Rules, 1954. The 1949 rules at least gave an employee a chance of representing his case personally before a Committee of Advisers consisting of four officers of Joint Secretary's level. But, under the fresh 1949 rules, even this facade of justice has been done away with. Besides, the Government has also refused to revise and amend the "Discipline and Appeal Rules" in the State Railway Establishment Code, which are freely used to victimise railwaymen for their trade-union activities.

The AITUC further protests against the exclusion of all major and urgent demands of railwaymen from terms of reference of the one-man *Ad Hoc* tribunal, which the Govern-

ment was ultimately forced to appoint on July 7, 1953, in spite of the united demand of AIRF and INRWF, now amalgamated together as National Federation of Indian Railwaymen (NFIR) for their inclusion in the said terms of reference. This shows that the Government's oft-repeated declarations of 'solicitude' for the workers' democratic trade-union rights and legitimate demands and grievances, especially with reference to the 10 lakhs of railwaymen employed in the biggest of the State undertakings, are false and fake. It is in fact adamantly following a policy of systematic attacks on their living and service conditions and on their rightful, democratic and trade-union activities.

Through their so-called Negotiation Machinery, the Railway Board have in a very subtle manner bogged and stultified all trade-union activity of the workers. These negotiations at divisional and railway levels are very restricted in their power and scope and they are skilfully operated to prevent and defeat the development and growth of collective bargaining power of the railway workers and their union.

Further, under the scheme of the welfare inspectors and officers, a vicious instrument of spying is built up by the railway administrators to disrupt and undermine the trade unions of the workers.

The AITUC strongly condemns this policy of the Government.

This policy of attack and denial of rights by the Government and the Railway Board can be resisted successfully only if railwaymen close up their ranks, unite their different organisations and assert their powerful united strength.

Towards this, the AITUC, while welcoming the amalgamation of the AIRF and INRWF into a united federation as NFIR, regretfully notes that this welcome step has precluded from its fold popular mass unions, like the SR Labour Union, which were once inside the AIRF and also discriminated against a number of TU activists on the plea of their alleged political loyalties and debarred them from participation in the work of the federation. It is to be further noted that the leadership of the united federation has not taken adequate steps to mobilise the mass of railwaymen and their unions to build a powerful mass movement behind their demands for their speedy realisation.

Inadequate and unsatisfactory as the recommendations of the Central Pay Commission are, they have further been reduced to ineffectiveness by the bureaucratic stinginess of the railway administrations in their implementation. The railway workers and their unions have repeatedly protested

against this and have demanded a fair deal from the Railway Board in this behalf. Disappointed at the lack of response from the railway administration and the Railway Board, the railwaymen through their central organisation, the NFIR, have now taken up the demand for the setting up of a new Pay Commission to revise and secure adequate improvements in their scales of pay.

In order that the railwaymen succeed in realising all their demands—local as well as all-India—the AITUC calls upon them to rally round their unions inside the federation and to participate directly in the day-to-day activities of their unions and at their places of work.

The AITUC fully supports the railwaymen's demands which, in the main, are as given below:

- Removal of all drawbacks and anomalies in the CPC recommendations and their immediate and full implementation;
- Increase in DA in accordance with the CPC recommendations;
- Merger of full DA with pay.

In connection with the Gadgil Committee's recommendation of 50% of DA being treated as pay for some specific purposes:

- a) Complete protection against any reduction in the total earnings directly or indirectly;
 - b) Protection against the loss of house rent allowance to staff in pay group of Rs. 76—100 at 'C' class stations, the ceiling limit of pay for purposes of house rent allowance be raised from Rs. 107 to Rs. 125 in these stations;
 - c) Protection against reduction in net earnings due to increase in the amount of house rent to be paid by 5% of the dearness pay;
 - d) The increase in pay by the addition of dearness pay should be counted for passes and PTOs;
 - e) Increase in consequential benefits such as increase in DA due to 50% DA being treated as pay;
- The system of employment by contract labour in workshops, loco-sheds, goods yards and engineering department work, etc., be forthwith discontinued and banned and all these works be carried out departmentally;
 - Every employee with one year of service be confirmed;
 - Immediate implementation of recommendations of CPC for educational benefits to the railwaymen and their

- families. Also full and proper medical facilities for railwaymen and their dependants including their parents;
- Casual and substitute labour with six months' service be confirmed, and till confirmation such labour be treated as temporary employees in the matter of pay and privileges;
 - Running staff pay and allowances be revised. The exclusion of certain categories of running staff for purpose of running allowances only be removed, for example in the case of travelling ticket examiners, travelling ticket inspectors, railway protection police, road van porters, road van clerks, etc.;
 - Restoration of all curtailments and cuts in the matter of passes, PTOs, uniforms, gratuity, medical facilities and other privileges accruing to an employee;
 - The vicious policy of transfer of active trade-union workers be forthwith stopped;
 - The inroads on the gratuity benefit of the workers under the pretext of the so-called punishments and unsatisfactory behaviour must forthwith end;
 - All victimised railwaymen must forthwith be reinstated;
 - All Railway Loco and Carriage sheds must be brought under the operation of the Factories Act;

In regard to ex-State Railway employees:

- a) The CPC scales be applied to them also with retrospective effect from 1-1-47 as in the case of Government railway employees and not from 1-4-50 (1-8-1949 in the case of ex-GBS Railway);
 - b) The discrimination made in the case of ex-State railway employees subscribing to provident fund deposits before 7-3-1938 in the matter of rate of interest be removed and be paid the same 4% interest which employees of Government railways get. Moreover, the loss in monetary earnings and other privileges resulting from the curtailment of their retiring age from 60 to 55 be protected;
- The ex-B.L. Railway employees, now re-employed by the Central Railway as new entrants as from 1-1-54 should be treated as duly "taken over" along with the purchase, take over, and merger of the B.L. Railway with the Central Railway and they should all be guaranteed full continuity of their service and other service conditions.
 - Similar full continuity of their service should also be restored to all over ex-State railway employees who

- have already been taken over along with the integration of the ex-State railways with the Government railways;
- Immediate re-classification of cities and towns based on the population census for the grant of compensatory and house rent allowances. Moreover, raising the limit of population figures for classifying towns in 'C' class for purposes of house rent allowance from 1 lakh and over to 1,11,000 and over be cancelled;
 - No increase in work-load in any form;
 - The new employment rules insisting on strict literacy qualification for the confirmation of all class IV employees should be forthwith be relaxed and withdrawn;
 - Railway Services (Safeguarding of National Security) Rules, 1954 be immediately withdrawn and the "Discipline and Appeal Rules" in the State Railway Establishment Code be suitably revised and amended;
 - All company-managed Light Railways be nationalised and taken over under State Railway management with the immediate introduction of the benefit of CPC Service conditions to these Light Railway employees.

On Cotton Textile Industry and its Workers

The twenty-fourth session of AITUC views with grave concern the crisis of the cotton textile industry existing since 1949, leading to periodical accumulation of cloth and yarn stocks, consequent closures of departments, shifts and mills and finally resulting in increasing unemployment of thousands of textile workers.

The Indian cotton textile industry, the premier national industry of India, recently celebrated its centenary. After hundred years of its growth and prosperity, it comprises of 445 mills with a total installed capacity of 1,12,40,635 spindles and 2,01,484 looms, with a paid-up capital of over 109 crores and 61 lakhs of rupees and employing about 8 lakhs of workers. The all-time production record of the industry reached during 1953, has raised India to the status of second cloth-producing and cloth-exporting country in the whole of the capitalist world.

Throughout this period of history, the industry has grown to its present status mainly in opposition to imperialist monopoly finance and has been built and developed with the sacrifice of the common people who patronised its products with sentiments of *swadeshi*. The 'captains' of industry who hold it tight in their monopoly grip have, however, refused to

serve the common people who expected the industry to supply them cheap and adequate cloth.

The industry has developed monopoly in concentration and control of production, under the aegis of the Managing Agency System and is now dominated by about 40 biggest monopoly houses, owning and controlling between them 148 mills with over 62 lakh spindles, over 1 lakh looms, having their total paid-up capital to the tune of 54½ crores of rupees. Nine biggest British houses along with others represent the controlling interest in the industry to the extent of 21 per cent. The Managing Agency constitutes the main parasitic burden on the industry and the recent rise of financial-speculator elements on its basis has led to mismanagement, fraud, speculation, over-capitalisation due to frequent change of hands and bankruptcy. Recent examples of Sholapur, India United, Maheswari, Radheshyam and Hirji Mills have shown how managerial and financial concentration in the hands of big monopoly groups through their managing agencies have not only threatened the remuneration of workers rightfully earned by them but the existence of the industry itself.

The requirements of the industry in foreign long-staple cotton for the purpose of producing fine and superfine yarn and cloth since Partition, in dyes, chemicals and sizing materials compel it to be dependent on foreign and particularly British and American monopolists. This is even so in the case of textile machinery and spares where the national manufacturing units themselves are dependent on British and American monopolists for their existence and running. All these factors, along with the ever-shrinking home market due to feudal agrarian set-up serve as great handicaps to the running of the industry in the interest of the Indian people.

The slump of March 1952 and its aftermath, despite boosting up of cloth production on the basis of forcing up of exports by government measures, once again revealed the post-war crisis of the industry, aggravated by the Partition, with all the above-mentioned handicaps in addition to the financial burden of managing agency system and reliance on capricious capitalist world market for profitable exports.

Despite this persistent crisis and slumps, the profits of the textile magnates during the entire post-war period, have mostly been over three times the pre-war level of profits. Any clamour, therefore, on the part of the textile monopolists about unprofitable working of the industry is not only hypocritical, but also reveals their ever-growing lust for fabulous profits.

The textile magnates instead of cutting down the prices

of cloth and making it saleable in the home market have been demanding forcing up of the cloth exports. Under the plea of reduction in costs, they are making frantic attempts to cut down the wage-bill by opposing wage-increases, denying bonuses and imposing rationalisation by means of unbearable increase in work-loads, thus throwing thousands of workers into the ranks of the unemployed. Rationalisation is being trotted out as the 'golden remedy' for all the industry's ills.

The Government by giving periodical concessions to the textile monopolists to facilitate the export of cloth, by crushing every struggle of the workers in defence of bonus and against rationalisation and unemployment, and by open and blatant support to rationalisation plans, has shamelessly come out in defence of the enormous profits of the textile magnates. On the other hand, it has not made a single effective move to put an end to speculation, fraud and waste in the management of the industry. The much-vaunted Five-Year Plan has no scheme to expand the industry to supply the needs of the Indian people, the 'planned' production giving only a meagre share of 18 yards *per capita* as a target. The "Working Party for the Cotton Textile Industry" appointed under the Five-Year Plan, in its report, has advocated a drastic cut in bonus, no living wage for workers, no benefit to the cloth consumer by way of reduction in prices, "rationalisation" under the plea of reducing costs on the one hand, and on the other increase in already high costs by boosting up profits, commission and dividends of the monopolists, thus adding to the parasitic burden on the industry. The Government policy of refusing to expand the home market by introducing drastic agrarian reforms, of supporting rationalisation and unemployment, and of defending the profits of the textile magnates will only intensify the crisis of the textile industry and spell its ruin.

The textile workers of our country have struggled against the economic consequences of the crisis for the last five years. With great heroism, courage and doggedness, and despite the reign of terror let loose on them, the workers have defended themselves against attacks made on them by the textile magnates, they fought against rationalisation and speed-up, against closures and lockouts, for bonus, against mass dismissals and victimisation, and for trade-union recognition.

This 24th session of the AITUC congratulates the textile workers from different centres and States who kept their banner flying, facing repression and starvation. It further congratulates them for restoring and strengthening their trade unions after beating back the blows of repression and victimisation.

The 24th session of AITUC considers it the task of textile workers and their trade unions to oppose the monopolist and Government policy with a working-class policy of their own, which will defend the interests of the workers, raise their living standards, make inroads in the profits of the monopolists, put an end to mismanagement, fraud and speculation, remove the parasitic burdens on the industry and clear the path to run the industry in the interests of the people. In the opinion of AITUC such a policy and programme should be based upon the following principles and measures conforming to them:

- Plan for expansion of industry and production for increased *per capita* consumption of cloth;
- Abolition of Managing Agency system, payment of remuneration to the agents, directors, etc., on the basis of their technical and executive services. All speculative practices in connection with running of the mills be stopped. Tripartite Inquiry into the affairs of the mills running at losses;
- Consultative rights for representatives of workers and technical staff on the board of directors;
- 6½ per cent return on share capital. Surplus gains to be utilised for expansion of the industry and improvement in workers' conditions;
- Reduction of cloth prices by one third;
- Cancellation of all rationalisation measures and introduction of three shifts;
- Expansion of cultivation of cotton including long-staple varieties by giving fair price to the cotton-cultivating peasants;
- Development of textile machinery production;
- Agrarian reforms and concessions to the peasantry with the view of expanding the home market;

The following demands of the workers be immediately conceded by the millowners:

- a) Minimum basic wages Rs. 35;
- b) Dearness allowance fully neutralising the rise in the cost of living, consolidation of 50% D.A. into basic wage;
- c) Unconditional Annual Bonus;
- d) Standardisation of wages on the basis of new workloads already introduced;
- e) Relay system of working hours, and staggering of holidays be abolished;

- f) Standing Orders based on safeguarding security of service and workers' rights;
- g) Unconditional holidays with pay and festival holidays;
- h) Extension of social benefits to working men and women, both employed and unemployed;
- i) Improvement in working conditions in order to create ease, comfort and safety in the place of work;
- j) Trade-union and democratic rights to be restored and all repressive and anti-working-class legislation to be repealed.

The 24th session of AITUC calls upon the textile workers and their trade unions to rally around the above demands and on their basis forge unity of action of all workers irrespective of trends, opinions and organisational affiliation in order to ensure success in their struggles.

On Jute Industry and Workers

The AITUC expresses its deep concern at the progressive deterioration in the workers' conditions of life and work, which are the result of the reactionary, anti-national policies pursued by the Indian Jute Mills Association (IJMA) with the active support of the Government.

In their insatiable lust for profits, the British and Indian jute monopolists are conducting the affairs of this major industry in a manner which is fraught with grave consequences not only for the 300,000 workers employed therein, but also for millions of peasants, traders, middlemen and others whose livelihood depends on the jute trade and for the entire economic future of our country.

Since 1949, the powerfully organised jute monopolists have deliberately restricted production by reducing working hours and sealing off 12.5 per cent of the industry's loomage, with the object of maintaining high price levels in the foreign markets and thus earning maximum profits. These unscrupulous tactics enabled them to rake in record profits between 1950 and 1952, taking advantage of the 'boom' conditions created by the Korean war. In 1950, the index number of profits for the jute industry reached 456.9 and in 1951 it rose to 679.1 or 500 per cent higher than the 1939 level.

At the same time, the deliberate policy of restricting production and raising prices is itself utilised by the IJMA to carry on an incessant propaganda barrage about the alleged shrinking of foreign markets and the need to produce more and more 'cheaply' if the industry is to maintain its exports to overseas consumers.

Instead of increasing output of jute goods and thus lowering their prices, instead of developing new markets and thus stabilising the industry's long-term prospects, the IJMA monopolists have been pursuing a reckless drive for maximum profits at the expense of the workers, peasants, middle-men, traders and even the national exchequer.

They have prevailed upon the Government of India to carry out successive and drastic reductions in the export duties on hessian and sacking; to deny the jute cultivating peasantry any guarantee of minimum prices for their product; to switch millions of acres of land from food crops to jute and to put a total ban on export on Indian grown fibres so that imports of better quality Pakistan jute may be reduced to a minimum.

Having secured for themselves these and other considerable advantages, the IJMA embarked on a full-scale rationalisation drive against the workers, with the whole-hearted approval of the Government of India and its Planning Commission. It is estimated that about 25,000 workers have been thrown out of their jobs over the last two years in the name of "modernisation" and greater efficiency. Installation of new labour-saving machinery in the Preparing and Spinning Departments, reduction in complements even without any new machinery, increase in work-load and refusal to fill up permanent vacancies as they occur, are some of the major factors contributing to this large-scale unemployment. While the Government of India talks airily about future plans for rationalisation "without tears", tens of thousands of jute workers are already being thrown out in order to satisfy the profit-lust of the monopolists and thousands more are threatened. The Jute Industry Commission set up by the Government of India has given the employers the signal to go full-steam ahead with this policy, without any practicable proposals for re-absorption of the retrenched workers.

The Government of India and the various State Governments must indeed bear their full share of responsibility for the evil effects of these anti-national and anti-social policies. They have encouraged the employers to create mass unemployment and to exploit the workers brutally. In West Bengal, they have acquiesced in a position where the minimum wages of the jute worker in 1954 have sunk below even the standard awarded by the Industrial Tribunal in 1948. They have protected the millowners' ill-gotten profits against the workers' just claims for bonus, by unleashing repression against the trade unions and refusing to intervene when militants are indiscriminately victimised by the managements or when the latter resort to illegal lock-outs or to mass deprivation of sta-

tutory leave facilities, or even to goonda violence against workers.

In Bihar, the employers in the name of the Bengal Award have cut down certain benefits which the workers were enjoying previously, such as efficiency bonus, wage increments, and full compensation for involuntary unemployment.

In UP the existing minimum basic wage in Jute mills is as low as Rs. 11-8 p.m. and the Government refuses to refer the question of wage-revision to adjudication.

In Andhra, too, the minimum basic wages in 3 out of 4 mills are much lower than laid down by the Bengal Award, and bonus is either withheld or paid at a very low rate.

Furthermore, the Government, by refusing to fix statutory minimum prices for raw jute, has deliberately sacrificed the vital interests of some two million peasant families at the altar of the monopolists' greed.

The Government's hypocritical 'concern' for the fate of the industry is exposed by the fact that it has made no serious efforts to develop trade in jute goods with potential markets like China and the USSR. Its lack of initiative and continued servile dependence on the US market have resulted in the Indo-Soviet Trade Pact remaining virtually a dead letter. At the same time the Government takes no measures to enforce the production in jute mills of new types of goods and fabrics for which a market can be created, both at home and abroad, as numerous technical experts have testified.

The Indian jute industry is thus left dangerously exposed to the vacillations of the American market where recession conditions are fast developing towards a major slump.

The AITUC, as the defender not only of the workers' interests but of the interests of the entire toiling people and the country as a whole, denounces the suicidal policies of the jute monopolists and the Government which are utterly bankrupt and point the way only to mass unemployment, impoverishment of millions, paralysis of production and squandering away of the resources and capacity of this great industry.

The AITUC puts forward the following programme of immediate measures whose adoption would be in the genuine interest of all sections of our people who have the country's welfare at heart and who are determined not to sacrifice it to the selfish, profiteering designs of the monopolists:

- A ban on retrenchment and on all measures aimed at increased work-load and speed-up of machines; restoration of the labour complement of each mill to the *status quo* as on 1-5-49;

- No “rationalisation” measures to be permitted;
- All sealed looms to be unsealed and at least 25 per cent of the total installed capacity to be switched to production of new types of goods and fabrics, other than the conventional hessian and sacking, for foreign and home consumption;
- Governmental initiative for concrete agreements under the Indo-Soviet Trade Pact and with countries like China to develop exports of jute goods;
- Appointment of a high-power Commission to investigate into overhead costs in the industry with a view to reducing the present huge, top-heavy expenses of management;
- While striving for self-sufficiency in raw jute supplies, adequate quantities of high-quality Pakistan jute to be imported in order to prevent deterioration in the quality standards of Indian jute goods and in the earnings of piece-rated workers;
- Statutory minimum prices for raw jute to be guaranteed to the peasants;
 - a) Adequate minimum wages and dearness allowance to be fixed for all categories of workers and employees and to be guaranteed to them irrespective of reduction in working hours resorted to by the employers;
 - b) 3 months’ wages as bonus;
 - c) Guaranteed minimum earnings for piece-rated workers;
 - d) Fixation of permanent cadre for all departments;
 - e) Permanency of all *budliwallas* who have worked for a period of 3 months;
 - f) Revision of the existing standing orders, which are harsh and unfair to the workers;
 - g) Adequate housing or house allowance; medical facilities and educational facilities for the workers’ children;
 - h) 15 days’ sick leave with full pay and 15 days’ festival holidays;
 - i) Recognition of trade unions.
- Immediate setting up of the tripartite industrial committee for jute to discuss all problems affecting labour; no measures to be taken by the IJMA or Government unless agreed upon in this committee.

The AITUC extends its greetings to the tens of thousands of jute workers who, irrespective of affiliation, have been carrying of a heroic struggle over the last two years against the monopolists’ offensive of rationalisation, retrenchment and