

1.

The International Situation

The years since our Bombay session have been marked in the international arena by further successes in the fight against imperialism, further achievements of the Socialist countries in building socialism and growing mass movements and working class action in the capitalist countries.

The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution; the Twentieth Anniversary of the founding of the German Democratic Republic; these have been occasions for stock-taking of the phenomenal progress made by the world socialist system.

The Vietnamese struggle has made big advances during this period and entered a new, higher, stage. The brave Vietnamese people have not only resisted, on the fields of battle, the fiercest onslaughts of the U.S. and puppet forces, not only withstood and beaten back the massive air raids, but have broken new ground both militarily and politically. Their resistance has not only made military defeat of the U.S. aggressors inevitable, but has also thrown U.S. imperialism into the worst political crisis in its history.

Under the blows rained on them by the Vietnamese people and facing a rising tide of criticism and even isolation and hostility in USA itself, the Government of the USA was forced to begin peace talks at Paris. However, at the very time that the talks started, leaders of the DRV and NLF had already warned that the US imperialists intended these talks to be nothing but a ruse. Leaders of socialist countries and progressive opinion all over the world fully shared this view.

Experience has fully borne this out. While talks at Paris are continuing, US aggression also continues at the same time. On

one pretext or another, the US side is dragging time out at Paris and refusing to meet the forthright demand of the Vietnamese people for the withdrawal of all the American and satellite aggressive armed forces from the soil of Vietnam.

Progressive people all over the world have also seen through the hoax of token withdrawal of troops announced by the US imperialists.

A great step forward was taken in the liberation struggle by the formation of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam. This event summed up, as it were, the great advance made in South Vietnam.

The PRG was promptly recognised by the USSR and other socialist countries thus underlining once again in concrete action, the deep solidarity which exists between the peoples of the socialist countries and the Vietnamese people. So far 22 countries have recognised the PRG. However, the Government of India has not granted recognition to the PRG, thus bringing out once again its vacillating and weak policy in relation to the most heroic anti-imperialist struggle of our time.

The heroic and deathless struggle of the Vietnamese people has begun to affect the political situation inside the United States itself. During the presidential elections, in the United States, peace in Vietnam became an important issue. Since then, the movement for immediate withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Vietnam has gathered great momentum. The various sections of the population—the students, intellectuals, lawyers and doctors, the women and the negro people, the working class and others have staged big demonstrations in various cities and college campuses all over the country. Marches have been taken to Washington and October 15, 1969, saw the biggest mobilisation—the Moratorium for Vietnam. Draftees continue to reject the draft, in fact, there is a regular movement for desertion from the U.S. Army and US nationals all over the world are joining in the national protest.

Inside the American TU movement itself, for a long time dominated by the reactionary leadership of the AFL-CIO, rifts have appeared. The Alliance for Labour Action formed by the big unions like the United Automobile Workers (UAW) and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) along with

several other unions has come out sharply in favour of an immediate end of the war in Vietnam.

Solidarity movements are going on in all countries of the world and protests are taking multifarious forms drawing in vast and broad strata of the people.

In line with the policies and programmes of the WFTU, the AITUC has been conducting a continuous campaign of solidarity with the heroic people of Vietnam.

The fighting people of Vietnam suffered a grievous loss in the death on 4 September 1969 of Comrade Ho Chi Minh. Millions all over the world paid tribute to this great revolutionary, who had become a symbol of anti-imperialist fight and liberation struggle.

The brutalities and inhuman terror practised by the US imperialists have been forcefully exposed by the massacres perpetrated on the people of Son My. They have shocked the conscience of people all over the world.

A delegation of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam has just concluded a successful visit to our country. At all places they visited, unions affiliated to AITUC were active in welcoming them and in the collection of funds and other activities connected with their programmes. The depth of feeling in the ordinary workers can be gauged by the fact that over 4,500 workers of a textile mill at Phagwara who were on strike for 40 days decided to forego meals for one day and donated the savings as a token of solidarity with the Vietnamese people.

There is no doubt that in the days to come, the struggle of the Vietnamese people, with the continued active support of the socialist countries and the solidarity of the peoples of the world will achieve final victory. AMERICANS will be OUT OF VIETNAM; VIETNAM will be FOR THE VIETNAMESE!

II

The machinations of US imperialism created a crisis in the Middle East and is keeping tension alive in that area. Aided and abetted by the imperialists, the zionist revanchist govern

ment of Israel launched an unprovoked attack against the Arab countries.

The help rendered by the USSR succeeded in bringing about an armistice and a ceasefire. Israel's military victory did not achieve the special aim of U.S. Imperialism—the aim of overthrowing the anti-imperialist Arab governments. On the contrary, it has given new impetus to the anti-imperialist forces in West Asia and is forcing U.S. imperialism to manoeuvre.

The AITUC along with the progressive sections of the Indian people has been active in promoting solidarity with the Arab people. It welcomed the delegation of the Al Fatah which recently toured our country and fully cooperated to make their mission a success.

The struggle in South Africa against the racist fascist regime has intensified. The AITUC has fully associated itself with the fight to end racial discrimination and to restore that country to its people. It has rendered full support to the setting up of a mission of the African National Congress in India.

Everyone today acknowledges the miracle of the German Democratic Republic, yet the Government of India continues to deny recognition to the GDR. Together with other progressive people and organisations in India, the AITUC has been consistently campaigning for immediate grant of recognition to GDR, which is a firm friend of the Indian people.

The anti-imperialist and liberation struggle continues to strike blow after blow in many countries of Africa. Radical anti-imperialist regimes have emerged in Libya, Sudan and other countries. The people of Angola, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe are carrying forward their armed struggle with unity and sacrifices and are achieving successes.

Despite the counter-offensives launched by it, imperialism has failed to change the general balance of forces in its favour.

III

However, the growing sweep and successes of the anti-imperialist struggle do not mean that imperialism has been finally vanquished or has lost its aggressive and dangerous character. On the contrary, it has intensified its desperate counter-attack

and in a variety of ways, seeks to disrupt and defeat the forces of socialism, progress and national liberation. U.S. imperialism remains the main enemy and the chief danger to the independence of peoples and nations.

The criminal war against the heroic Vietnamese people, Israeli aggression, the tensions created in the Near and Middle East, the US armed intervention in the Dominican Republic, the overthrow of several progressive regimes in Africa, the fascist putsch in Greece, the 'Peublo' spy-ship provocation to the Korean People's Democratic Republic, the efforts to revive Japanese militarism and many other events confirm this dangerous activity. The continuation of the policy of remilitarising West Germany and isolating GDR is a part of this policy.

Apart from these activities, attempts are made at ideological subversion and intervention in the socialist countries themselves. Taking advantage of distortions which had appeared in the economic and political fields in Czechoslovakia, an attempt was made to subvert the socialist state from within, detach Czechoslovakia from the socialist system and endanger the security of the Warsaw Pact Community of Socialist States.

However, the prompt action taken by the governments of the socialist countries thwarted this attempt and has created conditions for correcting the abnormal factors which were raising their head in the matter of mutual relationship of socialist countries.

IV

In the developed capitalist countries, the monopoly drive for super-profits continues. As a result of this, the workers have had to face a number of problems: automation and retrenchment, stagnation of wages, restriction in job opportunities, heavier workloads, downgrading of workers, job insecurity, attacks on gains obtained in social security and attacks on trade union rights and democratic liberties. The workers have had to face the attempts made by employers to make the workers pay for the huge investments required for modernisation of technology in the attempt to garner greater profits.

The employers and their apologists have sought to sell these

policies under new labels such as "incomes policies", "stabilisation plans", "economic programmes", "wage restraint" and "public expenditure cut", etc. Whatever the name by which these policies may be called in any particular country, the underlying idea is the same—to increase the exploitation of the workers for garnering super-profits.

In all the advanced capitalist countries, the workers are resisting these attacks and have fought glorious prolonged struggles in defence of their democratic rights and living standards.

Apart from the participation of the trade unions and the working people in the popular resistance against the continued aggression in Vietnam and the support to the Negro people's movement, the workers in many industries have waged bitter struggles in the USA. Examples of these are the strike of the electricity workers in the City of New York, the New York transport workers' strike and the prolonged strike of 75,000 dock workers of the Atlantic coast in 1968.

In U.K., the Labour Government sought to attack the workers' right to strike through its acceptance of the Donovan Commission's Report. But stiff resistance by the unions and the glorious May 1, 1969 strike forced the Government to retreat.

May 1968 witnessed the glorious country-wide mass upsurge in France. As a result of these struggles, the workers in all industries gained substantial wage increases. The huge popular upheaval undermined the regime of personal power of de Gaulle. The strike movement was notable also for the close identity of the trade union struggle with the struggle of the students and other sections of the people.

The glorious struggle of the French working-class in 1968, under the sagacious leadership of the C.G.T., led to outstanding political results, as developments in France in 1969 have strikingly shown.

Giant united strikes, both on a nation-wide and industry-wide plane, have taken place in recent years in Italy.

In Japan, the various "Spring Offensives" have resulted in wage rise. Side by side, the workers have been in the forefront of the struggles for end to U.S. occupation of Okinawa and in solidarity with the struggle of the Vietnamese people.

The outstanding feature of the Trade Union struggles of the working-class in the advanced capitalist countries in the recent period is that they have merged with the political anti-monopoly movement of the working people of these countries. The economic struggle and the political struggle are becoming more inter-linked than ever before and are leading to shifts in the political balance of forces.

V

THE SEVENTH WORLD TRADE UNION CONGRESS

The Seventh Congress of the World Federation of Trade Unions met in Budapest on October 17-26, 1969. The Congress was attended by 267 delegates from 50 affiliated national centres, representing over 134 million workers and 198 fraternal delegates from 45 national organisations from all the five continents representing over 19 million workers.

The Congress adopted a special appeal on solidarity with Vietnam amidst resounding slogans: VIETNAM FOR VIETNAMESE! AMERICANS, HANDS OFF VIETNAM.

One of the important tasks of the Congress was to adopt the new constitution of the WFTU. The new constitution defines the WFTU as a "democratic international TU organisation on a class basis". The WFTU represent the common interests of the workers throughout the world and acts in accordance with its programme and the decisions taken by the World Trade Union Congress and all other leading bodies. The organisation is open to and "can belong, on a voluntary basis and without any discrimination, and with respect for their rights and sovereignty, to trade union organisations with different policies from all countries of the world, whatever their political, philosophical and religious beliefs and the race or their respective governments."

The constitution defines relations between the WFTU and national centres and between the national centres within the WFTU or on a bilateral level as "based on mutual respect, complete equality of rights, reciprocal independence and non-interference in internal affairs."

The Congress adopted a report on "trade unions and scientific progress" and outlined the tasks of the trade unions:

"The working class, all the workers and their trade unions in the capitalist countries must increase their struggle for:

- the elimination of unemployment and guaranteed work for everybody;
- generalised vocational training and retraining for all the workers at the expense of the employers in keeping with the individual capacities of each worker, without discrimination;
- the establishment of a universal social security system financed by the state and the management as well as increased pensions and a reduced retirement age;
- the raising of the workers' cultural level and guarantees of their right to rest time.

In working steadily and consistently for the cause of working class and trade union unity, the AITUC is faithfully implementing the message and mission of the WFTU, of which the AITUC is one of the most steadfast contingents.

The Seventh World Congress of the WFTU held in Budapest in October 1969 pinpointed the new possibilities for trade union unity, both national and international, which have opened out in the present period and gave the rallying call to the world working class to grasp these new possibilities. The fight of the AITUC to consolidate, strengthen and extend still further the cause of trade union unity in India in the context of the present crucial political developments in the country is fully in line with the call of the WFTU.

LENIN CENTENARY

The international working class will this year celebrate the birth centenary of the Great Lenin. Lenin held no cause higher and more sacred than the cause of working class unity and of proletarian internationalism. The AITUC pledges itself at this session to defend the cause of working class and trade union unity, to uphold the banner of proletarian internationalism, as the most cherished and precious weapon of our class in its fight for democracy, socialism and world peace.

2.

The Economic Situation and the Political Scene

I

The 27th Session of the AITUC at Bombay ended on May 22, 1966. In the Report presented to that session, we had warned that the imperialists will intensify their attack against our economy. As the Report said: "The imperialists have failed to dislodge our independence and make us walk into their camp in the two crises of 1962 and 1965 border wars. They do not hope to stage a military coup like in Ghana or Indonesia.

"Hence, they are trying the economic blockade, hoping to conquer India by an economic coup or financial takeover." (*Report to 27th Session of AITUC*, page 78)

On 6 June 1966, this warning came true. The Government of India succumbed to the pressure of the World Bank and devalued the rupee behind the back of Parliament.

This action which was totally against the interests of our national economy was sought to be justified on the ground that it would help India to increase its exports, cut down imports and secure greater foreign aid. Experience, however, showed within a very short period that all this glib talk was without any foundation in fact. Exports continued to decline although prices of our goods in the foreign markets fell due to devaluation. Imports, though more costly than before, continued to rise. As a matter of fact, the unequal terms of trade worsened against our interests. Even the hope that more aid would be forthcoming from the World Bank and foreign monopoly capital was belied.

The economy, severely strained by the impact of the border wars of 1962 and 1965 and the imperialist blockade, suffered

further setbacks. A severe recession, exposing the inherent contradictions and limitations of the capitalist path, overtook all branches of production. The most severely affected were the engineering and the cotton textile industries but the crisis hit other sectors also in varying degrees.

Though the economy was in the grip of depression, prices continued to rise. The reason for this was the dominance of monopoly capital in the main sectors of production, in the main arteries of the market and the main levers of finance, that is, the banks.

Through their manipulation of the price mechanism and the money system, the monopolists preserved their profits and super-profits. At the same time, they sought to transfer the entire burden of the crisis on to the working class. Closures and retrenchment mounted. Thousands of workers were thrown out of job; while thousands others were subjected to long periods of layoff. Still others who managed to retain their jobs had to suffer loss of earnings due to fall in piece-work or even through direct wage cuts. Side by side with this, the employers increased workloads, through installation of new labour-saving machines.

The devaluation and the economic recession revealed in a naked form, the basic contradiction inherent in the policies pursued by the ruling classes. This is the contradiction between the interests of the capitalist class, specially the monopoly sector, and the interests of the national economy and the toiling masses.

The first three Plans, even though based on capitalist relations, had helped in laying the foundations of heavy industry and also in expansion of other industries. These Plans had also brought about expansion in the capitalist sector of agriculture. But being plans of a capitalist system, they had simultaneously sharpened the contradictions. In the industrial sphere, the monopolists grew and attacked the small and medium sectors of production. In the rural areas, the growth of capitalist sector led to the ruination of the poor peasant. Of late, the monopolists have also started penetrating in agriculture. Side by side with this, unemployment grew at an alarming rate. The recession brought out all these features very sharply.

The resistance of the masses against the attacks of the monopolists and vested interests, was sought to be crushed by ruthless terror and repression. The story of the working class struggles and the repression, their heroic fight in defence of their interests and rights is mentioned elsewhere in this Report. Through its resistance, the working class not only blunted the edge of the offensive and succeeded in partially preserving its interests: it also laid the objective foundations for the political changes which began to manifest themselves—specially after the fourth general elections held in the beginning of 1967.

II

The anti-people policies pursued by the ruling classes and the determined resistance by all sections of the toiling people led to the growing isolation of the Congress Party. In the fourth general elections held in January 1967, the Congress Party was swept out of power in Bengal, Kerala, Punjab, Bihar, Orissa and Tamilnadu. Due to disintegration among its ranks resulting in defections, it lost power soon after in U.P., Haryana and M.P. The number of its seats in the Lok Sabha fell sharply and it had a bare majority of 41 over the combined opposition.

Thus, for the first time since independence, the monolithic rule of the Congress was broken in many States. It is true that in some of the States like Orissa and later on in M.P. and Haryana, the parties which replaced the Congress are parties of right reaction. However, this was due to the weakness of the left and democratic forces in these States and the lack of a viable democratic alternative to the Congress.

In West Bengal and Kerala, governments were formed which were led by left and democratic parties. In Tamilnadu, a single democratic party, the DMK, came to power, while in Punjab, U.P. and Bihar, the governments included left and democratic parties as well as reactionary and communal parties.

The monopolists and other reactionaries unleashed a bitter campaign against the left-led governments. In particular, they singled out the Government of West Bengal. The assumption of office by the U.F. Government in West Bengal was followed

by deliberate closures of the factories by employers and large-scale retrenchment. The Central Government applied economic squeeze through refusal to grant finances and there was blatant and open interference in the administrative machinery. At the same time, a virulent campaign was let loose that there was breakdown of law and order. The Congress leadership even resorted to bribing to purchase MLAs and bring about defection in order to 'topple' the government.

But when all these proved ineffective, the Congress at the Centre, throwing aside all postures of constitutional democracy, utilised the Governor to 'dismiss' the popularly-elected West Bengal ministry and installed in its place a minority Government.

This rape of democracy and of the popular will was met with heroic resistance of the people. On November 23 and again on November 31, 1967, there were total strikes and Bandhs in Bengal. Despite most brutal repression, the movement continued and the puppet government had to resign. President's rule was ushered in to be followed by mid-term polls.

The politics of defection and counter-defection coupled with the presence of elements of reaction in the United Fronts of Bihar, U.P. and Punjab, led to dissolution of the State assemblies of these States as well as in Haryana. Mid-term poll was ordered in W. Bengal and these States in January 1969.

Profiting by the experience of 1967, the left and democratic parties formed a powerful united front in West Bengal. The mid-term elections resulted in spectacular success for Left and Democratic unity and its embodiment the United Front and reduced the Congress strength to a paltry 55 in a house of 280. The defectors from the previous United Front suffered even a worse fate and were wiped out.

In U.P., Bihar and Punjab, United Fronts could not be formed on this pattern. One reason was the comparative strength in these States of communal and reactionary parties and another was the resistance in some left parties to come together on the basis of a minimum programme. The result is that in Bihar, President's rule still continues; in U.P. and Haryana, the Congress Party came back to power, though the recent split

in the Congress has reduced it to a minority inside the U.P. legislature; while in Punjab, a combination of Akalis and Jan Sangh has formed the Government.

III

Towards the beginning of 1969, the recession began to lift specially in the engineering industries. This process was helped by comparatively good harvests which increased the internal market for goods and the export incentives and subsidies given by the Government.

However, it would be wrong to say that there is a complete recovery. In fact, the crisis cannot be overcome till some far-reaching and fundamental steps are taken, signifying a break with the capitalist path. Events have confirmed the analysis made in our Report to the 27th Session:

“A capitalist system cannot fulfil an overall *social* plan as such. It can make some programmes of building this or that industrial plant but a balanced integrated plan of the whole of social economy is impossible for capitalism. And India has been building capitalism, that too, in an under-developed country. Naturally, crisis and failures were inevitable unless she had changed her path.” (*Ibid.*, p. 60)

The growing discontent among all sections of the people and their resistance through mass struggles sharpened the crisis inside the ruling party. The conflict came to a head over the election to the office of the President of India. The reactionary clique of bosses known as the Syndicate forced the name of Sanjiva Reddy through the Congress Parliamentary Board. Their game was to get their own nominee elected and then engineer a counter-revolutionary coup at the centre, in alliance with the Swatantra and Jana Sangh parties. In fact, it was part of reaction's well-concerted plan for a take-over of power at the centre.

The majority of the Congress led by Smt. Indira Gandhi resisted this plan. There was open confrontation for the office of the President between the Jana Sangh, the Swatantra Party and the Syndicate on the one hand, and the left, progressive and democratic parties and sections of the ruling party on the

other. Giri's election was a big victory against reaction and generated great popular enthusiasm.

After Bangalore session of the AICC, the Prime Minister took away the Finance portfolio from Morarji Desai. This was followed by the nationalisation of 14 major commercial banks and the resignation of Desai from the Cabinet. Shortly afterwards, other ministers opposed to the policies advocated by the Prime Minister were removed from the Government. The remaining adherents of the Syndicate in the Government resigned.

The AITUC had been campaigning for nationalisation of banks over a number of years. Together with the State Bank and its subsidiary banks which are in the State sector, the State sector now controls over Rs. 4000 crores of deposits as compared with about Rs. 600 crores controlled by foreign banks and the smaller Indian banks not yet nationalised.

While extending its "appreciation of the bold step taken by the Prime Minister in nationalising the 14 commercial banks and recalling that "the AITUC had placed the nationalisation of banks in the forefront of its economic programme and had been actively campaigning for it for the past several years," the Working Committee of the AITUC characterised the nationalisation of banks as "a potentially powerful blow against the grip of the big monopolist interests over the national economy." It warned, however, that "nationalisation by itself cannot break the entrenched power of the monopolists to achieve which a series of further radical and democratic measures are required." It then went on to put forward nine urgent steps in order that "the nationalised banks may be made to serve effectively the goals of democratic development." These steps are:

1. Nationalisation of the foreign banks;
2. Rapid expansion of the resources of the nationalised banks;
3. Proper coordination between the Planning Commission and the decision-making organs of the nationalised banks;
4. Rigorous checks against misuse of bank credit for speculative purposes and non-priority production;

5. Development of an efficient and professional management;
6. Removal from all positions connected with banking policy and administration of those Big Businessmen or their agents who have been proved as having misused bank finances in the past for profiteering purposes;
7. Close participation of bank employees in the management at all levels;
8. Abolition of red tape and bureaucracy in banking rules and procedures;
9. A broadbased credit policy aimed at giving planned assistance to the small-scale sectors in both industry and agriculture, as well as to the economically backward regions, which have been neglected so far.

On the very next day after the Ordinance was issued nationalising the banks, a petition was filed in the Supreme Court against the Ordinance by leaders of the Jan Sangh and Swatantra Parties and some bank directors. Subsequently, after the passage of the Act, similar petitions were filed and the judgment of the Court is still to come. In the meantime, due to the Court's injunctions, as well as the sabotage by the bureaucrats and the timidity of the ruling party, no effective steps have been taken to follow up the nationalisation.

IV

The events following the Bangalore Session of the Working Committee of the Congress resulted in a split in the Congress Party. Though both claim the same name, in actual fact, there are two distinct and separate parties. As a result of this, the ruling Congress in the Centre has become a minority in the Parliament and has lost control over the Governments of Gujarat, U.P. and Mysore. In U.P., the ruling group has itself become a minority.

New political alignments and alliances are emerging on the political scene. On the one hand, the parties of right reaction are coming together and there is a de-facto alliance of the Swatantra, Jan Sangh and Syndicate. On the other hand, the left and democratic parties have not yet come together in any

cohesive manner. Indeed, on most issues, the dominant leaderships of the two socialist parties continue to support the triple alliance of reaction, though a section of the leadership of both these parties and a large number of their rank and file followers are opposed to any alliance with or support to the parties of reaction.

The political radicalisation of polarisation creates a big possibility in which democratic advance can be secured. At the same time, the grave danger of a reactionary take-over still continues and is by no means to be minimised.

In these circumstances, unity and political action of the working class assume prime importance. Unless the working class can unite and act politically, it can not only make no advance but the existing gains and rights cannot be defended.

V

The growing radicalisation of the masses and the mood in the country could be seen in the resolution passed by the Parliament at its last session asking for immediate abolition of the privy purses and privileges of the princes. Inside the ruling Congress, the progressive section has become more vocal despite the presence of representatives of vested interests.

At the Bombay session of the ruling AICC, this pressure of progressive opinion could be seen in the various panel reports and the speeches and declarations. However, despite all these, the Session did not formulate satisfactory concrete plans or even steps which would mark the beginning of a new orientation in the economic life of the country. The most urgent problem of land reform has been shelved due mostly to the pressure of State leaders; nothing has been laid down about any important changes in the Plan.

The inhibitions and inaction inherited from the past as well as the hold of the conservative sections and of the bureaucracy came out sharply when immediately after the Bombay session, the Birlas were allowed to set up a fertilizer plant in the private sector with U.S. collaboration. The deal had, in fact, been finalised during the tenure of Morarji Desai but its final announcement came as a counterblast to the Bombay Session. Six

out of the 11 directors will be nominated by the foreign collaborators, 3 by the Birlas and only 2 by the Government, though Government's investment will be three times that of the Birlas. This plant will go into production only 27 months after the finalisation of the deal and thus, it cannot be justified, as sometimes it is sought to be done, even on the ground of urgency.

On the other hand, the fact that the Government can be forced into a progressive direction was shown in the fact that it had to drop the Preventive Detention Act from the Statute Book. This hated piece of lawless law conferring powers on the executive to detain persons without trial and ruling out judicial intervention was mostly used against progressive political parties and had been on the Statute Book almost since independence.

Therefore, though the presence in the ruling party itself of representatives of vested interests and the pressure of right reaction from outside continue to exert their influence, at the same time the pressure of the masses and their united struggles and the weakened position of the ruling party in the Parliament can lead to steps which are in the interests of the people.

VI

The position inside the United Front in Kerala has undergone changes during this period. After the resignation of the Nambudiripad Ministry, the other parties of the United Front succeeded in forming an alternative ministry of the Front, thereby avoiding the imposition of President's rule, and have started successfully implementing important items of the UF programme.

Within the short period of just over two months, the United Front Ministry in Kerala headed by Comrade Achutha Menon has undertaken the following measures in the interests of the working people:

- * On December 10, 1969 it issued the Kerala Industrial Employees Payment of Gratuity Ordinance, the first time any State Government has made statutory provision for gratuity, for the workers of all industries.

- * Liberalised pay revision orders of the previous Government issued on June 1969 and rectified anomalies, giving concessions to as many as 2,75,000 middleclass Government employees. This costs the exchequer Rs. 1.40 crore additional expenditure a year.
- * Within one month of assumption of office, the Government distributed over 25,000 permanent pattas on Government wastelands to smallholders families. There are some 1.5 lakh such holders in the State and the Government hopes to complete the work of issuing pattas within 3 months.
- * The Agrarian Reforms (Amendment) Act, which received Presidential Assent, has come into force from 1st of January, 1970 and the Government has started its implementation in a vigorous way.
- * Decided that recruitment to the posts in the Kerala Road Transport Corporation will henceforth be done through the Public Service Commission.
- * Entrusted wholesale foodgrains trade to the Food Corporation of India.
- * Trade Union Recognition Bill, on the lines of the AITUC principles, is expeditiously being prepared.

In Bengal, strained relations have developed among the parties of the Front. As a result, the Bangla Congress which holds the Chief Ministership, launched a statewide satyagraha to call public attention to the necessity to halt the fratricidal clashes that were taking place between the followers of the parties of the United Front and in which several lives were lost, of workers and peasants belonging to various parties. The Front continues but is under great stress and strain.

While tensions continue among the parties inside the Front in W. Bengal, it must be emphasized that the United Front Ministry has some outstanding achievements to its credit.

On its very assumption of power, the United Front Government laid down the clear-cut policy that its police will not intervene in industrial disputes. The meaning of this is that the repressive machinery of the State would not be utilised against the workers who go into action for the fulfilment of their demands. This brought out sharply that the political power in

the State was no longer in the hands of the propertied classes but had been won by parties relying mainly on the working class, the peasantry and middle classes.

Helped by such a Government, the working class in Bengal, for long forced to work on wages much lower in comparison with advanced States like Maharashtra, swung into big united movements. The spectacular victories of jute, plantation, cotton textile and engineering workers could be achieved, apart from other factor, precisely because the Government was one which was their representative and not of the bourgeoisie.

The Bengal Assembly has passed an Act for payment of allowances to suspended workers, another to grant compulsory recognition to unions on the basis of a secret ballot. Both of these measures fulfil longstanding vital demands of the working class movement.

The police is not available for terrorising the peasants and tillers of the soil. For years, the kulaks and jotedars had been fattening on the sweat and toil of the rural poor. The Bengal Government at one stroke declared that the actual tiller will be entitled to the harvest. The police so long the protector of the exploiter, is now on the side of the exploited.

These achievements show that if the United Front would function smoothly, the vital interests of the people could be protected and furthered in a still better direction.

VII

The AITUC stands in a special relationship with the Governments of West Bengal and Kerala. In both these States, the Governments include parties which are closely associated with the AITUC and among its ministers are persons who have been leaders of the AITUC. Hence the assumption of power by these governments roused strong and legitimate hopes that policies will be pursued which will further the interests of the working class and will translate into action, the principles and slogans which the AITUC had been advocating.

While the two UF governments formed in Bengal after the general elections and the mid-term poll have adopted policies

which are helpful to the working class, as noted above, we cannot but point out that their relations with the AITUC have not been very happy.

On March 10, 1969, the General Secretary of the AITUC along with the General Secretary of the W. Bengal Committee, presented to the W. Bengal Labour Minister, a draft of a Bill for Recognition of Trade Unions. The Labour Minister did not communicate his views to the AITUC or the W. Bengal Committee of the AITUC and circulated a draft which was highly objectionable in essential respects. The W. Bengal Committee unanimously suggested amendments and, later on, the Working Committee of the AITUC suggested some further amendments. Again, without reference to either body, the Labour Minister refused to incorporate some of the most vital suggestions and now the Bill has been passed in a form with which the AITUC is not in agreement.

The Recognition Bill is a matter which does not concern W. Bengal alone. As the first State Act on recognition (not taking into account the BIR Act) and one which has been brought in by a left and democratic government, it is bound to have countrywide repercussions. As such, it has to be a model Bill.

The Labour Minister of the first U.F. Government of Kerala, the late Mr. Mathai Manjooran, had sent a memorandum to the National Commission on Labour which contained shocking statements on many issues quite contrary to the AITUC's well-known stand, reiterated several times. This was pointed out by the AITUC to the then Chief Minister but the Labour Minister not only refused to amend his anti-working class statements; he insisted that he would not change his stand. The Working Committee of the AITUC wrote to the Chief Minister Nambudiripad drawing his attention to the Memorandum submitted by his Labour Minister. The Chief Minister did not send any reply and the memorandum continued to stand uncontradicted. It is only several months after the Working Committee had objected to it that the Labour Minister of Kerala wrote to the N.C.L. saying that the memorandum be treated as withdrawn and that a fresh statement would be filed.

No report of this period would be complete without mention of a most alarming feature. This is the activities of communal and chauvinist elements which have harmed the unity of the working class and of the people as a whole and have led on many occasions to the outbursts of violence, murder and arson.

The virus of communalism is old. The British rulers deliberately kept it alive and played one community against the other. The partition of the country in 1947 and the harrowing carnage accompanying it further deepened communal feelings in vast sections of the people.

Communal elements have deliberately kept the feeling alive. Through insidious propaganda and open slander, the Jan Sangh and its core, the R.S.S. have poisoned the minds of thousands of young people. Their activities have even penetrated the working class in some areas though the bulk of it has been immune and has a glorious record of communal harmony and brotherhood. However, the workers live and work in a social milieu and cannot be kept isolated from the influences surrounding them.

These years have witnessed the terrible communal holocausts at Meerut, Ranchi, Jabalpur, Indore and Ahmedabad. In these riots, hundreds of innocent people were mercilessly massacred, shops and properties looted and women molested. In Indore, to the shame of the working class and its traditions, the Hindu workers refused for a time to work alongside their Muslim brothers.

The development of the capitalist system and of monopoly has not only perpetuated the regional imbalances already existing but in many cases has further aggravated them. Taking advantage of the frustration generated by the economic and social conditions in which vast masses are compelled to live and to toil, the growing menace of unemployment and the rampant corruption, bureaucracy and nepotism, disruptive elements have engineered chauvinistic movements. The most virulent among them is the Shiv Sena in Bombay. Disguising itself under slogans of extreme chauvinism, it is in essence directed against the working class. It openly aligns itself with

the most reactionary elements and has indulged in arson and physical attacks not only against non-Maharashtrians but also against the militant working class movement and in particular, the communists. It openly works as a strike-breaking blackleg agency with the support of the Congress.

In Andhra Pradesh, the genuine discontent of the people of Telengana region has been turned into a separatist movement.

Employers in some places have taken advantage of the communal and other divisions, have fanned and instigated those in order to divide and disrupt the unity of the working class.

The working class has to assert itself and fight against all forces which, in the name of religion or community, caste or region seek to disrupt the unity of the class and the integrity of the democratic movement of the working people.

3.

Working Class Action in Defence of T.U. Rights

The working class has acted in a big way in defence of its basic trade union rights and democratic and civil liberties.

The sharpening of the working class struggles and the people's movements has brought into motion contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, the bourgeoisie and its governments have intensified the attack on TU rights, while, on the other, the left and democratic governments have taken measures to defend, preserve and enlarge these rights.

The right to strike has naturally been the target of the severest attack.

The history of the right to strike in our country bears ample testimony to the fact that this crucial right has been under constant attack by the employers and their government. The Industrial Disputes Act of 1947 divided strikes into legal and illegal. Court judgements further sub-divided legal strikes into 'justified' and 'unjustified'—all illegal strikes being treated *ipso facto* as unjustified. The Code of Discipline sought to lay down certain 'moral' curbs on the legal justified strikes. But despite all these refinements, the right to strike in all services and industries did survive.

However, a most ferocious attack was mounted on this right in the course of the glorious 19 September 1968 strike of the Central Government employees. Though the occasion of the strike was the refusal of the Government to refer the demands of the two million Central Government employees to arbitration and though the demand itself was one for the grant of a need-based wage, the government attack turned the strike and the subsequent struggle into a massive, sustained and united action in defence of TU rights.

Immediately following devaluation, Morarji Desai who was then not in the Cabinet, proposed to the Congress Working Committee that "for the next twelve months, there should not be any increase in wages and in salaries."

At that time, nothing came of this suggestion. But when he became the Finance Minister, he tried to put this slogan into practice. In 1967 he refused to revise the D.A. of the Central Government employees and it was only because of the united stand of all TU organisations that this D.A. freeze could be beaten back. The organisations of Central Government employees raised the question of a need-based minimum wage. The Government refused to concede this demand or refer it to arbitration as laid down in the Joint Consultative Machinery. The Central Government employees consequently decided to stage a protest general strike on 19 September 1968.

The Government utilised all its repressive machinery to crush the strike. Immediately before the strike, Ordinances were promulgated outlawing the strike and prescribing stringent penalties. Largescale arrests started even before the strike was scheduled to begin. On 19 September itself thousands were arrested, brutal lathicharges took place on striking workers and even their womenfolk and children were not spared; firing took place at Pathankot, Shahdol, Bikaner, Mariani and Bongai-gaon resulting in the death of ten persons and injuries to several others. In Delhi, brutal lathicharge was let loose inside the CPWD office at Indraprastha Estate and one person lost his life. Notwithstanding all the draconian ordinances and brutal repression, the strike of Central Government employees was a big success. It is estimated that over five lakh workers participated in it. In the P&T services, the strike was almost complete throughout the country. In other services, it was partial. A new feature was the largescale participation of Central Secretariat staff and the staff of the Central Government offices in Delhi.

The strike was followed by largescale victimisation. Over 8,000 persons were arrested and prosecuted, services of nearly 50,000 were terminated; 4,000 were suspended; and all those who participated in the strike suffered break in service. All

unions which participated in the strike were de-recognised. This attack met with stiff resistance from the workers. All central TU organisations (barring the INTUC) joined together to support the employees. In the P&T, a very effective slowdown was launched through work-to-rule. A hungerstrike was undertaken at Delhi by leaders of Central Government employees' organisations. Finally, on *October 17, 1968*, a massive demonstration of Central Government employees marched to the residence of the Prime Minister.

The AITUC was in the forefront of those who supported the strike. On 19 September 1968, its leaders went round the various places in Delhi and helped in the strike and in resisting repression. After the strike, it helped in building up unity around the aftermath of the strike.

The General Secretary of the AITUC, Com. S. A. Dange, resigned from the National Commission on Labour as a protest against the government's efforts to use the Commission to confuse and disrupt the movement. Enquiry missions of the AITUC visited Pathankot, Bikaner and Shahdol and submitted their findings on the police firing at these three places.

This strike brought into sharp focus the attack on TU rights and the orgy of repression against workers. On the initiative of the AITUC, an all-India convention was held at Delhi on November 8. This Convention was unique in the sense that it brought together representatives of all organised sectors of workers including government employees, for the first time on specific issues on a single platform. The Convention set up a National Trade Union Coordination Committee representing AITUC, HMS, HMP, UTUC, UTUC (Dharmatala St.), AIBEA, AIRF, NFPTE, Confederation of Central Government employees, Federation of State Government employees, AIDEF, BMS and Police Karmachari Sangh. Together these organisations represented over 50 lakhs of workers and employees.

The Convention gave a call for the observance of a National Day in Defence of T.U. Rights on November 21, 1968, to be followed by a 72-hour hunger-strike by representatives of all these organisations all over India from November 28 to 30, 1968 and the observance of November 30 as the Need-Based Mini-

mun Workers Day. It decided to hold a National Conference of Trade Union Unity in Action on December 14-16 at Delhi.

This call did not however meet with the success that was anticipated due to the lukewarm attitude of some of the participating organisations. The decision to hold the National Conference had to be given up and it was decided to hold a joint meeting of the National Executives of all these organisations on January 4 & 5, 1969.

The meeting of the national executives decided to present a Petition of Indian Workers to the Parliament on May 1, 1969. The presentation was to be made through a massive March where representatives of all unions in India were asked to be present.

Despite some weaknesses and the meagre efforts put in by some of the participating organisations, the Indian Workers' Petition to Parliament was a huge success. Over 16 lakh signatures were collected from all parts of India and from all sections of the working class. In the March to Parliament, despite the inclement weather, some 30,000 people participated.

Though the stiff resistance put forward by the Central Government employees and the support from all TU organisations had succeeded in making the government withdraw its order regarding termination of service and restore recognition to the unions, break in service still continues. The bulk of the cases launched have been withdrawn. However, a large number of workers continue to be prosecuted. 382 employees are yet to be reinstated.

The attack on TU rights continues unabated. The Ordinances have been placed on the statute book and now efforts are being made to take away the right to strike of Central Government employees permanently.

The various organisations represented in the Coordination Committee have also sent a complaint to the ILO setting forth the violation of TU rights and democratic liberties.

III

The attack on TU rights is not confined to the Central Government employees. Through Sec. 36AD of the Banking

Laws (Amendment) Act, the Government has put curbs on the rights of bank employees. The bank workers are one of the most organised and militant sections of the trade union movement and they have repeatedly protested against these curbs. On 2.4.68, they resorted to a most successful one-day token general strike throughout India. On 22 November 1968, they again staged a nation-wide half day token strike. The AIBEA has fully participated in the joint movement for the defence of TU rights.

The Government has also placed on the statute book, the Central Industrial Security Force Act which sets up a central armed force with wide powers and which can be deployed by the Central Government in public sector plants without reference to the State Government where the plant may be situated. This Act is not only an attack on the TU rights, it also constitutes unwarranted interference by the Centre into the rights of the State Governments. The central TU organisations have been campaigning against this Act and its immediate withdrawal as also the Essential Services Maintenance Act and of Sec. 36 AD of the Banking Laws (Amendment) Act and these demands were incorporated in the Workers Petition to Parliament.

IV

The attack on TU rights and democratic liberties has been witnessed in most struggles conducted during this period. Many workers lost their lives through brutal police firings: Banda (July 12, 1966—one killed). Durgapur (August 5, 1966—one killed), Brajrajnagar (May 24, 1967—2 killed, 7 injured); Kalagarh (Aug. 1967—one killed); Modinagar (27 Dec. 1967—5 killed, 46 injured); Pathankot, Bikaner (19 September 1968—6 killed, 30 injured); Bokaro (28 Oct. 1969—4 killed, 10 injured); Cossipore (8 April 1969—one killed). Apart from firings by police, violence by employers cost several lives. Three workers died and 12 others were seriously injured in a bomb outrage at Phagwara (4 Oct. 1966); two were killed in firing by employers in Raniganj coalfields on 3 July 1967; one was murdered by employers at Aligarh on 11 June 1968. There is

no count of lathicharges, teargas attacks, arrests and beatings. Section 144 has been used indiscriminately to suppress workers movement; curfew has been imposed at several places and various provisions of IPC and Cr. PC shamelessly used to arrest and harass workers.

V

In a marked and refreshing contrast to these acts of repression and violence has been the policy pursued by the U.F. Governments in Bengal and Kerala. On the assumption of power itself in both these States, the Governments clearly laid down that police will not intervene in the industrial disputes against the workers. Thus these governments neutralised the repressive machinery of the State and through this supported the struggles of the workers. As was only expected, this policy was greeted by the workers throughout the country but the bourgeoisie and the monopoly press let loose a barrage of propaganda and slander campaign. Their main theme was that law and order had broken down. They refused to see that the old law and order which was nothing but naked dictatorship of vested interests was giving way to a new law and order in the interests of the toiling masses.

The very assumption of power by the first U.F. Government in W. Bengal in 1967 was met with an organised campaign of closures, retrenchments, layoffs and non-implementation of awards and settlements by the employers. In a State where Indian and foreign monopolists are deeply entrenched, a government pledged to protect the interests of the workers had come to power. The monopolists were bent upon sabotage. The working class of Bengal faced with the situation resorted to mass action in order to face this offensive. One form of this mass action was the 'gherao'. Though gherao was an old form of struggle in Bengal, yet in the light of the new policy that police could not interfere in peaceful industrial disputes, it assumed a new connotation. The employers and their governments as well as their apologists parading as intellectuals raised a hue and cry and the High Court of Bengal, through orders in various petitions for injunctions, forced the Government to send its police to break the gheraos. The National Commission

on Labour has said that "gherao cannot be treated as a form of industrial protest since they involve physical coercion rather than economic pressure."

Some of the T.U. organisations like the INTUC and the HMS also came out against gheraos. However, the AITUC consistently defended this form of workers' action. A well-conducted gherao is a legitimate weapon in the armoury of collective action. It merely imposes a picketing on the recalcitrant management to open a dialogue for collective bargaining. As does happen, a particular gherao may be unjustified; or it may result in some excesses. But so may be the case in a particular strike or any other action of the workers. On the ground that in a particular case, a legitimate weapon of industrial action has been abused, the right to action in all cases cannot be barred.

The question of gheraos was discussed in a meeting of the Standing Labour Committee held in 1968. The AITUC reiterated its position and firmly upheld the policy adopted by the W. Bengal Government.

VI

One of the most basic TU rights is the right of recognition of a trade union as the representative union. There is no statute which governs it except in Maharashtra, Gujarat and M.P., where the provisions of the hated B.I.R. Act apply. The AITUC has all along demanded compulsory recognition of a trade union on the basis of secret ballot of all workers. This had been resisted by the employers and the INTUC and by the Central and State Governments as well.

The AITUC took the initiative and approached the Governments of Bengal and Kerala to enact such a law. Recently, the W. Bengal Assembly has passed a law for compulsory recognition of trade unions on the basis of secret ballot. However, despite the unanimous recommendations of the Working Committee of the AITUC, the Government of West Bengal has not incorporated many of its suggestions and to this extent, the law remains faulty. The Achutha Menon Government in Kerala has decided to introduce legislation on the basis of the AITUC's suggestion.

VII

The National Commission on Labour has unanimously agreed that recognition must be provided through statute. This is an advance. However, they have not given any decision as to the method by which a representative union will be determined. Whether this is to be done by ballot or by verification is left by them to the various IRCs to be set up in each State. The ILC which met in November 1969 to discuss the NCL report dispersed without taking any decision.

The right to strike has been severely attacked in the Report of the NCL. The Commission has substituted arbitration and compulsory adjudication for strike in all services and industries which may be classified by the Parliament as "essential". In others, the strike is limited to 30 days at the expiry of which the dispute will be sent for adjudication. The Commission also provides onerous conditions for calling a strike and rules out as illegal all strikes which are not called by the recognised union and all sympathetic, token, spontaneous and political strikes.

Thus, on the one hand, the Governments led by left and democratic parties have acted in the furtherance of T.U. rights while, on the other, there is a sharp attack even on those rights which the working class has already won.

The experience with the U.F. governments in Kerala and West Bengal proves that the question of defence and enlargement of TU rights is linked up, to a great degree, with the class composition of the parties which form the government. Hence, in the coming period, when polarisation is taking place rapidly, the working class must prepare itself to intervene more and more effectively in political affairs to win more TU rights.

The growth of monopolies necessarily leads to a curb on trade union and democratic rights. These rights are under attack as is clearly shown by the new laws put on the Statute Book during the last one year and the proposals of the NCL. To defeat this attack, preserve existing rights and win new ones, the broadest unity in action of the working class is essential.

Hence the battle for TU rights must be carried on both from the trade union platform and in the political arena.

4.

Wages, D.A. and Bonus

“We note that increases in money wages of industrial workers since independence have not been associated with a rise in real wages nor have real wage increases been commensurate with improvements in productivity. Simultaneously, wage costs as a proportion of total costs of manufacture have registered a decline and the same is true about workers’ share in value added by manufacture. Wage disputes under these conditions have continued to be the single most important cause of all industrial disputes.” (*Report of the National Commission on Labour*, p. 225)

As this quotation sharply brings out, the position with regard to wages is highly unsatisfactory. Apart from the low level of wages, wide disparities continue from State to State, and even within each State from industry to industry and from unit to unit in the same industry. Though some order has been brought in this anarchy through the Wage Boards, some of which have given a national wage structure and others a regional wage structure, and though the wage fixation under the Minimum Wages Act which have tended to lay down some State minima, the divergences, disproportions and differences still continue. Different systems and rates of payment of D.A. have further added to other discrepancies and have upset the differentials.

II

In this background, the urgency and importance of wage movements specially in the low wage areas is immense. Despite its high degree of industrial development and the strength of

its movement, Bengal continues to be a low wage area. The assumption of power by the UF created conditions favourable to the working class and, therefore, it is not surprising that during this period, there have been big movements for wage revision in Bengal resulting in good gains to the workers.

Wages in the monopolist-dominated jute industry have been extremely low and workers, due to poor organisation, division in their ranks and the powerful hold of the jute employers on the government and the press, had been denied any increase over long years. The political change ushered in by the assumption of Government by the UF created favourable conditions for the workers. The AITUC, INTUC, HMS and UTUC led an 8-day-long united general strike of over two lakh jute workers from 4 to 11 August 1969 which led to a wage revision. As a result of the settlement, the workers got a monthly increase of Rs. 30, an ad hoc sum of Rs. 30 each and the determination of the wage structure has been left to be decided by an agreed machinery.

The next to move into action were the tea plantation workers. Like jute, tea is also controlled by the most powerful and rapacious monopolists. On 18 August 1969, the two lakh tea garden workers struck work under the leadership of all the four central TU organisations. The strike was complete and as a result of this struggle which lasted over two weeks, the workers secured increase in wages, additional employment opportunities as well as other benefits.

The engineering workers of Bengal numbering over four lakhs had been struggling for a long time for wage increase. Compared with Maharashtra, their wages were extremely low. They had a one-day token strike on 16 February 1969 and consequent upon the failure of the Engineering Wage Board, were preparing for continuous general strike. However, following the jute and tea strikes, a collective settlement could be secured without resort to a general strike. As a result of this settlement, the workers got a wage rise of nearly 20 per cent. The movement for a wage rise and the settlement was again led jointly by the AITUC, INTUC, HMS and UTUC.

The latest to secure a Statewide increase in Bengal are the textile workers. The Second Textile Wage Board had given

recommendations which are totally unsatisfactory and had been rejected by the AITUC. The textile workers of West Bengal went on a general strike from September 1, 1969. After a prolonged strike of 38 days, the employers entered into a settlement under which the workers got a wage rise of Rs. 20 pending final settlement through an agreed machinery. The strike was once again led jointly by the AITUC, INTUC, HMS and UTUC.

Thus the trade union movement of W. Bengal has made notable gains in the vital field of wages during this period. These gains were possible precisely because of two factors: one, the presence of a Government sympathetic to the workers and two, unity in action between all TU organisations. Without the one or the other factor, it may not have been possible to make such advances.

However, while noting these considerable gains, two shortcomings must also be pointed out. In the settlement regarding jute and cotton textiles, it is stipulated that D.A. will remain frozen for a period till an overall wage revision takes place. Already since the signing of the settlements, the consumer price index has risen. Thus the freezing of the DA has cut into the ad hoc wage increases. Secondly, while securing a higher minimum wage in the engineering industry, the incremental rates have not been adequately protected in any category and the wages of the skilled and highly-skilled remain comparatively low.

III

Apart from the settlements in Bengal, there have been successful bipartite negotiations and settlements recently in two public sector engineering units—the Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd., and the Heavy Engineering Corporation. As a result, the workers in these units have got an increase of over Rs. 30. A feature of these two settlements is the comparatively satisfactory rates of increments for each category of workers. These settlements were negotiated by unions affiliated to various central TU organisations and independent unions. Since the plants covered by these two public sector enterprises are in various States of India, the

new rates secured by them will be helpful for settlement of wages in the areas where these plants are situated.

As the term of the application of the wage rates awarded by the Steel Wage Board is ending, at the initiative of the central TU organisations, a bipartite committee was formed for the purpose of wage revision. The bipartite body in its second meeting recommended an interim relief of Rs. 33 per month w.e.f. November 1969. The quantum of interim increase and the short time within which it was granted were in marked contrast with what the various Wage Boards have been doing.

In Rajasthan, the 40,000 engineering workers and textile workers went on a Statewide strike on August 4, 1969. As a result of these strikes, settlements have been arrived at through which substantial reliefs have been obtained.

Among the national level collective agreements, the settlement in the Marketing Division of the Indian Oil Corporation bringing the public sector wage rates to a new high, deserves special mention.

Apart from these statewide and national industrial settlements, in many units and various industries, workers have through struggles, strikes and negotiations won many wage increases. Mention must be made of the wage increases in various textile units of Haryana and Punjab, because these increases are despite the Wage Board's recommendations and far in excess of it. In most of these units, the rate of D.A. has also been enhanced, contrary to the recommendation of the Wage Board.

In the engineering sector, of special importance was the strike of over 40,000 workers in eight large engineering units in Jamshedpur in November-December 1969. The strike was jointly led by the AITUC and one group of the INTUC along with other unions. Instead of negotiating with the leaders of the joint committee which called the strike, after 3 weeks of the strike, the Tatas and other employers in four plants signed settlements with one faction of the INTUC, providing for a minimum wage of Rs. 200 in Telco and slightly less in other factories. The strike continued till January 4, 1970, to foil the managements' attempts at victimisation.

The major demand of the State Government employees in all States has been for parity in wages and D.A. with the Central Government employees. However, the various State Governments have been denying this. Throughout this period, the State Government employees in various States launched massive struggles. The first breakthrough was secured in 1967, in the wake of the nationwide one-day token strike observed by most State Government employees' organisations on January 5, 1967.

On February 6, 1967, ended the 62-day-old strike of the State Government employees in Uttar Pradesh—the longest ever strike action in government services, in the biggest State in India.

In Andhra Pradesh, over four lakh employees went on strike from January 24 to 29, 1967. In the settlement reached with the employees, the State Government agreed to bring the State DA rates on par with central rates in two stages—50% from January 1 and the rest from April 1, 1967.

In Mysore, the State Government employees went on strike on January 24 and 25, 1967. On January 25, the State Government conceded the central rates of D.A.

In Rajasthan, the employees went on a protest action on January 28, 1967. Immediately after, the State Government announced a D.A. Commission and on February 3, the D.A. rates were raised to a minimum of Rs. 47.

In Kerala, the employees of the State Government struck work from January 5 to 17, 1967, following which the government appointed two commissions—one to decide on DA rise and the other to look into the anomalies in pay fixation.

In Punjab, on the eve of the threatened "quit work" movement of the employees on January 24, 1967, the government announced the quantum of interim relief.

In Bihar, the employees observed "quit work" days on January 24 and 25, 1967 and got an ad hoc rise of Rs. 10.

In some States as in Madras, W. Bengal and Maharashtra, the State Governments had announced substantial relief before the January 5, 1967 token strike.

In Madhya Pradesh, in the wake of the decision of the employees to strike from February 13, 1967, the State Government accepted in principle, the demand for Central D.A. rates.

Since then, as a result of further struggles, the major demand of parity in wages and D.A. has been conceded in most of the States. Indeed, in Punjab, the wages of State Government employees are now higher than those of comparable categories of Central Government employees.

Though the Government of India refused to concede the demand for arbitration to lay down a need-based minimum wage to its employees, it has now announced the decision to set up a Pay Commission to re-fix the wage rates.

IV

During the period under review, many Wage Boards have submitted their reports. These are for cotton textiles (second), electricity, road transport, leather, newspaper, port and dock, coal and cement (second). The Wage Board for Engineering Industry could not come even to a majority decision and submitted four reports: one by the workers, another by the chairman and two independent members, one by the private sector employers and one by the public sector employer representative.

In its memorandum to the National Commission on Labour, the AITUC had stated:

“The Wage Boards were accepted by the capitalists as an alternative to collective bargaining at the national-industrial level. In their working, the Wage Boards have been utilised to delay decisions for the longest possible time. In the meantime, while there are deliberations, there is a ban on reference of wage disputes to adjudication. The fact that a Wage Board is deliberating is also used to thwart and crush any strike movement. And while the proceedings thus drag merrily along for years and years, with struggles, settlements and adjudication frozen, the workers are compelled to go on working on the same miserable pittance. After the Wage Board gives its recommendations and the government accepts it with or without modification of its own, in many cases, a strange paralysis overtakes the government, usually so quick to act against the workers’ interests.” (pp. 48-49).

This analysis is fully borne out from facts. The date of appointment of the Wage Boards and the date on which each

Board submitted its Report is ample evidence of the inordinate and unnecessary delay which the Boards have been guilty of.

The Electricity Wage Board gave a unanimous recommendation regarding interim relief. The Government of India unilaterally modified it against the workers. On the other hand, the recommendations of the Wage Board for non-journalist employees of newspapers, as accepted by Government, were not implemented by the monopolist owners of the biggest newspapers—the Statesman, the Hindustan Times, the Times of India, the Indian Express. Yet the Government exhibited its utter helplessness and the workers of these papers had to go on a general strike which lasted 57 days (July 23 to Sept. 18, 1968). The employees of other papers throughout India expressed their sympathy and solidarity with the strike, by staging a one-day token strike. Still the Government refused to take any action and finally the employers agreed to implement the accepted increase only to the extent of 75 per cent and the rest was sent to adjudication.

The private coal mine owners are yet to implement the Wage Board recommendations regarding D.A.

As noted above, the Engineering Wage Board failed to give any recommendation. The Government of India has quickly absolved itself of all responsibility by taking the line that each State Government should take the initiative to call a tripartite to settle the matter at the State level. In Bengal, such a settlement has already taken place. In Rajasthan also, there has been an interim settlement. However, in most States, no such meeting has been called and even where meetings have been convened, this has been done in such a half-hearted and perfunctory manner that nothing has come out of it.

The recommendations of the Cotton Textile Wage Board are so unsatisfactory as to be totally unacceptable. In Bengal, Rajasthan, Punjab and Haryana, there have been settlements which have given the workers far more than what was recommended by the Wage Board. However, all the major centres of this industry are yet to come to an agreement.

The AITUC is thus of the considered view that there should be no further appointment of Wage Boards and that wages

should be settled through negotiations at the national-industrial or State level.

V

The position with regard to bonus has become even worse during these years.

The Supreme Court struck down as unconstitutional, the clause which guaranteed bonus at a higher rate to establishments which had been getting it prior to the Payment of Bonus Act. However, the minimum bonus clause was upheld.

The trade unions raised a demand that consequent upon the judgment of the Supreme Court, the whole bonus formula should be changed. This issue was discussed in the 25th Session of the SLC which met on October 26, 1966 which appointed a sub-committee to consider the various suggestions regarding amendment of the Act. However, nothing came of it in the face of the adamant stand of the employers and the government's unwillingness to act.

The various changes in the Finance Acts raising the rates of development rebates, abolition of tax on bonus shares, etc., have further hit the workers. On top of it have come further adverse judgments of the Courts. One such judgment is that of the Supreme Court by which the amount of tax rebate on the bonus payable in a year is given entirely to the employer. Another judgment is that of the Allahabad High Court according to which the 4% minimum bonus is not payable in case of actual loss to a company.

Apart from these judgments, the employers have been able to manoeuvre and manipulate the balance sheets in a way that in majority of cases, the minimum bonus has become the rule.

The Government which refused to move for a long time, at last came forward with an amendment on January 10, 1969. This amendment constitutes only very meagre and partial advance. Through it, workers will be able to get part benefit of the income-tax rebate earned on the bonus paid during the previous year.

Bonus has always been a big issue and every year, many strikes are fought on it. But with the law as it stands at pre-

sent, large sections of workers are excluded from getting any bonus and those who are entitled to it under law get only a very unsatisfactory quantum.

Since all central TU organisations had expressed themselves repeatedly at various tripartites in favour of amending the present Act and had even put forward an agreed formula, it was surprising that in the NCL, the representatives of the INTUC and HMS agreed to recommend the continuation of the present Act with only one proviso that its provisions should be made applicable to such small factories which are at present left out.

Hence, the battle for bonus is still on.

VI

The NCL has adopted positions on the wages issue which are totally reactionary. On two major issues of a need-based minimum wage and a national minimum wage, its findings are as follows: "We, therefore, hold that in fixing the need-based minimum, the capacity to pay will have to be taken into account," (para 16.31); and "we, therefore, feel that a national minimum wage in the sense of a uniform monetary remuneration for the country as a whole is neither possible nor desirable ... it may be possible, however, that in different homogenous regions in each State, regional minima could be notified." (para 16.17). In the face of mounting pressure of the workers to achieve a national minimum wage based on the criteria of a need-based minimum as accepted in the 15th ILC, the NCL has sought to provide a "theoretical" and "practical" justification from a so-called independent tripartite body for a denial of both. In this way, the NCL has sought to fully serve the interests of employers.

VII

The experience of this period has thus fully borne out the conclusions of our Report at the 27th session of the AITUC:

"There is no doubt that in the coming period, the big monopolists are going to launch an offensive against the workers in the matter of wages, D.A. and bonus.

“The workers in their trade unions, whatever their affiliation or their politics, have to unite in order to fight back the offensive and win new positions to improve their conditions of work and living.”

The situation is now changing. Prior to 1969, the capitalist offensive was helped by recession. The workers were not in a strong position to win new demands; most of their actions were confined to defending and preserving positions which had already been won and were now under attack. Closures, retrenchments and layoff as well as difficulties generated by the blockade of spares, essential raw materials, etc., put the workers in a position where their capacity to struggle was severely affected.

However, toward the beginning of 1969, the picture changes. Recession is halted and partial recovery starts. Production picks up and closed factories reopen. In such conditions, the workers are in a stronger position to win fresh demands. And during the last one year, the workers' offensive is borne out by the strike struggles and settlements through which they have won wage increases and other concessions. The monopolists and the employers are being forced to concede the just demands of the workers.

In the coming period, efforts should be made to organise industrywise campaigns and struggles on the basis of the widest unity of all workers and their unions. Through such unity and struggle, the workers can win not only their economic demands, but can also acquire greater weight on the political movement.

5.

Struggle for Job Security

In a capitalist country like India where unemployment grows with every passing year, the struggle for job security assumes great importance. In view of this and the absence of any system of unemployment benefits, a person who loses his job has not only very little hope of finding an alternative one, he has no means of subsistence on which he can fall back even for the barest necessities.

It is therefore a matter of prime importance that efforts should be directed to create more and more jobs. At present, the backlog continues to mount. The AITUC has been campaigning for radical economic measures which will signify a break with the capitalist path as the only means by which jobs can be created in any appreciable degree.

The recession affected the employees very harshly. Thousands of workers lost their jobs. While in the engineering industry, with the revival, many workers have been re-employed, in the cotton textiles, the position continues to be serious. The cotton textile industry has not only been hit by the recession, bad management, fraudulent practices and other ills have resulted in total or partial closure of dozens of mills in all parts of the country.

On the insistent demand of the workers, the Government has been forced to take some action. A few mills have been taken over under the Industries (Development & Regulation) Act, and re-started. A Textile Corporation has been formed in the State Sector to take over sick mills. But the number of sick mills which have been taken over remains very small. In many mills which have been taken over, wage cut and D.A. freeze have been enforced.

II

Attempts are being made by the big employers to introduce computerisation and automation. In a country like ours, such measures will not only affect the present employment but the potential also. At the same time, huge amounts of foreign exchange are involved.

In many places, the efforts to introduce automation have met with the determined resistance of workers. On the initiative of the All-India Insurance Employees' Association, a Committee of various central TU organisations was formed to resist automation. In the Life Insurance Corporation, following the determined opposition of the employees and under the impact of two token strikes observed by them against automation, the management has been forced to abandon the programme of installing a computer at Calcutta. The Bank Employees have also scored significant successes in the fight against Automation, under the leadership of the AIBEA.

The AITUC had demanded that a special tripartite conference should be held to discuss the issue of Automation. In 1968, the Government convened a special session of the Standing Labour Committee. As a result of the discussions at the SLC, a tripartite committee has been set up by Government to examine the entire question relating to automation including the desirability of automation in India in the context of the existing political and social conditions.

So far as the AITUC is concerned, its views on the question were put forward in a unanimous resolution of the Working Committee which met on 14 and 15 July 1968. The resolution stated:

"The present socio-economic conditions in India are characterised by a huge backlog of unemployment in the labour force and the problem of unemployment among the educated, such as graduate engineers, scientists, teachers, etc., has a special severity in our socio-economic conditions. This is primarily due to the failure to carry out a rapid advance in industrial development and the high rates of super-profits sought after by the foreign and Indian monopolists who own the major areas of industrialisation. It is these monopolists and big employers who

bring in schemes of automation, rationalisation and speed up which led to growth in unemployment. Hence, the AITUC declares that there can be no automation or computerisation under present socio-economic conditions which are characterised by all the evils inherent in the capitalist system.

“The experience of oil workers is that 90 per cent of the reduction in clerical manpower enforced during the last few years is due to higher mechanisation, viz., with electronic accounting machines and computers, particularly in the three foreign oil companies of ESSO, Caltex and Burmah-Shell where clerical work is or sought to be completely replaced by computerisation in offices. There is no prospect for those thrown out, except to join the army of educated unemployed. Hence, the Working Committee calls upon its delegation to the 27th SLC meeting to demand that computerisation wherever installed for table work be withdrawn and wherever proposed or in the state of being installed as in the LIC be stopped forthwith.

“Where automatic devices including computers are found to be imperative in certain types of scientific work, safety of human lives or well-ascertained compulsions of economies of scale in modern industries, introduction of automation and automatic devices in such cases could be considered, not on the basis of individual or piecemeal requirements but only within the framework of a national scheme of economic and technical advance which much be evolved and implemented with the consent and participation of the trade unions. Such a scheme will be based particularly on the solution of the question of security of existing jobs and increasing job opportunities and raising the standard of living through higher wages and falling prices, thereby preventing the gains of the advance in technique being mobilised solely for monopoly concentration of profits and power. The AITUC demands that since such agreed national schemes do not exist, all automation pending or otherwise be scrapped.”

6.

Trade Union Unity

I

The AITUC has always striven for unity in action not only at the unit level but at the State and national level as well. Unfortunately, prejudices and vested interests have stood in the way in many cases.

The INTUC has all along adopted a policy of total hostility to the AITUC and has refused to have any united action with it. Nevertheless, the AITUC wrote to all central organisations including the INTUC that we should all meet to find out ways and means of promoting united action. The INTUC wrote back saying that the AITUC should first declare that its unions will abjure strikes till all other methods of settling a dispute had been exhausted. The AITUC again wrote to the INTUC that any proposition could be discussed at a common meeting but no preconditions and much less such a precondition could be accepted. However, the INTUC refused discussions.

The changing political situation has however had its impact on the INTUC. The fourth general election saw the defeat of the Congress in most industrial centres. Some of the INTUC leaders left the Congress and the INTUC ceased to be a one-party organisation. The recession hit the workers hard. The political setback to the Congress and the economic difficulties faced by the workers, forced the INTUC into united action with the unions belonging to AITUC and others in many places. In the mid-term poll, the Congress suffered heavy reverses in Bengal and Punjab and could not improve its position in U.P. and Bihar. These reverses have again had their impact and to some extent, the rigidity and completely negative stand of the

INTUC has undergone a change. It still continues to be opposed to any united action and its stand on many vital issues still conflicts with that of the other TU organisations, but the realities of the situation and the pressure of the workers are having an impact.

In Bengal particularly, there have been united actions in engineering, plantations, ports and docks, jute and cotton textiles. In Andhra Pradesh, AITUC and INTUC unions in road transport fought a joint strike. In Kerala, there have been united strikes in plantations. In Delhi textiles and in Bhiwani (Haryana), the AITUC and INTUC unions as well as others have fought protracted joint strikes. Similar action at local level has also taken place in many other areas and industries. Recently, there have been joint moves in coalmines as between the AITUC, INTUC and HMS.

In many committees, the INTUC has been forced to adopt a joint stand with AITUC and others. Thus, in the Standing Labour Committee, on many issues like bonus and automation, there has been an agreed stand.

Recent political events leading to a split in the Congress have their reflection in the INTUC also. While the position is yet to crystallise, it appears that the split in the Congress may deprive one or the other wing of the INTUC of complete political patronage of various governments in the States. Such state patronage has been the mainstay of the INTUC and hence its withdrawal is bound to lead to the development of further contradictions inside the INTUC.

The HMS has leaders from various political parties inside it—the PSP, SSP, Congressmen of Syndicate and Indira groups, independents—all are present in it. Hence its stand has never been very consistent or forceful in relation to unity. For example, though it formally committed itself to united work in the coordination committee set up on 8 November and for the May Day March, its participation was mostly formal and it did not really play any active part in the campaigns. The Coordination Committee could not continue after 1st May primarily because the HMS decided to stay away.

The HMS had been nearer to the INTUC than to the AITUC. However, due to the developments inside the ICFTU to which

both are affiliated, as well as the sharp political changes inside India, the conflicts and contradictions between the two have grown during this period. The HMS had taken a stand of trying to develop united action only with INTUC. It had stayed away from the Rashtriya Sangram Samiti. This stand changed to one of unity in action with INTUC and AITUC, if both these could be brought in. Now, the political and economic developments, the contradictions with the INTUC and the pressure of the working class for unity in action has brought a majority inside the HMS to a position of exploring avenues of united action and stand on issues with AITUC. As a result, cooperation has developed between the AITUC and HMS.

The representatives of AITUC and HMS met formally in Bombay in March 1968 and agreed to have joint consultation before all tripartite meetings. The 19th September 1968 strike of the Central Government employees led to close cooperation among the AITUC and HMS affiliates as also with other central TU organisations and national federations (barring, of course, the INTUC). This has been noted elsewhere.

Since the March to Parliament, the AITUC and HMS leaders have been meeting regularly to arrive at unified understanding on many issues. As a result of this, the two organisations are striving to come together on some questions pertaining to particular industries as well as on general issues. In Bengal, the HMS has participated in all industrial struggles along with the AITUC and others.

With the UTUC and national federations such as AIDEF, AIBEA, etc., our relations continue to be cordial and friendly. We have also developed relations with the AIRF, UTUC (Dharamtala St.), AINEF and various organisations of Central and State Government employees.

The Hind Mazdoor Panchayat(HMP) was in the Rashtriya Sangram Samiti. However, while it continued to be in the united forum, its leadership tried to form rival unions to the AITUC. They even tried to float a rival union in Bombay textiles, the oldest base of the Red Flag. The HMP joined in the Coordination Committee but its participation was largely formal.

The Jana Sangh has formed the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS). The influence of the BMS is very limited. In ideology, it is communal and class-collaborationist. However, it did come into united action in the course of the struggle of the Central Government employees, among whom the Jana Sangh has some political influence and was within the Co-ordination Committee and the May Day March.

The BMS is the TU organisation of the most reactionary communal elements. It does not have organised mass base. Its influence is mainly because of the political influence of the Jana Sangh and the organisational support from the RSS. It has to be fought by all progressive TU organisations.

Experience is teaching all workers that in unity alone lies their strength. Hence, despite all the division of politics and prejudices, the forces of unity assert themselves again and again. With the recent sharpening of political polarisation, the monolithic unity of a trade union centre with one political party no longer exists. With a multiplicity of political parties functioning in each central TU organisation, the process of unity has become easier in one sense while posing difficulties in other ways.

II

In the Report to the 27th Session of the AITUC, we had observed:

“The question of unity has now arisen in the AITUC itself, following from the political differences that have cropped up in its leadership and have reached right to the trade union ranks.

“The AITUC has had several splits in its history of forty-six years, due to political differences. It split in 1929 into two and again split in 1930. It took eight years to reunite all under the same banner.

“The war once again virtually split it but formally it remained one, until the Congressmen and Socialists walked out in 1947. Then there was a further split in 1949, which was partly healed in 1953. Since then we have gathered more experience and more strength.

“We hope we shall continue to remain united despite political differences among ourselves, though already rivalries on union level in some places are marring unity and united action.”

Since then, the position inside the AITUC has, to say the least, not improved.

This question has arisen at several meetings of the General Council and the Working Committee. At the General Council meeting held in New Delhi from November 30 to December 2, 1966, the problem was thrashed out at length and unanimous conclusions were arrived at. The text of the resolution adopted by the General Council is reproduced below:

“The General Council of the AITUC has discussed the situation arising out of certain complaints made by affiliated unions in respect of formation of rival unions and association of leading trade unionists of the AITUC with these activities, undemocratic functioning and other similar matters.

“The General Council has given careful thought to the problem. The unity of the working class is of paramount importance, specially today when offensive on the working class is mounting. Any disunity in its ranks can only encourage and strengthen its class enemies.

“To protect and strengthen the unity of the working class, it is essential to steel more firmly the unity existing in the leadership and ranks of the AITUC which is the premier organisations of Indian workers.

“The General Council is of the opinion that whatever may have been the circumstances under which rival unions have been formed in the past, such rival unions should not be formed under whatever pretexts in the future.

“With a view to preserve the unity and collective leadership of the unions, the General Council calls upon all unions to strictly observe the principles of democratic functioning and elections in their unions. It further calls upon them to give due and adequate representation on leading bodies to different political trends in the union.

“The General Council directs STUCs to set up committees on ad hoc basis which should supervise elections to the unions whenever requested to do so by any group of members of an affiliated union.

"If, in spite of all these safeguards, any union rival to the AITUC is formed, the general council directs all office-bearers and members of the Working Committee and the General Council of the AITUC as well as of its State Committees not to associate themselves in any way with such unions or their activities.

"Where such rival unions already exist, the General Council urges upon all concerned that immediate steps should be taken to re-forged unity. All mutual vilification must stop immediately. Efforts should be made to have common struggles and campaigns.

"Organisational unity must be built again on the basis of dissolution or merger and proportional elections for executive committee and other leading bodies, under supervision of committees appointed by the STUCs concerned or the AITUC as the concerned parties may desire.

"If any complaint is received hereafter, the respective STUCs in the first instance shall appoint a committee to go into the question and make appropriate recommendations.

"In case either of the parties does not agree with these recommendations or the committee is equally divided, any one of the concerned parties has the right to appeal to the General Council of the AITUC whose decision shall be binding.

"The General Council hopes that these steps and the sincere desire for unity will enable the AITUC to grow stronger than ever before."

However, though some effort was made in one or two States to implement these decisions, nothing really came out of it. As a matter of fact, the process of splitting and of formation of rival unions has gone on apace. The State Conference of the UPTUC saw the sorry spectacle of the General Secretary of the STUC and his group boycotting the conference and holding a rival meeting. They have set up a State Committee which continues to function separately and has arrogated to itself the authority to issue certificates of affiliation to unions, although the AITUC Constitution lays down clearly that affiliation is a function of the Centre only.

In some places, the situation has deteriorated to physical assaults on not only trade union leaders but on common work-

ers owing allegiance to the rival group. Open slanders, abuses and attempts at rival functioning continue despite oft-repeated platitudes about concern for unity and observing norms of decent behaviour. Even government machinery is used in a partisan manner.

In view of all this, concern about unity inside the AITUC is real and unless genuine attempts are made not only to formally keep united but to stop splitting, refrain from slander, abuse and physical attacks, to observe the norms of democratic functioning and to put an end to all activities calculated to harm fraternal relations inside the AITUC, the situation cannot improve.

On the one hand, the AITUC is consistently following a policy of building the widest unity in action and on the other, relations within AITUC are deteriorating. In a fast maturing political situation, this can only harm the entire movement.

In the Working Committee meeting held on 20-21 December 1969, some comrades walked out of the meeting when their resolution asking the AITUC to affiliate all unions, including rival unions, was defeated and another resolution disallowing such affiliation was passed. In fact, the suggestion to affiliate rival unions is contrary to all principles of trade unionism, is against the practice of the AITUC ever since its formation and would only put a premium on splitting.

7.

Organisation and Work of the AITUC Centre

During this period, the organisation and influence of the AITUC has spread and consolidated.

The number of unions affiliated and their membership have gone up appreciably since our Bombay session and we have now a membership of about 18.5 lakhs in over 2,500 unions.

Besides this growth in numbers, the AITUC has now affiliations from certain industries and services, including two large unions on the railways and some unions of bank and defence employees.

In many other industries, our membership has grown.

However, along with this growth, it must be noted that there is still much to be desired in our functioning. Many unions do not file returns in time and do not even care to keep proper records. Office functioning and paper work are also not upto the mark. Democratic functioning has to be strengthened.

The Working Committee of the AITUC met six times and the General Council on two occasions since the Bombay session. In all these meetings, serious and constructive discussions took place on the various problems facing the working class. As a result of the decisions taken, the AITUC could further its work among the masses.

The AITUC took part in the work of various tripartite committees, such as the ILC, the SLC, the I&E Committee and various other bodies. Its representatives sat on the engineering, leather and tannery, heavy chemicals and road transport wage boards as well as on the Committee on Labour Welfare. Its representative is serving on the Committee on Automation. The AITUC representative on the NCL resigned from the same before the work of the Commission finished as a protest against the efforts of the government to misuse the Commission to disrupt the struggle of the Central Government employees.

The AITUC representatives gave evidence before the various Wage Boards and Commissions and Committees and also appeared before the Select Committees appointed by the Parlia-

ment on the Central Industrial Security Force Bill, the Contract Labour Bill, Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, etc., and also before the Committee on Petitions which considered the Petition of Indian Workers to Parliament.

The AITUC is excluded from participation in the work of the ILO where the Government only sends INTUC representatives. However, it has been able to send representatives to two Industrial Committees—Leather and Tannery as well as Wood and Woodworking. We also sent a representative to participate in the ILO Seminar on Labour Research at Singapore in December 1969.

One of the outstanding achievements of the AITUC was the holding of the Asian Trade Union Seminar at Delhi (16-30 April 1968). The participants at the Seminar came from 8 countries representing 23 organisations, affiliated to the WFTU, the ICFTU and independent. The conclusions were all unanimous. A delegation of the WFTU was present at the Seminar which constituted a good effort at promoting unity of understanding and developing fraternal relations among the unions of this region.

From 1 to 3 September 1969, the AITUC sponsored an Asian Seminar on Medicines, Drugs, Their Prices and Control in Relation to Public Health, at Bombay. Trade Union representatives from 7 countries (9 organisations affiliated to WFTU, ICFTU and independent), the WFTU and the Trade Unions International of Chemical, Oil and Allied Workers attended. Well-known economists and doctors also took part in the deliberations.

The AITUC maintained its close relationship with the WFTU and participated in the work of its Congress, the Bureau, Executive Committee and General Council meetings of the WFTU and the various Commissions set up by it. The AITUC also took part in the various meetings and Conferences of the various TUIs.

During this period, the AITUC maintained fraternal contacts with various trade union centres abroad and particularly with the trade union centres of socialist countries. A number of delegations from our fraternal organisations from abroad also visited our country at the invitation of the AITUC during this period.

8.

Unity of AITUC

This year, the All-India Trade Union Congress, the first founding central organisation of the working class of India, which had its first Congress in 1920 in Bombay, enters its fiftieth year. And during all these fifty years, it has fought many glorious battles in the liberation struggles of the Indian people and the class-struggles of the working class. Many a martyr's name adorns the scroll of honour of the AITUC in the service of the country and the class.

Last year has been a year of great changes, a year of great struggles of the workers, peasants and toiling intelligentsia, a year of advance and gains for the exploited classes and a year of significant defeats for the exploiters.

A severe political defeat was inflicted on the Congress Party, the ruling party of the capitalists, landlords and kulaks, particularly in the States of Kerala and W. Bengal,

where united front governments, mainly relying on the working class, the peasantry and the middle-classes came into being. Land to the tiller, a fair wage to the worker and more democratic rights for the poor and dispossessed started becoming a reality there.

And last year saw the central power of the Congress Party split and reduced to a minority, much to the delight and relief of the toiling people of our country, which has suffered so much at the hands of the oppressive rule of the Congress. **BUT ITS COMPLETE OVERTHROW IS YET AHEAD.**

Great perspectives for the democratic revolution have opened up.

The big political general strikes, the great Bandhs, the united offensive of trade unions and parties of the working class, the united actions of all central trade union organisations have brought gains in

several industries and trades, including the Government employees. Even the most backward sections, hitherto unorganised, have been roused to new consciousness, irrespective of caste, creed, language or religion.

History now demands that the working class, which is the prime mover of revolutionary changes, and its basic all-embracing organisations, that is, the trade unions in every industry, trade, office, should widen, deepen and unite on a far greater scale than before. Only with unity and unity on an all-national, all-industrial level can the further class-battles looming ahead be fought successfully.

It is in such a background that the AITUC enters its fiftieth year and is holding its session at Guntur in Andhra Pradesh, from January 28.

And it is just at such a juncture in history that the AITUC is once again threatened with a split. When the defeats and partial retreats inflicted on the

capitalist-landlord supremacy demand that all central trade union organisations and democratic and socialist forces should come together to launch further offensives, the premier organisation of the trade unions of India, the AITUC itself is being faced with split.

The cadres of the AITUC, the lakhs of workers who stand by the Red Flag, must redouble their efforts to see that the unity of the AITUC is not disrupted, but is preserved and strengthened so that the AITUC is able to play its part in forging the wider all-in unity of all the central trade union organisations in the country, which is the urgent need of the hour if the Indian working-class is to utilise the immense opportunities opened up by present political developments in our country.

LONG LIVE THE UNITY
OF THE AITUC!
LONG LIVE THE UNITY
OF THE INDIAN
WORKERS!
WORKERS OF THE
WORLD, UNITE!

Appendices

Appendix I

MANDAYS LOST IN STRIKES AND LOCKOUTS

Year	(in thousands)		Total
	<i>Mandays lost due to strikes</i>	<i>Mandays lost due to lockouts</i>	
1962	5,059	1,062	6,121
1963	2,229	1,040	3,269
1964	5,724	2,001	7,725
1965	4,617	1,853	6,470
1966	10,377	3,469	13,846
1967	10,565	6,583	17,147
1968	7,729	6,104	13,834
1969 (first six months)	—	—	4,921

Appendix II

ALL-INDIA CONSUMER PRICE INDEX NUMBERS FOR WORKING CLASS

(1949 = 100)	
<i>Yearly averages</i>	
1951	... 105
1956	... 105
1961	... 126
1962	... 130
1963	... 134
1964	... 152
1965	... 166
1966	... 184
1967	... 209
1968	... 215

Monthly Averages

1966	January	...	173
	February	...	174
	March	...	174
	April	...	175
	May	...	181
	June	...	185
	July	...	188
	August	...	190
	September	...	191
	October	...	192
	November	...	194
	December	...	197
1967	January	...	197
	February	...	198
	March	...	200
	April	...	202
	May	...	206
	June	...	211
	July	...	213
	August	...	215
	September	...	214
	October	...	217
	November	...	216
	December	...	214
1968	January	...	220
	February	...	217
	March	...	213
	April	...	214
	May	...	212
	June	...	214
	July	...	213
	August	...	216
	September	...	218
	October	...	219
	November	...	214
	December	...	208
1969	January	...	207
	February	...	205
	March	...	207
	April	...	208
	May	...	210
	June	...	216
	July	...	218
	August	...	218
	September	...	218
	October	...	218
	November	...	215