

# GENERAL REPORT

By

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Secretary

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## GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING

*New Delhi, August 31 to September 2, 1961*



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New Delhi, Aug-31, Sept.1 & 2,1961.

G E N E R A L

R E P O R T

by

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## REPORT TO GENERAL COUNCIL

We have discussed working class approach to basic issues facing the world, our country and especially the working class just over six months ago at the 26th Session of the AITUC. The events since then have proved the correctness of our decisions. In this meeting, we have to look to the new events that have taken place since the Coimbatore Session, analyse and review them and chalk out our future tasks for the coming period.

At Coimbatore, we noticed the advance of socialism. Workers of socialist land have since then registered still greater and unprecedented victory in flights to space and making way for flight to moon and other planets easier in time to come. The scientific feats of Major Gagarin and Major Titov from the land where socialism took its first roots have been hailed by the working class and the people all over the world and brings people in a new age.

Another important event of the period is the publication of the Soviet draft plan for the next twenty years. From the working class point of view, this plan will have tremendous effect, on their thinking and working. The present Soviet society has no capitalists and landlords and is based on the principle 'From each according to his ability'. Fulfilment of this programme will lead it to each according to his needs.

Free houses, free gas, water, heating, free public transport, free lunch in factories, offices, collective farms and schools, free education and medical services are offered by 1980 to Soviet workers. Certainly these things will gradually become cheaper and then free by that time. There will be five-day week for the working class with no loss in earnings. There has been no threat of unemployment for these workers since they won political power after the revolution.

As against this, what has happened in the imperialist camp?

The crisis has further deepened.

Bulwark of imperialism - the USA - got their worst defeat in Cuba where they tried import counter-revolution with their armies. The Cuban people under the leadership of Dr. Castro and with the support of socialist camp, Afro-Asian bloc and working class and people of many countries successfully repulsed it. After Suez, this is another big defeat for the imperialists.

France forcibly occupied Bizerta.

Britain to stave off its financial crisis has finally decided to join the European Common Market.

Warmongering and local wars are considered the only way out by these imperialist-monopolist powers. They have threatened the independence of liberated independent countries.

In Congo, Belgium supported by USA, etc., intervened in favour of counter-revolutionaries, made it impossible for a duly-elected Government of Lumumba to function. They murdered Lumumba and still the fight is on. The worldwide anger expressed at Lumumba's murder really shook the world.

In Laos, the 'dirty game' of USA to divide the country is going on.

In Angola, the Portuguese imperialism has attacked with the support of NATO powers.

. . . In Algeria



In Algeria, the bloody war continues.

The so-called Berlin crisis accentuated by the Western Powers and the differences amongst them is only a reflection of the deep crisis they are facing.

The heroic struggle of Belgian working class during this period is a glorious chapter in the international working class movement.

The working class in capitalist countries is continuously suffering from unemployment, under-employment, threats of automation and loss of real wages. They have to bear the burden of warmongering and local war or its preparations in movement of troops, maintaining large number of armies and allowing armies of other countries on their homeland.

Under-developed countries like Pakistan which are tied up with the military pacts with these imperialists may get arms aid but this has not helped them to raise the living standard of the people in any way.

The birth of the All African Trade Union Federation at a conference in Casablanca from May 25 to 30, 1961, in which representatives of 42 African countries were present, is an important event worth mentioning. In spite of the fact that some Governments like that of Congo Brazzaville, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Madagascar, Camerouns, prevented representatives from their countries to participate, this first conference and formation of a federation and the acceptance of the report of principles and policies.

India on the whole stood in the camp of peace along with socialist countries but it did show vacillations and hesitations on certain occasions though it corrected itself subsequently. India's attitude towards Congo, specially the legalistic attitude of its representative, Shri R. Dayal, in being unable to save the life of Premier Lumumba, recognition of the provisional government of Algeria and its participation in the neutral summit meet and recognition of East German Government are some of the instances.

Therefore, besides the tasks laid down at Coimbatore, we have to take initiative on these international issues along with other sections of people and press them so hard that there is little chance for Government to vacillate or hesitate.

### THIRD FIVE YEAR PLAN

We have now the Third Five Year Plan duly approved by the Parliament before us. Also the progress report of the Second Five Year Plan is before us.

The most striking feature of this is though the financial target of the Second Five Year Plan has not only been fulfilled - in fact, investment is stated to be Rs.6,750 crores as against the target of Rs.6,200 crores (increase of 9%), the physical targets have a shortfall. The Second Five Year Plan expected a rise in national income during the five years by 25%, while it is expected to rise only by 20%. Its industrial production target was fulfilled only to the extent of 85 to 90%.

The Chart below gives shortfall in important and basic industries. It has affected basic industries of steel and coal.



	Second Plan Target	Production figures for:	
		1950-51	1960-61
1. Steel (mil. tons)	4.3	1.4	3.5
2. Coal " "	60.0	32.3	54.6
3. Electric Power (Mil. kW)	6.9	2.3	5.7
4. Sulphuric Acid ('000 tons)	470.0	99.0	373.0
5. Cement (mil. tons)	13.0	2.7	8.5
6. Paper & Paper Board ( '000 tons)	350.0	114.0	350.0
7. Aluminium ('000 tons)	25.0	3.7	18.5
8. Bicycles ('000 Nos.) (organised sector)	1000.0	101.0	1050.0
9. Electric Cables('000 tons)	18.0	1.7	22.0

The responsibility for this physical shortfall is mainly of the employers whether in private or public sector, because of their mismanagement.

During the whole Plan period, the real national income has risen by 19.6%, and in the last year, i.e., 1960-61, to a record increase of 6½%.

Agricultural production has gone up by 18% in the Plan period and this year a record production of 78 million tons is being claimed of which there is little evidence either in stocks or prices.

Industrial production is estimated to have increased by 39% during this period, though this does not include increase in production of industries which started production after 1951. Taking this into consideration, this figure will still go higher. During 1960, industrial production rose by 12.1% - also a record since planning started.

Over this very period, the index of wholesale prices rose by 30% - 7.2% being in the year 1960-61. Ever since March 1961, the prices are going up.

Cost of living index has risen during this period by 24% - and during the year 1960-61 by 2.5%.

The Third Five Year Plan is mainly not different or rather a continuation of the Second Plan in major respects. There is one more new steel plant, plan for expansion of existing steel plants, other heavy electrical and mechanical plants, oil exploration and more production of power and transport machinery and equipment. There is more stress comparatively on agriculture. Looking from the view of percentage, grants to social services have been reduced. Consumer industries have also their targets enhanced.

. . . . A few important



A few important things are obvious in the Plan:

(a) There is more dependence on foreign aid - bulk of which is not certain - may be had on year to year basis. Help from socialist countries to the extent agreed upon is assured while from capitalist countries, it is only provided to a certain extent.

(b) The first budget of the Third Plan of 1961-62 - though it was just pre-election budget, shows clearly that in the years to come, inflation will continue and so deficit financing with more burden on the toiling, wage-earning and with fixed income group of people in the form of taxes.

(c) Public sector has not been extended to that extent that it has controlling or dominant power on our economy. The private sector has still bigger share. Nationalisation of banking and mines is not in the proposed Plan.

This will, as usual, result in more concentration of wealth and disparities in income to remain. Growth of monopoly has a free hand.

(d) As regards execution of the Plan, the same machinery - governmental - will work and it can be assumed, with the same red-tape, corruption, wastages, etc.

(e) The Plan continues to remain on the basis of capitalist relations of production and building private capitalism and state capitalism.

(f) There is no machinery to watch the distribution of the increase in production. As before, workers will have to fight for their share doggedly - otherwise, employers will run away with the gains.

After the Central Government employees' strike, the question was raised: where has the vast wealth generated in the Second Plan gone? Which class has appropriated it? Prime Minister agreed to appoint a committee to find it out. When the report of this committee will come out is not yet known. But one thing is clear. The share of working class in the wealth has been falling and that of capitalists rising. Even Shri B.N.Datar, Director, Labour & Employment, Planning Commission, in his note submitted to this Committee has come to the following conclusions, which, when considering the facts and figures stated suffer from a serious understatement:

(i) The share of organised industrial labour in national income has remained more or less constant, in spite of expanding wage-paid employment and greater share of factory establishments in the total output;

(ii) While average real earnings have gone up to some extent, they have not outstripped productivity; and

(iii) Wages have not been a significant factor in price increases as is often made out.

In short, our attitude remains the same towards the Plan, i.e.,

- We support the Plan which mainly lays basis for building heavy industry, oil and power production, maintains Public Sector and open new factories which is in the interest of the country and its economy;

. . . . we will have to



- We will have to fight as a class either for construction labour, factory labour, office-workers and in favour of all toiling people and middle class people with more or less fixed incomes when their standard of living is affected adversely or they are denied their due share in the prosperity of the industry.

Our comrades should also study the State Plans and analyse them. In the Third Five Year Plan, mention has been made of Central allocations of projects in addition to the State Plans. We do not have information in this respect here but we hope State Committees will discuss it and let us have their appraisal of the same.

### "CRISIS" IN INDUSTRY

During this period, certain types of crises have been faced by the workers:

1) The crisis in jute is a man-made crisis, with an excuse of shortage of raw material. First hours of work were reduced from 48 to 45 in a week, then thousands of looms were sealed and finally the mills were closed for weeks in the months of June and July 1961. Even when raw material was available, to depress its prices, purchases were not made and permission was sought to continue closure of the Factories for one week in August 1961. This was stoutly opposed by the workers. The Labour Minister of W.Bengal has to admit that "happenings in the jute industry were a mystery to him." (Statesman, Calcutta, Aug.8, 1961). In the month of August 1961, Government has ordered unsealing of 9% looms. The jute lords are furious over this and are abusing one and all - right from growers and workers to the State and Union Government Labour Ministry. To create a crisis and then plead inability to pay minimum wages or any increase in wages before the Wage Board is the clear game of the IJMA. Jute workers in W.Bengal went on one day token strike on February 13, 1961. Recently, they had a conference along with representatives of jute growers, Kisan Sabha and a united movement by jute growers and workers is on for 48 hours working and unsealing of looms.

In Kanpur jute mills also, closure notice was served.

ii) Crisis of shortage of electricity, coal and wagons.

This was felt in many States and centres like Punjab, Delhi, U.P. and W.Bengal. In Bihar, in NCDC, due to shortage of wagons, production of coal was cut down and workers laid off or threatened with retrenchment. Workers' fight there and at some places helped to avert the crisis temporarily.

Lack of coordination between the Ministries at the Centre and between Centre and the States are mainly responsible for this. Strong action by the workers with the support of other sections of people has yielded results so much so that the concerned ministries moved.

iii) In manganese, the export to USA has been reduced and there being no other market, mines are being closed.

Another so-called crisis is looming large on us. The decision by Britain to join European Common Market is likely to affect export of some of the industries. Even though the effect of this step may not be to an extent of really creating a crisis, the employers, as usual, will leave no opportunity in attacking workers' wages and passing on the slight adverse effect on the workers. They will attack it in different manner and in each case, on the basis of study of the industry and its real effects, workers will have to fight it.



WAGES

During this period, prices have continued rising. Cloth prices have specially risen. When recently Delhi was made 'A' Class city and the employees of the Government got increase in their wages from Rs.7 to about Rs.15 per month, the prices then and there shot up. The budget of an average middle-class family in Government colonies shot up by Rs.15 per month. And the Government did nothing to check it. We do not know the experience of other cities thus affected.

There has been rise in money wages in certain industries or centres as a result of the continuous agitation and agreements during this period. Notable among them are implementation of Sugar Wage Board report and interim relief by Jute Wage Board. Bonus agreement in W.Bengal plantations was made. LIC employees got an ad hoc increase of Rs.15. Delhi transport workers got Central Government employees' rates of D.A. Employees of U.P. and Mysore State Governments got increase of Rs.5 and Rs.10 respectively. Agreement was also arrived at in Hindustan Aircraft, Bangalore and Praga Tools, Hyderabad, giving monetary relief to workers. Upgrading of Delhi also with 26 other cities has raised the allowances of Government employees in these centres.

MINIMUM WAGES STRUGGLE

A notable feature of struggles was for the implementation of minimum wages among 14,000 cine employees in W.Bengal and plantation workers in and around Dehra Dun.

In fact, the worst affected by the price rise are the workers in smaller and less organised sections of the working class where minimum wages were fixed under the Minimum Wages Act. Their minimum wages were fixed a few years ago. Prices have gone up. There is provision for revising their minimum wages but this revision has not taken place. Building workers, stone-crushing or breaking, cotton ginning and pressing, printing presses, cashew, tiles, beedi, are some of the industries where daily rates remain the same for years.

We should raise our strong voice and agitate for revision of minimum wages commensurate with the rise in cost of living index.

WAGE BOARDS

The experience of Wage Boards also needs a thorough study. Below, we are giving a chart of Wage Board results:

Industry	Wage Board set up on	Report submitted on	Govt. resolution dated	Implementation started from
1. Textiles	30.3.57	27.11.59	2.3.60	May '60
2. Central Pay Commission	21.8.57	24. 8.59	30.11.59	July 1960
3. Cement	2.4.58	7.10.59	1.3.60	
4. Sugar	26.12.57	26.11.60	7.12.61	April 1961

. . .The Jute Wage



The Jute Wage Board was set up on December 11, 1959; Wage Board for Tea Plantations on December 7, 1960; for Coffee and Rubber Plantations on July 7, 1961. The Union Labour Minister announced on April 2, 1961, the Government's intention to set up a Wage Board for Iron & Steel industry but this has not so far been set up.

All the industries which were mentioned in the 15th Indian Labour Conference have not been covered in the whole of the Second Five Year Plan.

There is a long gap between the moment an announcement is made and in setting up the Wage Board.

The whole process takes about two years or so on an average.

There has to be an agitation for granting interim relief and then finalisation and publication of reports.

The Government takes its own time even in the case of unanimous reports to approve it for implementation.

And then employers in spite of the unanimous decision of the Wage Board, refuse to implement the recommendations and often resort to litigation.

Agitation and sometimes strikes and hunger-strikes are necessary to move the employer and the Government to 'negotiate' on these recommendations. The Government of India as an employer in the case of Central Pay Commission have set an example, if it was at all necessary, to implement only adverse recommendations first. The so-called 'representative' unions of INTUC are ever willing to enter into agreements with the employer even on less than the recommendations of Wage Boards.

Government itself puts rider in some cases, e.g., rationalisation, revision of prices, revision of workload, etc., etc., which gives opportunity to the employers to harass and deny workers their due.

With all the struggles and agitation, etc., it takes two to three years for implementation of the unanimous recommendations in majority of the industry.

Meanwhile, though prices are going up - even the profits - and the workers have not been given even minimum wages according to the norms of the 15th Indian Labour Conference on the alleged plea of 'no capacity' of the industry (like textile and sugar), the workers cannot ask for increase in wages. Linking of D.A. with cost of living index, though accepted in principle, has not been implemented to neutralise 100% rise in cost of living index as demanded by the workers.

And at long last, after five years, the Government comes out with bill asking employer to pay ad hoc increase only (with all the exemptions to continue) and at the same time, banning strikes by workers for demanding increase in wages.

We have opposed this provision in the Bill in the Parliament as well as in the tripartite committee called to discuss the bill on August 9, 1961. The Bill is again lying in cold storage.

In coal industry, discussion is going on for more than a year, whether the issue of wages of coalminers should be referred to a tribunal or a Wage Board.

... These Wage Boards



These Wage Boards, if they are not set up promptly and give their reports within six months of being appointed and the same is not implemented in the next six months are being used by the employers to deny due increase in wages. The Government helplessly becomes party to all this. We have raised this issue in the forthcoming Indian Labour Conference and unless changes sought for are made, we will have to revise our attitude towards Wage Boards as such.

#### BONUS COMMISSION

We were happy at our last conference that we have succeeded in getting a Bonus Commission appointed and that the notorious LAT formula will be revised. The employers have with the same purpose of delaying its functioning raised another issue that there should be only one representative from workers' and employers' side on the Commission. The Standing Labour Committee at its meeting in April 1961, with the exception of the representative of the All-India Manufacturers Organisation, agreed to two representatives each from workers and employers side to be included in the Commission. Employers have been delaying discussion of the terms of reference of the Commission also. The Labour Ministry has already given them assurance that only unanimous decisions will be implemented. The sub-committee to discuss the terms of reference was to meet within 15 days (from April 1961). Till today, there is no indication of even agreement on the number of representatives from workers and employers side on the commission. The Government which is very strict in making any issue of workers, that of law and order in dealing with it and taking arbitrary decisions, is a party to this delay. Meanwhile, LAT formula is already denying thousands of workers their legitimate due for several years.

Government has refused to accept the general principle of linking D.A. with cost of living index nor are they able to check rise in prices.

There is a proposal for further reducing the pay packet which is taken home by increasing the rate of Provident Fund to be deducted from workers from  $6\frac{1}{4}\%$  to 10%. This percentage of 10 -  $6\frac{1}{4}\%$  will be non-contributory for the employers.

In the name of 'no capacity' of the industry, they have already refused to raise the Provident Fund rates from  $6\frac{1}{4}\%$  to  $8\frac{1}{2}\%$ . An enquiry is going in one or two small industries to assess the capacity of the industry to bear the additional 'burden'.

Rate of employers' contribution in the ESI also remains the same - less than what was agreed at the time of introduction of the scheme.

In the Bank Tribunal, attempt has been made to repudiate the 15th Indian Labour Conference decisions regarding norms for fixation of minimum wages. The decision of the tribunal is still awaited but from the evidence produced, it is clear that it has been challenged by the employers.

Wages policy in all the three plans has in reality been to freeze wages and make increase possible only if production rises. In the first Five Year Plan, to some extent this policy worked, mostly because after the repression of 1948-51, workers were busy reorganising themselves.

In the Second Plan, workers resisted policy and in many industries and centres, it did succeed.

. . . In the Third Plan



In the Third Plan also, the same policy has been reiterated. It remains with the working class to fight it out as it does not get its share of gains even if production has gone up and minimum wage has not been secured to it.

The struggle for minimum wages, according to norms laid down in the 15th Indian Labour Conference, revision of minimum wages fixed years ago, sliding scale of D.A., Wage Boards to decide quickly and including implementation not to take more than a year, setting up of Bonus Commission without delay and its report to be published within a stipulated time-limit, fight against rise in prices are some of the immediate tasks in the coming period. The attack on wages in some industries as a result of Britain joining the European Common Market or demanding automation or rationalisation in its name has to be resisted.

#### LABOUR POLICY AND T.U. RIGHTS

Labour policy of the Third Five Year Plan is no different from that of the Second Plan. We have discussed the wages and prices issues earlier.

On the main question of recognition of trade unions, the employers have a final say as ever before. The provision of Code of Discipline regarding recognition has not been properly implemented. Some of the employers had the audacity to say in clear terms and in writing that they do not accept the Code as far as this provision is concerned, while others have found ways and means of taking shelter behind the loopholes. In this, the State Labour Ministry machinery fully abets them.

The Union Ministries of Railways, Defence, P&T, have given lead in not accepting the Code of Discipline and the Labour Ministry has failed in its process of 'persuasion' all these five years. Though a year is over, according to the general principles of the Code of Discipline, the unions of Central Government employees derecognised as a result of strike last year, no steps have been taken to restore recognition to them.

On the contrary, a bill was proposed to be introduced where right to strike and admission of honorary members in the unions of Central Government employees were to be banned. Even the machinery of arbitration offered therein was vague and limited with lots of discretion with the Government who also happen to be the employer in this case. The AITUC, AIRF and the unions of Central Government employees severely criticised this retrograde step and the bill has been for the time being said to have been shelved.

A clarification has been issued that Government employees cannot even attend election meetings of any political party,

Condition in mines, specially Raniganj belt, has gone from bad to worse. Employers' arbitrariness aided and abetted by the Labour Ministry officials on the spot and goonda attacks on TU functionaries are still common. There was another almost fatal attack on Com. Purnendu Mazumdar of Gua mines when it was known that efforts to get him sentenced to death for murder through law courts has failed.

"Nagarshahi" continues also in the so-called prohibited areas of factory and living in public sector.

In many places, Sec. 144 CrPC has been imposed permanently. It is high time that unions fight against this undemocratic action by defying it whenever possible.

. . . Struggles



### STRUGGLES

In the form of struggles during this period, hunger strikes have prominent place. In the Standing Labour Committee meeting, we made it clear that hunger strikes are not violation of Code of Discipline though on a special request by the Labour Ministry, all agreed that it should not be resorted to as long as reasonable avenues of negotiations and settlement are available.

Among the important struggles of the period are the anti-tax demonstrations in Chandigarh and Patna, jute strike of W.Bengal, Heavy Electricals strike in Bhopal, the prolonged strike of workers in Commonwealth Trust's tile factories in Kerala, etc. There have been many others which we are not enumerating here but will be covered in the Struggle Diary for the year whenever published.

### UNITY

An effort to unite sugar workers all over India was made by calling a conference by the U.P.Chini Mill Mazdoor Federation held in March 1961. Partly because representatives from sufficient number of other centres did not turn up and partly because a section of HMS leadership intervened, an All-India Federation of Sugar workers could not be formed.

Jute workers of W.Bengal had a united strike for one day in February 1961.

In the Railways, the merger of our affiliate, Southern Railway Labour Union with the Dakshin Railway Employees Union is a significant event. The united union has been expelled from AIRF at its Trivandrum Session of General Council of the AIRF held last month.

### COMMUNAL AND LANGUAGE TROUBLE

Communal trouble in Ferozabad (U.P.) and Jabalpur (M.P.) and the language trouble in Assam had their effect on trade unions also. We have stated it earlier that not only we have to fight communal feelings amongst workers or any attempt to divide workers' ranks on the basis of language but take a lead wherever possible in mobilising other progressive forces in this fight.

### NATURAL CALAMITIES AND WORKERS

This year floods have caused immense damage in all parts of the country. Everywhere workers have, along with other organisations, helped the victims. But in Bombay, for the first time, textile workers worked overtime on a Sunday and donated the entire earnings to the Poona flood relief, Konkan cyclone relief and for the relief of flood victims in other parts of India. INTUC's proposal of working on Sunday was at first opposed by the workers till it was agreed that the employers will also donate their profits of the day to the relief fund of which 75% will be spent for Poona and Konkan and 25% for the rest of India.

Comrades, this is not a full-fledged report for the General Council meeting. These are just a few important points and events mentioned in passing as a reference to guide the discussions on the review of events since Coimbatore.

. . . The General



The General Elections are fast approaching. Though the AITUC has, unlike other TU centres, never passed any resolution to support candidates of any political party, it does expect that the working class on the basis of its past experience will not only vote itself but see to it that its right of franchise strengthens whose elements and parties which accept our programme. There has been very often demand on us to get things raised either in the Assemblies or Parliament and get things done through MLAs and MPs and most of all, for visits in the conference or at the time of struggles, by MPs and MLAs. It has not been possible in the past not only to accede all such requests but we were unable to depute even on such occasions when presence of our MPs and MLAs would have helped the situation. One of the reasons has been the very limited number of MPs and MLAs and they remain too busy in their multi-purpose activities. Our movement has grown - this is admitted on all sides. Let this growth be reflected in this election battle also - so that the struggle outside may be properly reflected inside the halls of legislatures also.

ON WITH THE THREE CAMPAIGNS!

- BERLIN, - WAGES - ELECTION.

What should be the major campaigns that all our unions should undertake in the immediate future?

The greatest danger to world peace is the German problem. The warmongers, especially the American imperialists, have revived German militarism and are re-arming it even with nuclear weapons. The British and French imperialists have forgotten the lessons of the two world wars and it is astounding to see that German Panzer units are being imported for training in England and France.

The Soviet Union, seeing the growing danger of German militarism, has decided to sign a Peace Treaty with East Germany, that is, the German Democratic Republic. This means that the occupation of West Berlin by the American, British and French armies must come to an end. West Berlin will become a Free City to which all who come for peaceful purposes will have access.

This simple proposal to end the state of war with Germany and put the East German State on par with the West German which has been already recognised by the Western Powers has aroused war hysteria in the imperialist circles.

The war maniacs of Hitler who are again in power in West Germany aided by the American imperialists are capable of any treacherous attack on the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.

Hence, we must educate our workers and people in India about the correctness of the Soviet proposal. Even in the imperialist countries, people do not see why they should go to war against a Peace Treaty and to make Berlin a Free City, free from the warmongers' occupation.

The facts of the situation must be reported to all trade unions and conscious workers throughout India. An attitude that this does not concern us is very harmful.

. . . The plans of the



The plans of the warmongers, to kill the populations of vast areas of Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan by nuclear explosions, to create a "safety belt" behind which the imperialists can retreat, shows the monstrosity of the plans of the warmongers. And radiation belts in Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and near Kashmir are certainly going to affect Indian people right in their homes. These revelations of the CENTO Powers' secret plans should wake us up to denounce war, and campaign for total disarmament, and for Peace Treaty with Germany and disarming of West German militarism.

Berlin is a live issue and that is the first campaign we must undertake.

The second campaign which must claim our serious attention is that of wages.

We have discussed this at the Coimbatore Session. But things have moved further since then.

There we emphasised the fight for dearness allowance, the fight for defending the wages line going down, and so on. Not much headway has been done in this matter. One reason for this is that as a result of last year's strike and the coming general elections, the Government and the employers who are behind the Government, have not tampered with prices to the extent they did before. Food prices have not run away as before, though it does not mean that the cost of living has not risen. Moreover, the Wage Board reports in the big organised industries like textile, cement, sugar and a few agreements in other industries have prevented the rise of sharp wage-battles in this period.

But there is another vast field of employment in which deterioration of wages is taking place for a long time. That is the field of those industries which are small-scale and sweated and where Minimum Wages Act prescribes scales of wages. These industries though scattered and small, employ large numbers and earn large profits - such as biri and tobacco, cashewnut, construction, hotel employment, etc. For years, in many of them, the rates are not revised. In some, even the prescribed scales are not given effect to by employers, with the connivance of the Governments (viz., cashew in Kerala, cine employees in W.Bengal, etc.).

It is, therefore, necessary to take up the question of the wage-scales of these workers and fight it out. An overall increase in their rates is called for immediately as, in view of the rise in prices and the absence of the D.A., these workers have suffered the largest loss of real wages.

Another point for consideration in the matter of wages is our approach to the Wage Boards. We have had so far three Boards who have reported and three more which are on the working list - jute, plantations (separate for Tea, Coffee and Rubber) and iron and steel (to be constituted).

What is the net result of these Boards. They are used as a brake on new wage-claims and strike struggles. They hardly give an increase to meet the needs of the worker. And by their five-year bans on future claims and the time time, generally three years, they take to apply their awards, the Wage Boards are being turned into a weapon of the State and the Employers, to freeze wage-claims and wage-battles. The Wage Boards, therefore, are ceasing to play that progressive role they were expected to play in



the matter of wages. No doubt, we did make some gains out of them. But, now, after four years of the working of the 1957 Tripartite Convention and the Six Boards, the AITUC, in the situation prevailing should modify our approach to these Boards.

The first modification is that we should not halt our wage-battles because a Board is promised or is in session. The second modification is that the five-year bans that these Boards put on further wage-claims should be denounced and new claims put forward, wherever the situation demands.

This does not mean that we do not participate in the work of the Boards wherever they are functioning. But it does mean that we do not ask the workers to pin their hopes on them or restrain their struggles and claims because a Board is on or has given an award of five years' binding. How we carry out this modification in our approach is to be studied in terms of the situation in each industry, the state of our organisation and the given consciousness of the workers' concerned. Give up all hesitations, if they exist, in building powerful campaigns for wage-rises everywhere. With production and productivity going up and the monopolists making huge profits at the expense of the workers and the people, the trade unions must mobilise the workers for defending their interests and for a rise in standards of living. We must not forget that we have to contend with a ruthless capitalist system, which operates with sweet words and promises and black anti-working class measures. They will not change their course, unless we act.

The third campaign is an obvious one for all and that is the General Elections. Our election battles are based on a democratic front of all progressive people. We have to fight for the toilers' representatives and against those who have worked against us, who are with the bourgeoisie and the landlords. The legislatures are a forum where the working class is attacked by the bourgeoisie with anti-working class measures. It is also a forum from where we can reach the other sections of the people in order to draw them to our side and halt the growth of the reactionary policies.

These three campaigns - the Berlin Problem, the Wages Question and the Elections should occupy us in the near future.

The World Congress of the WFTU is meeting in December in Moscow. You have already before you the Programme of Action that the World Congress proposes to discuss and adopt. Next year will find us all girdled up to realise the basic slogans of that Programme.

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New Delhi,  
August 30, 1961



