

# WORKING CLASS and the EMERGENCY

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## CONTENTS

Present Situation and Tasks <i>(Resolution of the AITUC Special Convention at Indore)</i>	1
Role of Public Sector and Workingclass Participation in Management <i>by N. K. Krishnan</i>	6
Trade-Union Unity: the Path and the Perspective <i>by Raj Bahadur Gour</i>	19
Emergency and the Trade Unions <i>by T. N. Siddhanta</i>	27



## PRESENT SITUATION AND TASKS

*(Resolution of the AITUC Special Convention at Indore)*

The special convention of the AITUC draws the attention of the working class and of all patriotic, democratic and left forces to the gravity of the political crisis precipitated in the country by the policies and activities of the combination of right-reactionary and left-opportunist parties gathered together under Jayaprakash Narayan's umbrella and of JP's call to the military to revolt, which have led to the promulgation of national emergency.

The capitalist path of development led to the growth of monopolies, to unprecedented sufferings by the working people and to a severe economic crisis. The split in the Congress in 1969, the progressive measures taken by Indira Gandhi such as nationalisation of banks, etc., progressive changes in the constitution, steps against princes' privy purses, takeover of closed factories and the massive election victories of the ruling party in the 1971 and 1972 elections led to big expectations in the country. These progressive measures naturally aroused fierce resistance by the vested interests both inside the ruling party as well as outside.

Taking advantage of people's discontent over rising prices, growing unemployment and shortages of essential commodities, the right-reactionary forces in the country mounted a fresh offensive this time under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan who roped in the left-opportunist parties also into his front. The Jana Sangh and RSS were the spearhead of this front. The purpose of this offensive, carried out under the slogans of "total revolution" and "partyless democracy", was nothing other than the creation of chaos and anarchy in the country, destruction of parliamentary democracy and the instal-

lation of a rightist-fascist dictatorship of the monopolist and landlord classes under some form or another. Terrorist attacks and political assassination became a feature of the developing crisis.

With this mounting rightist offensive the economic crisis began rapidly to turn into a political crisis.

Utilising the judgement of the Allahabad high court on the election petition against prime minister Indira Gandhi, the right-reactionary and left-opportunist parties, united under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan, Morarji Desai and others, started a frenzied campaign for the immediate ouster of the prime minister. The fact that this combination of parties had no common programme except the one slogan of "Indira Gandhi Hatao", the fact that what the right-reactionary tactics wanted was not to carry forward the process initiated in 1969-71 but to reverse it, shows clearly that their aim was only to set in motion the forces of political destabilisation, chaos and civil war in the country as part of a process of reversing all progressive and national policies and establishing a rightist-fascist regime of open dictatorship of the monopolist and landlord classes in one form or another.

The political crisis created by the right-reactionary offensive moved to a higher stage when the supreme court judgement came. Misinterpreting and misusing the verdict of the supreme court which has unequivocally upheld Indira Gandhi's right to continue and function as prime minister pending the final disposal of her appeal, the right-reactionary-left-opportunist combine and its mentor JP stepped up their campaign for immediate ouster of the prime minister. They declared their intention to take to the streets and launch mass satyagraha and mass civil disobedience movement to enforce their demand. JP openly called upon the army, the police and central government employees to disaffection, mutiny and revolt, to set aside the parliament and seize power by force. Those who would not "obey" were threatened with "punishment".

Charan Singh had even earlier threatened civil war and bloodshed.

These calls created a situation of gravest danger for internal security in the country and for the cause of parliamentary de-

mocracy itself. They clearly revealed the plans of the JP-led combine to go to any lengths in order to achieve their catastrophic objectives.

If faced with such a situation the government has proclaimed a state of national emergency, the JP-led combine has only itself to thank for it. The entire responsibility for precipitating such a situation rests squarely on its shoulders.

Several months earlier, when JP had first given his call to the army to mutiny and revolt, members of parliament of the AITUC raised their voice against such calls and warned against their serious repercussions.

The present offensive of right-reaction inside the country fully corresponds to the policy of destabilisation which US imperialism and the CIA have set as their goals in respect of all regimes in the third world, pursuing the policies of anti-imperialism, nonalignment, peace and cooperation with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.

Stricken with the severest political and economic crisis and driven desperate by their rout in Indochina, their setbacks in the Arab world and the further advance of the revolutionary and democratic movements in Western Europe, Africa and Latin America, US imperialism has stepped up its neocolonialist attacks in the South Asian region. India is one of the main targets of this attack today. The lifting of the arms embargo on Pakistan, the decision to convert Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean into a nuclear military base, the pumping of massive arms into the Gulf area states—are all manifestations of this policy.

The activities of the US multinational corporations and of the CIA are being intensified inside our country.

The present right-reactionary offensive inside the country is synchronised with the new attacks against our national sovereignty and freedom coming from US imperialism.

In such a situation, this AITUC convention supports the prime minister and the Congress Party in their resolve not to yield to the demand for her ouster and the call to overthrow the government and parliament by terrorist forces.

This convention of the AITUC calls upon the working class to come forward urgently in a conscious and organised manner

to expose and fight uncompromisingly against these conspiracies of its worst enemies—US imperialism and the right-reactionary front inside the country—and to prevent these two pincers of counterrevolution from destroying our country's independence and democratic achievements.

The convention of the AITUC is firmly of opinion that right-reaction cannot be defeated by means of emergency powers unless they are speedily used by the government to attack and curb the vested interests who form the base of right-reaction, the monopolists, landlords, profiteers, hoarders and blackmarketeers and to introduce radical economic measures to bring relief to the working masses. This is the only way in which the toiling masses can be actively brought into the struggle against right-reaction and decisive successes achieved in this struggle.

At the same time, the emergency powers must not be used to suppress or curb trade-union rights of the working class, including the democratic rights of the working people, in fields, factories or offices. The AITUC pledges that it will continue to be in the forefront of the struggles in defence of workers' interests.

This convention of the AITUC calls upon the entire working class to wage an integrated battle against right-reaction and in defence of its just demands and rights. The present critical situation demands such an integrated approach. On no account must the right-reactionary and left-opportunist parties be allowed to exploit workingclass issues and struggles for their antinational political purposes.

In this critical period, the trade unions must exercise utmost vigilance and set up antisabotage cells in consultation and, if possible, in cooperation with other trade unions to prevent any sabotage of plants and production that the reactionary and disruptive forces might be trying to bring about.

This convention of the AITUC calls upon all TUs and workers to launch a countrywide mass campaign and movement on the basis of the following minimum platform corresponding to the needs of the present situation:

—Against US imperialism and against the right-reactionary offensive aimed at bringing about chaos, civil war and political destabilisation inside the country.



—Effective steps to bring down prices. For a proper public distribution system for supply to workers and their families of foodgrains and other essential commodities at fixed and reasonable prices.

—For the defence, development and democratisation of the public sector.

—Against unemployment, closures and retrenchment. For defence of TU rights.

—For immediate implementation of the land-ceiling laws and protection of harijans and agricultural labour.

—For takeover and nationalisation of sugar, cotton textiles, foreign oil companies and foreign drug firms. For takeover of wholesale trade in foodgrains.

—For repeal of the compulsory deposit scheme in respect of increased wage, DA and bonus.

—For drastic punishment of smugglers, hoarders, black-marketeers, tax-evaders, speculators and makers of black money who corrupt our public life and strengthen the right-reactionary forces.

This convention calls upon all TUs to carry on a continuous mass and political campaign on the basis of this platform, through broad TU conventions in the states and major industrial centres, mass demonstrations, mass hungerstrikes, etc.

This convention appeals to the INTUC, HMS and to all other central TU organisations and independent federations to come together urgently for the purpose of joint campaign and joint action to save our country from the conspiracy of right-reaction and open the way for united workingclass advance towards radical socioeconomic progress.

## ROLE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND WORKINGCLASS PARTICIPATION IN MANAGEMENT

N. K. KRISHNAN

Throughout the history of developing countries since their attainment of political independence, the question of the role of the state in their industrial and economic development, and particularly the role of the state sector, has constantly been in the very centre of ideological and political struggle between various classes.

The capitalist monopolies of the imperialist countries are vitally interested in the preservation of a system of private capitalist enterprise, as well as of the technical and economic backwardness that goes back to precapitalist modes of production, in the former colonies. This helps their neocolonialist aims of continuing the exploitation of the peoples of their former colonies.

A state which seeks to ensure economic independence through modernising the economy, carrying out largescale industrialisation, especially in department I, and the intensification of agriculture and building up a national-scientific and technical potential and modern infrastructure, becomes the main obstacle in the way of the neocolonialist policies of world capital, whose shock-brigades are the multinational corporations today.

This is why the public sector in the economies of the developing countries comes under heavy attack from imperialist quarters.

And this is also precisely why the working class and working masses and all progressive sections of opinion in the developing countries support the strengthening and expansion of the public sector and strive to direct the spearhead of public-sector policy against foreign and internal monopolies.

The public sector in India, as in other developing countries pursuing the capitalist path, is not "socialism" as sections of the national bourgeoisie would like to picture it. It is state capitalism. But it is **anti-imperialist** state capitalism, radically different from imperialist state-monopoly capitalism to be found in the United States or the countries of Western Europe. It performs a progressive role in not only developing the productive forces, but in doing this on a **national** basis, reducing the economic dependence on foreign capital, on imperialism.

The specific nature of state capitalism in India (and in similar developing third-world countries) as embodied in the public sector consists in the following:

— State capitalism grew up and developed in response to the need for rapid elimination of technical and economic backwardness in those countries which in the recent past were colonies.

— State capitalism in India and similar countries at the present time bears an anti-imperialist anticolonialist character and is aimed at defending and consolidating political independence and attaining economic independence by means of industrialisation on a national basis.

— State capitalism is developing in these countries in a period when a world socialist system already exists and is going from strength to strength, after the collapse of imperialism's colonial system and when the balance of forces between imperialism and socialism has changed decisively in favour of socialism. The growth of progressive forces throughout the whole world, the exacerbation of the class and political struggle as regards the choice of paths of development minimise the possibility that this sort of state capitalism might follow the path which state capitalism took when it appeared in 19th-century in Japan, Germany, Russia and other countries.

— Anti-imperialist and anticolonialist states promoting state-capitalist development (such as India) are pursuing a progressive foreign policy of peace and nonalignment.

— In the light of recent changes in the alignment of class and political forces, the assumption of power by national democrats in a number of developing countries who have opted for a socialist course (Syria, Somalia, Algeria, Burma, Guinea, etc.)

have created conditions in these countries for the **anti-imperialist** state sector to evolve into an **anticapitalist** state sector, a **qualitatively new stage of development**.

Such are the features of state capitalism in the developing countries and the prospects of its future evolution, which determine the attitude of the working class towards the public sector.

Precisely because of these specific features of the public sector in the developing countries, the most reactionary forces inside these countries with the backing of foreign monopoly capital resist with all their might the expansion of the public sector. This resistance ranges from the political activities of reactionary parties in parliament and outside aimed at wrecking the economic plans of progressive governments to economic sabotage and price-rigging designed to "prove" that the public sector is a total failure in terms of efficiency of functioning and the criterion of profit-making, the provoking of disorders and the organisation of conspiracies. Chile is the most striking example of this.

Generalising on the activities of foreign and internal monopolies in regard to the public sector in the developing countries, Professor Ulyanovsky in his recent book **Socialism and the Newly-Independent Nations** says:

"Foreign monopolies are rabid enemies of state enterprise in industry, although they usually attempt to conceal this. They persistently demand that the state should not concern itself with building up the infrastructure. The local monopolies strive to turn the state sector into their own stronghold, a means of monopoly exploitation of the people by wresting the state sector from under the control of bourgeois-democratic institutions and gradually by various subtle means, subordinating it to their own ends making wide use for this purpose of corruption tactics which in many countries have come to represent a major threat to national interests. During the first stages of the struggle to gain control of the state sector local monopolies sometimes do not demand that state enterprises should be sold, but merely insist that businessmen should be taken on to run these enterprises or that some of the shares of these state enterprises be quoted at stock exchanges so as initially to turn

them into mixed companies. Then the monopolies' demands increase, till they end up by calling for the complete transfer of state enterprises to private hands. Without adopting the unpopular stance of complete rejection of the need to develop state enterprise the local monopolies, supported in this by their foreign counterparts, try to cultivate within the milieu of the national bourgeoisie reactionary, antinational tendencies and, together with the foreign monopolies, demand that state initiative should be limited to the sphere of the infrastructure. This policy plays into the hands of foreign capital in that it serves to undermine the national bourgeoisie as a whole"(pp 517-18).

The inherent contradiction of the public sector in the developing countries like India which pursue the capitalist path consists in that although its creation and expansion are in the national interests, it is in the first place private capitalism that seeks to derive maximum benefits from its activities. This is clearly seen in Indian experience ever since 1956. Thus the main fruits of the "green revolution" in realising which the public sector played a decisive role went to the capitalist landlord and the rich peasant. Monopoly houses like the Tatas and Birlas have thrived and increased their assets manyfold by loans from the public-sector institutions. They have increased their profits manyfold by purchasing at lower prices the products they need from state-owned plants—steel, electricity, chemicals, machinery, equipment—and by enjoying special freight concessions from the state-owned railways.

The monopolists also resell at higher prices scarce goods bought from state enterprises—not for expansion of production for which purpose this money is designated, but for usurious and blackmarket operations through secret and illegal ways.

The monopolists have also freely used, for the purposes of their own aggrandisement, the infrastructure facilities created by the public-sector plants set up in backward areas and regions.

In every public-sector industry, the working class and progressive forces have to wage a constant class and political struggle against such promonopolist policies and activities and against the government's economic policies permitting public funds to be turned into a means of private profiteering.

State capitalism in India has not smoothed over the contradictions inherent in capitalism as such, but rather served to intensify them. Growth of largescale interbranch disproportions, of unutilised capacity both in the public and private sectors, growth of unevenness of economic development in various states and regions, of increasing conflicts between various strata of the bourgeoisie in the private sector itself—these have become marked in the recent period in India, together with further growth of the giant monopoly houses. The working class and trade unions, as well as the left and democratic forces, have to intensify their struggle to overcome these contradictions on the basis of a broad coalition of the antimonopoly forces.

The contradictions inherent in the public sector growing and expanding in a country like India pursuing the capitalist path of development can be finally resolved only as a result of the nationalisation of the big monopoly houses and abolition of the private sector. This means revolutionary changes whose aim is to go over to the noncapitalist path of development. In the ripening of conditions for such changes, the growth of the share of the public sector in the national economy is of great importance. That is why the struggle for expanding the public sector and defending it from inroads and aggression on the part of both foreign capital and internal monopolies becomes one of the crucial sectors of the class struggle in India. On the success of this struggle depends in each particular case the fate of this or that public-sector enterprise or industry.

## II

In evaluating the place of the public sector in Indian economy and formulating the tasks of our trade-union movement with respect to the public sector, the following specific features must be kept in mind:

(1) The public sector in India has made steady development since 1956, barring the slack period during 1967-69 when there was a virtual plan holiday. The share of the public sector in India's reproducible tangible wealth which was only 15 per cent in 1950-51 increased to 25.6 per cent and 35 per cent at

the end of the second and third five-year plans respectively. In 1970-71 it was estimated at 43 per cent. In 1972, 282 public-sector companies accounted for 48 per cent of the paidup capital of all companies in India.

All this is sufficient indication of the importance of the public sector in India's economy.

(2) In the development of the public-sector enterprises in India, a major role has been played by economic assistance from the socialist world in general and the Soviet Union in particular.

The fact that the development of the public sector in India has markedly come in the basic and heavy industries, including oil extraction and refining, with the decisive aid coming from the socialist countries, and that this has played a major role in reducing India's dependence on the imperialist countries, testifies to the growth of anti-imperialist and antimonopoly possibilities of this sector.

The public sector in India has also strengthened the defence of the country by increasing industrial production in general and the production of defence equipment like electronic equipment, aircraft, etc.

The public sector has considerably strengthened building up of a national cadre of modern managers, engineers and technicians and contributed to building up of our own research, modern technological and technical knowhow potential.

(3) The latest report of the Bureau of Public Enterprises regarding the working of the public-sector industrial projects during 1973-74 shows that the public sector in India today has attained steady growth in critical industrial sectors and that this development has indeed reached a significant turningpoint as far as its importance for Indian economy is concerned.

The old-time criticism against the public sector that it is a continuous drain on the exchequer is now totally invalid. But that in itself is not enough to characterise the working of the public-sector projects. Certain significant developments have to be taken note of.

The total resources generated by the public-sector enterprises during the fourth plan period came to Rs 4380 crore. Out

of this, Rs 3120 crore went to the exchequer by way of contributions under different heads. The public-sector enterprises contributed Rs 70 crore by way of dividends, Rs 564 crore as interest on government loans, Rs 230 crore as income-tax and Rs 2256 crore as excise duty.

Take some more statistics. In 1973-74, seventythree enterprises earned a total net profit of Rs 160.75 crore, while 41 enterprises showed a loss of Rs 91.62 crore. Thus the working results of the 114 running enterprises show a collective net profit of Rs 64.42 crore as against Rs 17.74 crore in 1972-73. In 1971-72 the net working results had showed a loss of Rs 19.02 crore. The net profit is expected to swing upward to Rs 150 crore in 1974-75.

This improved performance was without an upward revision of prices of their products. The better results are due to better maintenance of plants and equipment, proper materials management and comparatively better labour-management relations.

The year 1973-74 was also the last year of the fourth five-year plan. The fourth plan had set a target of Rs 1265 crore of internal resources to be generated by the public sector. As against this, the achievement at the end of 1973-74 was Rs 1260 crore or 99.6 per cent of the target. However the significance of this is better appreciated when one compares it to actual generation of internal resources at the end of the third plan which was a mere Rs 287 crore.

The yearwise growth of internal resources by the public-sector enterprises during the fourth plan brings out certain interesting points. In 1969-70, the first year of the fourth plan, internal resource generation was to the tune of Rs 194 crore. In 1970-71 this figure rose to Rs 204 crore or by 5.2 per cent, in 1971-72 to Rs 215 crore or by 5.4 per cent, in 1972-73 to Rs 260 crore or by 20.9 per cent and in 1973-74 to Rs 387 crore or by 48.8 per cent.

Compared to 1968-69, the last year of the third plan, the increase in the first year of the fourth plan was 36.6 per cent. The last two years of the fourth plan were again marked by a spurt in the growth rate of internal resources. This is directly



attributed to the sustained improvement in the financial performance of public enterprises during these years.

Some of the internal resources generated have been ploughed back by the public-sector enterprises for financing renewals, replacement, modernisation and capital improvements. The extent of deployment of internal resources for capital expenditure averaged about 27 per cent in respect of 41 enterprises. The extent of selffinancing growth has been over Rs 50 crore each in respect of Hindustan Steel, Indian Oil, Fertiliser Corporation, Shipping Corporation, Oil and Natural Gas Commission, Hindustan Aeronautics and Air India.

The total number of employees in the various groups of public-sector undertakings increased to 13.14 lakh in 1973-74 as against 9.32 lakh in 1972-73, according to report of the Bureau of Public Enterprises for 1973-74. The increase in the number employed in the public-sector enterprises in 1973-74 was of the order of 3,82,057 or 41 per cent over that of 1972-73.

During the same period the total outgo on account of salaries and wages and other benefits including bonus showed an increase of 45 per cent over the previous year; it was Rs 541.05 crore in 1972-73 which rose to Rs 786.40 crore in 1973-74. The average annual emoluments per employee worked out to Rs 5983 during 1973-74 as against Rs 5804 during 1972-73. The report has attributed the increase in salaries and wages mainly to the increase in dearness allowance, benefits, arising from new wage settlements and annual increments.

The total expenditure on employees' welfare through allocations for housing, education and medical facilities amounted to Rs 52.51 crore in 1973-74. On a total capital employed of Rs 5256 crore in 1973-74, the return worked out to 5.2 per cent. Net profit after tax as percentage on equity also improved significantly from 0.6 per cent in 1972-73 to 1.9 per cent in 1973-74.

The capacity utilisation in the manufacturing group of industries registered a significant improvement. Fortyfive units recorded a capacity utilisation of more than 75 per cent as against 41 in the previous year. In 23 units, it ranged between 50 to 75 per cent as against 16 per cent in the previous year.

Only 16 units operated below 50 per cent capacity utilisation during 1973-74 as against 25 in the previous year.

### III

Though nationalisation measures and the development of the public sector gathered special momentum after the split in the Congress in 1969, with nationalisation of the 14 big commercial banks, of Indian and foreign general insurance companies, of the coalmines and of 103 sick textile mills and of the government acquiring 74 per cent of the shares of the ESSO, yet all the nationalisation measures were partial and incomplete. Not only that, under the pressure of the monopoly houses, the Congress government in some cases has been allowing these houses to enter into what was earlier the proclaimed preserve of the public sector. The expansion of TELCO and TISCO, the establishment of Goa fertiliser factory and mini-steel plants of the monopoly houses are such instances.

The proposal to convert the lendings of the public-sector financial institutions to the monopoly houses into equity capital has been practically scuttled because it would have resulted in the virtual nationalisation of most of the companies of the monopolists, including TISCO. The concept of joint sector is now interpreted by Tata and others in such a way that it will result in the handing over all the public-sector undertakings to the monopolists. They want that government should provide the finances and bear the risks, but the management and decisionmaking power should rest solely with them.

The recent Subramanyam-Pai plan for a "national sector" to be formed by selling public-sector shares to the private sector is nothing but a scheme to allow the monopolist houses to bring the public sector under their complete control. Though public opposition to this plan has initially given it a jolt, the danger still remains of step-by-step implementation of this plan in practice.

It is significant that J. R. D. Tata has recently come out with a scathing attack against the public sector and raised the "red bogey" in this context. This synchronises with the right-reac-

tionary fascist movement being organised under JP's leadership. And it is no accident that JP himself has recently come out attacking and opposing the public sector.

In the coming period, following the rout of US imperialism in Indochina, increased US imperialist economic pressure against India and inroads of the multinational companies into Indian economy will operate against the public sector in India as one of their main targets of attack.

In such a situation, defence of the public sector against all attacks and inroads by foreign and internal monopolies, the struggle to improve its efficiency and profitmaking capacity, fight for expansion of the public sector and for its entry into the field of vital consumer industries essential for an effective public distribution system (such as textiles, sugar, drugs, oil, etc.) and an organised continuous struggle to democratise the management of the public sector and ensure effective working-class participation in this management at all levels from the shop-floor upwards are the prime tasks of the workingclass and trade-union movement. It is an essential part of the fight against right-reaction and fight to shift the political life of the country to the left. It is an essential part of the **political struggle** of the working class for the national-democratic revolution in India and the transition to socialism.

In the present conditions of our country, this struggle and the struggle to improve workingclass conditions in the public-sector undertakings aid and supplement each other. Together, they add up to the two-pillar policy, the basic line of the AITUC towards the public sector.

Our trade unions in each public-sector industry have to concretely study the specific problems of that industry and evolve concrete application of the above general line to the specific presentday conditions and problems of that industry.

The working class and trade unions in the public-sector enterprises have to combat the attacks on the public sector coming not only from the right, but also from the left-sectarians who only harp on its negative features and exaggerate its failures.

## IV

The present bureaucratic system of management of the public-sector enterprises in India is one of the biggest obstacles hindering efficient and purposeful functioning of the public sector and effective realisation of its full anti-imperialist and antimonopoly potentialities. With a few notable exceptions, the personnel manning top management positions in the public sector are drawn from the civil service or from the private sector and function as antiworkingclass bureaucrats and as saboteur-agents of the monopolist houses.

Unless this system of management is radically overhauled and effective workers' participation in management **at all levels from the shop-floor upwards** ensured, the public sector cannot play its due role in the realisation of national-democratic perspectives.

It must be emphasised in this connection that workers' participation in public-sector management, if it is to be really effective and not just nominal, must mean **participation in actual policymaking and decisionmaking** at all the appropriate levels.

As far back as 1973, the AITUC had put forward a concrete scheme for such effective workers' participation in public-sector management. The parliamentary committee on public-sector undertakings also made recommendations in the same direction two years ago.

As far as the **form** of workers' participation in management at all levels is concerned, this needs a consensus among the various central trade-union organisations who wield influence in public sector and are committed to making it successful. At the same time, it is quite clear that the machinery envisaged for such participation must include a **vital role for the recognised union** in the case of the factory as a whole. This necessarily means a new democratically-oriented industrial relations policy in the public sector, including statutory compulsory recognition of trade unions on the basis of workers' secret ballot and recognition of the right to strike.

As far as the **content** of workers' participation in manage-

ment is concerned, the issues coming under its purview naturally depend on the particular level of its operation.

In relation to the enterprise and the industry as a whole, workers' participation in management will necessarily involve the trade unions adopting a **positive** role in relation to problems of production and **actively intervening** on issues such as:

(1) Combating corruption and acts of sabotage, including pilfering, arson and communal riots fostered by reactionary forces. Eliminating waste and improving efficiency.

(2) Effective and economical use of raw materials.

(3) Concretely countering the monopolists' plans to infiltrate and undermine and weaken the specific role which the public sector has to play in an industry.

(4) Democratic and correct pricing policies, to combat pro-monopolist bias.

(5) Full utilisation of installed capacity which necessarily means diversification of production, as well as more state control over the monopolies in order to bring them within the orbit of centralised planning.

(6) Establishment of machinery to coordinate effectively policies and the working of public-sector enterprises which are closely linked with each other (such as coal, steel and the railways).

(7) Radical changes in lending and credit policies of public-sector financial institutions (nationalised banks, LIC, etc.).

(8) Evolving a system for training suitable cadre for manning the public sector efficiently.

Workers' participation in management in the public sector is of course not to be confused with the development of class-collaborationist attitudes or a "no-strike" policy on issues of workers' just demands in this sector. In fact it is only on the basis of safeguarding and extending workers' rights and interests that their conscious and willing cooperation can be enlisted for defending, strengthening and extending the public sector.

Finally, it must be emphasised that to bring about such working-class participation in public-sector management very sharp struggle on the basis of widest trade-union unity is needed against some of the present government policies.

Workers' participation in management in the public sector should not be viewed in isolation from the struggle for basic structural changes in society as a whole. Otherwise there would be serious danger of opportunist trends of economism, syndicalism, etc. being bred in the working class. Any genuine strengthening and extension of the position of the public sector and weakening of the positions of monopoly in the economy are ultimately bound up with **radical democratic transformations in the sphere of the political and state structure also**. This means the working class has to fight for bringing about shifts in the general correlation of class forces in the country in its favour, in the very interests of basic defence and expansion of the public sector itself. Workers' participation in management in the public sector has therefore to be viewed in this context. Defence of the public sector is inseparable from the struggle to change the policies of the government to give them a consistent antimonopoly, anti-imperialist direction. This poses the question of workers' participation in the formulation and execution of policies, as well as in the actual management of public-sector concerns.

On the basis of an **allsided comprehensive class understanding of its significance**, in the concrete context of today's Indian situation, workers' active participation in the management of the public sector at all levels can be a powerful weapon in the hands of the trade-union movement to **intervene** and project the active role of the working class in the national economy.

## TRADE-UNION UNITY—THE PATH AND THE PERSPECTIVE\*

RAJ BAHADUR GOUR

The trade union, its every character and the purpose for which it has been created demand that it should be a united organisation of **all the workers**. The only strength of the workers as Marx put it is in their numbers. And the numbers become effective only when organised into a fighting collective. The strength of the union lies in its all-embracing membership.

The union can become all-embracing only when it fights for all—all for one and one for all. And this could be achieved only when the union functions democratically. Democracy has not to be merely deliberative, it should also be participative. The membership must not only deliberate on the demands, the mode of struggle to secure them; they should also participate in formulating the demands, making the decisions, determining the course of action and electing the leading bodies right from the shop-floor upwards.

Democratic functioning is the key to the strength of a given union. And only this could make the union all-embracing and keep **all the workers together**.

There are however factors that have their origin outside the body of the workers that create divisions among the workers.

The capitalists must and do in their own interests indulge in actions subversive of the unity of workers in order that their bargaining capacity is sapped and there is no danger of erosion of their profits.

We know from our own experience that at the turn of the century when trade unions had started coming up in our country, the employers were deliberately encouraging "company

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\* Paper read at the All-Trade Unions Seminar, Bangalore, 5-6 July 1975.

unions" and victimising trade-union activists in a bid to prevent the growth of fighting trade-unionism.

Nobody can say that the employers have given up their habits now. The divisive aim continues to be the same. Only the mode has been constantly changing with the changing moods of the times and the growing consciousness of the workers.

We are also faced, in the history of our own trade-union movement, with such phenomena as using the religious, linguistic, caste and communal likes and dislikes, pride and prejudice, to divide the workers.

Lastly we know that the workers have acquired political consciousness and with it the preference for this or that political party or trend in the country.

There have emerged not only a number of unions in the same industry or establishment, but also a number of national and international trade-union centres.

It is in this situation that we have to discuss the problems of trade-union unity, the path and the perspective. We can neither afford to shut our eyes to this reality, nor could we adhere to certain utopia and work out schemes on that basis. It would be an exercise in futility, unproductive and frustrating.

The objective conditions themselves do throw up the basis for unity of trade unions from time to time. And that is the silver lining. It is this that we have to identify and hold on to advance on the path of unity.

Let us begin with the situation obtaining in the international trade-union movement.

We have the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions now renamed as World Congress of Labour (WCL).

The AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labour and Congress of Industrial Organisations) which had taken the initiative in disrupting the WFTU and setting up the ICFTU in 1949 on the basis of antisovietism has now walked out of ICFTU, ironically enough on the question of collaboration with Soviet trade unions.

So too the Chinese trade unions, which had taken important part in founding the WFTU, have virtually walked out of WFTU



because of their newly-acquired allergy for the Soviet Union.

And yet we find that the deepening of the world capitalist crisis, the problems of wages and employment, the growth of multinational corporations and their transcontinental exploitation of men and resources, and above all the desire for peace among nations have created powerful objective conditions demanding more and more united action on the part of international trade-union movement.

Unions affiliated to the WFTU, ICFTU and WCL had all come together in Geneva in June 1973—a total gettogether of 380 delegates representing over 200 unions representing 25 crores of workers. The conference was convened to decide on steps against the shame on earth—the apartheid regime of South Africa. And the conference demanded resolute worldwide action against this regime.

It is in such a developing situation that the WFTU gave the call in March 1972 for flexible forms of consultations, cooperation and coordination among all trade-union organisations, which could range from simple, more or less periodical meetings, to the setting up of liaison bodies and joint action.

One could see the compelling urges of the developing situation when the British Trades Union Congress, at its 105th Blackpool session in September 1973 mandated the general council "To approach all international trade-union centres to give consideration to the setting up of an international liaison committee and to make every endeavour to initiate discussions with a view to securing international trade-union unity". Let us not forget that the British TUC had collaborated with the US trade-union centres and brought about a split in the WFTU in 1949 and hosted the splitaway conference in London.

Coming home, in our country, the situation is grave enough demanding urgent attention and united action of national trade-union centres.

The imperialist decision to set up a military base right in Indian Ocean in Diego Garcia, coupled with renewed arms supplies to Pakistan, constitutes the essentials of a conspiracy to bring about destabilisation and encourage hostilities in the subcontinent and render assistance to the forces of chaos and anarchy in our country and pave the way for a rightist takeover

in order that they and their multinationals could exploit our country and our resources.

They pose a serious threat to our country and its freedom. The trade unions cannot remain oblivious to the conspiracies of the foreign imperialists, the multinationals and the right-reactionary forces within representing the monopolies, the big landed interests and all that goes by the name of social obscurantism.

Here is a field where the various national trade-union centres can fruitfully cooperate and organise joint actions.

The capitalist path pursued in our country since freedom has led us into a fiasco. The monopolies have grown, with misery mounting at the other pole. No solution could be found within the four corners of the capitalist path. Structural changes in our economy can no more be delayed. The trade-union movement cannot keep silent about all this any more.

Radical land reforms, takeover of essential industries like sugar, vegetable oil, cotton textiles and foreign drugs concerns, takeover of wholesale food trade to set up a 'pucca' public distributive system—have all become an urgent need. Nobody can say that these demands flow from the ideological predilections of this or that group or party. They are now nationally recognised urgently-needed democratic reforms in the interest of the entire people of this country.

Could this too not form an area of cooperation and joint action by national trade-union centres in our country?

The vast multitude of unorganised sweated labour covered by the minimum wages act is groaning under meagre wages and appalling working conditions. This is another sector where trade unions and national trade-union centres could go in for joint action to secure civilised wage and working conditions.

Public-sector industry is yet another sector where unions and national trade-union centres could engage in consultations and joint action.

Public sector in conditions of our country has to achieve the social aim of combating the imperialists and the multinationals, of confronting the monopolies at home and pave the way for social advance towards liquidation of capitalist exploitation and building a crisis-free socialist society.

It is therefore the target of attack and subversion by the mo-

nopolies, national and multinational, imperialists abroad, right-reaction at home and the bureaucrats entrenched in the enterprise itself.

The unions and national trade-union centres could and must get together to work out the strategy of joint action for the defence, development and democratisation of public-sector undertakings. Joint committees to prevent sabotage and maintain production and purposeful participation in management must be aimed at and achieved by our unions unitedly.

The committee on wage policy or the Chakravarty committee appointed by the government in February 1973 is reported to have submitted an interim report in March 1974. What has come of it in the press must make every trade-unionist sit up and think. The capitalists and their apologists would want to reverse all the accepted concepts and practices. The wellknown concept of a 'need-based wage' arrived at a tripartite meeting in 1957 is sought to be finally buried unceremoniously and the Chakravarty committee is reported to have advanced a 'poverty-line' wage concept and wages linked not to the needs and their cost but to the so-called 'national dividend' and productivity. In conditions of gaping inequalities of income, the idea of a 'national dividend' or the average is nothing but a mockery.

The trade-union movement as a whole has in this yet another opportunity and the need to get together and act unitedly to defeat these antiworkingclass theories and see that the need-based wage concept is not only retained but adhered to in actual practice.

The Chakravarty committee is also reported to have suggested national wage commissions/boards to work out wages. The committee by this recommendation deals a blow to the very idea of collective bargaining and bilateral agreements. Unions and national trade-union centres would undoubtedly reject this and act jointly to guard the basic trade-union right of collective bargaining.

A trade union is meant to negotiate and arrive at a settlement of the dispute. This right of the union cannot be fettered. This right is only reinforced by the right to strike. Where negotiations fail, strikes are resorted to, only to return to the negotiating table and arrive at a settlement. Strike is not an end

in itself. It is a means to achieve an end—the settlement. But to curb this right is to hamper a reasonable settlement.

In conditions of socialism the workers have the right to strike but there is no need to resort to strike, because the management and workers' unions do not work at cross purposes. Industrial management is only charged with the responsibility of production for social needs and not for earning private profits at the cost of both the worker and the society at large.

In conditions of capitalism the profit motive conflicts with workers' wage demand and strikes may become necessary. But the capitalist state puts curbs on the right to strike in defence of capitalist profits.

Trade unions must therefore necessarily zealously defend the right to strike as a fundamental TU right.

Apart from TU rights the workers are doubtless very much interested in general democratic rights and in strengthening democratic institutions.

We have a constitution wherein have been defined the fundamental rights that the citizens possess. This is part III. In part IV have been described the directive principles of state policy. All that we desired for ourselves and aimed at during our freedom struggle—full employment, equal wages for equal work, social justice, prevention of concentration of money and resources in private hands for private profit and so on and so forth—have all been mentioned in part IV. But all this is not mandatory.

What is mandatory is part III—fundamental right of acquiring property anywhere in the country and also the right to struggle peacefully, organise and agitate, speak and write freely.

Here the fundamental right to acquire property conflicts with the social requirement of combating concentration of wealth. Part III conflicts with part IV—the two were so to say not on talking terms. The twentyfifth amendment in a way removes this impediment.

Democratic institutions have to be vehicles of social change and fundamental rights have to be exercised to bring about this social change by enforcing directive principles of state policy. Law has to be not a defender of status quo but a weapon of social change.

This is what the working class and the working people want.

And this is what trade unions must strive for.

But forces of exploitation, reaction and obscurantism would want the democratic institutions to maintain status quo or otherwise vegetate and wither away giving place to a despotic rule. They want full liberty for themselves to amass wealth.

We want democratic liberties to go forward in the direction of directive principles and the right to mobilise against and overcome all the resistance of reaction.

Trade unions must see their way clearly. There is no such thing as an absolute democracy spoken of in abstract.

Lastly I must state that we are passing through conditions of emergency created by the forces of anarchy and reaction which had threatened the very system of democracy and were heading towards destabilisation and dictatorship. Not socialist reorganisation of our society but absolute power for social reaction was what they aimed at.

Special responsibilities devolve on trade unions in conditions of emergency.

Reaction and its imperialist mentors would continue in their efforts at destabilisation through acts of anarchy and sabotage. Unions have a role to play in exercising vigilance and prevent sabotage of plants and production.

Emergency has to be a weapon against right-reaction and enemies of democracy and socialism. The rights of the very forces struggling for socialism, for peace in the subcontinent, for freedom and democracy, rights of the working class and the working people must be protected.

National trade-union centres and unions locally at the industrial and plant level must develop consultation and cooperation in an integrated struggle against right-reaction and in defence of workers' vital interests and for social progress.

Trade unions have to exert united pressure to secure urgently-required relief like scrapping of compulsory deposit scheme in respect of increased wages, DA and bonus and also immediate reinstatement of hundreds of railwaymen and others who are still out of job.

I am tempted to quote here from the radio broadcast of B. C. Bhagvati, the president of the INTUC, which he made to the workers after the declaration of emergency. He has called

upon the workers to accept the challenge posed by "the joint front of communal, capitalist and left-adventurist forces". He has further said in that broadcast, "we hope and trust that steps will be taken by her (the prime minister—RBG) not only to preserve and strengthen the political democracy of the people, and safeguard the rights under the constitution, but will also make democracy meaningful for the toiling masses by taking radical economic measures in the interests of the have-nots, by removing basic causes, economic and social maladjustment and disparity and to ensure gainful employment for all.

"In so far as the working class is concerned, what they seek without delay is the establishment of a firm and equitable public distribution system of essential commodities, expeditious implementation of the land-ceiling laws, fixation of fair wages to industrial and agricultural workers, scrapping the compulsory deposit scheme imposed on workers, employees and other professional people, employment guarantee scheme and respect for the rights of the toiling people and the trade-union movement for securing their wholehearted cooperation."

This itself could form the basis for a fruitful consultation among central trade-union organisations and among the unions for evolving a platform for joint action.

To conclude, the objective conditions themselves throw up the need for united action on the part of unions and trade-union centres. The threats posed by imperialism and reaction, the problems posed by the crisis of capitalism and the fiasco of capitalist path, the suffering of the present and the urge for social progress—all cry out for urgent practical steps for joint consultation, cooperation and united action on the part of trade unions.

One union in one industry, one united national trade-union organisation for the entire country, and one united world body of trade unions have to be aimed at.

The path to this glorious perspective lies through practical steps today beginning from joint consultations, periodical get-togethers and joint actions on agreed issues, to formation of joint committees at plant level and liaison bodies at the state and the national level.

Let us move on with confidence in our class, our movement and our future.

## EMERGENCY AND THE TRADE UNIONS

T. N. SIDDHANTA

The two sinister arms of counterrevolutionary pincers—the one being US imperialism and CIA and the other being the internal reactionary forces ganged up under the leadership of JP—came dangerously close in their bid for power. JP's so-called "total revolution"—which was fast losing momentum and mass support (which too was confined amongst urban middle classes) and had failed to spread out in the states—got hold of the Allahabad high court judgement and also the supreme court stay order to make desperate attempt to subvert democracy.

A sinister campaign and tension was worked up aided by the monopoly press for the ouster of the prime minister. Democratic rights and liberties under the system of parliamentary set-up were fully utilised to hatch up a conspiracy for creating chaos and anarchy in a final push for power. The stern and timely action of the prime minister and the government of India foiled the conspiracy and beat back the counterrevolution for the present.

The reports of searches in the offices and hideouts of the RSS and Anand Marg give a long tally of all kinds of lethal weapons in huge quantities they had stored, with any number of human skulls to add, give an inkling of the network of countrywide organisation of these musclemen and assassins of the counter-revolution. International reaction to the national emergency measures to checkmate counterrevolutionary conspiracy is also significant. On the one hand, the Soviet Union, the socialist countries including Vietnam, the anti-imperialist democratic forces and organisations have extended support to the steps taken by the prime minister to halt counterrevolutionary bid for power. On the other hand, the imperialist press of USA

and Britain, in particular of Maoist China, has raised a chorus in defence of the reactionary forces and is fuming and fretting at the loss of democratic rights of counterrevolutionary elements to stage a rightist coup.

The rightist conspiracy has been halted and beaten back, but not yet fully vanquished. These forces will now try to operate in the sphere of national economy, by sabotage and dislocation of the economy in various areas. It would be dangerous complacency to think that the threat of counterrevolution is a temporary phenomenon, a passing cloud and would die down by state measures alone. The political resolution of the tenth congress of the CPI warned that "in the context of presentday world developments and international sharpening of the struggle between the forces of left and democratic advance on the one hand and the forces of fascist right on the other, the rightist threat in our country is not to be regarded as a temporary or passing phenomenon. It is a serious continuing threat for the whole period of the world capitalist crisis and will remain in our national life so long as the socioeconomic base of right-reaction is not demolished by antimonopoly and antilandlord measures."

In this context, the programme of economic measures announced by the prime minister is a welcome step in the right direction. But many more steps and radical measures have to be taken to isolate right-reaction from its socioeconomic base and to strengthen the positions of the toiling masses, and finally defeat right-reaction.

### **A New Period**

The central executive committee of the CPI in its resolution of 2 July has drawn attention "to the cardinal fact that an entirely new phase has opened in the postindependence history of our country". The new stage "is characterised by the fact those (of the national bourgeoisie) representing the anti-imperialist democratic sections of the bourgeoisie have been forced into using the repressive organs of state power against those representing the proimperialist and most reactionary, promonopoly, prolandlord anticommunist sections". The new period opens up immense possibilities of strengthening the unity of



democratic forces, giving new content to our democratic system and cutting at the root of the base of reaction by radical socioeconomic measures. But a sustained struggle lies ahead, especially on the economic front, to defeat the forces of counter-revolution, both internal and external. It cannot be gainsaid that the communal and reactionary forces have spread their tentacles in different levels of the state machinery and in different spheres of the economy. The monopolists were already sabotaging production, keeping productive capacity unutilised, creating artificial scarcity to reap superprofits. Stocks of goods started coming out and prices show downward trend because of fear of the heavy hand of the government coming on hoarders and blackmarketeers.

The political action which was timely and urgently called for, coupled with the economic measures is therefore a beginning of the struggle against the counterrevolutionary forces and their socioeconomic bases.

### **Role of the Working Class**

In this new period working class and the trade unions have to play a crucial role in defeating reactionary as well as left-sectarian forces on the economic front. In this period right-reaction will operate often clandestinely for creating dislocation in production, distribution and of the transport system. Political role of the trade unions has been further enhanced and has assumed key importance in discharging the new tasks that the new period enjoins on the working class. The key task of the period is to keep production uninterrupted and to prevent sabotage in factories, railways, transport and electricity. The twin tasks of defending national independence and democratic set-up and defending the interests of the working class have to be combined in a new way with the overall direction of preventing chaos and anarchy in the production and distribution sectors, and defeat counterrevolutionary machinations. No doubt it is a complex task requiring heightened political consciousness of mass of the workers and wellknit organisation. It requires reorganising our work, concretely working out the lines of political propaganda and changing the style and method of functioning of the unions.

The Indore special convention resolution of the AITUC has already warned against the danger of sabotage in the production arena and called upon unions in all factories and undertakings to form antisabotage and vigilance committees.

Reactionary elements and disruptors will carry on their propaganda in various ways, particularly with the aid of whispering campaigns to create confusion, frustration and passivity amongst the workers. These should be promptly and effectively countered by a sustained mass political campaign in the factory, at the gates, by meetings and conventions so as to reach every worker and his family. Workers' experience of earlier emergencies has not been happy when the employers and vested interests took advantage of the emergency situation to attack the working class, their rights and demands. Attempts to provoke the workers this time too cannot be ruled out. The AITUC has therefore urged on the government to ban layoffs, lockouts and closures, to evolve a machinery to quickly settle grievances and demands of the workers, and to confer on the workers the right and authority to intervene in the sphere of production.

But this time the circumstances and reasons which prompted the proclamation of the emergency are quite different and directed against the right-reactionary forces. And this time along with emergency, there is the economic programme as announced by the prime minister of which there was none on earlier occasions.

### **Public and Nationalised Sectors**

The AITUC has always considered the defence of public sector as one of the key tasks against attacks of the proimperialist and promonopoly elements, ridding it of corruption, wastage and bureaucratic management and improving the efficiency of the public sector in the interest of the workers and the nation consistent with the two-pillar policy of the AITUC. There have been systematic attempts to denigrate and discredit the public sector and nationalised sectors. These sectors being the vital sectors of the national economy will be the target of attack from within by the rightist elements and disruptors. It is

therefore all the more urgent in this new period to redouble our vigilance and adopt a pronounced and positive attitude towards production and efficient running of these establishments and undertakings. The AITUC special convention at Indore in a resolution has drawn pointed attention of the trade unions in the public sector "to adopt a positive role towards the problems of production, management, and efficient functioning of this sector". The resolution emphasised that "this task has become particularly urgent at this juncture when the forces of right-reaction and monopoly capital are going all-out to attack and denigrate the public sector". The trade unions and workers must overcome the lingering passivity in this respect which in the present situation will afford opportunity to the rightist and disruptive elements to bring about dislocation and sabotage of production. The special convention therefore called upon the trade unions in the public sector to pay close and detailed attention to the problems affecting each separate plant, establishment or departmental undertaking. Trade unions in the nationalised sector and service-oriented industries must exercise unflinching vigilance for maintaining public service at a satisfactory and efficient level, and to reorient the attitude of their members towards service to the public so as to dispel public hostility towards nationalisation as such.

### **Unity of the Democratic Forces in the TU Movement**

The new situation after emergency has opened up fresh scope for forging working unity of the AITUC with the INTUC, being the two central trade-union organisations politically committed to defeat rightist machinations in the sphere of production and in implementing progressive socioeconomic measures. Political necessity demands that the AITUC and INTUC come to broad understanding on the question of reshaping the industrial relations system, on the form and content of workers' participation in management and prevention of sabotage of production in the overall interest of the working class and the country. Joint committees of AITUC-INTUC at the plant and other levels are of particular importance. The AITUC and INTUC must jointly endeavour to politically mobilise and activate mass of workers for which joint meetings and conventions should be held. United front of

antiright and antisectarian forces in the trade-union movement in each plant and industry will alone enable the working class to discharge its responsibilities in this critical situation. Obstacles are very many and vary from state to state and place to place. But there are also instances when the AITUC and INTUC have successfully worked in securing demands of the workers and also conducting strike struggles. The new situation requires a new way of tackling problems, eliminating as far as possible the factors causing rivalry, particularly between the AITUC and INTUC. The unity should necessarily be on a progressive and democratic basis. The threat of the counterrevolution and the ushering in of the emergency create conditions for uniting the whole working class in a new way and for establishing all-in TU unity on a national level to fulfil the new tasks.

### **Workers' Participation in Management**

The programme of economic measures announced by the prime minister includes workers' participation in management. It is a recognition in principle of the workers' right to intervene in the economy and in the production process in particular. The AITUC has been demanding for long the democratisation of public-sector management and evolved a scheme as far back as 1973 for workers' effective participation in management at all levels.

Bureaucratic management in the public sector and the employers in the private sector will not easily reconcile to the encroachment of their exclusive domain of decision-making and planning and various other aspects of the production process which imply really effective workers' participation in management. They will have to reorient their traditional outlook and ideas, their opposition and obstruction have to be overcome by executive and legislative measures. Suitable forms have to be evolved to enlist participation of the trade unions and initiate right now the new aspect of trade-union work. So far as the content of participation is concerned there may not be much dispute among the trade unions and also on the part of the government. But the form and mechanism for setting up joint councils at different levels may bring to surface problems due to multiplicity and rivalry between unions, particularly between the AITUC and INTUC. Basing it on the right of "recognised unions" alone to nominate

the TU side of participation will not help, nor the objective will be fulfilled.

The new period demands the lessening, if not eliminating, rivalries, especially between the AITUC and INTUC so that the working class can come to its rightful position in the sphere of production and economy both in the public and private sectors. In pursuance of that, the necessity of having joint councils at different levels elected by all the workers in the plant, and not confined to union members alone, should be recognised and accepted by all concerned. That is the only democratic method to draw in the collective energies of the workers as a whole to rebuild national economy and social life on a new democratic basis. The new period of struggle for advancement of democratic forces against antidemocratic and disruptive forces will lose its significance and its substance if the same old ideas of discriminatory industrial relations system based on the subordination of the working class to the classical "standing orders" of the capitalist class is continued. This is the time for organised and planned transition to a new phase of democracy.

The formation of a bipartite apex body at the national level consisting of the AITUC and INTUC with equal number of members, the HMS, and representatives of employers' organisations, is an event of great importance bearing in it seeds of farreaching developments. It would be a sectarian mistake to consider this development as one of and leading to class collaboration. If the central TUs come to a broad understanding with regard to the content and direction of workingclass intervention in the production process and economy, the apex body in the new situation can act as an instrument of democratic advance in establishing democratic control in the economy, both in the private and public sectors.

### **Industrial Relations**

It is admitted on all hands that the existing industrial relations system is outmoded and has failed to meet the needs even in normal times. Its complete overhauling was long overdue and the AITUC has been pressing for a democratic industrial rela-

tions system based on the recognition of democratic rights of workers to choose their bargaining agents, and settlement of disputes by means of bipartite collective bargaining. Wide discussion and debate has taken place on the question during the years and even some acceptable tentative conclusions were drawn. But they were all buried in the rigmarole of the ruling party and the bureaucracy. Meanwhile bipartite collective bargaining in settling wage and other disputes in industry and public-sector undertaking levels with the participation of major central trade unions, the AITUC and INTUC in particular, has taken place on a significant scale and proved successful.

The AITUC in its discussions with the prime minister has urged on her to see that these norms established in practice to the satisfaction of all concerned are not reversed, but continued and extended to other industries.

In this period, a machinery has to be evolved for quick and prompt settlement of disputes and grievances at the bipartite level. It depends, however, on the discipline that the government is able to impose on the employers, both of the public and private sector, to adapt themselves to the needs of the situation and to refrain from provocatory victimisation and vindictiveness by taking advantage of the emergency.

The vast railway transport system is a sensitive sector of the national economy which requires urgent and serious attention. This system particularly is corroded and infiltrated by saboteur elements both from above and below. Workers' initiative and involvement will be doubly necessary on the railways to prevent sabotage and dislocation.

Key functionaries of the AITUC unions in many railways are still under victimisation despite assurances of successive railway ministers which have not been implemented by the railway administration.

Victimisation cases are now required to be dealt with and quickly disposed of at a high political level cutting out the discretionary and "spiking" authority of the railway administration. When two federations of railway workers could be recognised, there is no reason why the third federation, the AITUC

federation, cannot be recognised, particularly at this time when there is every possibility of the railway system being the target of sabotage and dislocation by disruptive forces. The industrial relations policy after the emergency should not be a continuation of the same old policy which divides the workers and denies workers' democracy. It should not also lead to imposition of more retrograde measures. The AITUC has therefore stated that there should be no blanket ban on strikes and there should be no attempt to impose compulsory arbitration in the name of quicker settlement of disputes. The content of the industrial relations policy should be expansion of workers' democracy, and not its further restriction. Otherwise that will kill workers' and trade-union initiative and engender passivity, which ultimately would play into the hands of reactionaries and disruptors. It is not a question of technicalities, but a matter of political decision.

### **Renovate the Organisation**

It cannot be exaggerated that the new tactical line in this new period cannot be effectively and purposefully implemented unless union organisation is greatly improved. The trade-union movement has immensely grown in all these years, workers have achieved big successes and many of the AITUC unions have secured recognition. But insufficient attention has been paid to building up the union organisation and to proper functioning of the union. Recognition instead of helping in strengthening of the mass organisation, and the advance in the consciousness of the workers, has more often than not engendered complacency and neglectful attitude towards the necessity of involving the mass of the workers in union activities, mass work in workers' colonies and bustis. In this new period our method and style of work must change, our actual organisational position factorywise, areawise and industrywise must be reappraised. The AITUC special convention at Indore discussed this problem and the detailed questionnaire circulated will help each union and the state TUCs to reassess our organisational position. Reorientation of work and directing attention to democratic functioning of union, regular functioning of union offices, enrolment of members, organising the defence and protection of

union meetings, demonstrations and union offices are key organisational tasks. The trade unions above all, if they were to effectively play their historical role in this period, must develop heightened political awareness of the mass of workers and achieve greater ideological content and understanding of the new period and build grassroots organisations. Particular attention will have to be paid to the sensitive sectors of the economy where the danger of disruption will be the greatest.

