

Gm - Kadiyan

Khet Mazdoor Front Report since 9th Party Conference held at Muktsar on 15th to 19th September, 1971. 15/74

(Report by the Sub-Committee)

Since last Party Conference in the period of over three years our work and influence among agricultural workers has made rapid advance. The political Report adopted at ^{that} Conference had noted that there was improvement on this front over the past years, but it was yet of a limited character. But now a qualitative change is taking place in our movement. We have registered a virtual break-through. Not that we have won majority of the class. But the class has turned its face towards its ~~own~~ class organisation- the Khet Mazdoor Sabha and the Communist Party. They have been coming en-mass to participate in big mass actions such as Chandigarh demonstration of 13th September, 1972, March to Parliament on 27th March, 1973, massive participation in processions and rally of All-India Kisan Session at Bhatinda on 23rd September, 1973, national-wide mass Satyagraha in the first week of October, 1972, dehoarding and Gherao action of August-September this year, district level joint demonstrations of 21st August and historic demonstration at Ludhiana on 8th October, 1974. They have waged heroic struggles for wage increases in the face of Nakabandis and won considerable gains. These struggles have raised their class consciousness, ^{and} strengthened their solidarity. They are coming more and more to join the Khet Mazdoor Sabha which has become their main spokesman and authoritative organ of their struggles.

During recent years, the Punjab Khet Mazdoor Sabha has made considerable advance in its membership and influence. The delegate session of State Sabha and its units are held every year. In the period under review, three annual delegate sessions had been held- 13th Session at Rahon, district Jullundur on 21st to 23rd January, 1972, the 14th Session at Chheharta, Amritsar district on 16th to 18th February, 1973 and 15th Session at Garshankar on 8th to 10th February, 1974. At the time of 12th Annual Session held at Bahadurgarh on 22nd to 24th January, 1971

the sabha membership was only 33,842. At 13th Session, it rose to only 39,740. At the 14th Session, it crossed the half-lac mark for the first time and reached the figure of 54,054. At the 15th Session, it reached the all-time high figure of 76,416 against the quota of 71,000. For the current year a quota of 1,05,000 has been fixed and it is likely to be over fulfilled.

Our Khet Mazdoor movement has acquired a creditable place in the All-India movement. As far as organised movement is concerned, we stand, second only to Andhra Pradesh where the movement is much older. That State is also much bigger. It is we who hosted the first and foundation Conference of Bhartiya Khet Mazdoor Union in September, 1968. In the Second All-India Conference held in distant Jajur in April 1971, we sent 40 delegates- biggest contingent from entire north. A bigger delegation of 64 from Punjab participated in the third Session held in May last in Tinali in Andhra Pradesh. Ours was the bigger delegation among all States except Andhra Pradesh, the host State.

At the invitation of Agricultural Workers' Trade Union of the Soviet Union, a three-member delegation of B.K.M.U. visited that first land of socialism. The honour of leading the delegation was given to Com. Ruldu Khan, General Secretary of Punjab Khet Mazdoor Sabha who is also Vice-President of B.K.M.U.

Gains of the movement in this period

The Khet Mazdoor movement and their joint agrarian movement of which it is an integral part has won important gains in this period as follows:-

* An Minimum Wage Committee for upward revision of minimum wages of agricultural workers was set up in 1972. Master Hari Singh was appointed one of its members. Main proposals of the Punjab Khet Mazdoor Working Committee were accepted. On recommendations of the Committee an up-ward revised Schedule of Minimum Wages was notified in the Government gazettee on 1st December 1972. The minimum wage for a day's work was raised from Rs. 3 plus food to Rs. 5 plus food or Rs. 6.50 in cash, and annual wage

for an attached worker was raised from Rs. 600 plus food to Rs. 1200 plus food. The Labour Commissioner through a folder further clarified that Work-man's Compensation Act and Industrial Disputes Act were as much applicable to agricultural workers as to the industrial workers.

* As a result of wage struggle conducted this year after Tinali Session of B.K.M.U, agricultural workers have won increase in wages from Rs. 1 to Rs. 3 per day in many places.

* In October, 1971, Presidential regime had permitted Scheduled Caste occupants of evacuee lands and also Rai Sikhs who had been in continuous occupation since Rabi 1970 to purchase them.

Recently Scheduled Caste, Rai Sikh, other landless cultivators and agricultural workers with continuous occupation of evacuee lands since 1972 Rabi have also been allowed to purchase lands under their occupation up to 10 acres. Price to be paid by them is Rs. 500 per standard acre in case of Scheduled Castes and Rs. 1000 in case of all other categories. If honestly implemented this decision should go a long way to solve the problem of abadkars.

In this period the agrarian movement has foiled the attempts of State Government (both Akali and Congress) to auction evacuee lands.

The appointment of M.L.A.'s Committee to enquire into grabbing of evacuee lands by officers and public men was another victory of the movement and its Report of complete vindication of its cause.

* The enactment of the Punjab Land Reforms Law in December, 1972, was the direct result of historic land movement of 170. The Act incorporates many demands of the movement, though at the same time it has many loopholes and shortcomings. If sincerely implemented and shortcomings in the law revealed by experience of its implementation are removed, it could yield some positive results.

* The old age pension for old destitute persons had been increased from Rs. 15 per month to Rs. 25 and later to Rs. 50. *Almost 9* All applicants who were entitled to it were granted pensions in 1973-74.

* The scheme for the grant of free house sites to landless rural wage-workers was introduced in 1972-73. 3.21 lac application had been accepted but actual implementation of it still falls much short of its target.

* The scheduled Caste, Land Development and Finance Corporation has decided to grant interest-free loans to members of Scheduled Caste up to Rs. 3000. On loans from Rs. 3000 to Rs. 10,000 only 3% per annum interest is to be charged.

* Scheduled Caste and backward class persons have been exempted from Chowkidara tax.

Review of Sabha activities since 9th Party Conference.

The sabha has been leading the movement of agricultural workers on issues of wages, land, house sites, employment, cheap credit, social oppression, police repression against rise in prices and for supply of food and essential consumer articles at reasonable prices. It has lent support to demands and movement of other sections of working people- i.e. industrial workers, peasants, Government employees and students.

Activities of the Sabha will be reviewed period-wise from Muktsar Party Conference to 13th Annual Session of the Sabha held in Rahon in January, 1972, from 13th Session to 14th Session, from 14th Session to 15th Session and since 15th Session uptill now.

Muktsar Party Conference to Rahon Session of the Sabha In January 1972.

When we met in 9th Party Conference in Muktsar in September, 1971, Presidential Rule had already been in operation.

Our Sabha deputations had twice met the Governor and submitted him Memoranda on issues, among others, of evacuee land, land reforms and house sites.

In the month of October, 1971, the Governor-in-Council decided that Scheduled Caste and Rai Sikh abadkars in occupation of evacuee lands since Rabi, 1970, would be entitled to purchase the lands under their occupation up to 10 acres at a price of Rs. 500 per standard acre for Scheduled Castes and Rs. 1000 for Rai Sikhs. We welcomed their decision so far as it went, but demanded reduction in price for Rai Sikhs also to the level of Rs. 500 per standard acre. The Governor-in-Council decided to auction the rest of the evacuee land. We opposed this and demanded that all poor abadkars be given the right to purchase evacuee lands under their occupation. The rest of the evacuee land, we urged, should be distributed among Scheduled Caste tillers by drawing lots, preference being given to local persons.

We urged the Governor to degrab evacuee lands from officers and other-influential persons who had grabbed these lands by hook or crook. He promised to enquire into the matter, if we gave him a list of such persons. Consequently we sent him a list of land-grabbers.

On the question of land reforms, we demanded that a Presidential Act be promulgated, as had been done earlier in case of West Bengal. We urged that the new law should unify Panjab and PEPSU laws and incorporate demands of the land movement. The Governor set up a Committee of three officers to draft a new law. The Draft was sent to the Central Govt. which, however, advised that the task of framing new legislation should be left to the elected Government.

The Sabha sent to the Governor a list of villages where land for house sites of Scheduled Castes had been reserved in Consolidation operations but possession where of had not been delivered to the beneficiaries. The Governor initiated enquiries into the matter, but nothing tangible came out of it.

On demand made by the Sabha, the Governor ordered that 207 standard acres of Wazool land which had been grabbed by one Bachan Singh Zaildar in village Khanpur district Sangrur be immediately taken over and distributed among

eligible Harijan tillers. But the land-grabber secured a stay order from a Civil Court and stalled his ejection.

The Khet Mazdoor Sabha in cooperation with Kisan Sabha and C.P.I. launched a State-wide campaign condemning Police atrocities in village Dadahur district Sangrur and demanding recall of the then I.G. Police Ashwini Kumar.

13th Annual Session of Sabha and thereafter

This Session was held at Rahon district Jullundur from 21st to 23rd January, 1972. The Sabha enrolment had reached 49,740. One hundred and forty-seven delegates and 37 special visitors attended the session. The session elected 30 delegates for Second Session of B.K.M.U. being held in coming April in Tanjur in Tamil Nadu. Of them 40 actually attended the session.

Rahon Session, besides transacting usual business adopted a 9 point charter of demands for forth-coming Assembly elections, 20,000 copies of the charter were printed and distributed in the period of elections. The agricultural workers were asked to judge parties and candidates on the basis of their attitude to these demands. Jullundur units reproduced the charter in hand bill form in 2000, Patiala 2000 and Amritsar 1000.

In the Assembly elections, it is the vote of agricultural workers which tilted the balance against Akalis and Jan Sabha and in favour of Congress and C.P.I. Our working Committee members Dapa Ram and Baggar Singh were elected M.L.A's from reserved constituencies.

3300 copies of Resolutions adopted at Rahon were printed and sold.

As a result of elections, Congress won majority of seats. A Congress Ministry headed by Giank Zail Singh was set up.

A deputation of the Sabha met the Chief Minister on 28th March, 1972, and presented him a Memorandum of Khet Mazdoor demands mainly on issues of land reforms, evacuee lands, house sites, implementation of minimum wage, corporation loans etc. in the light of resolutions passed at Rahon Session.

In the Budget Session of 1972, Gyani Zail Singh announced appointment of a Committee of 7 M.L.A's to enquire into grabbing of evacuee lands by officers and other influential persons and to suggest how to dispose of the evacuee lands. Thus an urgent demand of the agrarian movement had been met.

Having returned from Tanjur Session of B.K.M.U, members of the Working Committee reported on proceedings and decisions of the session in the districts.

In the Budget Session the Govt. introduced a Land Reforms Bill which fell far short of our expectation, though it met some demands of the movement such as unification of Punjab and PEPSU laws, application of ceiling on family basis, withdrawal of most of the exemptions, vesting the area already declared surplus in the State Government for distribution and linking compensation to fair rent instead of the ~~gross produce~~ ^{market price}.

Our Sabha submitted a Memorandum to the Prime Minister, Union Minister for Agriculture and the State Government on the subject. Suggestions were made for overcoming short-comings in the Bill, for cancellation of all transfers made after 25th September, 1970, to circumvent the ceiling, for taking over entire land of Princes and Business Houses, for identification and cancellation of all Benami transactions and for appointment of statutory Committees on Kerala model to implement land reforms.

5500 copies of this Memorandum were printed and distributed. Campaign was run through Wehra meetings.

Joint demonstrations were held on the issue of land at sub-divisional headquarters on 13th June, 1972, in which Khet Mazdoors participated in larger proportion than ever in the past.

Panchayat elections took place in the State in the summer of 1972. Our Working Committee in its meeting held on 24.5.1972 gave a call to the agricultural workers to unite with advanced sections of peasants to rout the reactionary, hostile elements and strengthen the position of democratic elements.

C.P.I., Khet Mazdoor and Kisan Sabha, T.U. Congress, Student and Youth Federations jointly planned a mass movement on burning issues and demands of masses including prices, supply of essential consumer articles, wage increase, land etc.

The agricultural workers joined in sizable strength in hunger-strikes held in scores of towns on issue of prices from 1st to third September, 1972.

Land conventions were organised in districts of Bhatinda, Jullundur and Amritsar.

A mammoth demonstration took place in Chandigarh on 13th September, 1972. It was an unprecedented demonstration of fighting masses in which at least 20,000 participated. At least 30% of them were Khet Mazdoors.

This mass action was followed by mass satyagrah from 3rd to 7th October against spiralling prices. Almost entire State and district leadership of the Sabha courted arrest. Of about 8000 participated in this satyagraha over 30% were Khet Mazdoors.

In the midst of this Satyagraha, firing took place on students at Moga on 7th October, which created a wave of angry protest among students all over the State culminating in Punjab Bandh of 11th October. Our Sabha General secretary Ruldu Khan rendered on the spot assistance to the Action Committee.

Upward revision of minimum wages

The sabha had agitated for appointment of a fresh Committee to consider the question of up-ward revision of minimum wages for agricultural workers. Such a Committee was set up in the Summer of 1972. Master Hari Singh was a member of the Committee. The Working Committee in its meeting considered the question. On the basis of its deliberations, a Memorandum was prepared. It was sent to the Committee and the State Government. Sabha units campaigned in support of the proposals made by the Working Committee. Master Hari Singh argued in the Minimum Wage Committee for acceptance of those proposals. The said Committee accepted

most of our demands and made recommendations to the State Govt. accordingly. The State Government accepted those recommendations and issued a Notification in Government Gazette dated 1st December, 1972 fixing a new Schedule of minimum wages. The minimum Wage for a day's work was fixed at Rs. 5 plus food or Rs. 6.50 in cash and annual wage for an attached worker at Rs. 1200 plus food.

As demanded by us, the Labour Commissioner issued a folder publicising the new rates of minimum wages. In that folder it was clarified that work-men's compensation Act and Industrial Disputes Act were applicable to workers in agriculture as in industry. It was further stated that reduction of daily time for work from 9 to 8 hours and increase in payment for over-time from 150% to 200% of normal rate were under consideration.

The Government did not accept our demand to set up a separate Inspectorate to implement Minimum Wages for agricultural workers. A deputation of the Sabha met the Labour Minister with this demand. He did not make any commitment but added that S.D.Os' and Tehsildars would also be associated with implementation of the Schedule. But according to the folder issued by the Labour Commissioner the officers appointed in this behalf are: Patwari, Qanungo, S.D.O, S.D.M. District Welfare Officer. Labour Inspector and Cooperative Inspector. Thus the responsibility has been diffused and none feels the responsibility to discharge the task.

The Minimum wage Schedule was printed by us in ten thousand copies in folder form and distributed free all over the State. Sabha unit of Abchar area issued 1000 hand bills. The contents of the schedule were explained through vehra meetings.

Attempts were made by employers to cut wages in many places which were, however, foiled by and large.

New Land Reforms Law

In this period a new Land Reforms law was passed

by the State Assembly. The Govt. made certain changes in the May draft, but loopholes were not plugged. ~~COMMUNIST~~ Communist Legislators moved 32 amendments none of which were accepted. The President of Indian Union gave assent to the law at the end of March 1973 and it was published in the Gazette on 2nd April, 1973.

Evacuee land question

In the Budget Session of 1972, the Chief Minister had held out the promise that evacuee lands would not be auctioned. A Committee of 8 M.L.As had been set up to enquire into land grabbing. The Committee had started its work. The material we had given to the Governor were also in possession of the Committee. The agrarian movement rendered full assistance to the Committee to identify land-grabbers. Without waiting for Committee's Report, the Government once more started the work of restricted auction of evacuee land. Our movement offered resistance to auction in districts of Hoshiarpur, Jullundur, Ludhiana, Ferozepur, Gurdaspur and Ropar. The game of the Sales Department was foiled in most places. In the meanwhile High Court had given stay orders on 1 writ petition and the process of auction was held up for the time being.

We arranged submission of a Memorandum signed by 8 Members of Parliament from Punjab to the Union Agriculture Minister against auction. Comrades Swatantar and Bhaura sent a separate Memorandum and held talks with Mr. Shinde Union Minister of State for Agriculture. Shinde wrote a letter to Chief Minister, Punjab, hoping that evacuee land would be disposed of in accordance with the spirit of land reforms. But the Chief Minister under reactionary pressure of votes of Harijan M.L.As replied back justifying the policy of restricted auction.

Scheme for grant of free House sites.

With the introduction of the Central Scheme for grant of free house sites to landless rural wage workers with effect

from 15th August, 1972, a long-standing demand of the Sabha was conceded. It was announced that landless, homeless rural wage workers would each be given a house site free, measuring 100 square yards within the Silver Jubilee year of Independence i.e. by 15th August, 1973. But the field staff was taking little interest in preparation of correct lists of beneficiaries. The Sabha submitted a Memorandum to the State Government and deputations met the Chief Minister twice in this connection. At the call of the Sabha, Khet Mazdoors held Dharnas at 29 Sub-divisional head-quarters on 27th November demanding accurate preparation of lists of beneficiaries. It was in the month of January, 1973, that clear-cut instructions were issued to the field staff. By end of February about 3.21 lac beneficiaries had been included in the list.

Under the scheme, Panchayat and Government lands made available were to be used in the first instance. The rest of the required land area would be purchased at Government cost - the central Government paying the cost of acquisition.

Our Sabha helped the eligible persons to apply. Justice was secured for many who had been left out in the beginning. We demanded that the Government should build houses for the beneficiaries at Govt. cost on Kerala model.

Memorandum to Parliamentary Committee on Untouchability (Offences) Amendment Bill.

The Committee visited Punjab on 14th and 16th September, 1972. A deputation of the Sabha met the Committee at Jullundur and presented it a Memorandum and answered questions of the Committee orally. The deputation demanded that social boycott be made a legal offence. A deputation of Hoshiarpur Khet Mazdoor Sabha met the Committee earlier.

14th Annual Session of the Sabha and thereafter

This session was held at Chheharta district Amritsar on 16th 17th and 18th February, 1973. Enrolment had reached 54054 against quota of 65000. Two hundred twenty nine delegates and 53 special visitors attended the Session. Resolutions of the Session were

printed in 65000. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ copies and sold out.

Enrolment quota of 71,000 were fixed for the next year.

Soon after the session was over, preparations were started for participation in Delhi March in support of demands of masses on 27th March, 1973. Ten thousand posters were issued explaining significance of the March. Twenty-five squads flag-marched from 1st to 14th March. They covered 1080 villages, held 1147 Wehra meetings and 86 public meetings. 1,76,000 signatures were collected by these squads on Memorandum to Parliament. 3600 Khet Mazdoor from Punjab participated in the March.

There were mass Dharnas and demonstration at 23 Sub-divisional head-quarters in cooperation with Kisan Sabha on, 14th March, 1973. Demand was made that Presidential assent be given to Punjab Land Reforms Law at an early date and effective steps be taken to implement it.

Evacuee land question

The N.L.As Committee had prepared its Report. But before it was published and Govt. announced its decision, the Government against sent out instructions for restricted auction of evacuee lands. It was Budget Session of Assembly Communisty Legislators created a furor over it in the Assembly and made its proceedings impossible. Next day our deputation met the Chief Minister who said that auction had been stopped.

Soon Evacuee Land Committee Report was published. The Report indicted a large number of officers and other influential persons including Minister Rattan Singh, Speaker Darbara Singh and Parliamentary Secretary Gurmej Singh. Committee recommended that lands be degrabbed from all land-grabbers. It censured the method of auction, ^{Open} or restricted, which has led to land-grabbing and recommended that evacuee land be allotted to deserving scheduled caste persons.

There was country-wide appreciation of the Committee's findings and recommendations.

The Minister, the Speaker and Parliamentary Secretary

had to resign. A number of officers were suspended. They went in writ petitions to High Court and were reinstated.

We carried on campaign for degrabbing land from indicted persons.

Mass degrabbing actions were conducted in Ludhiana, Ropar Hoshiarpur and Zira area of Ferozepur district.

The Financial Commissioner(Taxation) cancelled the sale of 129.4 acres of evacuee land to Santokh Singh, P.C.S. and twelve relatives in village Gatti Jattan in district Ferozepur. But the landgrabbers secured stay order from the High Court. Nothing has since been heard of the case. Further similar action in case of other land grabbers had since been held up.

Participation in A.I.Kisan Sabha Session.

The Punjab Khet Mazdoor Sabha mobilised agricultural workers in a big way for participation in fund collections, in the procession and the rally in connection with All-India Kisan Sabha Session held in Bhatinda from 19th to 23rd September, 1973.

The Sabha issued 20,000 posters calling upon the Khet Mazdoors to participate in the rally, bringing out common objectives of Khet Mazdoors and working peasants. Khet Mazdoor squads flag-marched from 7th to 12th September in the villages and addressed hundreds of wehra meetings. At least 40% of the participants in the procession were Khet Mazdoors and among uniformed volunteers 60%. The Kitchen arrangements were virtually in the hands of Khet Mazdoor cadres and militants.

The Kisan Sabha had given a call for Dharnas on 7th July, 1973.

The Khet Mazdoors fully participated in anti-Mahngai hunger-strikes and gheraos in the first week of August, 1973. Khet Mazdoor comrade Sada Ram of village Alipur Tehsil Garshankar of district Hoshiarpur died in a truck accident while returning from a gherao action at Garshankar along with his companions.

Wage-struggles

Wages struggles took place in many villages, but all have not been reported. By and large, the workers won increase in wages.

In villages Bija, Jartauli and Badawal of Ludhiana district wage struggles were sought to be put down through Wakabandis. But except in one patti of Jartali, they won minimum wage fixed under the Schedule. In district Faridkot, wages struggle broke out in villages Nihalsinghwala, Raunta and Patto-Hira Singh. In Raunta and Patto Hira Singh a wage of Rs. 6 plus food-Rs.1 above the minimum wage level of Rs. 5 was secured. In Sehna Khara in Lambi Block workers struck for 3 weeks and secured minimum wage. In Basarke and Baharwala villages in district Amritsar workers struck for increase in wages for paddy transplantation. They had to face hardship of Wakabandi. In Basarke, wage for transplantation was increased from Rs. 25 to Rs. 32 per acre. In village Kularan district Gurdaspur workers secured wage increase from Rs. 20 to Rs. 25 for transplantation of paddy per acre, though it was much below the minimum level. In village Kali Chaura of the same district, the Panchayat itself raised wage to the minimum level. In village Pandori Wjran in Jullundur district workers had to pass through severe Wakabandi to secure payment of minimum wage.

In most of the strike struggles, local Sabha units helped the workers. At State levels representations were made to Chief Minister, Labour Minister, Labour Commissioner and district authorities.

Struggle for house-sites continues

The scheme was to be implemented within the Silver Jubilee year of Independence. But the State Government bitterly failed to fulfil the target. Nevertheless it announced on 15th August, 1973 that 1.75 lac persons had been given plots. The Sabha exposed the falsity of the claim. The President of the Sabha met the Central Minister for Housing and brought to his notice falsity of Government statement. Later on the State Government further inflated the claim to 1.84 lac plots having been distributed by 30th September, 1973. In fact only paper allotments had been made.

To expose the lying claim of State Government and pressurised it to distribute at least the Panchayat lands made available,

Khet Mazdoors held demonstrations and sat in dharnas at sub-divisional headquarters on 27th November, 1973 and submitted Memoranda. A deputation of the Sabha met the State Minister for Housing on 12th December, 1973.

For acquisition of land, money had to be secured from the Central Government. But State Government did not send up Block Projects in time. It could secure only 30 lac for three blocks of Amritsar district in 1973-74. Now the Centre has transferred the scheme to the State Government which has budgetted Rs. 2 crores for acquisition of lands in the year 1974-75. But process of land acquisition is very slow. Most of the Panchayats lands have not yet been actually distributed.

Land Reforms.

After publication of Land Reforms Act in the Gazette, we pressed the Government to prepare Rules and the scheme under the Act at an early date. We discussed the Drafts prepared by a result of the discussion. But an important defect in the scheme remained. After a hard struggle we were able to compel the Government to rectify that defect also. A state level Land Reforms Advisory Committee was set up in December, 1973. Gen. Malhotra, M. Hari Singh and Vaid Chhajju Mal were taken as members of the Committee. District Land Reforms Committees were also set up. Only one member on our behalf was taken in each of these committees. The Revenue Minister took full six months to set up Sub-divisional Land Advisory Committees. One of ours included these Committees. These Committees have not been functioned by S.D.Os (Civil).

is by the govt. Minister. Many shortcomings were removed, but an important defect in the scheme remained.

A deputation of our Sabha met the Central Land Reforms Commissioner. The first week of December, 1973 and gave him a Memorandum pointing out lacuna in the Act and unsatisfactory pace of its implementation.

We have used the Land Advisory Committees as an organ of struggle. It was at our initiative that following decisions were taken:-

The followings items in connection with land reforms draft be completed by 15th August, 1974:-

1. Distribution of 48000 st. acres of land already declared surplus among eligible persons;
2. Disposal of applications received under section 15 of the Act for purchase of their tenancy lands by tenants with 6 years of continuous occupation.
3. Conferment of ownership rights on tenants already re-settled on surplus lands.

But these targets were not fulfilled by the S.D.Os, for various reasons.

We held the Revenue Minister responsible for sabotage of land reforms and demanded that he be relieved of the Portfolio of Land Reforms.

Memo on Punjab's V-Five year Plan

We prepared a Memorandum in connection with Punjab's V year Five Year Plan containing the suggestions for all-round amelioration of the lot of agricultural workers.

Scheduled Caste Corporation.

In this year the Corporation conceded our demand for raising limit for grant of interest-free loans from Rs. 1500 to Rs. 3000 and for reduction of interest on loans between Rs. 3000 and Rs. 10,000 to $\frac{3}{4}$ per annum.

Oldage Pension.

Our demand that question of oldage pension be increased from Rs. 25 to Rs. 50 per month was conceded in the financial year 1973-74. The quantum of stipends for Scheduled Caste students was also increased.

On 12th December, 1973, a deputation of the Sabha met the State Minister for Social Welfare. A Memorandum was presented to her making suggestions for expansion of social Welfare and their effective implementation. The Minister called a meeting of Harijan Legislators on 15th January, 1974, to discuss points raised in our Memorandum. President and General Secretary of the Sabha were also asked to attend that meeting. But no tangible result has yet accrued so far.

15th Delegate Session of the Sabha and after

The Session was held at Garhshankar on 8-9 and 10th February, 1974. Enrolment had reached the record level of 76,416 against quota of 71,000. 308 delegates and 49 special ~~xxx~~ visitors attended the Session. 77 delegates were elected for Tinali Session of B.K.M.U. of whom 64 actually attended it.

10,000 copies of the Session Resolutions were printed and sold.

High-lights of mass movement this year have been wage struggle in pursuance of decisions of Tinali Session of B.K.M.U, joint mass demonstrations on 21st August, 1974, at district head-quarters, de-boarding and gherao actions in the end of August and first week of September and historic demonstration at Ludhiana on 8th October.

In pursuance of decision of B.K.M.U. Session a three-month long struggle was waged over the question of increase in wages. At present the minimum daily wage fixed by the State Government since 1972 is Rs. 5 plus food. The working Committee decided that it be raised to Rs. 7 plus food in view of spurt in prices since then. It would be general propaganda slogan for the State as a whole at present. Slogan of action would depend on the concrete situation in different places. For instance in Hoga Sub-division, workers were already getting Rs. 8 plus food or even Rs. 10 per day. There were some ~~xxx~~ places in Sub-montaneous districts where even Rs. 5 plus food were not paid. The Workers in such places would fight in the first place for Rs. 5 or Rs.6 per day.

20,000 posters were issued in connection with the wage struggle. Jullundur unit issued 9000 additional hand bills and Amritsar 2000.

The campaign was initiated by Dharma at 20 Sub-divisional headquarters. ^{on 21st June.} Hundreds of Mehra meetings were held all over the State. 22 Khet Mazdoor squads flag-marched from 23rd to 29th

July covering 725 villages. 26 Conferences, 682 Wehra meetings and 31 public meetings were held.

In this period, strike struggles took place in about 50 village in districts of Faridkot, Ferozepur, Ludhiana, Jullundur Patiala, Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Hoshiarpur. About 30 strikes took place in Faridkot district alone. The strikes were sought to be suppressed through Nakabandi or socioeconomic boycott. The workers however won wage increases in almost every village where they fought. Wage increase was won from Rs. 1 to 3 per day. Wage increase were also won in connection with transplantation of paddy. In many villages employers allowed wage increase without strike struggle.

In preparation for 21st August demonstrations at district headquarters and 8th October historic demonstration at Ludhiana, hundreds of Wehra meetings were again held. In many districts, Jethas again did flag-march through villages. In district demonstrations, Khet Mazdoor constituted the majority in Faridkot, Bhatinda and Hoshiarpur districts and a substantial proportion in others. In 8th October demonstration, they were at least 50% of the participants from rural areas. They were in majority in contingents from Faridkot, Bhatinda and Hoshiarpur.

In deharding and Gherao actions of August and September also, Khet Mazdoor participated in considerable numbers.

Land Reforms.

Tharnas and demonstrations were held at sub-divisional headquarters demanding effective implementation of land reforms on 7th March, 1974.

A deputation of the Sabha consisting of Max Com. Bhan Singh Bhaura, M.P, Ruldu Khan General Secretary and Darg Ram, M.L.A met the Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi on 30th July, 1974 and presented her a Memorandum. The deputation told her that Revenue Minister Urao Singh was sabotaging land reforms. Suggestions were made for effective implementation of land reforms.

An important part of the demands in Memoranda of 21st August and 8th October demonstration has been effective implementation of land reforms.

An effective struggle is waged through State level Land Reforms Committee .

In this period, effective fight has been put up against eviction of tenants in Fazilka and Muktsar Sub-divisions where Conferences and Conventions had been held and mass resistance actions effected. Mass Conventions were also held in Kartarpur district Jullundur, in Chak Mirpur in Mukerian sub-Tehsil and Chat Hijat in Tehsil Pathankot.

Struggle was also continued for distribution of house sites out of Panchayat lands made available by Panchayats while exposing exaggerated claims of the Government.

Khet Mazdoor Front School

Three Khet Mazdoor Front Schools have been held this year - in last week of March at Chheharta and Phagwara and in the third week of July at Muktsar. These were Regional Schools. Overall attendance at these schools was 125,. In 1973, a State level Khet Mazdoor school had been held at Nihalsinghwal with attendance of about 55.

Visit of three-member delegation from Soviet Union.

A three member Khet Mazdoor delegation from the Soviet Union visited Punjab on 30th and 31st March, 1974. The delegation alighted at Raja Sansi Airport and visited some villages. In the evening it gave a talk to comrades present in Khet Mazdoor Front School ex-Chheharta. On 31st March, the delegation visited a village in Phagwara sub-division and later gave a talk to Khet Mazdoor and other Comrades in Phagwara.

Fight against Social oppression and Police repression

The Sabha and its units have fought against Social oppression in all forms such as Hakabandi, Physical assault, displacement from land and houses etc.

The most brutal case of social oppression was the martyr murder of four Harijans and injuries to other by a gang of goondas led by Sarpanch in village Bhat district Amritsar. The issue was taken up promptly in cooperation with C.P.I. and Kisan Sabha. All the goondas including the Sarpanch have been arrested. A big rally attended by 4000 persons was held on 22nd September in the village. Rs. 8000 were collected on the spot. 1st October was observed as Dath Day in the State. The State Government has been persuaded to grant relief at Rs. 5000 for each family of martyrs and Rs. 25000 to each injured person.

Sabha deputations met high Police Officers in connection with murder of Harijan father and his daughter in village Kandhwala in district Ferozepur and of a Harijan tenant in Village Tarkhanwala in Faridkot district. Our agitation made the Police arrest the culprits.

In village Raipur in district Ferozepur, Khet Mazdoor Motu Ram was beaten up by a landlord. He was also implicated in a false theft case. Ram Singh President of Ferozepur district Khet Mazdoor Sabha went on hunger strike for two weeks. At this Motu Ram was released and landlord culprit was put under arrest.

In cases of Wakabandi, social oppression and eviction, representations are invariably made to authorities at State and District levels. Deputations meet the authorities in all important cases.

Our Sabha President had written to the I.C. Police against beating up Satyagrahis in Mahngai march of October 1972 by Inspector Ravel Singh and Sub-Inspector Dhanan Singh of Ferozepur. D.I.G. Ferozepur had written to us some time ago to produce evidence which we have recently done.

The Sabha has invariably supported struggles and demands of other sections of people- Industrial workers, Rly. workers, Government employees, students, peasants,

Chowkidars, P.W.D. workers etc.

It tries to coordinate its struggles with that of peasantry

It teaches the Khet Mazdoors that industrial working Class in the cities is its best friend and ally.

The Sabha has included achievements of Socialism as its objective in its Constitution. It popularises the concrete achievements of Socialism among agricultural workers.

The Sabha has lent support to peoples fighting for national liberation- as in case of Vietnam, Chile, Bangla desh and elsewhere.

It lends support to the World Peace Movement, Afro-Asian solidarity and cause of Indo-Soviet friendship.

Functioning of the Sub-Committee, Working Committee and organisational position of Khet Mazdoor Sabha.

This part will deal with the period since Special Party Conference held in Chandigarh last year.

The Sub-Committee has been functioning regularly and ~~giving~~ guiding the Working Committee and through it the movement of agricultural workers.

After Special Party Conference, preparations were made for 15th Annual Session of the saba to be held at Garhshankar on 8th to 10th February, 1974.

Distt. delegate Sessions were held in the month of January.

The Sub-Committee prepared Report and Draft Resolutions for the Session. The General Secretary, and two members of Working Committee from Jullundur assisted the Reception Committee in propaganda and fund collections.

Sub-Committee meetings were held on following dates:-

11.1.1974, 1.2.74(Informal meeting,) 3.3.74, 26.5.74, 18.6.74, 8.7.1974, 3.8.1974, 26.8.74, 18.9.74(it was an extended meeting- 8 members present) and 30.10.1974.

Members of the Sub-Committee were M. Hari Singh(Convener), Bhaura, Ruldu Khan, Malkiat Chand and Gursewak Singh.

The Sub-Committee in its meetings reviewed activities of preceding period, drew agendas and guide-lines for Working

Committee meetings, discussed fresh developments on Khet Mazdoor Front etc.

Working Committee meetings.

At 15th Annual Session Bhaura and Baldu Khan were re-elected President and General Secretary. A Working Committee of 25 was elected.

Meetings of the new Working Committee have been held on following dates.

10.2.1974 at Garhsankar, 10.3.1974 at Jullundur
26.5.1974 at Chuhar Chak 3.8.1974 at Ludhiana 13.10.1974
at Ludhiana.

Thus five meetings of the Committee have been held so far. Sixth meeting is to be held on 14.12.1974 at Ludhiana. A meeting of the Working Committee is held on the average every two months. Attendance at the meetings is on the average two-third of its membership. Meetings of the Committee begin exactly at the scheduled hour and are business-like.

At these meeting activities of the Sabha at State, district and lower levels are invariably reviewed. The activity of each member is also reviewed. This helps tone up the entire work. The Working Committee discusses fresh developments in the movement and gives necessary guidance to the movement.

After each Working Committee meeting, detailed Report in written form is made to State Party Centre and B.K.M.U. Circulars are issued explaining decisions of meeting. When necessary explanatory articles are written in Nawan Samana.

District Working Committees function in all district except Sangrur. Best functioning Committee is that of Faridkot, Bhatinda, Ferozepur, Amritsar and Jullundur are good functioning Committees. Bhatinda needs improvement in collective functioning Hoshiarpur Committee has started functioning this year. Ropar has started functioning, but is yet weak. In Patiala there is some set-back. Ludhiana is just marking time. In Gurdaspur

there appears to be set-back in work. In Sangrur, work was started in a corner of the district. ~~Yet~~ ^{then} there was set-back, but recent reports show revival of work in Malerkotla and also in a pocket of Sunam.

On the whole, Khet Mazdoor front activity received a fillip this year. Special Party Conference led to increased activity on the part of Khet Mazdoor Comrades. 18th Session of the Sabha gave further spurt to mass activity. The wage struggle and joint mass actions culminating in 8th October demonstration at Ludhiana have given increased confidence to workers, increasing mass response among agricultural workers has enthused our units. Virtual break-through has taken place on this front. It is hoped the coming Party Conference will give added impetus to our work.

Main office bearers President and General Secretary have improved their functioning compared with last year. Com. Bhaura pays more attention to his duty. The General Secretary maintains better links with the Centre. Further improvement is expected in coming period.

Next session of the Sabha will be held in district Bhatinda towards end of February, 1975. It is expected the quota of 10,000 membership will be over fulfilled.

Adh.

There are 45 whole-timers in this zone at State, Dist + Local level. But not all of them yet come up to the mark.

Ami Singh
15/11/74