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Mandir Masjid Issue

Vajpayee shows his real face

6th December, is a black day in Indian history, marked with the barbaric demolition of the Babari Masjid, a historic monument, by saffron brigade, engineered and supervised by the present Home Minister L.K. Advani with two other colleagues with the evil motive to install Ram Mandir on that site — a crime reminiscent of the dark days of the medieval past. This ugly incident was followed by widespread communal flare up throughout the country, taking toll of thousands of religious minorities and rape of hundreds of women, burning of countless houses and widespread looting as desired by the BJP leaders. And thus the entire country was divided on religious lines, following the footsteps of British rulers, to reap harvest at the hustling by exploiting Hindu vote bank in their bid to capture power in Delhi, which was ultimately achieved by the BJP thanks to 'secular' role played by power-hungry TDP, DMK, TMC, Janata, Akali and others. Since then, 6th December is remembered with horror, shame, pain and anguish by those who still carry in their mind some remnants of glorious traditions of Indian Renaissance and freedom struggle.

This year, on the eve of 6th December, the words which came from the mouth of much trumpeted 'liberal' Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee hit the country like a bomb and sent waves of shock and terror among many. Quite unashamedly he asserted that construction of Ram Mandir at the demolished site of Babari Masjid

"is an expression of national sentiment", which he is very much eager to fulfill. It is well-known that the pioneers of Indian Renaissance and anti-imperialist national struggle never conceived construction of Ram Mandir, let alone destruction of Babari Masjid. Nor even was it viewed by religious preachers from Chaitanya to Vivekananda. These undeniable facts may be denied by saffron-clad historians who are engaged to distort history. But the BJP leaders can defend their position by chanting the teachings of their Guru Golwalkar that, "The theories of territorial nationalism and of common danger, which formed the basis for our concept of nation, had deprived us of the positive and inspiring content of our real Hindu nationhood and made many of the freedom movements virtually anti-British movements. Being anti-British was equated with patriotism and nationalism. This reactionary view has had disastrous effects upon the entire course of the independence struggle, its leaders and the common people." (*We and Our Nationhood Defined*) So according to the disciples Guru Golwalkar's national sentiment can only be equated with Hindu sentiment. To them Saheed Kshudiram, Bhagat Singh, Asfquallah Khan and many others who dared gallows and bullets or even Netaji, C. R. Das, Lajpat Rai, Gandhiji cannot be considered as patriots as they fought against British imperialism instead of upholding Hindu nationalism. To the

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REDUCTION IN OIL PRICE DEMANDED

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee's letter to Prime Minister

To
The Prime Minister of India
Dear Sir

You are aware that while imposing a substantial hike in the domestic price of petrol and petro-products on the plea of the increase of crude oil price in the international market, your petroleum minister had indicated to keep a watch on the international oil price movement and consider a roll back if the price goes down below 27 dollars per barrel. If he had been so watchful, he could not but have noticed that the crude oil price which was 42 dollars per barrel when he had decided to force such an increase, has now come down to 25.82 dollars per barrel. He might also be aware that on spot procurement which Government of India resorts to, the price would even be lower by further 3 dollars. But to the utter dismay of the people, there is still no initiative on the part of the central government to even review the price structure, let alone bringing it down. For example, the current price level, as per government's own calculation, warrants the price of petrol to be fixed at Rs. 14 per litre in the domestic market taking into account both import duty and transport cost over and above the procurement cost, but it continues to be charged at Rs. 30 per litre. It would therefore be observed that refixing should be at a level lower than what was forced on the common people in the phase preceding the last hike. There has been no exception so far in the behaviour of the government which always increases the domestic price citing the international market, but maintains inexplicable silence when the international price falls.

It may be added that the government has augmented the price on as many as five occasions since 1998 in the domestic market. The government's decision not to go in for issuing 'oil bonds' to raise funds to meet oil pool deficit confirms that it has already been taken care of by the widened gap between sale and procurement prices.

This, you would agree, is another clear instance of the central government having least regard even for their own pronouncements, utterances and arguments and being surreptitiously deceitful to pursue their anti-people policies and measures.

We strongly protest such an attitude of the government and demand immediate reduction in the domestic oil price foisted on the common people, reeling under insurmountable economic oppression. Thanking you,

Calcutta
24.12.2000

Yours sincerely,
Sd/- Nihar Mukherjee
General Secretary, SUCI

UTUC-LS Condemns Betrayal of Postal Strike

Comrade Tapas Dutta, General Secretary, UTUC-Lenin Sarani, has issued the following statement to the Press on 20 December, about of the naked betrayal of the cause of 6 lakh postal workers by three national Federations by an abrupt and unconditional withdrawal of their successful strike :—

"The working people all over the country are stunned at the unabashed way the three Federations, namely FNPO, BPEF and NFPE surrendered the cause of 6 lakh postal workers including 3,09,700 ED workers by withdrawing the 14-day-long brilliant strike unconditionally and abruptly, particularly at a time when the fighting morale of the workers was at its peak and not a single demand of the most affected segment as ED workers was met. This shameless betrayal by the leadership of the movement not only demoralised

their cadres and strikers but also cast a deep shadow of despair in the entire trade union movement of the country. At this hour of open betrayal we call upon the 6 lakh postal workers who stood like a rock during the entire period of strike despite threats and provocations of all sorts, not to lose heart because the indomitable fighting spirit that they demonstrated will go down in the history of country's Trade Union movement as a milestone. Of course, the lesson the postal friends must take from this bitter experience is that without a correct leadership no movement can ever be brought to its logical culmination. And for this they must engage in a struggle to develop correct leadership being wakefully on the vigil that the collaborationist and compromising elements can never find opportunity to sneak into leadership. Once again we hail their brilliant struggle."

US Presidential Election Rips Open Utter Degeneration of Bourgeois Democracy

The protagonists of so-called superiority of bourgeois democratic system consider America as its paradise. But the November 7 of US presidential election will go down in history as to what extent the system has become rotten through and through and utterly degenerated. We made a short comment earlier. Now that the victory of the Republican candidate, George W. Bush, has been manipulated and instances of corruption galore have come to light, we write on the issue from a broader perspective.

Rigging in election in America is nothing new as an author shows in his book that it can be traced back well over a century. And it has become a universal feature in all the capitalist countries including India, said to be the "biggest functioning democracy". But the way the exposure of the hollowness of the system has come to be exposed before the world after the US election, is because of the frenzied bid between the top monopoly houses, divided behind the two main contenders, in the context of dark cloud of deep recession over the US economy.

Election or selection?

Mr Bush, the Republican candidate became the President not really elected by the people's votes but selected by one vote majority in five to four judgement of the Federal Supreme Court. And the five judges going in favour of him were appointed by the Republican former Presidents, either the father of the winner or Ronald Reagan. In this wholly rigged election it was fraud all the way. Millions of dollars of rival big monopoly houses were freely used. Disenfranchisement of minority voters on a mass scale, especially the Afro-Americans was resorted to in the most shameless manner. Racial discrimination went to the extent of obstructing Afro-Americans and other minority people from voting by road blocks and intimidation by police. The involvement of the executive with police and administrative officials, legislature and even the judiciary in corruptions on such a grand scale were clear and vivid.

Two party system — basic limitation

The basic limitation of democratic right to freely choose representative by the people is set down by the two-party system. Both these parties are financed by big monopoly houses. This system willed by the ruling capitalist class has evolved in the highly developed imperialist state of America. Election therefore has reduced itself to a high cost game between the two contending parties of big business on which is concentrated all the focus of the media to pattern and limit the choice of the voters. It therefore means nothing other than a ritual, after every four years, both for the capitalist class and for the working people, of course for different reasons. For the capitalists, whoever wins by any means does not disturb the domestic and foreign policies in essence, guided as they are in the aggregate interest of the ruling class. For the working people on the other hand, whoever wins, it fails to bring any change in their life's miseries and servitude,

which is equally true in all the bourgeois democracies.

The US President is not elected by popular votes. The *Workers World* (USA) in its December 21 issue has shown that Bush actually lost the popular vote by 300,000 but won the Presidency. He required just 270 votes of the Electoral College and got one more. It may have revealed a peculiar deformity in the electoral system of the world's most highly developed capitalist country but nothing more. Had the American people the right to elect their representatives directly, could that offer them anything different? In India, the people have that right. But have the people been able to exercise it freely to their choice? Can they change the exploitations and oppressions being daily heaped on them? Can they get rid of unspeakable miseries and destitution — unemployment, squalor, hunger, untimely death by exercising voting right in a capitalist country? The answer should be obvious to them from hard experiences for long. The fable of bourgeois parliamentary path of solution of their basic problems in life helps to perpetuate the brutal rule of moribund capitalism and this has caused degeneration of social life in all its aspects, mostly because of absence of democratic movement on burning problems.

US presidential election — spotlight on corruptions

A plethora of writings have come up to show the mockery of the election. We collate some significant and relevant ones from those.

First, about rigging and exclusion of Afro-American voters in lakhs. Florida State apparatus controlled by Governor Jeb Bush, brother of George W Bush has been involved in grossly manipulating the vote in Afro-American precincts. Minority voters were discouraged to vote in a variety of ways. Some were turned away on the plea of lack of ballots, some prevented on the ground of their names not in the voting rolls, although they were all registered voters. The *Guardian*, London reports that road blocks were set up by the state police to prevent Afro-American voters from reaching polling booths. *Washington Post* reports, confirmed by many others that Afro-American neighbourhoods in Florida lost many more presidential votes than other areas because of outdated voting machines and rampant confusion about ballots that confused even native English speakers. As many as one in three ballots in black sections of Jacksonville was not counted in the election. Creole speaking Haitian refugees were not helped to understand the ballots. Many voters were refused the right to vote on the plea that they did not carry enough forms of identification. But still the canvassing officials said that "the voting process was fair to all voters".

What a striking similarity with the experiences of the Indian people about the 'electoral process'! The stout defenders of globalisation should be pleased to note that globalisation in corruption of morals, being practised like in other places in election, started long before.

An analysis conducted by the *New York Times*

showed that the old and creaky electoral machinery in poorer precincts — notably the punch-card system that caused so much trouble with undervotes, overvotes and improperly punched out "chads" — discriminated against Afro-Americans and potentially cost Mr Gore thousands of votes. The *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* found that one-third of 22,807 disqualified votes in Broward, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach counties came predominantly from Afro-American precincts. The paper concluded that had all the so-called disqualified votes been counted, Mr Gore might have got 18,000 votes more to clinch his victory. The *Guardian* therefore wryly commented: "Republicans came to power by excluding black voters".

Racial discrimination sidetracked

Both sides, Bush and Gore showed so much of their concern in the legal battles over "equal protection under the law" and "due process" without caring to bring to the fore the known and thoroughly documented massive evidences of disqualification of Afro-American voters. As the *Workers World*, writes: "this has been a non-subject in the court proceedings, in the campaigns of both Bush and Gore and in the mainstream capitalist media" ... They steadfastly refused to challenge the disenfranchisement of voters in majority black districts whose ballots were rejected at a rate of one in five compared to voters in majority white districts whose ballots were rejected at a rate of one in 14. This is prima facie evidence of discrimination on a massive scale. To the Gore forces, as part of the ruling class establishment, the prospect of opening up a struggle against racism was worse than the prospect of losing the election".

As we see in our own country communalisation of politics at a frenzied pitch has been picked up as a handy weapon to divide the exploited and oppressed working people by the capitalist class in neck-deep troubles, so also generation of racialism or racial hatred between the white and black Americans has been for long in use as the potent weapon of the ruling class of America. Everywhere, enmeshed in ever deepening all-out and overall crisis of moribund capitalism being reflected in all aspects of life, the ruling capitalist class is resorting to all divisive means to obstruct class solidarity of the working people to arrest growth of mass and class struggles. Neither Bush nor Gore representing the chosen parties of the establishment can therefore go against the divisive policy of the ruling capitalist class. All their fumings are within the narrow confine of bourgeois constitutionalism-legalism and with media support they want people's attention diverted and concentrated on what should be of lesser importance.

Manipulative power — the deciding factor in election

All that matters in winning the election apart from money, musclemen including police, along

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Postal Employees Betrayed : Build Up Struggling Leadership

The recent post and telegraph workers' strike on longstanding legitimate demands, particularly the demand of regularisation and departmentalisation of the Extra Departmental workers, is again backstabbed by the utterly compromising JCA (Joint Council of Action) leadership.

Brief Account

Over 6 lakh P & T workers started their strike struggle on 5th December 2000. Immediately the BJP-led NDA government started issuing threats. Judiciary, in effect, also sided with the government. The Delhi High Court questioned why the government had not decided to impose Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) against the postal workers. It questioned, "Where is the question of continuing negotiation with those who have paralysed the entire postal system." The court instructed the central government, "take whatever stern action you deem fit, we want the postal services to be normalised." The court also suggested, "It will be open to the government to take whatever action it deems fit to end the strike including invoking the ESMA." The High Court asked the striking workers "why are you entitled to get pay for the strike period?"

While utterly anti-working class moves were taken from all corners totally trampling the democratic values, norms and tradition, the JCA leadership virtually did not stand by the striking workers. Finally, the central government declared postal strike illegal and then promulgated ESMA.

Congress ruled-Delhi was first to invoke ESMA. Other states were BJP-ruled Himachal Pradesh, UP, Gujarat, Uttaranchal, NDA partner TDP-ruled AP and BJP and HVP-ruled Harayna, Union territory Chandigarh. Many other state governments were getting ready to impose ESMA. All this could not break the morale of the workers.

The media blowed up the few incidents of some workers joining work and ceaselessly propagated against the strike to poison public opinion and direct it against the struggle. The Government issued multi-lingual big advertisements spending huge public money to justify its action against the strike.

But the JCA leadership did not take up the very needful widespread vigorous propaganda against the disinformation of the media and the government. At this time of all-out attack virtually no help came to the workers from the leadership. Yet, struggling workers all over India remained firm and calm. They continued the strike with iron determination and unity.

The BJP-led government even conspired to use the students as strike breakers. It also sought the assistance of military. All these are signs that the government was getting more and more pressurised and it took more and more drastic steps. But no blow could break the struggling psychology of the workers.

Then came the final blow. On 17th December the Congress-led Federation of National Postal Organisation (FNPO) and BJP-led Bharatiya Postal Employees Federation (BPEF) and on 18th

December CPI-CPI(M)-led National Federation of Postal Employees (NFPE), all three forming the JCA leadership, suddenly withdrew strike unconditionally. This blow stunned the struggling postal workers. The NDA government grabbed the chance and imposed 14-day wage cut on the 6 lakh workers.

Preparation

Was JCA serious about movement? It declared the strike to start on 5th December. Here ended the leadership's preparation. To lead a prolonged movement it is necessary to build up workers' struggle committees first from the grass roots level, all over India, which, through a reasonable period, would prepare the workers' psychology for prolonged struggle and mobilise people's support through propaganda by means of printed appeals, discussions, meetings, conventions, processions, deputations, etc.

The JCA did nothing of the sort. Even when workers of various other fields were expressing fraternity to the postal workers the leadership did not even contemplate of adding dimension to the postal movement by calling upon workers of all sectors to initiate struggles in favour of postal strike along with their respective demands.

What could CPI (M)-CPI-led NFPE do

To justify its sudden withdrawal of the strike on 18th December NFPE argued that it was helpless as Congress-led FNPO and BJP-led BPEF withdrew on 17th December. What a lame excuse ! Does it not control 80% of the postal workers ? On account of organisational strength NFPE is the real leader. Had NFPE gone ahead with the postal strike with this massive workers' strength behind, surely the movement would get a tremendous lift while the Congress and BJP-led unions would have been isolated. It could imbue millions of workers all over the country with a new inspiration for militant struggle. The leadership did not do it.

Leadership

But why did leadership behave in this manner? A little probe in the recent years' experience will show. In continuity of the past movements, in July 1998 with the regularisation and departmentalisation of the Extra Departmental workers as the key demand started the postal strike under this same leadership JCA. The workers were leading a determined undaunted struggle. The movement was almost at the threshold of victory. But suddenly it was withdrawn on 16th July '98, and that too unconditionally, without any written agreement from the BJP-led coalition government. "Owner-worker relationship entered a new chapter in the history of trade union movement with the withdrawal of the strike without any agreement", said an elated communication minister Susma Swaraj. The JCA in a circular (20.7.98) declared, "Eight-day long nationwide indefinite strike was called off in the afternoon of the 16th July 1998, after a two-hour long dialogue with the hon'ble minister on the basis of mutual trust, belief,

confidence and understanding. It is a novel concept and heralds a new era in the history of trade union movement in our country." The then president of NFPE N.J. Aiyer wrote to Susma Swaraj, "You took the letter of strike withdrawal bearing signatures of secretary generals of NFPE and FNPO and rushed to both houses of Parliament and declared that strike has been withdrawn. Thus began a new chapter of faith and trust." (*Sangrami Dak Patrika*, November '98)

This is the leadership who professes mutual trust and confidence with a bourgeois reactionary government. This leadership did not expose the class position of this reactionary government in our class-divided capitalist society. Such leadership cannot but uphold interest of the ruling class only, at the cost of the working class. Naturally, that mutual trust and faith produced a big zero for the postal workers. They, particularly the ED staff, continued to suffer the same deprivation who were suffering through generations since British rule. The aggrieved workers, within 6th months, forced leadership to declare strike again. It was declared to start on 21 and 22 December '98. But again, the compromising leadership withdrew the strike notice on 18th December '98 on the basis of government order issued on 17th December. The order is as follows :

"Revision of Allowances of Extra Departmental Agents. DG OM No.26-1/97-PC&ED cell dt.17.12.98.

I am directed to say that the recommendations made by the Justice Talwar Committee on Extra Departmental Agents (EDAs) in respect of revision of their remuneration have been under consideration of the Government of India. The President is now pleased to order ... full and final settlement of all pending demands relating to the implementation of the Justice Talwar Committee recommendations..."

The order, therefore, dealt with only existing allowances / remuneration of ED workers and not their century old demand of regularisation and departmentalisation. Had the 3,09,700 ED workers regularised and departmentalised, their payscale, pension and other benefits would increase proportionately. But the BJP government in its 17th December order rejected outright the positive recommendations of Justice Talwar Committee, while did not declare that it would not implement its negative recommendations — reducing workforce, stopping new employment, abolition of vacancies, rejection of the scope to be promoted in Group-D level, no more opening of new ED post offices.

The JCA leadership in one voice with the government accepted this agreement as "full and final settlement".

Whose interest did the JCA leadership look after by accepting the order of 17th December '98 and not warning the postal workers that BJP government had finally denied their longstanding demand of regularisation and departmentalisation?

JCA leadership was all along under pressure

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NDA Partners Murmur Against PM's Remark to Guard Muslim Vote Bank

(Contd. from page 1)

followers of 'Guruji' real 'national sentiment' generates from "the positive and inspiring content of our real Hindu nationhood". So it is evidently clear that by expressing the term 'national sentiment' Vajpayee merely meant the idea put forward by RSS Guru. So, the Prime Minister's words are not just a slip of tongue, those are preplanned, well-calculated and deliberate pronouncements.

Why Vajpayee uttered the words in total disregard of the opinion of some of his allies and to the dismay of peace-loving people, shedding for the moment his 'liberal' mask? There are some imperative necessities. Firstly, they are frantically attempting to instill the minds of the present generation youths the concept of their brand of 'national sentiment', i.e., Hindu nationalism instead of Indian nationalism, held aloft by freedom struggle. So they cry for the construction of Ram Mandir issue to ignite Hindu passion and link it to their concept of 'national sentiment' and repeatedly utter to make it acceptable. Secondly, by speaking those words prime minister cunningly attempted to prepare a ground for the exoneration of his three accused colleagues, as if by demolishing the Masjid, they only accomplished a 'noble', patriotic task reflecting 'national sentiment'. Thirdly, it is noteworthy that acute economic crisis and hardship due to anti-people and pro-capitalist policies of the BJP-led central government has generated tremendous pent-up discontents of the masses, which even sometimes comes as sporadic outbursts of movements threatening capitalist class and government. So there is compelling need to divert people's mind and disrupt democratic unity by inflaming communal tension again. Fourthly, results of Panchayat elections in Gujarat, the erstwhile citadel of BJP and of municipal elections in UP, the largest state, has come as a grim warning to the leaders of BJP, necessitating further the playing of Ram Mandir card to stimulate 'Hindu Vote Bank'. Fifthly, there are ever increasing quarrels, bickerings and conflicts among 'all sacrificing' Hindutvabadi BJP leaders on the one hand and between leaders and common workers on the other over pelf and power thereby weakening the party. So there is an attempt to project facade of unity by whipping up Hindu jingoism. Sixthly, a large number of RSS and VHP activists, who have become mad to fulfil promise of construction of Ram Mandir and who collected crores of rupees and huge quantities of bricks and other materials for the construction work are now angry and restive due to delay, asking for the accounts of the funds. To assuage their feeling Vajpayee is reassuring them on construction of Ram Mandir. Seventhly, BJP-led government planfully and systematically is introducing dangerous educational policies to poison the minds of the younger generation with age-old fundamentalist ideas and religious thoughts to foster regimentation of mind by irrational, unscientific, blind faith along with distorted version of history and technical science education as distinct from scientific, democratic and secular education. To introduce this scheme

unhinderedly they have reconstituted different educational bodies. But they are still facing resistance from educationists, guardians and students. So they are conspiring to strengthen fundamentalist atmosphere by raising the bogey of the construction of Ram Mandir and issuing one after another Taliban fatwah to be followed in all aspects of life of Hindus.

But the question arises, how Prime Minister Vajpayee dared to utter these words and repeat and defend these again and again ignoring 'protest' from allies in government and 'opposition' by Congress, SP, RJD, CPI(M) and others? Because Vajpayee is clever enough to assess the moral fibre of these parties and he knows how far these parties will go. Absence of powerful left-democratic movement is also his strength. He knows coalition partners; i.e., TMC, TDP and others will merely murmur some words of disapproval to prove their 'secular' credentials to the Muslim voters but cannot in any way take the risk of breaking the government, lest their pound of flesh is at stake. Although sitting in opposition the Congress is also behaving as a passenger of the same boat. While real secularism means nonrecognition of any supernatural entity; making politics, economics, education, culture, social activities completely free from the grip of any religion and thereby maintaining character of the state neutral between both believers and nonbeliever; the Congress brand of 'secularism' is completely opposite to it. It encourages all religions outwardly but with a tilt to Hinduism inwardly, a legacy of its past. After independence the Congress also fomented communal tensions and riots. It is the Congress leaders, who first opened the backdoor of Babari Masjid for Ram Puja, initiated Ram *silanyas* to build up Hindu vote bank, thus they opened the door for BJP, who jumped into competition and ultimately outwitted the Congress. It is not accidental that the Congress-led central government did not prevent the demolition of the historical monument. It is the Congress leaders who have first given emphasis on religious education. These are done with a 'secular' cloak. Whatever, 'oppositional' voices the Congress leaders are raising now in Parliament they are doing it simply to woo the Muslim votes. Rabid casteist and parochial

parties like RJD, BSP, AIDMK and others are also doing something with an eye to the next election.

But it is a matter of regret that at this critical hour a big left party like CPI(M) is also playing a role which disappoints many left and democratic minded people. It is irrefutable that not election-oriented politics, but militant class struggles and powerful left-democratic movement armed with revolutionary ideology and higher ethics can resist all the attacks of fascism-communalism. For this it is incumbent to develop struggles on burning economic issues and to put emphasis on ideological-cultural movement against fundamentalist-communal-reactionary ideas and obscure cultures and traditions. But what is the CPI(M) leadership doing? They have given up the path of mass struggles, whatever they did earlier with their social democratic limitation, now they are confining their activities completely within the four walls of bourgeois parliamentary democracy. Not only they avoid mass movement, but in the states where they are in power, they do not hesitate even to ruthlessly crush class struggles and mass movements like other bourgeois parties to satisfy both national and foreign capital, to further extend their tenure of ministerial power. Our party, SUCI while organising class and mass struggles single-handedly responding to the needs of the hour, has been sending repeated appeals to the CPI(M) leadership for united left and democratic movement. Without giving any reply to that they are labouring hard to develop a 'third front' along with Congress, RJD, SP, AIDMK, and others and painting them with 'secular' colour only to get dividend in the election battle. Perhaps they do not want to take any lesson from the fact that their earlier 'secular' allies in the UF government, i.e. DMK, TDP, Akalis, Janata and others are now on the band wagon of BJP-led government. It cannot be forgotten that anti-BJP role in election in a given situation should not be taken either as secularism nor as anti-communalism. So in order to resist this menace of fascism and all attacks of exploiting capitalist class the urgent need of the moment is to develop left and democratic unity to organise countryside class and mass struggles

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AIDSO
Demonstrates in
Calcutta on
December 11
demanding
postponement of
Madhyamik
examination by
a month for
unprecedented
flood.



Women's Conference At Bellary

The 3rd State level Conference of AIMSS Karnataka held from 14-16 December has created a new inspiration for the women's movement in the State. It has drawn into the vortex of the movement many more women and men of eminence too.

Several months before the Conference Preparatory works began. Conventions, Camps, meetings, Press Conferences were organised. The entire organisation was geared up for extensive propaganda work. Apart from the regular six working districts, in two more important districts, campaign works were done. Conference Preparatory Committees were formed in the districts to involve new forces around the organisation. With the intellectuals and eminent personalities of the host district, Bellary a Reception Committee comprising of 120 members was formed. With the intellectuals from rest of the districts of the State, a Well Wishers' Committee was also formed.

With the help of the Campaign Committee Conventions and discussions were organised in countless colleges, offices, Mahila Mandalis, UBSP (Urban Basic Services Project) Centres, localities and also during Teachers' Meetings. Because of the initiative of the RC members the mid term examinations scheduled to be held during the period of the Conference were postponed by two days. Finally the whole city got ready for the Conference. Tremendous emotion was created wherein people started contributing most of the items needed for the Conference free of cost. The people of Bellary took pride in hosting the State level Women's Conference.

"Long live Women's Unity", "Stop Atrocities on women" "We demand education" "We demand jobs" "Down with Obscenity" "Down with the Central government which glorifies Sati" these were the slogans that resounded on the streets of Bellary on 14.12.2000. It was the united voice of fighting women who had thronged to Bellary from the nooks and corners of the State to attend the 3rd State level Women's Conference organised by the All India Mahila Samskruthika Sanghatana (AIMSS).

The vibrant procession was followed by the massive Open Session at the Gandhi Bhavan Indoor Stadium. Women belonging to all castes, communities, languages, age groups belonging to all strata gathered in thousands there. Soon after, amidst thundering slogans the MSS flag was hoisted by the General Secretary, Comrade Chhaya Mukherjee. A wreath was placed on the Martyrs' column by the All India President, Comrade Prathibha Mukherjee.

Then a beautifully organised Quotation and Photo Exhibition was inaugurated by a very



Comrade Prativa Mukherjee

renowned paediatrician and Vice-Chairperson of the Reception Committee Dr.P.Sulochana. The Exhibition contained the sketches of great personalities of Renaissance and quotations from their works, Nobel laureate women scientists and their achievements, sketches and paintings depicting the pain of women and photo charts of women's movements organised by the AIMSS in Karnataka. It drew the admiration of all.

At the Open Session Prof.B.Sheshadri, the RC Chairman and a noted Economist, in his welcome address threw light on the various injustices women are subjected to. He stressed upon the participation of men in shouldering various responsibilities so far shouldered majorly by women. Comrade K.Radhakrishna, State Secretary, SUCI, Karnataka who inaugurated the Conference placed to the women the two options before them: whether they would heed to the advice of the BJP and the Sangha Parivar to

follow the ideals of Sita, Savithri, and become Sati or will decide to break the chains of the old order of subjugation, humiliation and struggle alongside men to put an end to the exploitative society which is the root cause of all problems. He made a fervent appeal to the women of the State to come forward to fight for equal opportunities for all women in all fields of life and being half of society should jump into the struggle against all injustices of the society.

Comrade H.G.Jayalakshmi, the State Secretary of AIMSS Karnataka said that a new dimension has



Comrade Chhaya Mukherjee

been added to the problems of women like dowry, obscenity, atrocities etc, with religious revivalism and cultural invasion from the West. The politico-cultural scenario of the State has changed she said. In her thundering speech, she gave an account of the powerful movement of AIMSS against the dangerous trend of perverse glorification of physical beauty of women with an ulterior motive of multinationals for creating a market for dangerous cosmetics. She said that the women of Karnataka will not lag behind in their historic task of fight for emancipation.

Comrade Prathibha Mukherjee the main speaker of the Conference said that women are subjected to double exploitation. Atrocities and indignities on women are increasing daily. Attack on the minorities is mounting. Along with this women are facing the burning problems of unemployment, price rise etc. On the one hand the prices of all essential commodities are increasing but the peasants who grow it are not getting the proper prices and pushed to face the dire consequences of it she lamented. The capitalist system responsible for all this is also strengthening the patriarchal domination. She said that as shown by a great Marxist philosopher of this era Comrade Shibdas Ghosh women will have to fight and achieve their emancipation and that is possible only by participating in the movements against the problems of the women and blending the women's movement with the movement of all other sections of the exploited. She also cautioned about the danger lurking behind the legislation of prostitution being heard throughout the world while demanding at the same time proper rehabilitation of our mothers and sisters pushed to the humiliating condition of earning livelihood through prostitution. She congratulated the women of Karnataka for organising such a massive Conference and called upon them to build a powerful movement which can inspire the women of other States also.

Smt. Hemalatha Mahishi, renowned Advocate and writer who was the Chief Guest, discussed
(Contd. on page 7)



*3rd State Level Women's Conference at Bellary, Karnataka held on 14-12-2000.
A section of the open session gathering*

CULMINATING PROGRAMME

Joint Platform of Action's Protest Week at Allahabad

Government employees in hundreds from various ministries' offices and departments of central and state government in Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, thronged with great enthusiasm at AG Gate in Queens Road where a mass meeting was organised under the auspices of Allahabad Unit of Joint Platform of Action of Government and Associate Services Employees' Organisations (JPA) on 22nd December, 2000. This meeting was preceded by a 4-day long campaign programme launched by Allahabad JPA where representatives of JPA from various states, including Delhi, Haryana, West Bengal and other parts of Uttar Pradesh, participated. They addressed a number of floor meetings, exchanged with various sections, groups and associations of government employees on the need of developing a new platform like JPA. This is an urgent task at this grave hour of unprecedented attacks let loose against the government employees. This created attraction and admiration amongst the employees who warmly congratulated the JPA activities and initiatives, and many of the Associations spontaneously came forward to cooperate with and contribute to JPA fund.

The meeting was conducted by N.K. Sharma, the President of Allahabad Unit of JPA and a veteran leader of government employees' movement on behalf of the Presidium comprising Dr. Chakradhar Dubey, Kripasankar Srivastav (Audit, Allahabad) Kareadin Jadab (General Secretary, UP State Government Employees' Association), Shibram Sukla (National President, RMS Association), A. K. Majumder (Convenor, JPA, Delhi), Murshed Ali (Telecom Employees' leader from West Bengal), Dilip Dutta (Railway Audit), Chinmayee Mukherjee (President, Government Nurses Unity, West Bengal), Saibal Chakraborty (President, National Library Staff Association) and Birendra Singh Dahiya (General Secretary, Joint Council of Health Employees, Delhi and All India President of Central Health Employees' Federation) among others.

Sri Kripasankar Srivastav delivered welcome address wherein he appreciated the initiative taken by JPA. The valedictory address was given by Sri

Shibram Sukla, national leader of postal employees, who expressed his broad agreement with the views and objectives of JPA. Sri Manoj Kumar Srivastav, General Secretary, C&D Audit Employees' Association of Allahabad in his brief address explained the background of formation of JPA in Allahabad, emphasised the need of expanding and strengthening JPA and called upon the employees in general, and various associations, in particular, to join the platform. The main resolution was moved by Dr. Chakradhar Dubey and endorsed by Sri Triloki Singh Jadav. The main resolution contained in brief the present situation pertaining to government employees' movement at national and state level. Welcoming the heroic struggle of postal employees, it condemned the betrayal of the cause of the ED employees and vindictive attitude of the Central government, and emphatically urged the Prime Minister to accept JPA's 26-point Charter of demands.

The main speaker of the meeting Sri Achintya Sinha, All India Convenor of Joint Platform of Action, discussed at length the multi-pronged attacks unleashed against the government sector and its employees in Central and state services vis-à-vis the role of established leaderships of various government employees' organisations. The attitude and role of the employees' representative in the JCM recommendations are being implemented with their tacit approval.

In the telecom sector in last September they called for an indefinite strike not against corporatization or privatisation but on terms and conditions of corporatization. They finally accepted corporatization and thus helped the Central government to open up the entire sector to domestic and foreign monopolies. In postal sector, this time too, like that of 1998, the indefinite strike had been called off, betraying the legitimate cause of ED employees. The three Federations, namely NFPE, FNPO and BPEF have never failed to claim that the demand of departmentalisation of ED employees had always been the central issue of postal strike but it is deplorable to note that the issue has been sacrificed finally. He commented, it appears that privatisation and downsizing have been turned into our national slogan. In conclusion he said that in the given perspectives the emergence of JPA movement was the need of the hour in the history of government employees' movement.

Among the other speakers who addressed the gathering were Sri Birendra Singh Dahiya (Health Sector), Sri Murshed Ali (Telecom Sector), Sri Tarak Das (All India Civil Account Employees Federation), Smt. Parbati Pal (Nurses' Unity, West Bengal), Sri Bimal Jana (Community Health Guides' Union), Sri Rakesh Singh Bahdoria (Central Secretariat Clerks' Association), Sri Prem Chand (CPWD Workers' Organisation), Sri Rambabu Pandey (Delhi) and Sri Saibal Chakraborty (National Library Staff Association).

After the open meeting representatives of JPA from various states met together in the joint meeting which inter alia decided to launch a fortnight long campaign on the eve of the

forthcoming budget session and to hold hundreds of public meetings comprising government employees and other sections of the toiling masses to pressurize the government to withdraw its policies of downsizing, privatisation and contractorisation and to concede to JPA's Charter of Demands dated 17th August, submitted to the Prime Minister of India.

In this connection it may be mentioned that on the occasion of Protest Week in West Bengal thousands of employees participated in a mass demonstration held at Rani Rashmoni Road, Calcutta on 19th December and submitted a Memorandum to the Chief Minister, Government of West Bengal. On that very day the government employees of Delhi demonstrated before Shastri Bhavan.

Betrayal of Postal Employees

(Contd. from page 3)

of aggrieved workers and so again, after one and half years it was compelled to declare indefinite strike to start from 2nd May 2000. But the treacherous leadership did not take long to again backstab the workers. It promptly withdrew the strike at midnight of historic May Day'2000 through a joint statement by BJP-led government and JCA. The joint statement was silent about the treachery committed against the ED workers concerning their key demands. On 5th May 2000 the circular issued by FNPO informs, "The decision to defer the strike on reaching a written accord was unanimous — not a single dissenting note." From the above statement it can be reasonably gathered that on the basis of written agreement between the government and the JCA leadership, strike has been withdrawn. But where is that agreement? Of course, on the 1st May 2000 joint statement, the term 'agreement' was used as title, but it contained only some assurances of two ministers, some sympathetic words for the ED workers, an appeal not to resort to strike on account of drought and promise to implement the demands within 4 months.

But the demands remained unfulfilled. After 4 months the JCA leadership was compelled to give the strike call to start on 5th December, 2000. Although the leaders went on repeating the demands of regularisation and departmentalisation of EDAs, the Strike Notice it served on the government (6.11.2000) did not mention them. The Notice mentioned about the change of status of EDs, pension, etc. Change of status boils down to change of name. And the demand for pension separately proves beyond doubt that the dropping of the key demand has got the full consent of the leadership. Had not the key demand been dropped, demand for pension automatically would have been included, there would not have been any necessity to mention it separately. The workers, not knowing that their key demand had been sacrificed, started the strike with enthusiasm.

And ultimately, in absence of uncompromising struggling leadership, the tragedy struck, the postal workers' movement.

Vajpayee's inciting comment

(Contd. from page 4)

linked with ideological-cultural movement. This movement may in a given situation utilise the conflicts among bourgeois parties and groups keeping the people well aware of their role without creating any illusion. Once CPI(M) leadership projected BJP as 'democratic' against authoritarian Congress rule and now is projecting Congress as 'secular', against communal BJP only to grab power causing much confusion and harm to the democratic movement.

Further, we appeal to all left, democratic, secular-minded people to help us in organising and intensifying mass movements which alone can thwart all attacks of fundamentalism-communalism-fascism.

Women's Conference at Bellary

(Contd. from page 1)

elaborately on the attitude prevalent in the society regarding women which is responsible for the dowry problem which continues to be a menace. Women will have to form struggle committees in all localities, villages to create awareness about problems and fight it. She also appealed to women to reject Beauty Contests. Women achievers in every field should become ideals before the young girls she said.

Fraternal delegates from the neighbouring states — Comrade Mini K. Philip from Kerala, Comrade G. Lalitha from Andhra Pradesh and Comrade Jayanthi from Tamil Nadu — expressed their solidarity to the fighting women of Karnataka.

Dr. Sudha Kamath, State President, concluded the meeting by appealing to one and all to spread the message of the conference so that a powerful women's movement can be developed in the state to secure equal rights and equal and respectable position for women.

In the evening on the same day colourful cultural programmes highlighting women's issues were organised by the artists of Bellary. It added to the enthusiasm generated by the conference.

The next two days were kept aside for the deliberations by the delegates on the main resolution, organisational report and a few more resolutions on the problems of girl students, women employees etc... The delegate session organised at the auditorium of ASIM Women's College was inaugurated by Comrade Krishna Chakraborti, Member, Central Committee, SUCI. Comrade Chakraborti, analysed the complex struggle of the women, based on the thoughts of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, for their emancipation throwing light on the then historical conditions responsible for women's subjugation. He called upon the delegates to become conscious and play their role in the social movements to create an exploitation free society.

Of the 150 delegates present nearly 75% of them spoke on the various resolutions placed in the conference. At the end a 35 member State Council was unanimously elected with Dr. Sudha Kamath as the President, Dr. Mary John, Comrade Sheela Rao, Comrade Nagammal, Comrade Aparna as Vice Presidents, Comrade H. G. Jayalakshmi, as Secretary, Comrade Sumadevi, Comrade Manjula, Comrade Shobha and Comrade Hilda Mary as members of the Secretariat and Comrade B. S. Pratibha Kumari as the Treasurer.

Comrade Chhaya Mukherjee, the All India General Secretary, addressing the newly elected State Committee said that grass root level organisation should be built up throughout the state by taking up the burning issues of all sections of the women. As against various trends of women's movement which tend to confuse women and keep them within the frame work of the old society, AIMSS should be built up strongly she said.

The Conference concluded with lot of hopes and bright prospects of women's movement with every delegate pledging to play her due role in creating history.

US Presidential Election

(Contd. from page 2)

with administration and jockeying for power through its selected candid confession of a mouthpiece of American big business in the context of the US presidential election and the high tension accompanying it.

The *Business Week*, in its issue of December 11, comments: "Let's be honest here. The dispute over whether George W. Bush or Al Gore won Florida and thus the Presidency, is not about great constitutional issues. It's not about federalism, or the separation of powers between courts and the legislatures or even a correct reading of the Florida Election code. At this late state of the game it's about one thing: who can manipulate the levers of power to win. And once again, wrapped up in this naked power struggle is the US Supreme Court". That's why the very legitimacy of the election has been questioned widely within the USA and outside. It is a conclusive proof that bourgeois democracy can no longer maintain even the facade of parliamentarism-legalism. The hideous face of brutal dictatorship of the capitalist class comes to the fore.

Bourgeois parliamentary system has lost relevance

We see from concrete experiences of the US presidential election how the electoral practice has been wholly corrupted and to what extent the executive, legislature and judiciary have become objects of manipulations. The truth is, today when capitalism is struck in the of all-out morass and ever growing crisis, the democratic values, norms and principles once cherished by the bourgeoisie and upheld in social life, have become eroded beyond recognition. Degeneration stalks all spheres of social life, while the bourgeoisie is trampling democratic norms and principles and becoming more and more attached to bureaucracy and militarisation. This fact is given admission even by the liberal democrats who still hope that the thoroughly corrupt capitalist system can be corrected by the regeneration of democratic norms and values. However sincere and honest may be their desire and intention they try for the impossible — bourgeois democracy minus all pervasive crisis, chaos and decay all around.

In America, such trend of thought was best represented by Mr Ralph Nader, who ran unsuccessfully for the presidency as the Green Party candidate and got 3 % of total votes. He accused the electoral laws and demanded uniform method of voting, investigations into discrimination against minority voters and the media for ignoring their party candidates. He thought change can occur only if the media shift their focus from covering who will win to what the issues are. The theme of his public speeches was how corporate influence is eroding democratic participation. In his view, the expectation level of average citizens has dropped so low that they think "our politicians can run to the bank and then get elected and re-elected". He was urging for people's involvement. He and his likes will have to think how in a state like the USA under the grip and influence of giant corporate houses, desperately trying to keep its dominance, all the democratic reforms suggested can be made possible. And even if those were accepted would they not be just formal, on paper only? Is it not a fact that even on the question of welfare, accepted as state policy, financed by the exchequer, millions of women and children, the majority African American and Latin American people, are driven off welfare while hundreds of billions of dollars are doled out in corporate welfare to the rich?

We are happy with the call given by the *Workers World*. It writes: "...it must also be clear that Bush and Gore were fighting over votes that each could use for the purpose of becoming the oppressor of the people for four years. Both have a proven track record on that score and both belong to parties under the domination of big business which have been enforcing exploitation, racism and war well over a century...the only road to progress will be to open up militant mass struggle against the Bush administration, while retaining complete independence and following a programme that is irreconcilably opposed to the Democratic Party leadership".

To those democratic-minded people of America whose conscience is burning with shame at this shocking experience, we appeal not to remain silent but to join the militant democratic movement of the working people.



AIMSS Orissa demonstrate against fee hike in Bhubaneswar on 1st December, 2000 (News on page 1)

West Bengal Chief Minister's Licence to Police to Kill Condemned

In course of a statement issued to the Press on 26.12.2000 Comrade Provas Ghosh, Secretary, West Bengal State Committee said: "The instruction of the Chief Minister to the police to shoot down criminals at sight is very much alarming.

"The Chief Minister has also made the influence of unemployment problem and certain type of movies entirely responsible for giving birth to antisocial activities in this state and elsewhere. This is not also correct. These are the partial factors but not the principal cause. The power-hungry political parties-businessmen-police-administration nexus is primarily responsible for thriving criminal activities in society. It is this unholy alliance which is not only protecting and encouraging the criminals but in some cases aiding to make the youths criminals. Besides, all know that many of the police officers and political high-ups regularly collect money from these criminals. The more these criminal chains gain in strength, the more the crimes thrive in the society. The instruction of the Chief Minister to the police to open fire freely, without fighting this nexus is portent of dangerous fall out. Normally the police is accustomed to frame innocent persons instead of bringing the culprits to book, at the instance of their political masters and in vengeance to implicate opponent parties' workers in false cases, to gun down people indiscriminately on the plea of self-defence and even to maim the prisoners in custody. But according to the laws of the land even a person accused of murder cannot be punished without trial. A criminal under capital punishment even can expect humane treatment.

"We too want the criminals severely punished. But it must also follow laws and must not bypass judiciary. Police may have to open fire on compulsion but obviously not with the motive to kill but to immobilise the criminal by hitting below the knee and that too must be justified by the police before the court of law. In this country the police do not care a whit for such rules of a civilised society. In such a situation, the Chief Minister's direction will not stop criminal activities, on the contrary, this will help the police to intensify their indiscriminate attack and atrocity on common people."

Three SUCI workers murdered by CPI(M) goons

On 26th December last three of our party workers Comrades Hasem Sardar, Monirul Sardar and Zakir Sardar of Dhosa-Chandaneswar Anchal under Jaynagar P.S., South 24-Parganas, West Bengal went to offer Namaz after having completed their campaign in connection with the 'Maha Michhil' (People's March) of 8th January. At that time a gang of about 50 miscreants with firearms led by the local CPI(M) leaders Habibur Rehman Mondal and Akchar Sardar attacked them, killing all the three comrades on the spot. Till now the police have not arrested any of the murderers.

In course of a statement condemning this heinous crime and role of the police, Comrade Provas Ghosh, Secretary, West Bengal Committee of the SUCI, on 27th December 2000, wondered if the particular measures which the Chief Minister directed the police to take to tackle criminals, are actually measures meant to give licence to the anti-socials under the CPI(M) umbrella to continue their crimes freely?

Railway Workers' Meeting at Kharagpur

Under the auspices of UTUC-Lenin Sarani railway sector workers from different states of the country met in a meeting at Kharagpur, West Bengal, on 16th and 17th December 2000. Comrade K.P. Singh, a veteran trade union leader of railway workers, presided over the meeting. At the start, the meeting paid its respectful homage to the departed General Secretary of UTUC-LS, Comrade Prithvi Chanda, who organised railway workers through very many odds and led their struggle to a new height.

Comrade Sunil Mukherjee placed his report and highlighted the present day problems of railway workers. Representatives from various railway zones and production units participated in the deliberation and focused the problems of the railwaymen, such as, privatisation efforts of production units like Chittaranjan Locomotive Works and others. Track maintenance and other maintenance works are also being handed over to contractors. They also discussed over abolishing of printing works in railways, store delivery through contractors, handing over of jobs of

present zonal workshops to private companies, computerisation of office works, introduction of private travel reservation agencies, anomalies in pay scales of different categories recommended by the 5th Central Pay Commission, retrograde recommendation of the 5th CPC not to fill up vacant posts, recent declaration of 10% reduction of staff-strength and ban on recruitment in government departments, reduction of rate of interest of PF etc. Despite increasing onslaughts by the government and the administration, the speakers pointed out, other unions in railways are not building up any united movement.

Comrade Tapas Dutta, General Secretary, UTUC-LS addressed the meeting. While reviewing the present state of affairs in railways and railwaymen's movement he urged the railwaymen to take lessons from the railway strike of May, 1974. The railway workers are still paying for the unconditional withdrawal of that strike by the leadership. He said, no amount of compromise and submission can save the railway workers. They must be free from opportunism

Students fight fee hike in Orissa

At the call of AIDS, a massive students' rally was organised on 1st December last before the state Secretariat, Bhubaneswar. The students protested BJP-BJD government's decision to hike examination fee at +2 level from Rs. 291.00 to Rs. 505.00. Police attacked and injured many students, arrested many including State Secretary Comrade Rajendra Burma. A long preparation and various programmes led by the state level Students Action Committee culminated in this rally. ABVP opposed the movement. SFI and AISF did not join it. The movement achieved partial success. But it will continue till the demand is fully achieved.

and economism. Overall attacks on workers and toiling masses require unity of them to fight back all the anti-people and anti-worker policies of the government and the ruling class. He urged the railwaymen to build up mighty united struggle as a class conscious detachment of the Indian working class.

JOIN MAHA MICHHIL

In Calcutta on 8th January, 2001
In Protest Against the Anti-People Policies
of the Central and State Governments

From Azad Hind Bag (Hedua) to Kalighat Park • Assembly : 11 a.m.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF : NIHAR MUKHERJEE