

ELECTORAL REFORMS BILL : WHAT DOES IT AIM AT ?

On the 13th of December last the Central Government introduced in the Lok Sabha the Electoral Reforms Bill by bringing two amendments, viz, (i) the Constitution (62nd Amendment) Bill to lower the voting age from the existing 21 to 18 years seeking amendment to the Article 326 of the Constitution; and (ii) Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill, 1988 giving Constitutional sanction to, among others, widening the grounds for disqualification of persons desiring to be candidates, keeping police and civilian officials engaged in election work to remain at the total disposal of the Election Commission, registration of political parties, stringent measures to check rigging and booth capturing and severe punishment for the election staff and the outsiders for indulging in all these acts etc. The 62nd Constitutional Amendment Bill has already been passed on 15th December last.

The Bills have been described by Mr Rajiv Gandhi as 'historic and revolutionary' and he claimed that 'none in the last forty years could dare to bring such Bills'. The Law and Justice Minister, Mr B Shankaranand, has described the lowering of voting age as 'widening the scope of democracy'. Further, Mr Gandhi said: "The value-based politics which started with the Anti-Defection Act has found its culmination in the Electoral Reforms Bill".

The demand for a poll reform is long overdue and the Opposition parties had been clamouring for it for years and our Party's concrete suggestions, among others, advanced from time to time to the government that the Election Commission should be an independent statutory body, neither under the Central nor under the State Governments, which should start work from the preparation of electoral rolls to the declaration of results, and the staff associated with this entire process should be regarded as the staff of the Election Commission so that they may remain free, as far as possible, from their commitment or obligation to the Government or to the parties either at the Centre or in the states. Secondly, we suggested the introduction of identity cards with photographs to check the false voters. But none of our suggestions found any place in the amendment. Neither the Bill mentions any measures to check

the role of black money, mafia and musclepower in the election.

But why this poll reforms now? The Central Congress(I) government so long did not pay any heed to these demands and this time they have brought the Bill to reform the electoral process as if some good sense dawned on them. But if we examine the whole issue one by one the inescapable conclusion can only be that far from being good some devilish design worked behind these measures of the Congress(I) government at the Centre, the most trusted agent of the ruling Indian bourgeoisie. They are trying to make the people believe that the absence of law to check these things has given rise to this sorry state of affairs. Hence the introduction of this Bill. By this they want to hoodwink the people that henceforth the law will take its own course and stop all these things once and for all.

But what is the reality? Is it not true that the existing law were enough to control bribing the voters and influencing the election and counting staff, capturing of booths, scaring away the genuine voters, stamping the ballotpapers, snatching away and tampering with the ballot boxes with the help of the musclemen of ruling parties? Secondly, where lies the guarantee that once the Bill is enacted elections will be free from all these evils? Because the ruling parties themselves do practise

all these and the Congress(I) is the main culprit on all India scale in (Contd. on page 4)

COMRADE NIHAR MUKHERJEE CONDEMNS U.S. PROVOCATION

Com. Nihar Mukherjee, the General Secretary of the SUCI, in course of a statement today strongly condemned the unprovoked brutal shooting down of the Libyan Jet planes by the U.S. imperialists over the Mediterranean which once again brought to the fore the true colour of the U.S. imperialists, its peace pretensions notwithstanding. Pointing out the impending danger of a full scale aggression against Libya, Comrade Mukherjee called upon the peace and freedom loving people of the world in general and the Socialist countries in particular to realise the grave danger inherent in such heinous war design of the U.S. imperialists and come forward to foil it.

Com. Mukherjee Protests Coal Price Hike

Com. Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI, has issued the following statement to the press against the hike in coal prices by the Central Congress(I) Government.

"With the recent enhancement of prices of coal by 13.7 per cent, i.e., from Rs. 219 to Rs. 249 per tonne, the Central Government has once again hit hard the already impoverished people of our country. As a result, the price of many essential commodities are bound to increase under its impact.

He demanded of the Central Government to revoke its decision and urged upon all the Left, democratic and opposition parties and forces to build up a united movement to force the Centre to drop this anti-people measure.

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Sino-Indian Border Dispute

CC Urges Early Solution

Ever since the unfortunate developments in Sino-Indian relations in the year 1962, the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Centre of India has always maintained that prolonging tension along the border and continuing belligerent posture by this or that country could be allowed only to the detriment of the interest of these two nations and to the peril of the great peoples of these neighbouring countries now numbering around 1.9 billions and constituting about two-fifths of world's population.

The Central Committee cannot but view with concern that when the question of improving the lot of the common people of these two developing countries ought to have been given topmost priority, whatever social system they may opt for, the defence budgets have continued to rob a very large slice of the national exchequer of both these countries for long.

There is no denying the fact that solution to the outstanding problems between the two countries has to be found out in strict adherence to the five principles of peaceful coexistence, popularly known as *Pancha Sheel*, which has been reiterated strongly by the leaders of both the countries during the recent visit of China by the Indian Prime Minister.

While not undermining in the least the importance of increasing cultural exchanges and mutual economic and technological assistance as steps towards creating an atmosphere of goodwill, trust and confidence, the Central Committee considers that the most important question at the moment is the solution of the border problem. The formation of the joint working group to study the border problem and the decision to fix up a time-frame of three years for it to prepare the basic formula for a settlement may reflect some sense of urgency, but it cannot be forgotten for a moment that the more the border problem lingers and remains unresolved the more will the imperialists and vested interests try to exploit the situation.

A sincere desire to solve the problem based on understanding of each other's point of view which will be in the interest and to the benefit of both the peoples may lead to a really "fair and reasonable settlement of the boundary question" as set out in the joint communiqué only when preconditions like "there is no question of parting with any territory" coming from whatever quarter, are dispensed with.

The Central Committee is confident that it voices the genuine aspirations of the peoples of both India and China when it underlines the urgency of solving this vexed problem as expeditiously as possible basing on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of any country and mutual respect for each other's point of view, making a common cause in the greater interest of peace and progress of people of Asia and the world as a whole.

Bodo People's Movement : An Analysis

In Assam for about two years the All Bodo Students Union has been agitating for a homeland with the status of a Union Territory comprising the areas of Assam where there are Bodo inhabitants. The agitation started in the form of Bandhs, Rail Rokos, Rasta Rokos although remained confined mostly to Bodo inhabited areas, resulted in violent clashes with police. And as a result of police firing not less than 30 persons have died in the meantime. Apart from this, police oppression in the form of raids on villages, arrests, lathicharge and intimidation have also become widespread. On the other hand the agitation has badly affected communal harmony and peace, non-Bodo people living in those areas are feeling insecure; violent communal clashes and attack upon opponents of the agitation had also cost many lives. As a matter of fact, a climate of total uncertainty is prevailing in those areas. At the same time, it is also true that most of the Bodo students and youths are today emotionally involved with the agitation while large section of the people firmly support the movement but the non-Bodo people of the State are largely against the movement as they feel it will further dismember the State.

It may be recalled in this connection that the P.T.C.A. (Plains Tribal Council of Assam) also spearheaded a similar movement in the early 70's for the formation of Udayachal as a Union Territory comprising certain areas of Assam where the Bodo people reside. But it did not succeed. Although it has not still given up that demand yet, the P.T.C.A. is not associated with the present agitation, rather they are opposed to this A.B.S.U. (All Bodo Students Union)-led movement. Bloody clashes between the P.T.C.A. and A.B.S.U. has also occurred. The All Bodo Sahitya Sabha and another faction of the ABSU although strongly aggrieved over the injustice perpetrated against the Bodos and also engaged in separate movements demanding redressal of their grievances—are not in favour of separation from Assam. Hence the distance from the ABSU led movement. In this connection it should also be noted that apart from the Bodo agitation, a spate of separatist movements either with the demand for formation of separate states or for formation of autonomous regions involving mostly the tribal people is presently raging Assam. Thus among the Karbis and the Kacharis residing in Kar-

bi Anglong and North Cachar Hills districts respectively there is a movement continuing for about a year demanding formation of an autonomous State within Assam. Some other Tribal organisations are also agitating for greater autonomy for other smaller tribes. All these demands are, however, not unanimous in that tribal population being not homogeneous; concerned tribes differ in raising demands. However, amongst all these movements, at present, the movement conducted by the ABSU has become the principal one which demands immediate solution.

The Bodos are the largest amongst the tribal groups who are the aboriginals of Assam. For a long time Bodo-Kachari rulers ruled many parts of present Assam. During the subsequent rule of the Ahom king, Assamese became the dominant language due to their patronage. Due to the patronage of the British rulers Assamese flourished further and almost all the tribes including the Bodos got more and more initiated into Assamese language and culture and in this way Assamese language was becoming the principal language of the region although English remainend the official language.

With the advent of independence, reins of administration came into the hands of the upper strata of the Assamese nationality and during the entire post-independence period of Congress rule things began to take a bad turn. Not only the Bodos, but all other tribal groups including other linguistic and religious minorities fell victim to worst type of exploitation, discrimination and neglect in all respects—economic, political and cultural. An injured feeling of the tribal people, resulting out of it, was no doubt very deep. Adoption of the Assamese language as the sole official language of the state in total disregard to the feelings and aspirations of the tribal people dealt a powerful blow to the cause of unity and integrity of the people of the state. Parochial forces began to rear their ugly heads and separatist demands were being raised. Formation of Nagaland and Mizoram became inevitable. Scores of other hasty steps making Assamese the sole medium of instruction and making Assamese a compulsory subject further aggravated the situation. Added to their extreme economic backwardness and this linguistic chauvinism was the social problem of looking down upon the tribal people, which the ruling elites fostered for a long time. The penultimate assault upon the cause of unity and integrity of the people of the state has been brought by the Assam movement conducted with the ostensible slogan of driving out foreign nationals while its real essence lay in the latent slogan of 'Assam for Assamese'. It dealt the last blow to the minds of the enlightened sections of the tribal people to whom it was a movement for establishing total 'domination of the Assamese' as they felt that as a result, the future of their language and culture was doomed for ever. For obvious reasons the utterly chauvi-

nist and parochial movement gave fillip to the growth of different types of parochialism, even amongst the tribal people.

The situation, therefore, has become extremely critical. But the irony of the situation is that whereas the down-trodden tribal people living in an extremely suffocating situation require immediate steps and measures which will not only alleviate their sufferings but also help them to overcome this unhelpful situation, the better-off and educationally advanced sections of them who are articulate also and very much pro-bourgeois in their outlook are out to utilise the situation to their own advantage. And therefore the issue of neglect, discrimination and exploitation perpetrated by the bourgeois ruling parties turn out to be a demand for meeting the 'political aspirations' of the tribal people which for all practical purpose means formation of, at best, of a parasite state administration or a Government heavily dependent upon the Central Government with respect to the crucial matter of finance in which this better-off section of the tribal people become the agents of the Central capitalist government.

That is the reason why no perceptible change in the life-pattern of the down-trodden tribal people has taken place in those states which have been carved out of Assam in the past. The only pronounced outcome of formation of those states like Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Arunachal has been the disappearance of the earlier communitarian pattern of society and emergence of a new affluent ruling elite gradually engaging themselves in exploitation of their own people in collusion with the Indian bourgeoisie and the Central government, making thereby the task of development of democratic

movements against the misrule of the Central and state governments much more difficult whereas the fact remains that even in those newly carved out states, the lot of common people can be changed only through democratic movements. What comes out of the slogan of 'meeting the political aspirations of the tribal people' is crystal clear: emergence of small states financially almost wholly dependent upon the Centre, police and bureaucracy eating up its lion's share, quite unable to meet the minimum needs of the people in any sphere—economic, political, cultural manifesting all the economic and political limitations from which all other states are suffering today, developing at the same time all the vices in the administrative system which the existing capitalist system engenders making people more vulnerable to the trickeries, deceptions and devisive tactics of the rulers—task of developing democratic movements becoming thereby many times difficult. This is the net outcome of 'political power' with which the people are 'endowed' with the formation of new tribal states.

India being a country inhabited by people having diverse language and culture, there having innumerable divisions amongst the people in terms of race, religion, language etc., formation of states will have to be viewed in that context, keeping in mind the following pertinent facts:

(a) that all real problems of the people are today, basically economic in nature,

(b) that as no state can be totally unilingual or homogeneous in nature in the capitalist politico-economic setup and the multinationality pattern of the country, problem of political and

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Comrade Tapas Datta's Speech

AT WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS SESSION

(We regret the inordinate delay in publishing this report).

This year the General Council meeting of World Federation of Trade Unions was held in New Delhi from 24th to 27th October, 1988. About 200 participants from 75 countries attended the meeting. Comrades Prithvi Chanda and Gyan Singh, President and Secretary respectively of UTUC (Lenin Sarani), attended the sessions along with Comrade Tapas Dutta, member of the General Council of WFTU.

On 24th October after the opening session meetings of different Commissions were held, in Asia-Pacific Commission meeting Comrade Chanda raised some very important questions and appealed to the House to adopt a resolution condemning India-Sri Lanka accord and demanding withdrawal of Indian army from Sri Lanka immediately.

In the General Council meeting the full text of Com. Tapas Dutta's speech could not be read out because of shortage of time. In his speech he said: "We are holding this session at a time when mankind is threatened with nuclear and star wars. And to ward off the resistance from the working class in the imperialist-capitalist countries the rulers are enacting newer and newer draconian anti-labour laws and curbing seriously the Trade Union and democratic rights of the workers". Com. Dutta while discussing the condition of the people living in Asia-Pacific region said about ever-growing pauperisation in spite of natural resources galore because of age-old inhuman exploitation by the colonial powers. He said that they are not free from economic subjugation of the neo-colonialist powers and the bourgeoisie of their respective countries. Pointing out to these who overlook the antagonistic contradiction of two opposite classes he said that "it will be a grave blunder if we do not bring about this awareness among the working class who for so many reasons falls victim to the propaganda that 'by introducing New Economic Order' keeping the capitalist relations of production intact and a slight change to this or that direction will change their

lot and all causes of their ills are stemming from the improper planning or unregulated market economy'. But the stark reality is that even when capitalist economy is regulated the lot of the working class remains the same, because it is meant to serve the aggregate interest of the capitalist class only". He also warned that the idea of protecting the interest of the imperialists and capitalists on the one hand and the working class on the other on the question of preserving peace, . . . is a load of humbug as when extending the lease of life of imperialism means strengthening the possibilities of danger of war' . . . Com. Dutta also discussed about the attainment of imperialist character of Indian capitalism and said, "it is now not only exporting commodities but exporting capital as well" and became junior partner of world imperialism. He said, "...India having the leading role in the Non-Aligned Movement, which has a positive role in preserving world peace, is also trying to carve out its own sphere of influence through various manoeuvres. The recent despatch of Indian army to Sri Lanka is an outrage on that country's sovereignty and is a naked reflection of India's expansionist tendencies".

He said, "Here in

India unemployment has reached an all time high and with the passage of time is reaching newer and newer heights because of computerisation, modernisation and capital intensive industries replacing labour intensive industries in both the private and state sectors. About 1.49 lakh industrial units have had either lock-out or closure because of sickness throwing millions out of employment. . . In the public sector there is no recruitment for the past 10 years and the Central government has declared a moratorium on recruitment. . . As a consequence of this, heavy workload has been imposed on the existing workforce in industry and business. . ." He also said that capitalist government following the footsteps of its big brothers in the developed capitalist countries, "is taking recourse to militarisation of economy. And for this Indian government is enormously increasing its defence budget by imposing very heavy tax burdens. Already it has attained the sixth position in respect of military power. Last year India was the largest purchaser of arms and military gadgets surpassing even Iran engaged in war for years with Iraq. It is also going to build up a missile testing range at Baliapal in the State of Orissa by spending crores of rupees evicting lakhs of people from a most fertile land known as granary of Orissa in spite of the fact that people in Kalahandi in the same State are facing starvation death every year".

Comrade Dutta also exposed the fact that in face of all-out crisis of capitalism, "the Indian government is introducing various draconian enactments like the Essential Services Maintenance Act, National Security Act, Trade Union and

Industrial Disputes (Amendment) Bill 1988, Hospital and Other Institutions (Redressal of Grievances of Employees) Bill and the latest the Defamation Bill".

While welcoming the Soviet moves for peace treaties, disarmament agreements and arms limitations talk, and also the Soviet withdrawal from Afganistan as per Geneva Agreement, Com. Dutta pointed out, "these moves will be meaningful when these are done as a part and parcel of and backed by militant peace movement. Unless and until the imperialists are forced to stop war manoeuvre they will continue to do so because it is the inherent law of imperialism to generate war, as Comrade Lenin taught us."

It is noteworthy that although the general tenor of the deliveries was compromising and reflecting revisionist line, the representative of Japan Federation of National Public Service Employee (KOKKOREN), expressed different tenor. He was very much critical of the report placed in the General Council session. We are referring some portions of his speech. He said, "...only the advancement of the class struggles in respective countries can make foundation of a democratic development of economy in each country. . ." Again, he, in course of discussion said, "trade union policy should be based on the fundamental position of trade unions to defend interest of workers and people. Therefore, when we think over the issue of industries and economy, we need to firmly stand on the basic viewpoint that these are parts of the class struggle fighting against the reactionary policies of transnationals and capital in different countries. In this sense, I cannot but point out that there is a serious weakness in the report". Again he criticised the report by saying—"The report and other draft documents point out, 'to build a nuclear-free and non-violent world' is in-

dispensable to the development of this region. Military armaments, the largest violence, will exist, unless capitalism disappears from the world. Therefore, such an argument on non-violence in the report is one which is putting the today's pressing task of the elimination of nuclear weapons on the shelf, turning back to the aspiration of the workers and people.

"So, we think that the report and draft resolutions presented here lack series of such important issues as the class struggle in each country, military alliances, abolition of nuclear arms as I mentioned before. We cannot overlook this as manifestation in the trade union movement of the 'new political thinking' which denote the class struggle in each country in the name of the priority to 'earth sharing co-destiny' or the 'one common human stream'. I wish to point out that it has a serious negative effect on the trade union movement in the capitalist countries".

We have already mentioned that the general tenor of the deliberations was compromising one and reflecting revisionist line. In this respect we like to refer an example from a speech of Sri Chaturan Mishra, President of AITUC, who said, "now in the changed world situation, the conception that export of capital from a capitalist country to other countries does not reflect the imperialist character of that exporting country". Here we find a brilliant defender of imperialism. Another important matter which is worthy to be mentioned in Com. Dutta's report, that is, under the initiative of UTUC (Lenin Sarani) a joint amendment on a resolution, signed by the representatives of Sri Lanka, the Philippines and UTUC (LS) was brought and it was defeated by a brute majority. But, of course, it had a tremendous effect on the delegates attending the session particularly the representatives from Asia-Africa region.

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this matter. Other major Opposition parties, even the Left parties, cannot claim to be innocent in this practice. Rather the Congress(I) government has brought this Bill in order to apply it against its opponents while they themselves will violate it. So also other parties will take advantage of it in their respective strongholds.

Take the example of a Clause in the Representation of the People Act in which it has been clearly stated that the parties in power shall not use government machinery and resources for its election campaign. But in actuality these things are being frequently practised by the ruling parties with impunity. Another Clause stipulates the definite ceiling of expenditure of a candidate. But how many of these ruling parties abide by this law? Again it is mentioned that after the declaration of elections the party in power or the government shall not open or declare any project, financial or other benefits or anything of this sort which will bias the minds of the electorate. But what do we experience? We find loan melas, sanctioning of schools, roads, tubewells; development projects and reliefs and other financial benefits through government machinery and the panchayats on a large scale as the order of the day. So it is not true at all that absence of law helps these things happen. Rather it is more true that the law will not touch the offenders, they will violate the law and it will be applied against the opponents. These are some of the reasons why they have armed themselves with this Bill in the name of free and fair election.

This poll reform Bill has been introduced at the time when the people are witnessing butchery of democratic values and norms every now and then by the Congress(I). Their democratic rights are being drastically cur-

Electoral Reforms Bill : One of many ploys of Congress(I) to refurbish its image

tailed through the introduction of so many draconian Acts, Bills and Ordinances. It is their life's experience that their most legitimate and just struggles are ruthlessly crushed by the government in a most fascist way in the name of law and order. They helplessly watch that the ruling parties by deleting the genuine voters not to their likings and by including the ghost voters in bulk in the electoral rolls are winning the elections with the help of money, musclepower and mafia and through various forms of rigging and branding the victory as the mandate of the people and thus made election a total farce. The parties thus capturing power having brute majority in the Parliament and Assemblies have made the police, administration and the judiciary virtually their subservient and made democracy a mockery. The media, once called the reflection of social reality, are now made to behave as the instrument of propaganda and thus pattern the mass mind through imaginary opinion poll etc. in favour of the parties and forces protecting the interest of the bourgeoisie and their establishment and are out to create an artificial polarisation in the elections to the serious detriment of growth and development of correct thought and revolutionary party and thereby making grounds for a two-party democracy. The government, therefore, is giving these parties the advantage to use the government media during the elections to the recognised parties and depriving the other parties and forces against the spirit of democracy and the parties thus getting favour are silent on this undemocratic attitude of the Centre.

All these have cumulative effect on the mass mind regarding the worth and credibility of the elections and if this

trend grows unabated it may lead to endangering the parliamentary democracy itself which serves the ruling class best and which the ruling class wants to protect and prolong because of its so many illusory and deceptive aspects through which the bourgeoisie can hoodwink and befool the people with false hope and impression that if they can change the government through elections their problems will be solved and they will have a better future in bringing this or that party to power.

With the parliamentary election round the corner the ruling class has felt the pulse of the people and hence brought this Bill firstly to salvage the worth and credibility of the elections and thereby extend its lease of life to befool the people for a longer period of time. Secondly, the Congress(I) has lost all its credibility with its leader Rajiv Gandhi's sagging image once created by the media as a new hope for this crisis-ridden country. But with the allround crisis growing by leaps and bounds day by day the myth has not only exploded with the passage of time but the party and its leader have fallen into the quagmire of scandals like the Fairfax, Bofors and German submarine deals. So to pose Rajiv Gandhi as an apostle of democratic values and refurbish his image through this Bill the ruling Congress(I) wants in the name of value-based politics and extension of democracy to recover what it has lost over the years in order to reap rich dividend in the elections and secure their rule. Thirdly, the dazzling slogans of yesteryears like *Garibi Hatao* and *Bekari Hatao* having failed miserably because of their rejection by people as hoax, the Congress(I) this time in a bid to befool the people with more gaudy slogan has taken recourse

to these measures in order to create a false impression among the people that there is none more democratic than the Congress(I) in holding high the democratic norms and value-based politics. This is one of many ploys of the Congress(I) to recover its image in view of the elections. Who knows how many are to follow with the nearing of elections!

We now come to Mr Rajiv Gandhi's contention that his urge for value-based politics made him introduce Anti-Defection Act and Religious Places Act and which culminated in this Electoral Reforms Bill. Value for what? Apparently it may mean value for democratic norms. But what we have been observing is that the Congress(I) under Rajiv Gandhi is perpetrating the butchery of democracy and Rajiv Gandhi's sole aim to introduce the Anti-Defection Act was to guarantee his own position in the party riddled with dissension, infighting and squabble. The people have not forgotten the incidents of Karnataka, Meghalaya and Tamil Nadu where the Congress (I) itself engineered and encouraged defection to suit its own political purpose. So this value-based politics does not find its application elsewhere than guarding and securing Rajiv Gandhi's hold over the government. Rather we observe that the protagonists of this value-based politics are violating the law themselves to serve their narrow political ends.

This is the starting step of their value-based politics. His second step was the Religious Places Act through which, Rajiv Gandhi claims, he has been able to free the religious places of the political activities. The real import of this claim can only be that as if he has upheld the true spirit of secularism. But what we are experiencing all over

the country? The incidents regarding the Babri Masjid and the Muslim Women's Act conclusively prove that the Act could not even touch the fringe of the problems of religious fundamentalism. Rather the Act helped it rear its ugly head all over the country. The Congress(I) introduced this law in order to apply it against a particular community who are allegedly using their religious precincts for political purposes — while 'the Congress(I) itself is using the temples for political activities' as was disclosed by the former Punjab Chief Minister, Mr. Surjit Singh Barnala, in an interview with *India Today* (Dec. 25-31, 88). Thus the Congress (I), mouthing slogans of secularism, is itself using religion against the other religion-oriented parties and forces as is evident from the incidents in Punjab.

All these steps taken by Rajiv Gandhi, the leader of the ruling Congress(I), are not meant to mend the electoral procedure. Rather their heinous design is amply evident from these steps as is evident from the provisions meant for the registration of political parties. These Clauses have been incorporated in the amendment with a satanic motive in order to eliminate the real party of the people and thereby paving the way for the establishment of the two-party democracy which the ruling class has been striving hard to achieve. So to proceed in that direction they are using the slogan of mushroom growth of political parties as an alibi.

The ruling party contends that the mushroom growth of political parties disturbs the smooth democratic process and is the factor behind the instability of governments. Hence this clause. The people also due to their prevalent level of political consciousness are made to believe and think that perhaps the mushroom growth of political parties is creating hurdles on the way

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MSS : W. B. STATE CONFERENCE

Comrade Chanda Calls Upon Women To Rally Round MSS

30th December '88, Raghunathpur town of Purulia was resounded with the chorus from thousands of women coming from the districts of West Bengal. They came from far-stretched Darjeeling as well as from the remotest corners of South 24-Parganas ignoring the biting cold of December. Some of them even without possessing the minimum winter garments, embracing kids by one hand and holding baggage on the other came out from their interior villages braving all obstacles to join the 2nd West Bengal State Conference of their beloved organisation, the Mahila Sanskritik Sangha.

From the late hours of 29th they started pouring in and were received with warmth by their comrades-in-arms of the host district, who waited round the clock tirelessly in two railway stations, Adra and Jaychandipahar, the two main gateways of the town. The enthusiasm of the waiting comrades roused higher when Comrade Pritish Chanda, the Polit Bureau member of the SUCI, one of the closest Comrades-in-arms of the great Marxist thinker, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, and the main speaker of the conference got down from the train at the Adra Station. The surroundings at once reverberated with slogans like 'Red Salute Comrade Shibdas Ghosh', 'Long Live Comrade Pritish Chanda', 'Make success the Second State Conference of MSS' etc. He along with other party and MSS leaders was escorted to the venue of the conference.

For the occasion of the conference, the entire town was decorated with monumental high arches on the streets and writings on the wayside walls. The venue of the open session, the Raghunathpur Football Ground, took a festive look with large rostrum at a corner and posters surrounding the ground. At one corner of the ground was a beautiful poster exhibition on the atrocities on women and their resistance movement which attracted a large crowd.

Within the noon of 30th the delegates from all over the state reached the town.

At 2 p.m. the procession started from the camp site at Raghunathpur College. Before it, the MSS flag was hoisted by Com. Chhaya Mukherjee, the Joint Convenor of the All India Mahila Sanskritik Sangha and flower bouquets were placed on the martyr's column by Com. Gayatri Dasgupta, the West Bengal State Secretary of MSS and Com. Sadhana

Chowdhury, the member of the State Secretariat, as the women volunteers marched past with the drum-beat to pay homage to the martyrs. The processionists in a well-disciplined manner with well-written demand posters in their hands then stepped forward from the college gate to join the open rally. The procession with the State Committee members and the district secretaries at the frontline and a large festoon with the announcement of the conference behind them, followed by more than five thousand women contingent in two files made its way through Nutan Bazar, Nanduava and Munsef-danga towards the venue of the open session. Some were barefooted, some wore scanty winter garment, some were carrying youngsters — with tired feet but with eyes shining with firm determination they were marching. These were the women who, oppressed by the capitalist exploitation on the one hand and the patriarchal subjugation on the other, once came to join hands with the MSS to fight against social injustice in general and for women's emancipation in particular based on the teachings of their beloved leader and tea-

cher Comrade Shibdas Ghosh. The local people gathered in large number, on the wayside and stared at the processionists with high hope. The housewives who could not join them, peeped through the windows and it appeared that they emboldened themselves by the thousands of female volunteers' fighting zeal for the cause of the women.

At last the procession reached the Raghunathpur Football Ground amidst slogans raised from the rostrum like 'Build up protracted movement against dowry system, women's oppression and murder of housewives', 'withdraw the anti-people National

Policy on Education of the Union Government and language and education policy of the State Government', 'stop the publication and spread of obscene literature and show of obscene film' etc. The ground selected for the open session immediately proved too small to accommodate the huge crowd. A large number of them could not even enter the main venue and stood outside.

Before the meeting started Com. Pritish Chanda, the main speaker and Com. Prativa Mukherjee, the Chairperson of the meeting, garlanded the martyrs' column near the Raghunathpur bus stand in

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The main speaker Com. Chanda addressing



A section of the gathering at the Open Session at Raghunathpur, Purulia

Comrade Pritish Chanda at ILC

UNIFORM D. A. FORMULA DEMANDED

The UTUC(LS) President, Comrade Pritish Chanda, demanded uniform single pattern of Dearness Allowance (D.A.) formula for the entire working people of the country irrespective of public or private sector, Central or State Government employees. One pattern of formula should be applicable to all industries, establishments and sectors including services and Government Offices.

While explaining the different patterns in D.A. currently in vogue in Public Sector Undertakings, private sector industries and for Central and State Government employees, Banks, Insurances — Life and General — Comrade Chanda cited the different D.A. patterns for Central Government employees, public sector workers, certain private industries and Banks, LIC, GIC etc. and he observed that such differences are creating more problems in evolving equitable social justice.

These preliminary remarks were made by Comrade Pritish Chanda in the first D.A. Committee meeting, convened by the Union Labour Ministry, held on 23rd December, 1988 at Delhi under the Chairmanship of Shri Bindeswari Dubey, Union Labour Minister. It is to be remembered that the Central Government through the Department of Public Enterprises (Bureau of Public Enterprises, commonly known as BPE) under Ministry of Industry by a Resolution notified on 19th September, 1988, has appointed a Tripartite Committee consisting of representatives of Government of India, Central Trade Union Organisations and the Public Sector Enterprises to review the formula for payment of Dearness Allowance (D.A.) to the employees of the Central Public Sector Enterprises at present governed by the Industrial Dearness Allowance formula. This Tripartite Committee is formed under the Chairmanship of the Minister of Labour and having Secretaries of Department of Public Enterprises, Department of Coal, Department of

Steel, Department of Mines, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas — all representing Government of India and Chairman, Coal India Ltd., Managing Director, Bharat Yantra Nigam Ltd., Managing Director, National Fertilizers Ltd., Director (Personnel) Steel Authority of India Ltd., Director (Personnel), Indian Oil Corporation Ltd., Director (Personnel), Bharat Earth Movers Ltd., and Director (Personnel), National Thermal Power Corporation Ltd., — all representing Public Sector and representatives of INTUC, BMS, HMS, UTUC (LS), AITUC, CITU and NLO — all as members of the Tripartite Committee. The terms of the reference of the Tripartite Committee are as follows: —

1. To review the extent D.A. Formula applicable to the employees in Public Sector enterprises governed under the Industrial D.A. formula.
2. In recommending such a D.A. formula to keep in view the repercussions on the resource position of the Public Sector of Central or State Government, on employees of Central or State Governments, on employees of Undertakings governed by other D.A. formula, on the organised Private Sector, on unorganised industrial workers or on agricultural workers in rural areas etc. etc.,...

In the meeting of Tripartite Committee held on 23rd December, 1988, Comrade Pritish

Chanda first drew the attention of the Government of India — to the fact that while the terms of reference stipulates that the Committee will submit its report within 6 months of its setting up, the first sitting of the Committee is taking place after 3 months of its constitution, hence only 3 months are left to complete the business and finalise the report. This reflects sadly the seriousness of the Government to the issue under reference. He, therefore, urged that although we are very eager to decide the matter quickly, since many wage negotiations are pending in the Public Sector, yet the loss of 3 months' time should not be included in the stipulated time of 6 months. He then criticised the limitation imposed on the Committee by clause (ii) of the terms of reference wherein it states that, "in recommending such a D.A. formula to keep in view the repercussions on the resource position of the Public Sector of Central or State Government, on employees of Central or State Governments, on employees of Undertakings governed by other D.A. formula, on the organised Private Sector, on unorganised industrial workers or on agricultural workers in rural areas."

This term, Com. Chanda said, consideration of 'resource position' or 'capacity to pay' and repercussions in other sectors including rural agricultural workers puts an unwarranted fetter on the Committee which, if observed, will obviously frustrate the very purpose of the Committee. He, therefore, pleaded for not to bring in the question of 'capacity to pay'.

Com. Chanda then dealt on certain vital points for consideration by the Committee, which are: —

- (i) while deciding the D.A. formula the first consideration

should be to make full or 100 per cent neutralisation of rising cost of living. He argued that when the 4th Pay Commission in case of Central Government employees has recommended for full neutralisation of cost of living and which has been accepted by the Government of India on principle — there is no reason for denying the same in D.A. for the industrial workers of Public Sector, or for that matter for all workers and employees.

- (ii) Viewing the fact of existing irrational wage structure which is very low in comparison to other industrialised countries, and in view of constant erosion in real wages the basic wages should be sufficiently raised as to bring it to a civilised standard, without which neutralisation would not be possible by increasing D.A. rate alone. Even after 4 decades of independence the Government has failed to introduce any national wage-structure and the old colonial pattern is still continuing. He also reminded in this context that the 15th Indian Labour Conference in 1957 recommended for "need-based wage", which still now remains a far cry. Indian judiciary has also long past ordered in many cases for a living wage and next a fair wage. Many Courts had also observed that the industry which cannot pay a living wage to its workers has no

right to exist. Public Sector which were financed by people's money must provide for civilised wage to its workers.

- (iii) Income-wage policy should be seriously reviewed and a reasonable share of the income should be allotted for wages.
- (iv) The incorrectness in the CPI numbers has caused so long serious loss to workers and employees. Hence while introducing new CPI series the old errors along with new errors pointed out by our Trade Union must be corrected and also while converting 1960 base year to 1982 the linkage factor should be made correctly without which the D.A. cannot be determined properly.

The Union Labour Minister, Shri Bindeswari Dubey, presiding over the meeting, in his speech although remarked in favour of full neutralisation as far as possible, yet emphasised that 'capacity to pay' is to be considered seriously. He has assured to convene the next meeting soon.

TAILORS' MOVEMENT IN TAMIL NADU

The workers under the leadership of Periar District Tailors' Union affiliated to the UTUC (Lenin Sarani) are on a movement since November 3 last. The ready-made garments manufacturing workers demanded the minimum bonus at 8.33 per cent as per the Bonus Act. But their very legitimate demand was turned down by the owners though the same has been achieved elsewhere under the leadership of the union affiliated to the UTUC (Lenin Sarani).

From November 28 the tailors under the Periar District Tailors' Union have been on continuous dharna to achieve their demands.

Electoral Reforms Bill

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of smooth functioning of democracy and hence the two-party system like the USA or Great Britain is the right answer. The Congress(I), the most trusted agent of the Indian capitalists, took advantage of the idea rampant among the people and very slyly introduced this amendment to pave the way for a smooth progress towards a two-party system on the one hand and on the other limiting the choice of the voters among the parties chosen by the ruling class and thus denying the people the right of proper representation through the party of their choice on the basis of ideology, policy and principle.

We want to remind the people that during the heydays of bourgeois democracy none thought that the existence of multiplicity of party was an obstruction to the democratic process; rather this was considered to be a guarantee for wider democracy by the then bourgeoisie during the days of free competition and *Laissez Faire* economy. That is why we found John Stuart Mill describing the spirit of democracy in his famous book *Liberty*: "If all mankind minus one were of one opinion and only one person were of the contrary opinion mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.... All silencing of discussion is an assumption of infallibility." It is only in the era of moribund capitalism that the bourgeoisie who have scant regard for democratic values and principles are finding the existence of multiplicity of parties disadvantageous to their class interest and hence the necessity of restricting the number of candidates with a view to imposing in the process a two-party democratic system one day.

In this Clause of the amendment it is men-

tioned that any party intending to be registered must furnish everything including its membership strength category-wise as if these are credentials for a party to contest in the election but not the distinct ideology it possesses. In the same Clause it is also mentioned that every party which wants to be registered must apply with the copy of its constitution which must contain a provision that the party shall bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India etc. etc. Now it is known to all that the existing system is that a candidate has to pledge by the Constitution at the time of filing nomination and the legislators require to take oath to abide by and protect the Constitution. Why then is this new provision? What does it aim at? Is this Clause in conformity with the democratic norms that the party in power or the government will dictate terms as to what provisions will be there in the formulation of the constitution of a political party? Is it not against the spirit of democracy? Has it any relevance to the free and fair elections? Rather by these the ruling party will be legally armed enough to eliminate the parties not to their likings.

By the 62nd Amendment to the Constitution the ruling party claims that by lowering the voting age from 21 to 18 years it has conferred electoral rights on 5 crores more people and thus it has widened the democracy. But as a matter of fact it is a long pending demand and whereas the municipalities and panchayats in some states have already introduced this, the tall claim does not behove the ruling Congress(I) and its leaders, who have brought this Bill so late and are posing how democratic they are. But will they answer why this long pending demand is not accepted much earlier? How can the people expect the extension

of democracy when they are experiencing everyday the shrinking of democratic rights, privileges and norms? Are they not indulging in butchery of democracy, committed judiciary and attack on Press, change of Criminal Procedure Code (Cr.PC) and virtually reducing the country to a police state in order to prolong the lease of life of capitalism which has turned not only reactionary but out and out corrupt as well. Those defending and protecting capitalism are inescapably bound to plunge in corruption too.

So the corrupt ruling class was waiting for the opportune moment. The ruling bourgeoisie through their government over the years has been successful in vitiating the character of the larger section of youth with the help of obscene films and literature, drugs and intoxication and thus made them fall easy prey to money, privilege and power. Gone are the days when waves of movements used to burst forth in different corners of the country spearheaded by the youths and students. Most of them no longer think in terms of good to the society, good to the people. Rather they are now made to think 'support those who ever is in power or may come to power.' Their general trend these days has been to run after personal interest and they are gradually being patterned this way.

So taking all these things into cognizance the ruling class assessed the whole affairs and arrived at the conclusion that far from losing anything by conferring voting rights on the youths of 18 years and above they would rather gain by the help of money, muscle-power, media and widespread false voting. Perhaps the people are apprehensive to think that when boys of 13 or 14 claim to be the voters of 21 years what age group will come to claim as voters to give false votes is anybody's guess.

The ruling class has taken a very calculated step to achieve their class ends. But how far it will succeed will depend on the people. If the people can understand the grave danger the Bill poses and accordingly rise to the occasion then they can foil this monstrous design of the bourgeoisie by building up a nationwide protracted movement. Only the people's mighty movement can guarantee

the existing democratic rights and privileges and can work as the watchdog against the onslaughts on democratic norms, values and ethics. We appeal to the people in general and youths in particular to come forward to frustrate the evil motive of the ruling class. We at the same time call upon all Left, democratic and Opposition parties and forces to move in that direction.

BODO MOVEMENT

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cultural domination of the minorities cannot be eliminated altogether and therefore the democratic movement of the toiling people will have to face it boldly and effectively.

(c) that the problem of nationality domination is a bourgeois phenomenon and to wage a struggle against it, it is also better to strive for winning the support and sympathy to the extent possible and to forge unity with the oppressed section of the dominant nationality for which again they have an interest to win the support of the minorities, in the process, thereby making it conducive to the growth and development of anti-capitalist socialist revolution.

(d) that even from the working class point of view formation of states for obvious reasons can't be an endless process.

Again, to all sections of the down-trodden people of the country irrespective of differences in terms of race, language, culture, religion etc. exploitation being perpetrated by the capitalist class is proving to be ruthless. All basic problems—economic, political and cultural, not excluding the problem of discrimination are the direct offshoot of it. Question of confronting the capitalist exploitation in the effective manner is the basic question. Nothing should therefore be supported or resorted to, which virtually overshadows this pertinent fact of capitalist

exploitation and that stands in the way of forging of greater unity of all sections of the toiling people of India which alone can give birth to powerful democratic movements and force the rulers — whether of the states or of the Centre to concede to the just and legitimate demands.

In this connection it also cannot be forgotten that the formation of states in India on the basis of language to which the Left-democratic movement of the country in general once extended a qualified support should be viewed in proper perspective. It was intended to foster Indian people's unity on a more effective basis and for that it cannot be allowed to degenerate into an instrument for bringing disunity amongst people in the hands of the ruling bourgeoisie.

The demand raised by a powerful section of the Bodo students and youths for a separate 'homeland' to be carved out of Assam needs to be viewed in this greater perspective. Whereas they have many just demands arising out of their extremely backward condition, arising out of prolonged neglect and discrimination the pertinent question to be asked is—in which way they can best solve their problems—by forming a small state with inherent weaknesses having little scope to shape out the destiny of the people or to try to change

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MSS Conference

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memory of Com. Habul Rajak and Com. Sovaram Modak who had courted the martyr's death in the police firing while fighting against the unjust bus fare hike by the State 'Left Front' Government—in 1983. After the welcome address by Com. Manju Chakraborty, the female volunteers dressed in milky white uniform greeted Comrade Pritish Chanda by paying guard of honour. After a short speech by Com. Protiva Mukherjee and move of the homage resolution, main resolution and a resolution on education, Com. Pritish Chanda delivered in details on the genesis of and cause behind the particular problems confronting the women's life and urged upon them to link their fight with the anti-capitalist socialist revolution. The meeting ended with the song on Com. Shibdas Ghosh and after that the cultural programme was presented by women's cultural group.

From the morning of the next day commenced the delegate session in the pavilion erected for this purpose within

BODO MOVEMENT

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the lot of their people by developing powerful mass movements—while pledging themselves to the unity and integrity of Assam and thereby gaining powerful support of other sections of the toiling people of Assam. The question assumes more importance in the face of the fact that exploiting the sentiments and feelings of the people of Assam, which is quite reasonable, that they have for the unity and integrity of the state, the AGP Government is today out to crush the agitation with brutal force.

the college campus. The delegates had to spend hard hours on the previous night as the accommodation arranged for them stood insufficient and they had to sleep in the temporary delegate hall in this biting cold. At the beginning the secretary's report was placed by Com. Gayatri Dasgupta, the State Secretary and the main resolution and one on disastrous New Education Policy of the Central Government and the other on the anti-people language and education policy of the State Government were moved one by one. The General Secretary's report and all other resolutions were largely deliberated upon, seeking amendments and additions. The afternoon session was addressed by Com. Protiva Mukherjee and the concluding speech was given by Com. Pritish Chanda. The session elected new State Committee for the coming two years with a seven-member advisory board, with Com. Protiva Mukherjee as President, Comrades Namita Bose, Rina Ghosh, Manju Ghatak, Manju Chakraborty, Protiva Gupta, Gita Das, Usha Sen and Kalyani Banerjee as Vice Presidents, Com. Gayatri Das Gupta as Secretary, Comrades Sadhana Chowdhury, Hasi Hore, Menoka Basu Roy, Anita Mukherjee, Dipti Sarkar, Aruna Kar and Pranati Bhattacharya as the members of the Secretariat, Com. Krishna Sen as Treasurer, and nine members and sixtysix Council members.

After the presentation of the song on Com. Shibdas Ghosh, Great Marxist Thinker, the President declared the Second State Conference of MSS as concluded amidst cheers and slogans.

The main speaker of the meeting Comrade Pritish Chanda in course

of his speech said: the saddest chapter in the history on the torture of women is that the women themselves have accepted most of the rites, rituals and customs formulated to trample of the women as the part of their life. Even most of those who feel these unjust have taken in as their destiny. The situation has come to such a pass that even the mother gets morose when she gives birth to a female baby. Children grow up under these circumstances and get various obstruction when grown up. But, as you know, this society and civilisation have developed and reached this stage as a result of efforts and labour of both man and woman, yet women are deprived of all these rights and privileges. During the period when human civilisation did not flourish the place of women was considered higher than that of men and the mother was the only source of identity. But afterwards women was gradually pushed to the background. Yet during that period woman did not allow it go unprotected and put up resistances to get back their rights and privileges.

The bourgeois constitution singing glory to democracy conferred equal rights on women but it remained only on paper. Equal rights for women remains a far cry till today in this capitalist country like ours though the Constitution had sanctioned it. Moreover, medieval barbarism is still being perpetrated on women. They are treated as saleable commodities and it is very difficult for them to live with honour. They are being humiliated, tortured and raped every now and then not only by the anti-socials but also by the custodians of law and order in the lockups and even in public places as well. And wonder of wonders, these beasts of prey are protected by the political parties, Com. Chanda said:

The social emancipation and, so to say, the overall solution of the women's problem lie in the overthrow of the present capitalist system and the establishment of socialist society. So many misconceptions prevail in the countries in the name of socialism—don't be confused by those. For, those who have deviated from the right path, are committing mistakes out of wrong understanding. Marxism-Leninism is not at all wrong, so also socialism.

Com. Chanda conclu-

ded: I hope with these teachings and experience MSS will soon become a real instrument of struggle at the hands of the struggling women of the country and will draw programmes of action complimentary to reach their ultimate goal. The entire women community will have to rally round MSS. So, on the chapter of humiliation and torture a new history of struggle has to be written: So no tears, but a vision with firm determination and fiery spirit.

A P Save Education (Preparatory) Committee Formed

In view of the All India Save Education Convention in Madras in March the Andhra Pradesh Save Education (Preparatory) Committee has been formed as a part of South Zone Save Education Committee with the following persons: President: Justice O. Chinnapu Reddy (Retd. Judge, Supreme Court); Vice Presidents: Sri Vavilala Gopal Krishna (freedom fighter), Prof. Chekumi Rama Rao (Director, Telugu University), Dr. Jayashankar (Registrar, CIEFL) and Prof. S. L. Prasad (Director, Open University); General Secre-

tary: Prof. G. Haragopal (University of Hyderabad); Executive Committee Members: Mr. Satrugna (Journalist), Prof. K. Sridhar (M. J. College of Engineering) and Mr. Vedakumar (Engineer, R and B); Secretariat: Messrs. Ramesh Patnaik, M. V. Rama Rao, Mr. C. Murahari and Mr. H. Srikanth.

It has also been resolved that as and when a District Committee or a University Committee is formed, the President and General Secretary shall be Ex-officio members to the State Committee.

Police Assault On Protest Marchers

In protest against steep rise (30 per cent to 40 per cent) in milk prices, hundreds of workers of the SUCI, Delhi State, courted arrest at Jantar Mantar on 30th December last. They were proceeding towards Krishni Bhawan to submit a memorandum to the Union Agricultural Minister and were stopped and brutally assaulted by the CRPF and Delhi Police. Even the women and children were not spared.

Before that a meeting was held in which the leaders of the Delhi State Organising Commi-

tee said that rise in milk prices was an unethical and criminal act because rampant corruption and mismanagement of the milk supplying authorities resulted in this price-rise and for this the whole onus is put on the shoulders of the people. They also demanded that the government announcement to raise the price of sugar from January should be revoked and appealed to the Opposition parties to come forward to defeat these moves of the government through sustained movement.

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