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Election and Government Formation

Decadence of bourgeois democracy exposed

Election to the 14th Lok Sabha has been concluded and the results declared. The Congress-led alliance bagged 219 seats and formed the government with Manmohan Singh as prime minister, with the CPI(M), CPI and their associates, who won

61 seats, providing support from outside. It is tragic that an out and out reactionary party with non-secular orientation like the Congress which as the most trusted political agent of the ruling capitalist class was in power in Delhi for many

years after the independence, and was subsequently de-throned being voted out, has returned to power. It is doubly tragic because this has happened with the support and initiatives of those who call themselves leftists.

principles to the winds. They resorted to every conceivable opportunism, utterly opportunist alliance, tie-up, adjustment, fraud, trickery and bribery just to gain more seats anyhow. Nothing was too mean or vile for them. Some of the most glaring instances of these are mentioned below. In Andhra Pradesh, the SUCI and eight other parties, including the CPI(M) and the CPI proclaiming themselves lefts and pretending to champion the cause of the downtrodden, had been jointly developing mass movements. As the election bells rang, the

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SUCI condemns petrol, diesel, cooking gas and coal price-hike

Strongly condemning the latest severe hike in prices of petrol, diesel, cooking gas and coal under the pretext of rising prices of crude oil — wherein coal does not come — Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI, in course of a statement on 16 June, 2004 said that another Damocles' sword had come down on the common people groaning under the ruthless exploitation of the capitalist class, and this time from a Congress government supported by the CPI(M) and its allies, which in its chain effect would cause further spurt in the prices of other essential commodities and services.

Calling upon the people of the country to oppose and resist this attack Comrade Mukherjee emphatically stated that the capitalist rulers have no moral right to shift on the common people the burden arising out of the crisis which is again their own creation.

While the need of the hour is to build up worldwide public opinion against the highly unjust and monopolistic pricing of crude oil by the international oil cartels it is deplorable that, not to speak of the bourgeois ruling parties, left phrase-mongering parties like CPI(M) and CPI are finding it fine to burden the common people in their bid to minimize and lessen the pressure of the capitalists, Comrade Mukherjee added.

Central TUs joint memorandum to the Central Labour Minister

The seven Central Trade Unions, representing an overwhelming majority of the workers of the country, viz. AICCTU, AITUC, CITU, HMS, TUCC, UTUC and UTUC-LS, met the newly elected central labour minister on 26 May, 2004 and submitted a memorandum. In the memorandum submitted to the minister, they demanded that the new government must set out to act without any delay and carry out the

tasks of giving immediate relief to the distressed working masses of the country.

They emphasized the necessity to embark on a programme of massive government investment, directed and targeted to augment agricultural production building and expanding social infrastructure particularly in health, education, supply of drinking water, vastly

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The murky election scenario

There has been a mockery in the name of election even by bourgeois standards. It was attended by corruption and malpractice of every sort. The parliamentary parties conducted electioneering on communal, casteist and parochial lines unabashedly, throwing all



USA reverberates with the slogan : No War ! More funds for education !

Protesting the government decision to curtail funds for education, students of 8 colleges in San Diego, USA boycotted classes and participated in a protest march on 26 April. On that day 400 students, a force to draw attention by the US standard, marched to the office of the Governor, California, voicing slogans like — Tax the rich, not the students ! No curtailment of funds for education ! Pit Baily, member of the ANSWER, urged upon the gathering to raise the question, when the US government does not hesitate at all to spend \$ 160 billion for an illegal barbaric imperialist war : on the basis of which law does it forward the plea of lack of fund when it comes to spending money on people's need, like education ? Students then raised the slogan — 'No War ! More funds for education !' (Workers' World, 8-5-04)

Election — ruled by money, muscle, manipulation

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CPI(M) and the CPI left the 9-party combination and went into alliance with the Congress for improving tally of seats. In Assam, a left-democratic platform had been functioning with participation by the SUCI, the CPI(M) and the CPI among others. When the election was declared, the CPI(M) went ahead on its own to fight the election in support of the Congress. In UP, the BJP, Congress, SP and BSP — all indulged in casteist politics. The election associates of the Congress in this state included even the Indian Muslim League ! The Congress even made overtures to the out and out casteist BSP of Mayawati which had been running the state government in alliance with the BJP till only the other day and embroiled in the Taj-corridor scam, for an electoral understanding. In Chattishgarh, V. C. Shukla, once a Congress stalwart, suddenly changed colours to join the BJP ! To combat Shukla, the Congress took back Ajit Jogi, the former chief minister of the state, who had been accused of corruption and suspended from the party ! The Congress also brought back Sukh Ram, who had been expelled from the party eight years back for his palpable involvement in multicore telecom fraud. In Bihar, Ram Vilas Paswan of Jan Shakti Party took mafia dons Suraj Bhan and Pappu Yadav into his party. RJD chief Laloo Prasad Yadav, reportedly at daggers drawn with these two, still tied up with Paswan to anyhow improve election prospects.

In Kerala, Karunakaran had almost split out from the Congress to form a new party. But when the election came, he was lured back to stay in the Congress by inducting his son into the state ministry, allotting a Lok Sabha seat to his daughter and offering him a Rajya Sabha seat ! Some of the CPI(M) candidates in the state had no other credential than being known representatives of their respective communities. For example, its candidate in Aleppy is the state president of Latin Catholic Youth Organization and a strong-man of the Church. In a statement, he confessed that had he been approached by the Congress-led UDF first, he would have become their candidate ! In Tamilnadu, the Congress, CPI(M) and CPI had no compunction in tying up with the

DMK, MDMK, and PMK which had been in the BJP-led NDA till the other day. In Karnataka, the BJP engineered massive defections from other parties. The BJP also admitted into its fold, Bangarappa, an ex-chief minister of the state known for his frequent floor-crossing for pelf and power, whom the BJP had once called the most corrupt chief minister in the country! The CPI(M) and the CPI chose to contest against the Congress in West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala while in the rest of the country, they had seat adjustments with the Congress and conducted election campaign in support of the Congress in the hope of gaining one or two seats here and there with its favour.

Criminals dominated at large

Another dangerous feature of this election has been the dominance of arch criminals and mafiadons. Not only that such notorious elements filled up the rank of the bourgeois parties and their opportunist allies and controlled the election machinery, they became formidable candidates, managed to win elections through indiscriminate use of money and muscle and were rewarded with important ministerial portfolios. For example, Laloo Prasad's RJD teemed with such musclemen, mafias and shady characters of all sorts. It is this RJD of Laloo Prasad, with Sahabuddin, Taslimuddin, J P Jadav that was in Bihar the principal ally of the CPI(M), CPI.

Glamour trade to woo voters

The electioneering was reduced to a *tamasha*, a circus, when numerous Mumbai film stars and sportspersons, hired by the BJP and the Congress combinations against huge payments, descended upon the election scene as candidates or for campaigning.

This was nothing but a glaring manifestation of the level the political standard of the bourgeois vote-seekers has stooped to. Unable to attract the people with their politics these parties now need to be "star-studded" in order to pull crowd and catch vote. Thus the whole election process has been reduced to a commercial activity of hire-purchase taking in its sweep the limited scope that remained for serious discussion and debate over important political issues during such occasion. Many of these stars

are known for possessing disproportionate assets, evading tax, featuring in obscene and vulgar movies and leading questionable life. But they have a media-propelled class-backed "glamour" that these bourgeois parties are trading to earn political fortune. Even this glamour-trade of the bourgeois parties has not been objected to by the so-called lefts. It appears that they might also follow suite in the days to come.

Free flow of money

And then both the known bourgeois parties as well as those calling themselves lefts had indulged in unthinkable lavish poll campaign expenditure. The extent to which these vote-seekers demonstrated their money power even rattled the Election Commission. The Commission had to admit that the quantum of expenditure by these parties far overshoot the prescribed ceiling. The question is what is the source of such free flow of money that has been spent in all sorts of immoral and unethical manner to anyhow woo and influence the electorates? Obviously, it is the black money of the monopolists and big business that funds this huge expenditure. Naturally all those parties who gratefully accept such "doles and grants" from the ruling class, remain ever loyal to it no matter how much they talk of serving the people.

The farce of election

The election campaign showed that even the minimum bourgeois norms of electioneering had been discarded. None of the parliamentary parties bothered to place its policy and viewpoint before the people and tried to justify and substantiate the same with reasoning. There was no serious debate on any matter of principle, any important issue. The ruined economic condition of the people, their distress crying out for succour, did not figure in the election campaign. Instead, it degenerated into falsehood, covering up their own misdeeds while blaming the opponents, much ado over insignificant, irrelevant or contrived issues, launching worst kind of personal attacks and indiscriminate mudslinging. The contending parties vied with one another in using money and muscle power to swing the election in their favour.

Money flowed, and organized muscle power ruled. Criminals and antisocials, forming hordes of goons, moved about terrorizing the people dissuading them from exercising franchise as per their choice.

The election, conducted in 4 phases, was marked by widespread violence, killing and injuring many. There was large scale rigging all over the country. The rigging started with manipulations at the time of preparation of voters' lists. On the election dates there was massive rigging in various forms. Votes were purchased or procured under dire threat; booth jamming was resorted to employing roughs so that many genuine voters, tired of waiting in the queue, went back without voting; forcible polling was conducted under intimidation; false voting was resorted to, even wholesale false voting by capturing polling booths; electronic voting machines were snatched away and damaged. And all this on a very large scale. This happened all over the country. Widespread violence and terrorization was to such a degree in Bihar that re-polling had to be ordered in hundreds of booths spread over the state. Things came to such a pass in the Chapra constituency that the EC had to order a total re-poll, in all the 1157 booths of the constituency. Fittingly, none other than Laloo Prasad Yadav was the main contender here.

But West Bengal must take the cake for organized rigging. There, the CPI(M) which calls itself leftist and communist, heading the ruling Left Front, masterminded and systematically organized rigging in all the constituencies. The threat of CPI(M) terror was omnipresent, while the planning and execution of rigging were total, making the opinion of the electorate irrelevant. Before the election, the Election Commission aired how very concerned it was to ensure a free and fair poll and repeatedly stressed the steps it would strictly enforce for the purpose. This was duly projected and highlighted by the media. But thereafter it was found that some "invisible fingers" pulled the strings from behind and all such "steps and stringent measures" remained confined to words and letters. The rigging operation was free and the surveillance mechanism was indeed fair to it. Who but the

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CPI(M) helps entrench bourgeois 2-party system

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ruling class could have such overriding power to reduce the “powerful and non-partisan” Commission into an indulgent spectator to such a widespread malpractice? However, as a face saving device and to confuse the people, the Commission ordered repoll in certain booths where it felt, irregularities crept in. But it was all eye-wash and did not touch even the fringe of the monstrous operation.

The people of the country, groaning under fast deteriorating economic condition, exploitation and oppression, and listless under 57 years' capitalist class rule since independence, seeing no ray of hope, developed apathy towards the poll process and sensing the hollowness of this election process, felt alienated from it. The violence and rigging too acted as further dampeners. They had no enthusiasm at all to participate in the election, and this apathy was an all-India phenomenon. As a result, the turnout at the polls was very low. The official figure of 50 per cent plus polling given out does not tell the true story. Considering that this figure included the huge number of false voting organized as a part of the rigging, which resulted in 80%, 90%, 95% or even higher polling in very large number of booths in West Bengal, Bihar and elsewhere and excluded the huge number of genuine voters whose names were struck from the voter's list, it would not be incorrect to assume that not even 40% of the electorates exercised their franchise. The election did not reflect the genuine opinion of the majority of the people.

People voted against capitalist reforms

But even then, whatever limited opportunity was available was seized by the people to give vent to their accumulated grievances against the ruthless capitalist rule and exploitation and to vote against the BJP-led NDA who became symbol of this gruelling oppression and suppression. The verdict was particularly against the policies of globalization, liberalization and privatization being pursued in the country for over a decade now by the governments in Delhi run by parties serving the ruling capitalist class. Essence of these policies is the opening up of the Indian

economy and market and placing the same at the disposal of monopoly capital, Indian and foreign, for ruthless exploitation by them at will, fleecing the people to maximize their profits. These policies were first instituted and set in motion in 1991 by the Congress ministry of Narasimha Rao with Manmohan Singh in charge as the finance minister. These anti-people policies were continued by the UF ministry headed first by Deve Gowda and then Gujral with the CPI participating in the ministry and the CPI(M) supporting it from outside.

It is the pursuit of these policies, their vigorous and widespread implementation by the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre for the past few years that has affected the employees, workers, and peasants — all sections of the people, grievously. Through reduction of the Provident Fund interest rates, drastic reduction of interest rates on bank and postal deposits, coupled with rising inflation, tens of millions of employees and aged people dependent on PF and interest on deposits, have been pauperized. Lakhs of factories, mostly small scale, have closed down in the country. Within the last few years, 3 lakh vacant posts in the Post and Telegraph Department and 1 lakh posts in banking industry were abolished. Lakhs have lost their jobs in the private and public sector units. As millions of tons of foodgrain rot in the FCI godowns, bulk of the rural populace go hungry, try to eat whatever they can lay their hands on, even if it is unfit for human consumption (like eating mango seeds in Orissa), and die in flocks of malnutrition, diseases and starvation, often driven to killing the near and dear ones before committing suicide themselves. Thousands of farmers all over the country, caught in vicious debt trap, are committing suicide. The Muslim minority that had not forgotten BJP's rabid communalism culminating in the carnage of Muslims in Gujarat and disdaining Vajpayee's frantic wooing to please them on the eve of the poll, voted en masse against the BJP, along with many right-thinking Hindus all over the country, even in Gujarat. But it is mainly their pent-up grievances and sense of deprivation, their heart-rending cry of distress, pain and anguish that the Indian people articulated,

overcoming all obstacles, through voting against the incumbent government. But it is a great tragedy that they found no force in the established political spectrum to carry forward their voice and project it, to fight for their cause.

Return of Congress — fall out of bourgeois 2-party system

True that the people did express a desire for a change. But did the change they aspired for come about? In the absence of a strong current of left-democratic movement and on account of the despicable stand of the CPI(M), CPI to become a part of the bourgeois vote politics for frequenting the corridor of power, the Congress managed to stage a comeback and form the government. Power was thus transferred from one trusted political agent of the ruling class to another, from the BJP to the Congress, fulfilling the design of the ruling class to establish the bourgeois two-party system whereby, when there is discontent against a bourgeois party or combination in power, it is replaced with another bourgeois party or combination to assuage the public feeling and continue with the anti-people bourgeois class policies in relative peace, safeguarding the capitalist system from people's wrath. It is a pity that those who call themselves leftists have been instrumental in making this conspiracy of the ruling class a success.

Overwhelming support for SUCI

Yet there has been sparkle in the pervading darkness, a crimson arc on the horizon. While the bourgeois parties joined the fray with money and muscle, surfeit of hoodwinking devices, debased culture and all-out mafia-backing and the so-called lefts played a second fiddle to have a share in the booty, the SUCI, holding aloft the noble banner of Marxism-Leninism-Comrade Shibdas Ghosh thoughts, appealed to the people to use this opportunity in furthering the cause of democratic mass movement. It called upon all to discard the bourgeois design of vote-politics, rally behind the genuine forces of legitimate democratic mass movement centring around the burning problems of their life and make the tested and tried soldiers of democratic movement victorious in

the elections so that the voice of conscious mass struggle could be heard inside the legislature. This appeal of strengthening left democratic movement through the election battle received overwhelming response from lakhs of conscious and conscientious people who voted for the 56 SUCI candidates in the 13 states braving all odds and refusing to be swayed by the bourgeois polarization created by the ruling class to limit people's choice within the chosen bourgeois outfits. Apart from votes, this genuine alternative political line of democratic mass movement attracted the toiling people from all walks of life. They have seen the SUCI fighting for the cause of the people, building up sustained organized class and mass struggles throughout the country on the edifice of higher ethics and culture. They thronged at the election meetings of the SUCI in huge numbers, listened to the speeches in rapt attention for hours, enthusiastically purchased the political literature of the party including the celebrated works of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh and freely contributed to the fighting fund. Many joined the party to develop themselves as revolutionary political cadres. Everywhere the people could identify in this party the future of theirs, the embodiment of their urges and aspirations, their yearning for emancipation from the clutches of capitalist oppression..

Betrayal of CPI(M), CPI to people's cause

In this way, the Congress, discredited long back, returned to power without changing its class character and policies. But was this inevitable? Is this what the people of the country deserve? Had the CPI(M), the CPI and their associates come forward in response to our repeated appeals to build up united democratic mass movements on the burning problems in people's life articulating the people's grievances, a strong wave of mass movements could have been created, and integrated with it, an ideological-cultural movement against communalism could also have been conducted. In the course of developing and strengthening the movement, some of the people's demands could be secured providing some relief to them, and

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Stabilizing government from outside — height of opportunism

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in course of the struggle, a Left and Democratic platform could have emerged as the people's instrument of struggle, as their own alternative. Had this present election been fought from that Left-Democratic platform, a Left-Democratic alternative could have been projected on the national political scene. Had candidates of that Left-Democratic platform been made victorious in significant numbers, the strong voice of mass movement could have reverberated inside the Lok Sabha, simultaneously coordinated from outside, and a new vista could have opened up before the left and democratic movement in the country.

But that was not to be, because the CPI(M), CPI and their allies, in order to attain and stay in governmental power with the blessing of Indian and foreign capitalists, have abandoned even the limited participation they used to have earlier in the mass movements. Wherever they have been in power including West Bengal, they have been crushing mass movements like any bourgeois government and avoiding mass movements at the all-India level. By crushing and avoiding mass movements on the one hand, while mouthing left, revolutionary vocabulary on the other to confuse and deceive the masses, they have been playing a social democratic role, acting as agents of the bourgeoisie in the working class movement.

In this election, with the object of anyhow making gains and moving closer to the centre of power in Delhi, the CPI(M), CPI and their associates created a smoke-screen about the BJP's communalism and gave the call of forming a "secular" government in association with "secular" forces like the Congress and its allies to "fight" BJP's communalism. The "secular" allies included reactionary, corrupt forces of all sorts, even casteist Laloo Prasad Yadav, the king of corruption and his criminal associates.

But it is known to all that Congress had never been secular. Rather it has been tacitly playing the communal card including engineering of communal riots on several occasions to derive political mileage by dividing people and thus serving the class-interest of the ruling bourgeoisie. In fact, in the

current era of decadent capitalism, no political party subserving bourgeois class interest can remain non-communal or free from corruption.

CPI(M) played key role in ministry formation

Before, during and after formation of the Congress-led ministry, each stage was marked by naked opportunism and duplicity of the CPI(M), CPI and their associates. The communique of the Central Committee of the CPI(M) on the Lok Sabha elections clearly mentioned, "The CPI(M) will rally all the secular and democratic forces so that the widest forces can be mobilized to defeat the BJP alliance ... which ensures the emergence of a secular government." And clarifying this stand Prakash Karat, the CPI(M) politburo member said, "If this means allying with the Congress, be it so." In fact, H.S. Surjeet the CPI(M) general secretary, became the emissary of Sonia Gandhi in securing alliance partners for the Congress. The CPI(M) also fought the elections with Sonia's photograph and message displayed in its posters. It had tie-up with the Congress in many states.

After the elections, the CPI(M) leaders apparently took upon themselves the responsibility of forming a Congress-led government. Once again, Surjeet became extremely active and played a pivotal role in the behind-the-scene activities that culminated in the installation of a Congress-led government. It was Surjeet who advised the Congress not to declare Sonia as the prime ministerial candidate so that he could unite all his "secular" friends including those parties and forces who had reservation about her holding the top post. In fact, he began hectic parleys with all the parties outside the BJP-led NDA to elicit their consent to back the Congress. Who knows whether it would be revealed one day that it was at Surjeet's advice that Sonia declined prime ministership to harvest bigger gains in the future. As per press report, Pranab Mukherjee was denied home ministry because of the CPI(M)'s objection. The CPI(M) leaders also claimed that the suggestion for having a Common Minimum Programme (CMP) came from them and most of the clauses of CMP

were picked up from their manifesto. The CPI(M) and its associates also said that they would endorse the CMP if their proposals were incorporated. The very fact that they did endorse the CMP confirms compliance with their requirement. Not only this, the CPI(M) leaders have seen themselves "in a steering role in the new government." Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, the CPI(M) politburo member and the West Bengal chief minister prided himself in declaring in a post-election public meeting in Calcutta: "If we say, yes, the government will move. If we say no, it will halt". So the CPI(M) leaders have made it amply clear that they are in total command of this ministry. They have also been categorical in their assertion that come what may and whatever might be the provocation they "would not allow this government to fall."

But when the CPI(M) was offered key positions in the ministry including, as reported in the press, the deputy prime ministership, it declined to join the government. Instead, the CPI(M) leaders pledged to support the government from outside. When they were asked the reasons for staying out of a government they took so much initiative to install and committed to run for full 5-years, they said that the Congress was a bourgeois landlord party. Hence, they could not share ministerial posts with them. They also said that they differed with the Congress over economic policies and had some reservation about the CMP. They also lambasted against disinvestment of profit-making public sector units to show their point of disagreement and demanded dismantling of the disinvestment ministry. In fact the CPI(M) leaders noticed that apart from the issue of Hindutva, the principal reason behind the defeat of the BJP had been its vigorous pursuance of the policy of globalization-liberalization-privatization or the capitalist economic reforms. They also knew that it was the Congress and the same Manmohan Singh who authored and rolled out these economic reforms that the BJP inherited and carried forward with more ferocity and velocity. So they needed to pose to the people that they differed with the Congress on economic affairs.

Both CPI(M) and Congress want reforms

Are they really so? Let us hear from the CPI(M) top brass. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee articulated the CPI(M)'s stand in no uncertain a term. "It is a wrong notion to brand us anti-reforms. Let me make it absolutely clear that we are pro-reforms. We understand that the process of economic reforms is irreversible. All we want is that the reforms should have a human face." "Seeing its effort to promote growth and welcome foreign investment, its willingness to adapt labour laws to the special circumstances of the IT industry and to close loss-making public enterprises (in West Bengal), I am optimistic that the Left Front will be pragmatic in its approach to economic policy making", said Lee Bradwig, economic counsellor at the US embassy in Delhi. Such confidence has been reposed on the CPI(M) and its associates by the front ranking Indian monopolists as well as the chambers of commerce. Mukesh Ambani, the Reliance Industries chief said, "I can assure you that the communists in India will put them (i.e. revisionist Chinese Communist Party leaders who turned renegades and completed counter-revolution in China —Ed., P.Era.) to shame." In fact, the CPI(M) is now advocating "private-public partnership", an euphemism for abject surrender to monopoly private capital, for economic development. The CPI(M)-led West Bengal government has opened up key sectors like power, education, health-care, real estate, agro-industries, infrastructure, etc., to private owners and is frantically seeking foreign capital from all notorious imperialist countries like the war monger US, UK, Zionist Israel and Italy, Japan, among others, assuring "full protection to their interests". It is also implementing other key prescriptions of globalization incorporated in the reforms programme like contract labour, VRS, creation of special economic zones and so forth. Encouraged by the coinages and achievements of the CPI(M), Manmohan Singh, the Congress prime minister, made no delay in announcing that his government also wants reforms with a "human face" and its philosophy is also to have a "private-public

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improving irrigation facilities, developing small and medium industries, building rural roads setting up new power stations, extending communications and above all reducing poverty and generating massive employment.

They expressed the expectation that the new government would repeal the draconian POTA and ESMA, which have been unwanted incursions into the democratic rights of the people.

During the past few years, all the central trade unions and independent unions and federations in the country, had jointly formulated the following eight-point demands :

- Halt to privatisation of profit making and potentially viable public sector undertakings,
- No change in the labour laws in favour of the employers and against the interest of the workers,
- Immediate enactment of comprehensive legislation for agricultural workers,
- No to policies leading to severe aggravation of joblessness and unemployment,
- Widen comprehensive social security schemes for all, including workers in unorganised sector,
- Restoration of quantitative restrictions on imports,
- Amendment of Payment of Bonus Act by removing all ceilings,
- Restoration of 12 % interest rate on PF Deposits.

Besides the above, the entire spectrum of the trade union movement in the country denounced the Supreme Court pronouncement against the right to strike and demanded that the central government take appropriate steps to negate the pernicious impact of the said judgement of the Supreme Court.

Urging upon the government to respond to the concerns of the working people, the Trade Union leaders listed the specific issues and demands, on which the new government is expected to initiate speedy action.

On Labour Rights

First and foremost, the impasse created by the Supreme Court verdict on the right to strike by taking effective steps to negate the

pernicious impact thereof.

Initiate steps to ratify the core conventions of the International Labour Organisation on the right to association and right to collective bargaining (ILO Conventions 87 and 98), as also the ILO Conventions 151 and 154, which specifically relate to the rights of those employed in public services.

Include the May Day as an additional national holiday.

On policy issues

End privatisation/disinvestment of profit making, strategically important and potentially viable PSUs and departmental undertakings.

Restore quantitative restrictions on imports and review EXIM policy to safeguard agriculture, indigenous industry and national interest as a whole.

Carry out expeditious land reform programmes, which will lead to swift economic growth and create vast employment potential.

Reverse measures like ban on recruitment in government offices, railways and public sector enterprises and systematic down-sizing of workforce; undertake a crash programme for creating jobs to reduce the colossal volume of unemployment.

Strengthen the public distribution system with adequate quantity and regularity of supply with effective monitoring system to ensure that the gains reach the deprived and needy section; reduce the price of kerosene, augment its supply through public distribution system; price of diesel, petrol and cooking gas not to be raised any further.

Review the Electricity Act, 2003 and rescind the deadline of 10th June, 2004 for unbundling of SEBs; withdraw the Bills pending in Parliament for the privatisation of banks, coal mining, etc.

Take immediate measures to tackle the crisis in the traditional industries like tea, jute, coir, textile, handloom, khadi and village industries, beedi, sugar, etc.

Reverse the repeal of the Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act; restore the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) and its Appellate Authority (AAIFR); strengthen the mechanism of BIFR/AAIFR, revamp them with appropriate arrangements for finances for ensuring rehabilitation/revival of the sick companies; create an appropriate mechanism for

rehabilitation of sick smallscale industries, which are outside the purview of SICA.

Appoint a new review committee with representation from the CTUOs to devise a truly transparent mechanism of compiling the cost of living indices, with the CTUOs being given a monitoring role.

Redress the growing problems of fishermen; cancel the licences given to foreign deep sea fishing trawlers; stop the increasing use of mechanical vessels for fishing in the coastal regions.

On tripartism

Streamline functioning of the Labour Ministry; ensure effective functioning of Labour Ministry in all matters concerning the interests of labour; activate the tripartite mechanism including Tripartite Committees, the Indian Labour Conference and Standing Labour Committee.

End the whimsical and partisan manner of deciding representation of Central Trade Unions in tripartite committees; evolve norms therefore in consultation with the CTUOs.

On labour legislations

Enact the comprehensive Agricultural Workers Bill to guarantee minimum wage and to extend social protection to the vast multitude of agricultural labourers.

Enact the Unorganised Sector Workers Bill, as unanimously recommended by the Central Trade Unions.

Rescind forthwith the notification introducing a new classification of "fixed term employment workman" under the Model Standing Order Rules, which will wipe out permanency in all jobs even in the organised sector.

Reverse the whole gamut of legislative changes, carried out as well as contemplated, in detriment to the interests of labour; annul the exemption given to Export Promotion Zones/ Special Economic Zones from application of labour laws and social security schemes.

Initiate an in-depth discussion with the Central Trade Unions for making the labour legislations more meaningful and effective and for strengthening the implementation machinery.

Amend the present provisions in the Bonus Act to remove the income ceilings for eligibility and calculation of bonus.

Amend all labour legislations, in consultation with the CTUOs, providing for a uniform definition of 'workman' and 'industry', make them applicable to all workmen doing away with income parameters/ ceilings of any kind.

Annul, by bringing in appropriate legislation in Parliament, the adverse impact of the Supreme Court judgements, which have (a) reversed its earlier beneficial ruling in favour of contract workers and (b) ruled that teachers employed in private schools and educational institutions could not be construed as 'workman' and thus declared them to be ineligible for gratuity and other statutory benefits even.

Take expeditious steps to enact legislation for preventing sexual harassment of women at work place as per the Supreme Court guidelines.

Protect the interests of Inter-State Migrant Workers and amend the Inter-State Migrant Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979 for extending its coverage.

On social security

Evolve a national social security policy to provide for a comprehensive scheme, covering all sections of workers and extending relief to those who are involuntarily unemployed, for early implementation.

Restore the 12 per cent interest on the Employees Provident Fund, small savings, General Provident Fund, Public Provident Fund, etc.

Improve the present social security schemes under the Employees Provident Fund Organisation and the Employees State Insurance Corporation, in consultation with the Central Trade Unions for a thorough overhaul to ensure their better functioning and universal coverage.

Reverse the retrograde measure replacing the existing 'benefit defined' pension scheme by a new 'contribution defined' pension scheme for new recruits in the government service.

On the issues and demands of the working people enumerated above, the leaders of the above seven central trade unions, including UTUC-LS represented by its vice-president Comrade Krishna Chakraborty, expressed the hope that the government would initiate meaningful steps and expeditious actions.

Corporatizing prisons in America

Ugliest Face of Capitalism and its 'Human Rights'

The sadistic torture, sexual abuse and humiliation of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib in Iraq have glaringly brought to light the depravity and savagery of the rapacious US imperialism. Though the hypocrite Bush administration, in the face of worldwide condemnation, has tried to explain it all away as cases of individual aberrations, it is by now well known that this kind of illegal, dehumanized and dirty means has come to be routinely employed to break down the prisoners physically and psychologically, in utter violation of all civilized norms and conventions, be it in Iraq, Guantanamo Bay, or elsewhere. This is the US model of protection of Human Rights! Even within its own borders, behind the façade of democracy, trampling of civil rights, sinister attacks on the downtrodden and beastly savagery are today characteristic of the US imperialism-capitalism. Nowhere is this truth more nakedly exposed than in the prison system run by US imperialists — a system that has turned misery and crime into a source of super profits for big corporations.

US prisons — living hell

The US prisons have become living hells - symbol of terror and horror. Three prisoners, chained with iron rods are squeezed in a dark dingy cell and forced to work. A federal judge of the Alabama state has compared the local prisons with a ship carrying slaves (*New York Times*, 20.5.01) If any of the prisoners, unable to bear the excruciating pain and torture, breaks out in revolt, he is shot dead. The infamous Attica prison of New York has already earned the "distinction" of being a prototype of a Nazi concentration camp. In September 1971 as many as 43 inmates of that prison, who protested against the inhuman torture meted out to them day in and day out, were gunned down by the police under the direction of Nelson Rockefeller, the then Governor of New York. But since then conditions in US prisons have become far more horrid. Not to speak of the ever growing abuse and torture in US prisons, even women prisoners are not spared: denied minimum protection and security, they are subjected to severe physical

and mental torture and worst sexual assaults.

Prisons — lucrative profit centres

And this human misery has become big business. Prisons in the USA serve as profitable industrial centers for big corporations to book super profits by exploiting prison labour. The corporations are permitted to construct newer prisons and make profits worth billions of dollars. Thus the US imperialists are in a planned way converting their prisoners into reserve commodities.

Prisons are even used for speculative trade in shares. Correction Corporation of America is leading this prison trade. The value of their shares was \$ 8 in 1997, now it has risen to \$ 30. Yet the prisoners who are made to slave away and yield such huge profits are paid a paltry amount of 1.10 dollar/hour to 2.05 dollar/hour, far below the minimum wage. Today prison labour is fast becoming one of the resorts of American economy. "In my mind there's no more recession-proof form of economic development," said an Oklahoma city manager who persuaded the Corrections Corporation of America to build in Sayre, population 4,114. (*Workers World*, Sept. 2001)

This is why the US government, putting ever larger number of people behind bars, has been increasing the number of prisons drastically and arranging increased budgetary allotment of funds by curtailing allotments for education. Between 1994 and 1999, in New York alone the allotment for education has been slashed by \$ 100,00,00,000. At the same time, the giant corporate manufacturers are granted orders for prison accessories, equipments and other prison related services. Even the management of prisons has in the last 10 years been rapidly handed over to private contractors with laws introduced in 28 states on the pretext of coping with deficit budget.

This has caused New York-based World Research Group to remark in their booklet, "...newest trend in the area of privatizing government run programmes - while arrests and convictions are steadily on the rise (nationally), profits are to be made - profits from crime. Get in on the ground floor of this

booming industry now!"

Number of prisons and prisoners rising fast

Perhaps it does not come as a surprise that the USA has today the highest number of prisoners in the world. Data from 1999 show that in the seven industrially developed countries (G-7) per every 100,000 people, prisoners numbered 40 in Japan, 90 in Italy, 95 in Germany, 100 in Canada, 125 in Britain, whereas in America they numbered 680, which in 2003 went up to 715. According to US Justice Department report, one out of every 75 men in the US was incarcerated by middle of 2003. Today the number of prisoners has increased to 2,100,000 - this being the "tip of the ice-berg" - an official version of number of prisoners. Those detained in the name of reformation, are also in reality prisoners; together they constitute a formidable total of 6,600,000, surpassing thereby even the population of many countries. With millions of people unemployed and destitute due to the inherent crises of capitalism, many get thrown illegally into jail. Thus for example, a federal judge of Alabama on 19 May, 2001 announced 2000 such prisoners as unlawfully detained. (*New York Times*, 20.5.2001) Moreover, the atrocious racist character of the US imperialists who proclaim to be the "sole agent for protection of Human Rights", is glaringly manifest in the way there is a pick and choose of the

people being put behind bars. Though minorities (mainly Hispanics and black people) in USA constitute about 25 % of the entire US population over 66 per cent of the prisoners belong to these minorities, the majority of whom are black and poor. Justice Policy Institute, an autonomous body of American jurisprudence reports that in 2001 the total number of black prisoners far outnumbered the total number of college students.

Due to ever harsher laws, those convicted for life has risen by 83 percent since 1992. Thus in California under the new law three convictions for least serious crimes can bring on life sentence, under the motto: 'three strikes and you're out' law'. The *New York Times* reported on May 12: "The Supreme Court recently upheld the life sentence of Leandro Andrade, whose third strike, or felony conviction, was for the theft of children's videotapes worth \$ 153." Not to speak of miscarriages justice: the well-known example of Mumia Abu Jamal, the African American journalist and activist on death-row who has been falsely charged with killing a police officer, is but one of many.

The prison system in the US reveals the height of hypocrisy of bourgeois democracy where jails have become sources for amassing super profits at the cost of appalling misery of and inhuman torture on the inmates. To what depth of perversity this moribund capitalism-imperialism has sunk that it breeds crime, injustice and misery on such a gigantic scale only to profit from it.

Demonstration in Ranchi

At the call of the Ranchi District Organizing Committee, SUCI, a powerful mass demonstration was organized in Ranchi on 26th May on the demand of supply of water, as scarcity of water not only in Ranchi but also in the whole of the state of Jharkhand has reached an alarming proportion. Several hundred SUCI workers and supporters participated in the demonstration before the office of the D.C. A deputation led by Comrade Asoke Singh submitted a memorandum with 8-point demands to the DC.



Before it, the demonstrators burnt an effigy symbolizing the Jharkhand government at Elbert Ekka Chowk in protest against electricity charge hike for the lower strata consumers in the state.

Protests in USA against Iraq war and solidarity with freedom fighters of Iraq, Palestine and Haiti

At the call of international ANSWER Coalition, (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism) June 5 was observed as global protest day in many countries, including India. In USA more than 20,000 people marched in Washington, San Francisco and Los Angeles, demanding an end to US-led war in Iraq and calling for immediate withdrawal of foreign troops. The demonstrations also pledged support for the just cause of Palestinian people and voiced their opposition to the Bush administration's war against social, economic and civil rights at home. The demonstrators accused Bush and Rumsfeld of war crimes and raised slogans demanding an "end to foreign occupation" in Iraq, Haiti and Palestinian territories. In Washington DC, the protestors — braving pouring rain and thunderstorms as well as police efforts to block them — marched up to Defense Secretary Rumsfeld's house.

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A part of the huge demonstration in Washington on 5 June 2004

Election and Government Formation

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partnership”.

Motive behind CPI(M)'s outside support to Congress government

So where is the difference between the CPI(M) and the Congress on economic issues including the reforms agenda that has devastated people's life? If the CPI(M) leaders are so serious about it, why are they not spelling out clearly the areas of discord? Any genuine left party, if placed in a position to dictate terms to a government, would have, as a pre-condition for lending support listed out five or six irreducible minimum demands of the people and compelled the government to commit itself to remedial action. But the CPI(M) and its associates did not raise any such demand. Rather, they have declared that their support to Congress is unconditional. If they really had areas of dispute, how could they extend unqualified support without clinching those issues? Those who have rudimentary knowledge of politics know that the CPI(M) leaders have no answer to this because they are committed to the ruling bourgeoisie to grant this blanket support to the Congress government.

But at the same time, the CPI(M) leaders are extremely concerned to preserve the apparent halo of a radical left party because that is their capital in the elections. So they need to guard this

unqualified support to the Congress government. Hence the occasional cantings and rantings to divert the attention of the people. But this tight rope-walking does have its pitfalls. In their bid to simultaneously appease the ruling class and hoodwink the people, they are making lots of contradictory statements which bear glaring testimony to utter hypocrisy and double dealing. Take for instance, the recent episode centring round the President's speech during the inaugural session of both houses of Parliament. The CPI(M) leaders said outside that there have been departure from the Common Minimum Programme in the speech. But inside Parliament, the CPI(M) members did not utter a single word and passed it without moving any amendment. Then what is the propriety or sanctity of such protests, dissents and expressions of reservation? Are these not simply misleading or purported to beguile the people?

It is worth mentioning in this regard the remarks of top CPI(M) leaders during the course of a discussion that appeared in the press. They said that had they participated in the ministry, it would have been extremely difficult for them to oppose any proposal of the government that they were opposed to. It would then endanger the government. But by staying outside, they would have full freedom to criticize such moves or proposals without destabilizing the ministry.

Incredible indeed! It means that the CPI(M), for public consumption, would make such oppositional gestures from time to time. On the other hand, the Congress government would know that such protestations are docile and imbecile, mere playing to the gallery and would not come in the way of its carrying out its plan of action. This is the tacit understanding between the CPI(M) and the Congress.

Is it not a treachery to the people? Do the CPI(M) leaders take the people for granted? If so, they are grossly mistaken. A new awareness is dawning upon the toiling people throughout the country. The day is not that far when such treacherous acts would have to face trial in the court of the people.

Democratic movement — sole alternative

So it is clear that through this election, one reactionary bourgeois combination led by the BJP got replaced by another reactionary bourgeois alliance led by the Congress. It is more shocking that this anti-people Congress-led government is installed with a progressive cloak on account of the unstinted support and help from the pseudo-lefts who have now stood as guarantor to its stability. It is also clear that there will be no departure from the ruinous policies of economic reforms that bled the people white. Only there would be

attempts to hoodwink the people under the slogan of a “human face” which, evidently, is nothing but a bunkum. On the other hand, the BJP, on being ousted from power, would regroup and flaunt its rabid communal agenda much more aggressively to regain lost ground. So the people would continue to groan under the yoke of ruthless capitalist exploitation and be constantly threatened by the communalism-fundamentalism of the Sangh Parivar and the BJP. They have nothing to expect from this government which is also subservient to the ruling class and would function as per its behest and dictates. Hence, the toiling people would have to take recourse to the path of left democratic movement to demand for fulfillment of their basic necessities of life and livelihood. It is only by building powerful conscious democratic mass movement and integrating it with a powerful ideological-cultural movement that they can successfully combat and defeat the menace of communalism. We also appeal to the honest rank of the CPI(M), CPI and their associates to perceive the ruinous course their leaders are on, emasculating the class and mass struggle from within, sully leftism and unabashedly collaborating with the ruling class for petty parliamentary gains. Would they allow themselves to languish in the fold of the exploiting class as its appendage or turn around and join the course of democratic movement to carry forward the struggle for emancipation?

Against imperialist war and occupation

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According to ANSWER the June 5 protests are the first step in a summer of protest and resistance. Demonstrations are also planned for the end of June exposing the Bush administration's phony transfer of sovereignty in Iraq as nothing but a cover for the continued occupation. The third step is a mass mobilization on July 25 outside the Democratic National Convention in Boston, Massachusetts. If elected, Kerry (the aspiring presidential candidate) and the Democrats have pledged to continue the criminal occupation of Iraq and to add tens of thousands of additional US troops for that purpose.

The protest and resistance will culminate with a massive protest in New York City on August 29, timed to coincide with the Republican



Protest demonstrations in different cities of Haryana

against the US imperialism and Israeli zionist aggression protest demonstrations were organized in different places of the country on 5th June '04 under the auspices of our party, SUCI. We are publishing here the reports received from Haryana, MP, West Bengal, Karnataka, AP and Maharashtra.

Haryana

In Haryana protest

President Bush was burnt.

AP

In Andhra Pradesh the protest demonstration against US and Israeli imperialism was organized in Hyderabad under the leadership of Comrade K. Sridhar, Secretary, AP State Organizing Committee.

Convention in Muradabad against occupation of Iraq

To protest against illegal

3.6.04. In his address as chief guest, Comrade Krishna Chakraborty, member, Central Committee, SUCI, explained how the Bush-Blair duo defrauded the whole world by attacking and occupying Iraq on false pretext and called upon all to rise in protest, demand immediate withdrawal of the occupation army and express solidarity with the fighting Iraqi



Protest March in Calcutta on 5 June, 2004. Comrade Manik Mukherjee, Vice-President AIAIF igniting effigies of Bush and Sharon

National Convention. Besides A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition many other anti-war and progressive groups are planning for huge demonstrations in New York City on August 28, 29, and throughout the week of the conventions.

At the call of ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism), to express solidarity with the freedom fighters of Iraq and Palestine and the people of Haiti as

demonstrations were organized in six districts. In Rohtak the demonstration was led by Comrade Anup Singh, Secretary, Haryana State Committee and other district Committee members. Besides, solidarity programmes were organized in Rewari, Gurgaon, Sonipat, Karithal and Bhiwani.

MP

In MP Solidarity Day was observed in Jabalpur city at Malaviya Chowk where the effigy of

occupation of Iraq by US-UK imperialists, a conference was organized at Moradabad (UP) on

people. Veteran leader Comrade Om Prakash Sharma presided over the meeting.



Effigy of President Bush being burnt on 5 June 2004 in Bangalore



Anti-imperialist demonstration on 5 June, 2004 in Nagpur (Maharashtra)

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