

Fiscal Savagery in 'Pro-people' garb

On the 28th of February last, the Union Finance Minister, Mr. S. B. Chavan, placed the Union Budget in the Lok Sabha claiming it to be 'soft' on the poor and 'harsh' on the rich. But as has been the case in the past, this time, too, the Central government headed by the Congress(I), the most trusted agent of the ruling capitalist class in our country, to hoodwink the people, painted the budgets as pro-people claiming these would in the long run help improve the poor people's lot. But though it is the usual practice of the Congress(I) and its ministers to trade in lies, the people do not believe in all these sugar-coated bitter pills and count for the dreaded day of February when the Union government presents before them the heavy doses of taxation both direct and indirect. But in spite of all these the people in the election year have a sigh of relief for a few months because of the fact that though the prices will further rise after the election is over as a result of fresh taxation or surcharge imposed by the Centre, still they generally expect that at least before the elections the government will not impose heavy taxes on them. This sort of election budgets are branded by the economists as 'Political Budgets' because of its political implications rather than economic ones. And these have been the practice of the Central Congress(I) Government for a long time.

But during Indira Gandhi's rule people witnessed a special feature in the budgetary formulations. There were proposals for heavy taxation afresh in the Budgets. But these were far outnumbered by fresh doses of surcharges twice or thrice a year on some commodities which were used even by the poorest of the poor. In other words this is called as Budget by instalments and administered prices. People can well remember the imposition of surcharges on petrol, diesel and kerosene which alone in a year fetched Rs. 2100 crores of rupees to the central exchequer.

The illustrious son (!) following the footsteps of his illustrious (!) mother increased the prices of coal and steel before the Budgets to fetch Rs. 150 and Rs. 250 crores respectively and alongwith it proposed an 11 to 18 per cent freight hike in the railway budget to fetch Rs. 876 crores to make a total of Rs. 1,276 crores. In the Union budget the tax proposal has been estimated at Rs. 1287 crores and if we add these two figures together it will reach a staggering amount of Rs. 2,563 crores which is a record in a single year in

the history of our country. The only difference between the mother and the son is that the son increased the prices before the election and administered a savage tax blow to rake in the largest amount ever raised in a Union Budget branding it 'anti-rich' and 'pro-people'.

Let us examine how far true is the claim of the central government. Every Budget has three sides: (i) the tax proposal; (ii) how to run the government expenditure; and (iii) how much deficit is there in a budget and how much debt there will be. On the revenue side the government has planned to pull Rs. 500 crores by imposing 8 per cent surcharge on the tax payers, both individual and company, earning more than Rs. 50,000 per annum. This money will be spent after a special rural employment programme in 120 backward districts of our country to help generate employment. But as we know how much money will reach the actual beneficiary is a matter of doubt. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi has admitted that out of Rs. 6 only Re. 1 reaches the real beneficiary and all are grabbed by the intermediaries. To exhibit how

'anti-rich' and 'pro-people' they are, they have imposed fresh taxes on car, television, air travel and expenditure in five-star hotels to draw Rs. 410 crores. From steel items Rs. 168 crores and from aluminium Rs. 50 crores will be pulled and in addition to these, the rate of specific excise duties on a large number of commodities has been increased by 5 per cent to net Rs. 220 crores. A net relief of Rs. 120 crores in import duties has been given. Thus an uncovered budgetary gap of Rs. 7,337 crores has developed and as per last year's budget estimate it reaches a figure of Rs. 8,240 crores of deficit.

On the expenditure side though the government showed the reduction in defence budget from 15 to 14 per cent; but after scrutiny it will be revealed that the total figure will remain about the same if not more. Because there is a trickery in this account. The government while showing the reduction in defence budget may take up measures for the benefit of the defence department through other departments, such as building roads and rail links to meet up needs of the defence through CPWD or the Railway or even import engineering gadgets for the needs of the defence through Commerce department; or other scientific works needed for defence are shown in the Science and Technology department. Such is the hoax of the reduction in defence budget and if read carefully in between the lines, these facts will be revealed. Further, whereas the non-plan expenditure should have been curtailed substantially for taking up developmental works, the figure, as it stands at present, will no doubt step up inflationary trend and other problems.

It may be mentioned here that in the last 10 years the contribu-

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All India Save Education Convention

Firm Resolve to fight Anti-People National Policy on Education

"You are not a few thousands of people, you who have assembled here represent the whole of India. The Government of India is not above the people. And it is we the people of India who decide today that the education policy the Government of India has adopted and is implementing—which is mischievous—we shall tear it into pieces!"

This was the fervent call of Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer at the concluding hour of the All India Save Education Convention held in Madras last month.

The city of Madras on 13-14 February opened a new horizon before the history of education movement of our country. It lit a new light of hope, roused a newer magnitude of determination in the minds of the education loving people of the country. It sounded the bell of caution for the despotic rulers of the country that the academic community cannot be cowed by mere threats or anything else. It dealt a severe jolt, struck a heavy blow to their heinous conspiracy to deny the right of knowledge to the common people.

Two days, few hours in the calendar, but a new chapter in the history of democratic movement.

13th & 14th February, 1989, the southern metropolis became almost a mini India. The teachers, intellectuals, litterateurs, jurists, artists, journalists, students—the people from all walks of life thronged the great city from all parts of the country. From the remotest north of Punjab and Haryana, from the farthest west of Gujarat and Maharashtra and from the far-stretched eastern bordering states of Tripura and Assam they came to join their southern colleagues in a converging stream—to register their voice of protest against the worst ever education policy of the Union Government. The threat of the ruling parties on their career, the strain and hazards of the long and sleepless journey, the diversity in cul-

ture and difficulty of language—nothing could dissuade them from joining this common platform to raise voice in unison: "Withdraw the disastrous new National Policy on Education." They travelled miles after miles, some even to the range of few thousand. For two or three nights during monotonous journey they could not even sleep a bit. Immediately after reaching the city they had to jump into the work of the convention without taking the minimum rest. But still while listening to the deliberations of the distinguished speakers they showed hardly any sign of exhaustion on their faces or expressed any uneasiness. Their eyes were brimming with encouragement and spirit for standing by the com-

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Record taxation and huge deficit sure to add fuel to fire of inflation

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tion of the budget plan to the Plan has come down from 39 per cent to 29 per cent of the total central expenditure. Rather, extra-budgetary resources for the plan increased from Rs. 16000 crores to Rs. 17,500 crores and as a result total central plan outlay has been increased by 20 per cent from Rs. 28,715 crores to Rs. 34,446 crores. Thus total plan expenditure in real terms in the Seventh Plan will come to 115 per cent of the original outlays.

If we look into the percentage of increase in the respective sectors in 1989-90, we will see the rate: Telecommunication (56.6 per cent), power (38.6 per cent) and coal 35 per cent, steel 23 per cent and railways 15.6 per cent. But one of the most amazing things is that the Prime Minister who often gestures to make the country educated and wipe off illiteracy and talks tall of education, art and culture, has allotted a very meagre sum to these.

Even after this heavy dose of taxation the overall deficit stands at Rs. 7,337 crores. Deficit occurs in two ways—(i) Revenue account deficit; and (ii) capital account deficit and if there is a big deficit in the Revenue budget it is compensated by diverting the surplus from the capital budget. But if the capital budget runs in a deficit, the total deficit increases and then there is no other way than taking fresh loan from the Reserve Bank of India. That means, it will aggravate the inflationary trend already rampant in the country as the RBI will have to print extra currency notes violating all financial disciplines. This trend of diverting the capital budget to the Revenue budget is unhealthy for the economy because the very purpose of the capital budget is the formation of capital to take up developmental works and if we channelise these

money towards meeting the non-plan expenditure like giving salaries to the government employees, military requirements and giving subsidies and reliefs then not only the existing capital is exhausted but also the possibilities of further growth of wealth is sealed leading to further inflation.

As a matter of fact, the total deficit should be calculated combining the three factors, viz. (i) credit from the RBI; (ii) internal borrowings; and (iii) external loans. The total borrowings will be Rs. 18,459 crores in 1989-90 which is Rs. 241 crores more than the budgeted total of Rs. 18,218 crores for 1988-89. That is one part of the sorry state of State economy. But if we calculate the overall internal and external borrowings we will find an astounding figure of Rs. 1,30,758 crores and Rs. 28,037 crores respectively making a total of Rs. 1,58,795 crores. Though last year the government gave the interest payment figure at Rs. 14,000 crores but in actuality it stood at Rs. 14,150 crores. This year the interest payment account is calculated at Rs. 17,000 crores but in actuality it will grow more because of far more loan account. And to meet the instalment payment and interests the government will have no other way than to borrow afresh at least Rs. 4,000 crores from the internal market, i.e. LIC, Provident Fund, NSC, Indira Vikash Patra and Kisan Vikash Patra etc., and the rest from the foreign market making the far tighter stranglehold of the economy in the debt trap. These very high figures of the borrowings have reached a dangerous proportion but the more dangerous is the external loan for it not only spells disaster on our economy, but is also liable to endanger the political stability and sovereignty of our country!

This is the very sorry state of our economy. The government though tried to paint the Budget 'anti-rich' and 'pro-people', but if we analyse the nature of the budget we will find that in spite of 'pro-people gimmick' this budget is out and out anti-people and pro-rich in character and full of hoax. Take the example of rural employment scheme in the name of Nehru Rojgar Yojana in which the Centre wants to induct Rs. 500 crores to create jobs for rural unemployed in 120 backward districts of our country. Is it not a cruel joke to the people, 37.5 per cent of whom live below the poverty line still after 42 years of independence? See the fun of the fanfare of Nehru Yojana. If we distribute Rs. 500 crores among 120 backward districts the amount comes to a little more than Rs. 4 crores. And if we take for granted that a district has a population of 30 lakhs with 5-member 6 lakh families then allotment per family will be an amount below Rs. 70 in a year. Then how could the government expect to help generate jobs? Is it not an inhuman and cruel joke on the part of the Congress(I) rulers to our countrymen made pauper by the ruthless exploitation by the capitalists? There is no indication either in the budget about the future of about one-and-half lakh of closed factories, lakhs and lakhs of whose workers are starving and slowly proceeding towards death! And another hoax is that the government would distribute sari free of cost among 2 crores of poor women for which allotment of Rs. 50 crores has been made. That means, that they will buy a sari at the rate of Rs. 25/- each. But if the Prime Minister's remark that out of Rs. 6/- only Re. 1/- reaches the actual beneficiary is any indication, then where will reach the figure of Rs. 25/- is anybody's guess and if we take it for granted that

something will reach them, maybe in the form of a piece of torn cloth! This is the picture of their pro-people budget. Whatever may be their claim, this large overall deficit and direct and indirect taxes and excise duties added to the pre-budget administered price hike in sugar, coal, steel and cement and an 11 to 18 per cent hike on railway freight will have a cumulative and cascading effect on all commodities of daily use and will thus erode further the purchasing capacity of the common man.

On the other hand, considerable favours are shown to big business and industrialists and multinationals through proposals of concession in customs duty on the import of capital goods under technology upgradation scheme. Decontrol of prices and distribution of cement and aluminium is a big concession to the owners of these industries whereas the consequential rise in the prices of such essential items will hit hard the common men by making new housing and other requirement more costly. So the declared housing loan to the rural poor will virtually be of no use. The reduction in agricultural tax by 12 per cent will help only the rich peasants and is a political bribe to the rich kisan lobby, the rural vote bank, in the election year.

Thus between the Finance Minister, Mr. Chavan and the Railway Minister Mr. Scindia, they have made sure of a spiral in all prices all around in addition to the pre-budget administered hike of Rs. 400 crores. They may have given the impression of hurting the rich, but the effect, in the long run, is bound to be exactly the opposite. So it is clearly evident that all such talk of 'tax-relief' to the poor and imposition of tax on the rich is nothing but a big hoax. This is nothing but a gimmick of the Congress(I) in the election year to befool the people

of our country. It will be sheer naive to expect anything else from this out and out corrupt capitalist government when the very system is neck-deep in acute crisis.

That is why it is utmost necessary on the part of all Left, democratic and Opposition parties and forces to build up a relentless mass struggle against this capitalist government and its anti-people fiscal policies as reflected in the Budget for which Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, our beloved General Secretary, has given a call in course of his statement on central Budgets.

International Women's Day Observed

ORISSA

Cuttack, 8th March—Under the auspices of Orissa State Unit of Mahila Sanskritik Sangha, historic International Women's Day was observed on 8th of March in Cuttack with all seriousness it deserved. To give vent to its on-going fight against social evils like bride-burning, dowry system, gang rape, display of obscene advertisements and for equal wage for equal job to women-folk, a mass demonstration encompassing diverse sections of women was organised on the day.

A large well-decorated women's demonstration displaying different slogans inscribed on placards held out by the women paraded the different thoroughfares of the city in the afternoon and converged before the State Assembly. The procession although was led by Comrades Binapani Dash, Tarulata Behara, Kusum Mishra, Sunsi Panda. A public meeting was held before the State Assembly. The leaders present in the meeting highlighted the

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AWARD ON BHOPAL CATASTROPHE

Abominable role played by India Government

The great tragedy of the Bhopal catastrophe has become a nightmarish memory that shook the civilized world and still continues to unfold ruthlessly. It was the world's most terrible industrial disaster of the 20th century that happened in the dark fateful night of the 2nd December, 1984. With the pronouncement of the Supreme Court's verdict on February 14-15, 1989, the worst victims of Bhopal has once again been victimised not only by denial of their suffering but alongwith it, their dignity, their last hope of survival has been virtually given a silent burial! The settlement arrived at between the Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) and the Government of India, coming as it were, through the Supreme Court, came as a rude shock to most of the people of the country and abroad not excluding the civil right activists in the USA. Thus, the bitter legal battle between a government and a multinational that dragged on for over four years, in six courts, across two continents came to a pathetic end. But in the end, the hope that over five and a half lakh people of Bhopal victims would receive appropriate justice ended with a compromise settlement! Reacting sharply on the meagre compensation of \$ 470 million (Rs. 715 crores) to the victims, Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, the beloved General Secretary of the SUCI described paltry sum of compensation, "in view of the extensive damage the people of Bhopal suffered, as an abject surrender of the Government of India to the US multinational and its government."

The terrible disaster in Bhopal can only be compared with the horror of Hiroshima or Nagasaki. An area covering 40 sq. km. surrounding Carbide plant was the worst affected one. Poison gas that mysteriously leaked from the plant killed more than 20000 people though according to the government estimate only over 3000 people died. Over two-and-a-half lakh people who inhaled the poison gas either live on the brink of death or are permanently maimed or incapacitated. Even over four years hence the disaster death in Bhopal's Hamidia Hospital is a daily affair. On an average, it has been known, it continues to claim a victim a day. But whatever may be the astounding figure of victims that are still gasping here and there, the most horrifying consequences it wrought concerned the coming progeny who are facing serious danger in as much as the pregnant women who inhaled the poison gas have been giving birth to dead, deformed and abnormal children. And the fate of those children

who are surviving after being born in the poor families are slowly but steadily proceeding to death! Since breast milk of the mothers is being dried up due to the effect of the poison gas as a result of which the only source of nutrient for these hapless children also vanished!

It is in the context of this havoc wrought by the Bhopal disaster the Award of the Supreme Court providing a paltry \$ 470 million compensation money has to be judged. Admittedly, as a result of the century's worst misfortune the lives of thousands of people died in the disaster cannot be brought back. But surely one can expect legitimately, given the adequate money, the families of the dead and those countless incapacitated people could be restored to life through appropriate medical treatment and consequently rehabilitated as well. But does the judgement pronounced by the Supreme Court provide an opportunity to fulfil this objective? What a fair trial for the 5,70,000 people who have

filed claims for death, injury, loss and damages to have settled for such a paltry sum? It was anybody's guess how a judgement disposing of the case for compensation was suddenly delivered by the Supreme Court when it was only an appeal against an interim order and that, too, are yet to be concluded after full arguments? Does it not defy one's credulity as to the modus operandi through which a settlement was arrived at and consequent prompt acceptance by the concerned parties which can all be described as a verdict of the Supreme Court?

We know that Government of India was prosecuting a claim not of its own but was acting as a trustee of the victims. How could it settle without consulting at least the various organisations working for the interest of the victims, particularly when one of such social organisations, viz. "Zahreeli Gas Kand Sangharsh Morcha" was a party before the Court? Wonder of wonders, not only did the Court place the value of Indian life at an incredible low figure, termed as "peanuts" but at the same time bidding good-bye to criminal jurisprudence, it quashed all criminal prosecution—present as well as future! The apt question that is sure to crop up is whether immunity from prosecution be bought by paying compensation!

As a result of this order of Supreme Court the claims of the victims would stand buried without their having any opportunity to agitate on their claims. The obvious effect would be the petitions pending before the Court against the validity of the "Bhopal Gas Leak (Representation and Processing of Claims) Act, 1985, stands dismissed without any opportunity to the petitioners of being heard. As some news magazine reports: The Supreme Court perhaps decided on the average of the higher offer made by UCC \$ 350 m, and the lowest figure of \$ 600 m demanded by the Go-

vernment. Both figures were mentioned before the Judge John Keenan of New York in March 1986. Given 10 per cent as appreciation value, the \$ 350 m invested in 1986 would become around \$ 465 m in March 1989. It may not be out of place to mention here that when the Govt. of India took it upon itself to argue the case against the UCC on behalf of Bhopal gas victims, it assured the people of extracting "the maximum possible compensation from the rich and affording defendant." As if to prove its bonafides, it asked the Supreme Court for a sum of \$ 3,250 m to compensate for the immeasurable damages caused in Bhopal disaster.

Now, even though we are in the dark about method of disbursement of compensation money to the victims, we may conveniently take the M.P. High Court's interim award as a guide in which Rs. 2 lakhs for each of the dead and seriously injured (whose number the government has mysteriously fixed at 33,200). By the token of this yardstick, the rest of the claimants will receive roughly around Rs. 1,900/- each. Even this 'peanut' money will be reduced to ridiculous low a figure if we remember what the Bhopal Gas Leak Act, 1985, provides for payments to meet quite a number of heads of expenditures viz., (i) claims of govt., local authorities, institutions for expenses incurred in relief & rehabilitation; (ii) expenses incurred by the Govt. to cope with the disaster loss of revenue to the government; (iii) injuries that are likely to be suffered on account of gas leak. Government, it is said, has so far spent Rs. 100 crores on relief and rehabilitation. This could well be deducted from the compensation money. The UCC on its part will deduct \$ 5 million paid to the Red Cross at the instance of New York District Judge John Keenan. And to cap it all, the story goes, the Government in all probability, may deduct the ad hoc grants of Rs. 10,000/- and

Rs. 1500/- given to the families of the dead and injured respectively, from the final compensation money.

It is said that if the executive and legislation act lawlessly, citizens are at liberty to go in for justice in the Court. Does the Supreme Court deliver such contemplated justice which one thinks can be had from it? In other words where do they go if the Court places itself above the law? Then again, it is not the scale of devastation and human sufferings alone that make the Bhopal disaster unique. More important is the fact of the government's (Centre and the State) vile conduct and out and out anti-people and inhuman character that is so easily discernible. As we know, immediately after the disaster the army was called out and thousand of dead bodies were either thrown into the Narmada or burnt and buried in mass graves. Clearly, to minimise the horror of the disaster the Government took such abominable steps to show a lower death toll and that was being done only to cover up the misdeeds of the killer multinational UCCL. Moreover, when medical help and relief was so urgent, it shamelessly created hindrance to such relief attempts. Can any sensible person forget the criminal behaviour of MP Government, who by imposing ban on the use of sodium thiosulphate injection, an antidote, came in rescue of the US multinational which vehemently denied any cyanide poisoning involved in the killer gas leak! The fact of the matter was that a doctor of the Hamidia Hospital on the basis of detection of cyanide poisoning by initial autopsy reports, proposed sodium thiosulphate injection to be the immediate anti-dote and to which the gas victim patients were responding well and it was thwarted by the M.P. Health Services Deptt. If this anti-dote could be prescribed earlier thousands of precious human lives could have been possibly saved. Lest the full information about

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Denial of education to children most violent national crime : Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer

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mon millions of the society at this hour of crisis.

In this convention a huge number of delegates came from the southern states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. A large number of students and youngmen among them worked tirelessly as volunteers — always with smiling face looking after the delegates coming from all over India and attending to the honoured guests round the clock braving all difficulties on

public in the city of Madras through house to house and on the street campaign, at the gate of the educational institutions to meet the huge expenditure of the programme of such a vast dimension. The people too responded to their mite generously and enthusiastically because they felt this convention was an imperative if education were to be saved!

During the two days of the convention the delegate camps looked like Study room or debating hall before and after the sessions. The

personalities of different categories united against a common educational issue. No government policy since independence faced such a prolonged opposition.

The Preparatory Committee for All India Save Education Convention formed in the Delhi Seminar of 14th September, 1988, had called this two-day convention. From 11th February the delegates from different states poured into the city by different trains. The volunteers of the host state had to vigilantly attend the trains round the clock at Madras Central Station, Egmore Station or Airport to receive and escort the delegates to the different camps, to give cordial reception to the dignitaries and take them to the guest houses. On 13th morning the camp of Dharma Prakash was packed to the capacity with more than three thousand delegates.

At the end of the delegate session Dr. S. K. Mukherjee in his presidential address, expressed confidence in the students and youth of the country who would not allow everything to be perished at the hands of a power crazy group of people! He appealed to all the delegates to carry the message of this Convention in their way back home to different corners of the country and keep the flames of this movement burning!

Next an important business was carried out — the election of an effective and powerful All India Save Education Committee, with complete unanimity of the house, which had as its President Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer, as Members of Presidium. Members of the Committee are:

ADVISORS :

Justice V. Chinnappa Reddy
Prof. Samuel Mathai
Justice P. Venugopal
Dr. Sundaravadi Velu

Dr. Sachi Rout Roy
Prof. K. A. Jalal
Dr. Bidhubhusan Das
Dr. Arabindo Bose
Dr. Ramchandra Sharma
Dr. Monoranjan Mohanti
Dr. S. N. Jain

PRESIDENT :

Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer

MEMBERS OF

PRESIDIUM :

Dr. Sushil Mukherjee
Dr. H. N. Prasad
Prof. R. V. Ranade
Prof. Hiren Gohain
Dr. Ajit Kumar Ghosh
Prof. S. Guptan Nair
Dr. I. K. Roy
Prof. Sukomal Dasgupta
Prof. G. Haragopal

SECRETARY :

Dipankar Roy

MEMBERS OF THE
SECRETARIAT :

Arun Kumar Singh
Dr. V. Venugopal
Pratap Shamal

TREASURER :

Dr. S. Banerjee

In conclusion Justice Iyer took the floor and in an emotional voice, echoed the spirit and sentiment of the delegates when he declared: "India shall not perish, Indians shall not remain illiterate! The first half of this century saw India free. The second half of this century must make Indians free — educationally, culturally and politically! We shall not surrender this nation to an elite section, we shall not surrender our education to monecracy. The war is on! It will be a difficult battle. There will be many obstacles! But march we will, fight we will and win we will!"

He said: "The convention as many people have rightly said, is a historic Convention, I go

further and declare that this Convention itself has made history!"

At 4-30 P.M. a well decorated and disciplined procession started from the front of the camp. The participants from all the states with the regional banners and festoons of the State Save Education Committees and carrying posters and placards were registering their protest against the NPE. This march of education loving people symbolising a battle-march against the anti-people new education policy of the Central government, treaded the main thoroughfares of the city like Punamallu High Road, Sydarnhams Road, Veppery High Road and Purasakkam High Road, with high spirit, firm steps and vibrant slogans like 'Down with new education policy', 'Go hell the scheme of model school', 'introduce secular, democratic and scientific education for all', etc. The local people at the way side and at the street junctions, who were stranded for long due to the procession, stood patiently to let the procession make its way.

At 5-30 P.M. when the procession reached Thana Street, Pura Sawa-kkam the venue of the Open Session, it was a vast sea of humanity. On the towering rostrum were sitting the leading educationists, jurists, journalists and intellectuals of the country like Mr. V. R. Krishna Iyer, former Justice of Supreme Court, Prof. Samuel Mathai, former Vice-Chancellor of Kerala University, Mr. P. Venugopal, former Justice of Madras High Court, Dr. S. K. Mukherjee, former Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, Dr. H. N. Prasad, former Head of the Department, Economics, R a n c h i University, Mr. K. Veeramani, General Secretary of D. K., Tamil Nadu, Prof. Monoranjan Mohanty, Deptt. of Political Science, Delhi University

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Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer delivering his enthralling speech.

their way five or six days centring the convention.

Furthermore, the elections to the State Assembly having been concluded only three weeks before the convention there were fewer days remaining to prepare for this great occasion. So, all these volunteers particularly those of Tamil Nadu had to engage themselves for a fifteen-day long fund collection at a stretch from morning to late evening with taking rest only for a very brief spell in course of the daily rigours of collection. They collected thousands of rupees from the teachers, from the scholars, from other professionals as well as from common members of the

delegates sitting in groups became busy in reading and discussing the Draft Alternative Policy on Education (DAPE) and preparing amendments on it. Through this intermixing and intercourse in the camps on and after listening to the observations of the front ranking intellectuals of the country, the delegates from different parts of the country washed away the slightest of the doubt about the prospect of the movement against NPE, if there was any, within them and pledged themselves to do their best in building up save education movement. Never did the country witness such a vast assemblage of intellectuals, academic

All India Save Education Convention in Madras

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Dr. B. C. Ramchandra Sharma, former advisor, UNESCO, Prof. Vidhu Bhusan Das, former Vice-Chancellor Utkal University, Mr. Hiranmoy Karlekar a renowned journalist, Dr. R. V. Ranade, Prof. of Political Science, Nagpur University, Prof. Sukomal Dasgupta, former member of Senate, Calcutta University, Mrs.

Tripta Wahj of Hindu College, Delhi, Mr. Narendra Sharma of Zakir Hossain College, Delhi and others.

The meeting started with Mr. V. R. Krishna Iyer in the chair. The message of Mr. Chinnappa Reddy, former Justice of Supreme Court was read out by Dr. Venugopal. The President Justice Iyer

delivered his speech. The entire audience was charged with hilarity and indignation when Justice Iyer condemned the NPE as cultural opium of the people. He observed that since in Art. 45 of the Constitution universalization of education of the children upto the age of 14 had been made compulsory and since here education was not meant

as mere literacy, the NPE was contra constitutional. Criticising the attempt of deliberate denial of education to children as the most violent national crime, he opined that there was resources in our country but that was mis-spent and misdirected. Ridiculing the system of model education he observed that making scope for vocational training

was one thing but the vocationalisation of entire education under the NPE aimed at producing robots. Dwelling on job-degree delinking he opined that in the absence of any attempt to create more jobs this slogan was a fraud on the common people of the country. As a future call of movement, amidst thunderous applause he concluded, "It is not the beginning of the end, but the end of the beginning."

Justice P. Venugopal observed that the Union Government was out to provide three-tier education as non-formal for the poor, vocational for the middle class and model school for the elite. He expressed his support to the fight against NPE.

Then rose up to the mike Dr. S. K. Mukherjee and observed: The rulers had taken much more time than the promised 10 years to eradicate illiteracy. It was not difficult to eradicate it, but they were profiteering by the existing state of affairs. This was the politics of poverty and politics of illiteracy. With no allotment for providing basic minimum facilities in the schools, the slogan of 'Operation Blackboard' stood thoroughly exposed. He concluded by saying: 'This politics can be overthrown by mass movements and we are interested in such a movement.'

Mr. S. K. Veeramani told that the NPE attacked the very democratic concept that education should be for all. He wished this convention all success and assured his support to the future movement against NPE.

Prof. Monoranjan Mohanty observed: This education policy is a part of the authoritarian policies pursued by the Central Government and is just as condemnable as NSA and other black legislations. That is why the struggle is a part of the comprehensive democratic movement.

Dr. B. C. Ramchandra Sharma of Karnataka in his address envisioned



Dr. Sushil Kumar Mukherjee addressing the Delegate Session on 14th February. Behind him are seated the distinguished speakers of the Session.



A section of the large audience at the 14th February Delegate Session.

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SEMINAR ON ELECTORAL REFORMS

Design behind Poll Reforms Bill exposed

A seminar on 'Electoral Reforms in India' organised by the West Bengal Political Science Association in collaboration with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, West Bengal Branch, was held on 16.2.89 at the Council Chamber of Assembly House. Among others it was addressed by Comrade Deba Prasad Sarkar, the leader of SUCI Legislature Group in West Bengal Assembly.

Here is the text of the speech delivered by Comrade Sarkar :

While addressing the seminar on 'Electoral Reforms in India' I like to mention at the very outset that in a class-divided society like ours the question of 'Poll reform' cannot be assessed from supra-class outlook. So we shall have to decide first, whom this poll reform is meant for? Whether this is in the interest of the ruling capitalist class or in the interest of the common working people of the country? Because, as a student of history and social science we know that, capitalism, which for its own sake once gave birth to liberal form of Bourgeois Parliamentary democratic rule, now attaining the stage of monopoly capitalism and thereby Imperialism, in conformity with centralisation of capital in the economic field, needs centralisation and concentration of political power. also. To the present-day moribund capitalism the old liberal form of bourgeois parliamentary system has lost its utility and it is the autocratic fascist rule which is most suitable to serve its purpose. It is not a fact that this fascist rule will always manifest in the form of naked military rule or in the form of naked dictatorship. It may manifest also in the form of "two-party democracy" where the ruling class will resort to heinous tactics of forming government by either of the two parties enjoying its confidence and serving its interest. It is needless to say that the ruling class of India, doing away with the last remnant of democracy, is frantically

attempting to pave the way for bringing 2-party system like in the USA or Great Britain so that under parliamentary garb it can impose fascist rule in the country.

In the crisis-ridden socio-economic - political background the purpose of the ruling class in poll reform is to do away with all the norms necessary for holding free and fair election and to make the election a farce where the scope of election will virtually be restricted to two parties or combinations of parties enjoying the confidence and having the choice of the ruling class. In the light of the said scientific outlook one will not fail to realise the real significance of the recently passed Electoral Reforms Bill which has been described by the Central Government as 'historic', 'revolutionary' and so on. One will not fail to realise that the Bill does not aim really at preventing corruption in election and upholding democracy. Rather behind the introduction of this Bill there is a heinous and well planned conspiracy to do away with the fundamental right of the people. For paucity of time just for an example, I want to mention the Clause of Registration of Political Parties in the proposed Bill. The Clause has been laid down in such a way as will help the ruling class 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. To justify these measures

they are trying to confuse the people with the wrong idea that the existence of multiplicity of political parties is endangering democracy and that is why, according to them, to save democracy it is necessary to reduce their number. But what is the lesson of history in this regard? We know 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. To explain the spirit of democracy John Stuart Mill said: "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." So this was what the real concept of bourgeois democracy meant.

But today the ruling class of our country is explaining democracy just the reverse way. Again, it has been claimed that the recently passed Bill has widened democracy. But to our utter surprise we find that there is no provision in the Bill to abolish the gross discrimination in the existing election process of our country. In the present system of election a political party gets recognition exclusively on the basis of its election result and its parliamentary activities. In this regard extra-parliamentary movement and mass activities of a political party is not taken into consideration. The most pertinent question is, the political party which is mobilising lakhs of people to organise mass movements on the burning issues of public life, where the party workers are dedicating their lives for a noble

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Joint Convention On Female Foeticide

A Convention was organised on 'Female foeticide' vis-a-vis status of women in our society at Lajpat Rai Bhawan jointly by Medical Service Centre and Mahila Sanskritik Sangha (MSS), Chandigarh Units. It was attended by the people from all walks of life. An exhibition with the help of charts depicting the misuse of modern medical technology was also organised on the occasion outside the hall.

The convention was presided over by Prof D. N. Kakkar, Post-graduate Institute, Chandigarh. Comrade Gian

Singh, General Secretary, Committee for Protection of Democratic Rights and Secularism (CPDRS) was present as the main speaker. In his speech Comrade Singh traced the historical context of exploitation of women in particular and exploitation of man by man in general in different stages of development of society. Continuing, he said that even on the eve of 21st century, in the so-called modern society, exploitation of man by man in general and women-folk in particular is continuing unabated, though in different forms. (Contd. on page 7)

cause and ideology—why such a political party on the basis of its extra-parliamentary movement and wide mass activities and support will not be regarded as a recognised political party in the election and it will not be allowed to contest in the election on equal footing? Besides, while conferring recognition on a political party, particularly in the present day election system in our country, one cannot correctly determine the organisational strength and popular support of a political party on the basis of manipulated election result. Because in the existing election system the role of the voters is very insignificant in determining results. It is a matter of common knowledge to all that the different election combinations or Fronts or alliances, the artificial polarisation manipulated by the press and other media, the big money influence, the peaceful or violent rigging etc., play havoc in influencing election result in our country.

Before I conclude, I like to mention that though in the present socio-economic - political structure it is not possible to prevent corruption completely in the election

process yet, at least, in a relative sense to ensure free and fair election we had been demanding for poll reform for years. Our party's specific suggestions, among others, advanced from time to time to the Government includes: Election Commission should be an independent Statutory Body absolutely free from the control of both the Central and the State Governments. The entire process of election work starting from the preparation of electoral rolls to the declaration of results be conducted by the exclusive staff under the control and supervision of the Election Commission. Secondly, we suggested introduction of identity cards with photographs to prevent false voting. All will admit that had the said suggestions been implemented it would have been possible to prevent corruption in the election system at least to a considerable extent. But none of our suggestions found any place in the Bill and was rejected outright as per previous practice. So, in my opinion, the recent Electoral Reforms Bill passed by the Central Government manifests its vile design to destroy democracy in the name of saving it.

Bhopal Gas Victims Victimised again

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the composition of MIC comes to light and help explode the myth behind the manufacture of MIC in Bhopal, both the Central and the State Governments came in rescue of the US multinational!

In such a dreaded situation when the government has been playing the role of a collaborator in massive cover up of the misdeeds of the UCC, Zahreeli Gas Kand Sangarsh Morcha led by Com. Alok Pratap Singh and others came forward to build up a movement to press the urgent demands of the gas affected people through meetings, squattings, demonstrations etc. The criminality of the government reached to such a height that the M.P. government came down heavily on the organisers of the 'Morcha'. Even women organisers were beaten at their residences and arrested with their babies. Notorious antisocials were requisitioned to torture the arrested activists within the jail. The police raided, time and again the residence of Com. Alok Pratap Singh and had arrested a number of times, carried on searches in his residence and caused considerable damage to household goods, valuable documents and damaged a photo of Karl Marx. He took a novel method as a form of movement exerting pressure on the concerned authorities by collecting signature from 83 poets of international repute from 16 countries. For the purpose, they sent a memorandum to the US President on 15th January last for taking steps against the UCC so that Bhopal gas victims get their due compensation as early as possible. The memorandum, inter alia demanded of confiscating the properties of the UCC of USA all over the world and pay the due compensation and long term medical relief and rehabilitation to the gas victims.

In an interview given to the Press Comrade Singh described Supreme Court award as total betrayal to the cause and interests of the Bhopal gas victims. The Bhopal case is not about money. There are larger issues involved. The guilty must be punished." (India Today)

Before we examine those so-called welcome features of the judgement, one may not lose sight of the fact that in December 1986 in the case of a non-toxic leakage of oleum gas in Old Delhi, what the Supreme Court had delivered by way of judgement in quick haste to the people shivering with apprehension. The Supreme Court in that case, proclaimed the principle of absolute liability of hazardous industry; and now see the difference, after travelling 3 years thence. Bhopal Settlement scornfully ignores this binding principle. Does it not create one regime of liability for Indian capital and none for the killer multinational! Intelligent reader will have no hesitation to draw appropriate conclusion from this single instance. Let us again try to see through an eye of a jurist. It may be worthwhile to recall that a "binding 7-Judge Bench in the recent Antulay Case held that the Court had no power to transfer criminal proceedings unto itself and issue consequential orders; here, it simply proceeded to quash criminal proceedings! The Court has no power simply to transfer civil proceedings and order that they be deemed concluded. In ordering as it did, further, the Court violated a requirement of the Civil Procedure Code (a requirement of justice) that in a representation action affected parties must be heard before a compromise is decreed." Mainstream—4.3.89) Clearly, under the law and Constitution of India, the Supreme Court's orders are merely without juris-

diction. If any one scoffs off this vital aspect of legality on the plea of its being just 'technicalities', one is apt to stake, knowingly or unknowingly, the citizen's entitlement to a just administration of justice.

Now, with regard to the argument that it would have taken many years, and many courts to try on merits of these claims and the poor victims would have suffered in the meantime. To say in such a vein is derogatory for Indian Judicial System for its being so inefficient that it cannot dispose of the case affecting few lakhs of people in less than five years! That apart, would Indian State have no duties to gas victims, in so far as the right to life of a citizen and the consequent duty of support by the State as enshrined in the Constitution is concerned! A Government claiming itself to be the defender of the biggest democracy in the world and holding sway over a civilized government could have provided the needed money, say five or six hundred crores of rupees, for relief and rehabilitation of the victims and then reimbursed itself when the case was over. It could even evolve a method, for the matter at that, for creation of such a fund like the 'Refugee and Relief Postal Stamp', issued during the Bangladesh war.

The Bhopal catastrophe and its aftermath thus once again clearly demonstrate that we are living in a setup where the authority not only has least regard for human values but does spare no means to crush the most just and legitimate movements. The government aided and abetted the multinational UCC in using the Indian people as guinea pigs. When the crying need of the hour was for medical help and relief as well as for economic rehabilitation of a

few lakhs of surviving gas victims, the government came forward with extraordinary promptness to scuttle the proper course and allowed at the same time the multinational UCC to go virtually scot-free!

But the shamelessness of this government reached a new height when we take into cognizance the fact that the Indian Government has issued a new licence to the Union Carbide for a new company to locate it somewhere in Maharashtra for manufacturing special types of gases and gas mixtures based Helium. Needless to say, this company will in its turn invest huge sums to the same. One can easily see through the nefarious game of the Govt. which is trying to hoodwink the common people by giving an eyewash of what is staked at Bhopal disaster: filing a money-suit and extraction of a contrived decreed suit! Yet there are people who believe that this award is an invitation to multinationals to produce dangerous substances in India without having to answer for even the dreaded consequences it is fraught with. It also reports bitterly to a move by the Govt. of India to build a new MIC plant, in collaboration with the French, to manufacture the same gas from which victims of Bhopal disaster are still dying today. Has this abject surrender to the US multinational and its Government has anything to do with regional super power status India have acquired in so far as plugging the gap of acquiring the technological aspect of germicidal warfare is concerned?

So, it is not only the negligence or callousness and bartering away the interest of India Govt., that are called into question. On the other, the lingering tragedy of Bhopal disaster points unmistakably to the identity of class interest and a calculated design to exploit the people with hand in glove both by killer UCC and the Indian State. One may aptly conclude that for 'Bhopal' and its aftermath, the responsi-

lity squarely lies with the Government of India (State and Centre) and the UCC-management. Both must be put together as the real culprit on the dock.

The task of the people at the present moment is therefore to build up such a popular movement all over the country so that no more 'Bhopal' happens.

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The basic socio-economic structure of our society, he said, is the root cause of such a malady. Citing the oft-quoted saying of Lenin, Comrade Singh showed how the women in exploitative society are exploited both in the domestic sphere and in the society problem like 'female foeticide' is increasing day by day and appealed to the people at large to engage themselves in creating awareness against this obnoxious practice through development of mass movements with the slogan of ban on the sex determination tests. Comrade Nirmala, President of MSS, Haryana rising to speak on the occasion touched on the gravity of the menacing social problem like 'female foeticide' and urged upon the gathering to develop counter current of mass awareness against it.

In the presidential speech, Dr. Kakkar appreciated the efforts of MSS and Medical Service Centre towards creating a public awareness against the female foeticide. Besides urging upon the Union Government to ban this harmful phenomenon, he also urged upon the State Government to take effective measures against the malpractices and corruption prevailing in the medical field as well. The Convention came to an end after it took a unanimous resolution urging the Govt. to ban the sex determination test once for all.

All India Save Education Convention

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a future India where the fundamental right of a child to get education and the government's duty to educate them would be guaranteed.

Dr. Vidhu Bhushan Das, said : How can the set of people who are responsible for the present maladies in the educational system be entrusted with formulating a new policy? Educational administration should be under educationists and never under bureaucrats.

Mr. Hiranmoy Karlekar, said : Through model school the government will achieve a national network covering rural and urban areas to spread a western decadent culture, a pop-culture but not a culture of humanism, Marxism or other great philosophies.

Prof. R. V. Ranade of Nagpur with emotional and self critical voice said that the teachers of the country who had so far engaged themselves in petty economism and neglected their role of fighting for education should immediately step forward.

Except two speakers who spoke in Tamil, all others spoke in English. The members of the audience who were naturally mostly Tamils were found trying to follow the speeches patiently and with rapt attention. Some were even seen asking others to help them follow what the speakers were deliberating.

To oppose and criticise a government's education policy are nothing new and not so hard a task. The organisers of the Save Education movement did not consider the responsibility fulfilled by merely doing this; but had taken the strain to formulate an alternative policy draft, made it the topic of discussion in the last Delhi seminar of 14th September '88 with the frontranking intellectuals

of the country and circulated it throughout the country for an open and countrywide interaction among the concerned people. This DAPE was the subject of discussion in the first delegate session.

From the morning of 14th began the delegate session in the Peryar Thedal, quite a big auditorium of the city. The delegates who were exceeding 3000 overflowed the hall and many of them had to take seat in open air outside. The session began from 9-30 A.M. with Dr. S. K. Mukherjee in the chair. Dr. H. N. Prosad, the former head of the department of Economics of Ranchi University introduced the DAPE at the beginning. In his speech he observed that the NPE was the cruel fraud made against the vast multitude of the country. While highlighting some important aspects of DAPE he told that DAPE had emphasized the man-making and character-building aspects of education and had been formulated in such a way that every young man and woman might be infused with scientific approach to social problems, free from all superstitions, all fanatic and obscurantist ideas. He highlighted its emphasis on secular and democratic approaches in formulating the syllabus and curriculum so that the students might not be divided on the basis of caste, creed, religion and others.

After his speech, participated in the discussion distinguished personalities like Prof. Guptan Nair, a famous litterateur, Dr. Uma Shariff of Joseph College of Arts & Science, Bangalore, Prof. J. Haragopal of Central University of Hyderabad, Smt. Rajam Krishnan, Chairperson of the Reception Committee, Prof. N. Sharma and Prof. Tripta Wahi of Delhi, Prof. Sukomal Dasgupta, for-

mer member of the Senate, Calcutta University, Prof. Saleh of Delhi University and Prof. Balanarasu. Many important suggestions and amendments came from their observations. In addition to these hundreds of amendments in written form from the floor reaches the dais for enriching the DAPE; but for lack of time they were deprived of taking part in the discussion.

Prof. Dasgupta in his speech dealt educational issues from socio-political approaches and opined that there would be a great mistake if educational issues were considered in isolation from social perspective and observed that since the society was sharply divided into two opposing classes of haves and have-nots with antagonistic interests, there could not be any single approach to educational problems which would satisfy all equally. He maintained that following the ideals of the pioneers of renaissance of this country and abroad, the DAPE had laid emphasis on developing a thirst for truth and quest for knowledge.

In the afternoon session which was presided over by Dr. S. K. Mukherjee also, was moved the Main Resolution by Prof. Krishnamurthy and was seconded by Dipankar Roy. In support of the resolution spoke Prof. Srivastava of Bihar University, Prof. Aminder Pal Singh of Guru Nanak College, Arun Singh, Pratap Samal and Secretaries/Presidents of different state level Save Education Committees.

Women's Day Observed

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significance of the 'Day' and read out the Memorandum submitted to the Deputy Minister of Social Welfare.

After the meeting, a delegation led by Comrades Binapani Dash, Tarulata Behara, Kusum Misra, handed over the Memorandum to Sm. Saraswati Hembram, Deputy Minister of Social Welfare, demanding appropriate steps against torture, indignity and other social menace on women, banning obscene advertisements, drug addiction, dowry system, etc.

WEST BENGAL

Calcutta, 8th. March—
Like the previous years, 8th of March was observed as International Women's Day in different parts of our country with all seriousness at the call of Mahila Sanskritik Sangha (MSS). West Bengal State Committee of the MSS took this historic day as a mark of protest against the reported statement of the Union Minister of Energy Mr. Vasant Sathe, who was quoted in the press as saying that no reservation against 'female foeticide' was needed as abortion was legal. To give vent to this voice of protest, a 7-member delegation led by Comrade Gayatri Dasgupta, the Secretary of West Bengal State Unit, handed over to the Governor for its onward submission to the Prime Minister a memorandum.

In the Memorandum dated 8th March addressed to the Prime Minister it was deplored how on the last lap of 20th Century womenfolk seize press headlines not as celebrities but as victims of bride-burning, dowry system, gang rape or other social menace. No civilized society, as we boast of, can afford to continue such a sorry state of affairs for long. It, at the same time ex-

pressed its deep concern about the Government's pathetic attitude of treating women of our country as a second class citizen as was manifest in the speech of a personage like a Union Cabinet Minister, Mr. Sathe. It went on saying how any evil met in the society affects mostly women's life, being not only the weaker section of the society but also due to their being condemned to household only. Expressing shocking concern, it gave vent to its indignant protest over the recent findings of 'AIDS virus' in some injection ampoules, specifically injected to some pregnant mothers. No civilized government can shake off its entire responsibility of the dire consequences such incidents are fraught with including endangering lives of so many hapless mothers and children too! Along with it, the memorandum drew pointed attention of the Government with regard to rampant flouting of law of the land in respect of paying equal wage for equal job to women workers of the country. Besides demanding of public apology on behalf of the concerned authority for the reported comment in favour of 'female foeticide, it demanded of the Union Government, among others, (i) banning of Amniocentesis, (ii) strict implementation of anti-Dowry Act, guaranteeing equal wage for equal job for women workers, (iii) security of women against torture, indignity and other social menace, (iv) arrest of evil forces of casteism, communalism, obscurantism standing as a barrier in the development of democratic values in social life.

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