

AFTER HEROIC STRUGGLE

Jute Workers Betrayed

They have been betrayed: their vital cause compromised! The historic strike struggle of more than 2 lakh jute workers of 56 jute mills in West Bengal came to a tragic end after 84 days, longest so far in the industry by a settlement signed on 7th of April by eleven out of fourteen trade union bodies who called and conducted the strike. UTUC (Lenin Sarani), B. M. S. and IFTU leaders refused to sign.

It is a 'settlement' to unsettle the already settled facts going in favour of the workers. And this is exactly what the jute mill owners were wanting over the years. UTUC (Lenin Sarani) along with two other fraternal organisations has called it in unmistakable terms a "Black Agreement".

In order to know why it is a black agreement the workers' demands and how the said agreement settles those are to be understood, first.

The workers fought this time for so many days with attendant sufferings and privations for four principal issues. They are:—

(1) Implementation of the recommendations of the Banerjee Committee set up by the State Government on workers' complement (number of workers) and work norm in the industry. The recommendations were—

(a) There shall be no further increase in work-load/decrease in workers complement as they were obtaining on 7.5.72, by any jute mill;

(b) Either the workers, who have lost their jobs due to increase in workload, should be reinstated or the vacancies so caused should be filled up by new workers;

(c) Adequate cost compensation should be paid to those workers who have been shouldering additional work-load.

It is to be remembered that in the 1979 tri-partite agreement of the jute workers, representatives of both the mill-owners' organisation—Indian Jute Mills Association (IJMA) and of the trade-unions agreed that the State Labour Minister's Award on these recommendations would be accepted by both. The Labour Minister in his award in 1982

accepted all these recommendations. But the jute barons trampling under foot the previous agreement of 1979 refused to implement these recommendations. It is a matter of shame that the State Government did not force the jute barons to accept what was in the previous agreement. Naturally, the jute workers had no other option than to go on strike to force the mill-owners only to act according to what they should have done two years back.

In short, while the IJMA was determined not to bring back to service about 50,000 jute workers who were retrenched by increasing the work-load through change of loom-workers ratio, particularly during the days of emergency, the workers on the other hand, were practically fighting for the implementation of an agreement, reached five years back.

(2) Secondly, another major issue was also, like the first, implementation of recommendations of the Bhattacharjee Committee, set up by the government on grade and scale which in reality means restructuring the piece-rated system of jute workers which is far worse than that of the monthly rated workers. Here too, the Bhattacharjee Committee recommended:

(a) Grade and scale for all categories of workmen,

(b) Increment should be from 1.3.80 and

(c) As machine, materials and other factors vary from mill to mill so restructure of piece-rate system shall be done at plant level.

It is to be understood however that whereas the mill-owners were not unwilling to grant grade and scale or for that

(Contd. on page 2)

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CALL OF 24th APRIL

THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, AT DIFFERENT PLACES, 24TH APRIL HAS BEEN OBSERVED THIS YEAR AS PART AND PARCEL OF THE MOVEMENT LAUNCHED BY THE SUCI TO SPREAD THE THOUGHTS OF COMRADE SHIBDAS GHOSH, THE DEPARTED LEADER, GUIDE, THE FOUNDER GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE PARTY AND ONE OF THE FOREMOST, MARXIST THINKERS OF THE ERA, AND TO BUILD UP LEGITIMATE DEMOCRATIC MASS MOVEMENTS ON THE BURNING PROBLEMS IN THE PEOPLE'S LIFE AND ON THE EDIFICE OF HIGHER PROLETARIAN CULTURE AND ETHICS. SOME NEWS OF THE PARTY FOUNDATION ANNIVERSARY IN SOME OF THE STATES HAS REACHED US. WE ARE PRINTING THEM BELOW IN BRIEF.

ORISSA

In Cuttack, at Saheed Bhawan, a mammoth public meeting was organised on the evening of 24th April. Com. Binapani Das presided and Com. Tapas Dutta, Secretary of the Orissa State Committee of the party, addressed the gathering as the main spaker.

A well decorated procession paraded the main thoroughfares of the town to meet in a rally at the meeting place. The meeting commenced with the DYO music squad singing on the departed most beloved leader and Founder General Secretary of the party.

(Contd. on page 3)

TAMIL NADU

Culminating in a central mass meeting at Salem on 30th April, a month long programme of extensive campaigning on the significance of the party foundation anniversary observance was carried out in this state.

A procession of people from different walks of life was taken out in the afternoon of 30th April at Salem where party workers different districts of the state had converged. A mass meeting was held at Bose maidan where a rostrum was constructed with a big portrait of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh in the backdrop. Com. M. Jagannathan, in charge of Tamil Nadu state unit of the party, presided. Com.

(Contd. on page 4)



Part of gathering (below) and dais (above) at Party Foundation Day meeting at Salem, Tamil Nadu.

Black Agreement in Jute Industry

(Contd. from Page 1)
 matter, its revision, in case of the monthly rated workers, they were opposing grade and scale for the piece-rated workers, who were getting a paltry Rs. 211.00 on attendance and Rs. 41.00 on productivity basis. The recommendations referred to above, clearly were in favour of those workers having a grade and scale, the work-norm to be decided at the plant level due to unevenness of machine standard etc. The Labour Minister's award also could not out accept the justifiability of these recommendations. The mill-owners were however for 80% of the wages of these jute workers, productivity-linked, that too on higher worknorm in as much as work-shifts were increased years back from 8 to 21 denying practically no leave for the workers. On this issue also, the monopoly houses like Birla, Bajoria, Goenka etc. represented by their organisation, IJMA were flouting the provisions of the previous agreement and the workers' fight was to get those implemented.

(3) The third major issue was for revision in wages and neutralisation rate in D.A. as also giving retrospective effect to those from 1.1.82 when the previous agreement lapsed in 1982.

(4) The fourth issue was for ensuring deposit of PF money deducted from the workers and making their timely payment to them. It is to be noted that the jute barons have been resorting to a fraudulent means for meeting their capital requirement by misappropriating the workers' PF money which now comes to the tune of Rs. 35 crores. Default in depositing the PF money deducted from the workers is a criminal offence under sections 404 and 409 Cr. P.C. of the Indian Penal Code. But whereas in other states there have been instances of prosecution against this criminal act, the West Bengal government under CPI(M) led "Left Front" has not moved against such offenders in a single case.

Let us now see what the

jute workers have got in the recent agreement after their heroic struggle for 84 days. We are to bear in mind in this connection that there was nothing to be decided anew on the vital questions of worker's complement (bringing back the retrenched workers) bringing down the work-norm or grade and scale for all the jute workers. All these were settled but the IJMA was refusing to implement the previous agreement. Naturally, the only question left was to force the jute barons to honour the agreement.

But wonder of wonders, it is the jute barons' flouting of the previous agreement that has been condoned and sanctified in the new settlement by the "left front" government and the trade union leaders of CITU, AITUC, INTUC and others who signed the new agreement. The recommendations of the two previous expert bodies, not being favourable to the mill owners have been scuttled under cover of setting up two new bodies.

The present agreement provides for the constitution of a tri-partite apex body by the state government to examine and monitor the maintenance of complements. *Whenever changes in manning pattern is sought for carrying out modernisation, the matter will be referred to the apex body for consideration and decision.*

It is crystal clear then that this apex body is for monitoring the manning pattern as at present or in future whenever a change will be sought for modernisation. It has got nothing to do to restore the worker's complement as on 7.5.72 which was the recommendation of the previous body, waiting only for implementation. Thus it seals the fate of about 50,000 retrenched workers getting back their jobs or such vacancies declared and filled up. Connected with it, *the atrocious work load imposed on the workers is also accepted, let alone compensating for bearing this increased work-load.*

Not only this, *sanction is also being given for further retrenchment of workers under the pretext of modernisation.* The only thing to be 'considered' and 'decided' by this body is how many thousands of workers will have to lose their jobs :

A section of the press has also questioned, where is the guarantee that the IJMA will accept the decisions of this body as to the future manning pattern when it refused to accept the recommendations of a previous committee. Well, there is the other aspect. When the same very trade union leaders who could throw to the winds some of the pro-worker recommendations to appease the jute barons why will not they do the same in future from the proposed committee ?

In the same manner, the recommendations of the Bhattacharjee Committee have been scuttled by agreeing to a new expert committee to be set up by the state government within a month, the recommendations of which will be submitted within four months.

It hardly needs to mention that the jute barons were exactly demanding all this. The glee of jute mill owners as also their real motive found expressions in the editorial note of the *Economic Times* of 10th of April, thus :

"Whether there will be meaningful restructuring of the piece-rate system will depend on the selection of technical experts who are to constitute the committee. In this task, the West Bengal Government will be well-advised to consult the office of the Jute Commissioner. If the IJMA refused to accept the recommendations of the earlier committee on work load and grade and scales, it was because non-technical men sat on them."

It was further stated that "improved productivity", a rational manning pattern and modernisation can ensure the viability of a traditional industry like jute".

The fundamental question that is involved in

this agreement is therefore about allowing the management to scuttle a previous settlement simply because it was, not to their liking. After this dangerous precedent being allowed to be set up 'left front' government makes mockery of trade union movement in general and the right of collective bargaining of the workers in particular.

The next thing is about the economic benefits. It is being much trumpeted by the IJMA, the government spokesmen and the trade union leaders subservient to them that the jute workers have gained much of their economic demands. Mr. Bajoria, the President of the IJMA in a show of concern says that the industry has undertaken an extra cost load of Rs. 30 crores which it can hardly bear. This means either the government will have to lessen the burden by subsidies for modernisation or the workers will have to be prepared for more retrenchment under the cover of modernisation, or probably both. But what exactly is the fact ?

The present agreement provides for an increase of Rs. 65.00 in wages and Rs. 5.60 in DA for revision in its formula from Rs. 1.30 per point increase in Consumer Price Index to Rs. 1.50 but that too with a pegging in index. This means the workers will get the benefit only on index figures beyond 500 point, 528 being the prevailing figure of CPI the benefit has been restricted to (26×20) Rs. 5.60 only. The wage settlement has been made effective from 1.3.84 instead of being 1.1.82. Whereas in similar settlements in industries like Coal, Steel, Engineering and even in the case of recently concluded port workers' settlement, retrospective effect to wage revision could be achieved, in the jute settlement the workers have been deprived of that. As a result, on an average, in the very modest estimate individual jute worker has lost in money term between Rs. 450 to Rs. 1120.00 and at least an amount of Rs. 20 crores has been

given to the jute barons as a present, in this election year, for what purpose, not very difficult to understand.

But what is to be noted in connection with wage increase is that it has been linked with productivity. The piece-rate workers, prior to this settlement were at least getting Rs. 211.00 without any productivity link but henceforth, their entire wages will be linked with productivity. Mr. Bajoria, says that the productivity linkage has been increased to 32% but that is showing the figure less, deliberately.

It can be pointed out that—CITU, AITUC, especially who atleast show their opposition to productivity-linked wage revision, denial of retrospective effect in wage revision and manipulation in neutralisation formula in DA, as also job insecurity to the workers, have agreed all those in the jute settlement to prove that their opposition is nothing but formal only to hoodwink the workers.

Now, on the last item, i.e. recovery of workers' PF deductions misappropriated by the jute mill owners, nothing other than promise has come to the workers. Mr. Jyoti Basu, who can be said to be the co-architect of this kind of settlement, why, we will say in a moment, was quite satisfied, with this assurance of those who misappropriate worker's money? why not? If Mrs. Gandhi's government can put its trust on the good senses of the big tax evaders and black money holders, Mr. Bose's government can well do the same in case of monopoly houses in jute industry who are not to go to banks for loans with the obligation of their repayment along with the interests accrued but simply to cheat the workers by misappropriating their PF money.

Afterall, it is a competition between the two parties and the governments, they run as how best to serve the real master, the ruling capitalist class!

(Contd. on page 4)

CALL OF 24th APRIL

(Contd. from page 1)
party, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh.

Discussing the historical background and the necessity to found the SUCI, the only genuine Marxist-Leninist party on the soil, Comrade Dutta elaborated on the arduous struggle undertaken by Comrade Ghosh and his revolutionary compatriots to pave the way for real emancipation of the Indian masses. The pseudo communists who in fact had betrayed the cause of the freedom struggle in the pre-independence period were engaged today in serving the ruling bourgeoisie through their conciliatory role between labour and capital and their anti-people policies and repressive measures from the governmental seat in some states. The task of holding aloft the banner of mass movement fell today on the SUCI alone. Com. Dutta emphasised that the need of the hour called for forging unity among all sections of the toiling people against the machinations of the ruling class and the bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties subserving it to disrupt people's unity and break moral backbone by spreading decadent bourgeois culture.

The meeting adopted two resolutions, one demanding a high level judicial probe into the police carnage at Paradeep and the other extending support to the striking medicos of Orissa. After a brief address by the president,

the meeting ended with the *Internationale*.

ASSAM

In observance of the 36th anniversary of the foundation of the party a big public meeting was held on 24th April at the Nabin Bordolai Hall at Gouhati. Com. Asit Bhattacharyya Secretary of the Assam State Committee of the party, was the main speaker and Comrade Siddheswar Sharma, noted trade union leader, presided over the meeting. The meeting adopted two important resolutions of the present economic and political situation of the State. The resolution on economic situation noted with grave concern the fast deteriorating economic situation of Assam which under the one year rule of the Congress(I) Govt. has been reduced to a bankrupt one where extreme sluggishness both in agricultural and industrial production has become very much pronounced. While emphasising the urgent necessity for bringing powerful pressure upon both the state and the union Govt. and seeking solution to the burning economic problems like price-rise, unemployment etc. the resolution also noted with deep regret that even the sponsors of the Assam movement have not cared to press upon the Govt. for steps to combat price-rise and for the speedy industrialisation of the state.

The resolution on

political situation deplored the divisive policies pursued by the present Congress(I) Govt. The resolution observed that whereas unity amongst all sections of the toiling people alone could defeat the divisive politics of the anti-people gov't. the leaders of the Assam movement failed to evolve a common charter of demands embracing the interests of all sections of the people of the state.

As regards the collapse of the six party alliance which had emerged as the symbol of aspirations of all sections of the toiling people of Assam, the resolution observed that not only the withdrawal of the CPI, RCPI and Congress(S) which arose out of their unprincipled character and petty party interests, but also CPI(M)'s utter dislike for democratic mass movements is equally responsible for its collapse.

The main speaker Com. Asit Bhattacharyya while analysing different aspects of India's capitalist economy and the state system, observed that when under the patronage of the ruling bourgeois parties the capitalist economy of the country and state structure were being further consolidated, the pseudo Marxist parties like the CPI(M) and the CPI were not only spreading parliamentary illusion and gradually abandoning the path of democratic mass movements but were also trying to suppress democratic movements as they had done—in West Bengal. Com. Bhattacharyya called upon the toiling people of Assam to strengthen the S. U. C. I., the only revolutionary party on Indian soil.

Andhra Pradesh

Under the auspices of

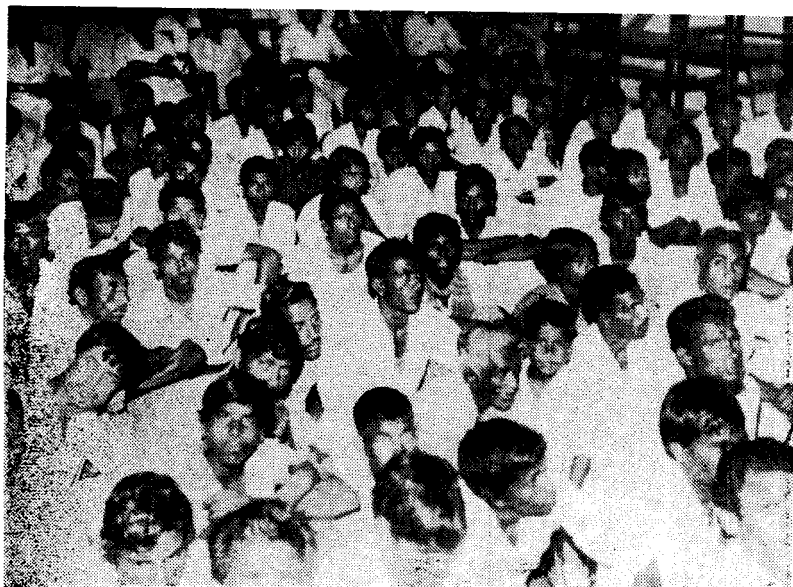
cular, he emphasised that any reform in this respect should aim at introducing a scientific, secular, democratic education, as taught by Comrade Shibdas Ghosh.

Com. Pradeep Kumar, Secretary, Bangalore city Committee of the SUCI, reminded the basic tenets of Marxism and emphasised the role of the SUCI as the only genuine revolutionary proletariat party on soil as against social democratic role of the CPI(M), CPI, etc.

Com. Srinivasa Rao, Secretary, Kurnool District Committee of the party, urged the gathering to realise the significance of the anti-capitalist socialist revolutionary line of the SUCI laid down by Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, the great leader of the proletariat. Com. Rao dealt on the Rayalaseema issue, pointing to its problems



Com. Ashit Bhattacharyya, Secy. Assam State Committee is seen addressing; (below) Part of audience at Nabin Bardolai Hall, in Gauhati on Party Foundation Day.



the Anantapur unit of the party, the 36th foundation anniversary was observed at a public meeting on the evening of 18th April last in Lalitkala-Parishat. This was preceded by political campaigning and fund collection which aroused enthusiasm among the people about SUCI as the standard bearer of their cause. Com. Anjaneyulu, in-charge of the Anantapur unit of the SUCI, presided at the meeting.

Com. Amarnath, Treasurer, AIDS O AP State Committee, was first to address. Discussing at length the problems in the field of education in parti-

covering irrigation, industrialisation, unemployment, etc. Exposing the roles of the CPI(M), CPI and CPI(ML) to fan up regional sentiments among the people over this issue, he urged the gathering to extend their support to building up a protracted democratic mass movement on the Rayalaseema issue, which task the SUCI had engaged itself. Com. B. S. Rao also spoke.

JABALPORE

In Jabalpur, the party foundation anniversary was observed in a solemn manner on 24th April. (Contd. on page 4)

Jute Workers Betrayed

(Contd. from page 2)

And in this service, Mr. Jyoti Basu, himself and his government have set up a record, probably unprecedented in the history of trade union movement of the country. On the day, preceding the date of signing the settlement, he met in a conference with the IJMA bosses and drafted a settlement as per the wishes of the latter to be presented to the T.U. leaders for getting it signed the next day. This conference was also the terms did not remain secret as they came out in a section of the press before it was signed. And on 7th of April, a veritable drama was enacted.

Mr. Jyoti Basu who was never seen, to have shown active interest in solving the just demands of the workers, made his presence. Before that the Rotanda of the Writers' Buildings, (State Government Head Quarters) was heavily guarded by security-men and the T.U. leaders were subject to their checking before entry. Then Mr. Basu, flashed out the so-called agreement and in a most cavalier fashion asked the T.U. leaders to sign, not even allowing minimum time for examination and scrutiny. This highhanded manner amounted to asking the T.U. leaders to sign on the dotted lines. While CITU, AITUC, INTUC etc. obliged the government and the IJMA, UTUC (Lenin Sarani), BMS and IFTU—these three organisations refused to sign a document of shame, an "agreement" for the sell out of the workers' vital interests, a fraud on the workers.

They have squarely termed it a "Black Agreement" in as much as the refusal of the jute mill owners to accept—

(a) the recommendations of the Banerjee Committee to restore workers' compliment and work-norm as on 7.5.72.

(b) so has been allowed the jute mill owners' demand to throw to the wind the recommendations of the Bhattacharjee

committee on grade and scale for the piece-rate workers; And by this agreement;

(c) productivity linkage on the basis of an atrocious work-load has not only been imposed on the workers but the provision for further reduction in work force under cover of modernisation has been made;

(d) even the wage-revision has defrauded the workers of their legitimate dues for retrospective effect as could be achieved in other industries;

(e) the pegging of benefit of DA increase, a most reactionary proposal has also been conceded and

(f) what is more the dangerous precedent, of a most highhanded manner, in which the so-called settlement has been forced on the workers, denying them their basic right of collective bargaining, was allowed to be set up. From all these aspects this agreement on jute workers' demands under the 'left front' rule in West Bengal is sure to cast its very adverse reflection.

While sharing the sorrows and anguish of the jute workers for this betrayal to their cause after their heroic struggle for 84 days, we would appeal to them to isolate and cut to size those leaderships in their movement who, by concrete action proved to be the parties in this black deal. They should instead, rally behind the correct leadership which fought to the last to save their cause, honour and dignity. Finding overwhelmed by the forces committing gravest of treachery to the workers, these trade union bodies did not sign the black agreement and it will surely go down in history that not all the organisations and their leaders acted as agents of the management.

It should be clear to every class conscious worker that as the crisis of the moribund capitalist system deepens, there is scramble also among the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parliamentary

CALL OF 24TH APRIL

(Contd. from page 3)

A well decorated exhibition containing documents on movements organised by the party, such as on 15th June '79 civil disobedience movement, historic Delhi Rally on 4th November, 1980, Tram-bus, and railway fair and freight hike resistance movement of 1983 and historic Language movement of W. Bengal going on for the last 5 years were displayed on 21st and 22nd April at important street corners of the town. Hundreds of people visited these exhibitions showing their enthusiasm.

The observance culminated in a meeting at Makhanlal Chaturvedi Bhawan on 26th April which was addressed by Comrade K. D. Sharma, member of Madhya Pradesh State Organising Committee of the S.U.C.I. Comrade Sharma, in his speech, elaborated on the symptoms of fascism as explained by the great Marxist thinker of this era, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh. Painting the crisis ridden present capitalism, Comrade Sharma explained the necessity of anti-capitalist Socialist Revolution

parties to defend the crisis-ridden bourgeoisie. The casualty is no doubt the vital cause of the workers. Another aspect, in an election year, what these parties, are connected with most is how to appease the capitalists; for in the prevailing electoral system, rigged by centrally administered apparatus, common men's votes hardly count.

Will not the workers realize this truth? Will not they pay back to these leaders what is their due?

The struggle to build up correct leadership for a right direction and control over their struggle as also to ensure a just outcome, must be taken up with all seriousness by them. The lesson and experience of their heroic struggle must bring home to them, this urgency if the same sorry tale is not to be repeated again and again.

Long Live Workers' Struggling Unity!

Long Live Revolution!

in our country and urged the people to strengthen the party of the proletariat the SUCI.

BANGALORE

The Bangalore District Organising Committee of our party SUCI organised a public meeting in Bangalore on 26.4.84 in observance of the 36th foundation anniversary of the party Com. Krishna Chakrabarty, an all-India organiser of our party was the main speaker.

Com: K. Surendra Babu, member of the city unit or the party, presiding over the meeting showed how the ruling capitalist class of our country was trampling upon democratic rights and civil liberty.

Com: K. Radhakrishna, Secretary of Bangalore District Organising Committee explained as to why we should accept Marxism as the philosophy of our life.

Comrade Chakrabarty elaborately explained as to how the capitalist class usurped power in India in 1947 and since then has already developed to the stage of imperialism. Therefore our political line cannot be any other than anti-capitalist socialist revolution. This being the reality, the pseudo-communist parties like CPI, CPI(M) have been pursuing the erroneous line of people's democratic revolution.

TRIPURA

The 36th anniversary of the Party Foundation Day was observed here at the Sangit Mahavidyalya. Comrade Milan

Mazumder, the District Secretary presided over the meeting. Comrade Ashit Bhattacharyya, the Secretary of the Assam State Committee of the SUCI was the main speaker.

Comrade Bhattacharyya dealt on the present political situation of the country and showed that not only the branded bourgeois parties but the social democratic parties like CPI and CPI(M) have been serving the interest of capitalism by pursuing the hated politics of class collaboration. He also pointed out that in order to create artificial stimulation in market, defence expenditure is being increased on the plea of external aggression. Comrade Bhattacharyya appealed to the people to build up counter current of movement conducive to anti-capitalist revolution on the basis of the thoughts of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, who concretised Marxism on Indian soil.

TAMIL NADU

(Contd. from page 1)

Krishna Chakrabarty, a central organiser of the party addressed the gathering, analysing the salient features of a genuine revolutionary party. He showed, in the light of the teachings of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, how the base political line of the CPI (M), CPI, etc. was erroneous. He urged the assembly to strengthen the hands of the SUCI. Com. Jagannathan and Com. S. Narayanswamy, in-charge of the Madras District Committee of the party also addressed the gathering.

May Day Observed

DELHI

May Day was jointly observed by the HMS and the UTUC (Lenin Sarani) at Delhi by the respective Delhi Pradesh Committees of these organisations. A big public meeting attended by large number of industrial workers and employees was held on the lawn of the Constitution Club on the evening of the May Day. It was presided over

by Comrade Prithish Chanda, member, Central Committee of SUCI and General Secretary, UTUC (Lenin Sarani).

BANGALORE

The Bangalore District Unit of UTUC (Lenin Sarani) organised a public meeting to observe MAY DAY on 1st May, 1984, at Yeswanthpur Market Circle, Bangalore.

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