

THE TWO TU CONFERENCES

18-19 May 1971

20-21 May 1971

DOCUMENTS — SPEECHES — DECLARATIONS

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD	...	v
PART I: DOCUMENTS RELATING TO CONFERENCE CALLED BY TU CENTRES, NEW DELHI, 18-19 MAY 1971		
AITUC Letter of Invitation	...	3
HMS Letter of Invitation	...	6
Joint Statement at Press Conference by AITUC and HMS	...	8
Summary of Proceedings of Conference	...	10
Declaration	...	12
List of Invitees	...	18
List of Participants	...	18
PART II: DOCUMENTS RELATING TO CONFERENCE CALLED BY GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, 20-21 MAY 1971		
Letter of Invitation from Government	...	23
List of Invitees	...	25
Letter from AITUC to Minister of Labour, 9 May 1971	...	28
Letter from HMS to Minister of Labour, 14 May 1971	...	31
Letter from AITUC to Minister of Labour, 17 May 1971	...	33
NOTE for TU Conference prepared by Ministry of Labour	...	35
Inaugural address by Prime Minister	...	44
Opening address by Minister of Labour	...	50
Summing up by Minister of Labour	...	56
Joint statement by trade union representatives after conclusion of conference	...	59
PART III: DOCUMENT RELATING TO CONFERENCE OF EMPLOYERS CALLED BY GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, 22 MAY 1971		
NOTE prepared by Ministry of Labour for conference of employers	...	63

**PART IV: FORMATION OF BANGLA DESH SOLIDARITY
COMMITTEE**

Appeal to workers of the world by trade unions of Bangla Desh	...	67
Formation of National committee of TUs for solidarity with Bangla Desh	...	71

APPENDIX: TABLE showing, how in a country, where there are more than one national TU Centre, repre- sentation to ILO Conference is made in a composite delegation of all centres	...	75
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FOREWORD

The month of May 1971 saw two Conferences of Trade Union representatives meet in Delhi—one on 18-19 May and the other on 20-21 May. Both conferences showed a new stage in the trade union and working class movement in India.

The first conference consisted of representatives of all central trade union organisations—except the INTUC. But, they also sent an observer—a new feature.

All those central TU organisations which met, were, in actual life, rivals of each other, who, at one time, were together. Each one, so to say, had his double, which had split away on some grounds, sitting in front of him. Despite this, all had decided to sit in a common TU conference and talk.

Who had called them together and why had they agreed? No, it was not a conference called by “anyone”, that is, not by any one organisation. There was also no joint ‘united’ invitation. “It was under nobody’s auspicious”, was a proposition, which was very carefully emphasised by some speakers. And, certainly not under the auspices of the AITUC—some people wanted to underline this very much. We, of the AITUC, also agreed to accept this underlining! That shows that the rivals had met, but.

But that itself was a step forward.

Since a year or more, the AITUC and HMS had taken a common attitude on certain points of organisational behaviour in relation to the government, the Indian Labour Conference, the question of verification of membership for recognition, ban on strikes, etc. These attitudes were arrived at by mutual discussions. Then each one reported back to their centres and took common steps and wrote memoranda to government, expressing, though in different language or with different arguments, a common decision.

Then we used to inform others also of our viewpoint. For

example, in the matter of the ILC, we used to inform the UTUC or consult with it. The UTUC, many times, agreed with our common view. We also used to inform such of the INTUC leaders, as were amenable to talks or contacts, who however, followed their own line.

Things came to a head when the Government of India tried to push through the recommendations of the National Commission on Labour by calling the 29th Session of the Standing Labour Committee of the ILC on 23 July 1970.

The AITUC and HMS decided to boycott the meeting and requested the Prime Minister to call a broad conference of TU representatives to discuss how to give a new democratic turn in labour relations policy. But the thing did not materialise. We boycotted the meeting.*

II

Nearly a year passed since then.

In the working class and trade union field, a new spirit of unity, both from below and from above, was showing itself. A tremendous strike wave was sweeping over the whole country and embracing all the industries, trades, professions and services, including the government employees of all branches. Workers united in action despite the rivalries and splits in the central organisations or the trade federations. And, that brought together the various rival or split organisations to join hands for action. The workers demanded it. Even where the INTUC at the centre would not countenance such "unities", its local representatives made common cause with the others.

This wave of actions was reflected in the annual tally of "man-days lost", as follows:

1967	—	17.2 million days
1968	—	17.8 million days
1969	—	19.0 million days
1970	—	18.7 million days

* For papers, letters, resolutions and memoranda regarding this, see the AITUC publication entitled TWENTY-NINTH STANDING LABOUR COMMITTEE AND LABOUR POLICY.

For the first time since 1947, which had recorded 16.5 million days' action, had this figure gone so high.

This had its effect on all political parties, including the ruling Congress Party. The elections of 1967, the split in the ruling Congress Party, the events of 1969, the elections of 1971 and all that followed bear the unmistakable mark of this upheaval in the working class, the vanguard of the toiling people. Not less remarkable were the actions of the toiling peasantry and the young intelligentsia.

This very period, when the toiling masses, and particularly the working class, was showing the greatest amount of unity in industrial action, and the greatest militancy also, the political ideologies, political parties and organisations and even individual leadership blocks, were showing greatest splits, differences and differentiations, with differing slogans, flags and sign-boards.

Not that the splits were limited to organs of the exploiting classes, who by their nature, ought to compete and divide.

They took place in the organs of the exploited classes also who, by their nature, ought to cooperate and unite. In this category fall the TU organisations.

Yet, it was a fact that soon after the declaration of differences and divides, those who were based on mass organisations and mass actions (and not purely on group or squad actions), were pushed by the very logic of mass actions to seek cooperation and unity of the masses in action.

It is such a situation, full of exasperating contradictions as well as tremendous possibilities, that called for the efforts of all to meet and discuss the developing situation vis-a-vis the Government and the employers, in the limited field of *industrial* action, with its unavoidable reflections in the political field.

So, once again, we in the AITUC, met the HMS leaders and, after discussion in Delhi and Bombay, issued letters to all central TU organisations and federations calling for a joint meeting of all.

It was expressly stated that through these letters we did not mean to suggest that we, or anyone, was providing the lead or the auspices. And thus the conference of 18 and 19 May took place. Results?

III

When we were discussing to hold our TU meeting, the Prime Minister and the new Minister for Labour, picked up the thread where they had left it and decided to call a conference of TU representatives, before they should think of calling the tripartite of the old type. They timed it for 20-21 May. So, we timed ours for 18-19, though the participants of both were not identical.

This volume gives the list of the participating organisations, as well as the names of their representatives. (Pp. 18-19).

The organisations are all trade union centres and federations. But their representatives, apart from their trade union badge, have a political party affiliation also. Taken together, we had the following national TU centres in our conference:

1. All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC)
 2. Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS)
 3. United Trades Union Congress (UTUC—Bowbazar)
 4. United Trades Union Congress (UTUC—Lenin Street)
 5. Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU)
 6. Hind Mazdoor Panchayat (HMP)
 7. Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC)
- Observer only.

And the political parties that came to be reflected in this are:

1. Communist Party of India (CPI)
2. Communist Party of India (Marxist) CPM
3. The Praja Socialist Party (PSP)
4. The Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP)
5. The Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP)
6. The Socialist Unity Centre (SUC)
7. The Forward Bloc (FB)
8. Cong.(O)
9. Cong(R)

We are not listing separately here the trade federations as also independent individuals, who were present and participated.

It is also worth noting that organisations affiliated to the WFTU as well as the ICFTU came together in this conference and adopted unanimous resolutions.

IV

THE DECLARATION

Two days of debate and speeches. Each one spoke out his mind but with one reservation—tacitly accepted—that is, no one called the other any names, no one went into the past that led to the splits, no one accused another of being “strike-breaker” or similar things. If at all there was any implied satire or parenthetical inuendo, it was silently heard or ignored. We were all bent upon uniting for the main task with agreed approach and slogans. We achieved that.

The speeches mentioned all the current political subjects, such as, US imperialism, its aggression in Vietnam, the dollar debt of India, the Arab-Israel War, Bangla Desh and its meaning, the character of the government and so on. But they could not be part of the joint Declaration.

Someone wanted a programme of action to be adopted. Why not call for a one-day general strike? Then someone pointed out that we once had a whole spate of actual “bandhs” including a declared perspective of a Bharat Bandh. But it did not come. So, wait till things develop. Mention “action” in general, and later, plan for it bit by bit in a united way. Thus the debate took place. The final result was the Declaration, adopted unanimously. It is there in this volume. Its analysis of the situation, the eight points of campaign and call for united action stand out in bold relief before the working class and democratic movement in our country. Amendment of the constitution of the country, elimination of monopoly capital, radical land reforms, and integrated national wage policy, jobs for all and no quarter to closures, public control of essential commodities, their supply and prices, moratorium on foreign debts, and ridding our financial and economic policies from foreign influence and dictates.

Workers’ right to strike and collective bargaining and recognition to be decided by ballot, to be followed by further steps to unity are the highlights of the Declaration.

And to work out this unity further, a continuing convening committee of three with powers to coopt, to call further and

broader meetings was set up—so that the thing does not end there with the signing of the Declaration and the next day's conference, called by the government. Thus concluded the first conference of TU representatives of all national TU centres and trade federations.

V

THE SECOND CONFERENCE

The second TU conference, which met from 20-21 May 1971 in the Vigyan Bhavan in Delhi was convened by the labour minister. It was inaugurated by the prime minister. It was not expected to adopt any definite resolutions. The chairman, R. K. Khadilkar, summed up the proceedings but his own colleagues of the INTUC showed their dissatisfaction with it. They felt that it "smelt" of favouring the positions taken in the Declaration of the other group of TU centres—which, of course, was not a fact. It was plainly visible that some elements in the ruling party's camp did not want a favourable conclusion for this TU conference, which was of an unusual type and wherein the rightist elements had no majority.

It is interesting to note the way the invitees to this conference were composed, in which the right reactionary bureaucrats played a significant role. If all the central TU organisations alone had been invited, as is done in the ILC, the weightage would have been leftwards. If all the trade federations, belonging to all shades of thought and all national TU centres, including those who are not yet admitted into the ILC, viz. the CITU, the BMS, the second UTUC, and the rival trade federations, had been included, even then the trend would have been leftwards. The bureaucrats in the labour ministry, advised from somewhere, included, in the invitees to this meeting, some ad hoc TU committees of unknown origin and with no sizable following anywhere, but known to the TU movement as being centres of right reaction. And, during the proceedings, they duly spoke their master's voice by attacking what they called "communist unions".

That this was pre-planned is evident from another fact. Till the previous day, and until the AITUC, protested, no invitation had been sent to the most powerful AIBEA (All India Bank Employees' Association), which had led big struggles and won big victories. No invitation had been sent to the UTUC of Subodh Banerjee. And so on. The game was self-evident—to load the conference with rightist elements, who, though defeated in the political field, could be shown as having “the working class and trade union bases” with them, and who could prevent the conference from taking progressive and democratic decisions on the vital questions of industrial relations such as strikes and recognition.

But the game misfired. The conference went on record in the new democratic and left direction. The old policy must change or face new battles from the working class.

VI

The right wing intention not to allow the conference to go into the question of giving a completely new democratic orientation to the labour policy of the government was also seen in the so-called agenda or “issues” for the conference, prepared and circulated by the labour department. These were exactly the same issues on which the central TUs had decided to boycott the 29th SLC. They were being purposefully repeated so that we of the trade unions could be provoked into boycotting this broad based conference also.

Out of the seven issues framed (Page 43 of this volume) four were as follows:

1. A period of “strike-free” growth and increased production.
2. Equitable sharing of the gains of increased productivity.
3. Appointment of three man IRCs for the settlement of industrial disputes.
4. Restrictions on the right to strike or lock-out in certain industries/services.

This was as much as saying that the conference was called to discuss the two most vital subjects that were flatly opposed by

the TU movement, that is industrial truce with ban on strikes, and wage-increase only through higher productivity, that is, wage freeze.

The trade union organisations, invited to the conference rejected this agenda and wrote to the government. The AITUC conveyed this view directly in an interview to the labour ministry. In reply the trade unions were told that they could discuss any subject they wanted to and that the "issues" circulated by the department were not in the nature of a binding agenda as such.

Thus the calculations of those who wanted to provoke us into a boycott because of a reactionary framing of the agenda were foiled. The majority of the participants rejected the approach to the problem as framed in the issues. And as soon as the speeches of the prime minister and the labour minister were over, we presented the Declaration adopted by our first conference to this second conference, for consideration and discussion—so to say, it came on the agenda, whether some people liked it or not.

The prime minister made her inaugural speech to the conference on 20 May in the evening. Then the labour minister spoke. This session lasted hardly one hour and adjourned for the prime minister's tea. Next day, the discussions opened at 10 in the morning and with an interval for lunch, the whole thing was over at six in the evening. The delegates then were taken to the presidential palace for tea and talk. Thus the actual deliberations of the conference lasted only about six hours in all, with forty-six delegates of TU organisations and the prime minister and two other ministers participating. In our opinion, this was hardly doing justice to the seriousness of the problems or to the "big powers" that had assembled there both on the side of labour and the government. The only saving grace is that the labour minister has stated that: "I wish the recognised All India bodies would give further thought to this suggestion (i.e. evolving a proposal for selecting a bargaining agent—Editor) by constituting a small committee or a working group of their own for this purpose which could report within a couple of months". But one wonders whether this will survive the freezing hand of

the bureaucracy and other reactionary elements. We will not, however, predict a bad end to a good new venture. The trade union leadership must try its best to take it forward.

VII

We had to go into this aspect of the question because the Prime Minister, in her speech, said:

“It must be over a year since I first expressed my desire to have frank dialogue with representatives of organised labour. I am glad that my colleague, Shri Khadilkar, has now arranged such a meeting and that you have responded to our invitation. I think that this meeting is one of the most crucial in recent years. We are at a significant stage in the evolution of our political and economic system”.

The Labour Minister also, in his speech, said:

“This is not a conventional conference. We have our formal consultative forums—in tripartite bodies... But I think this is the first time that trade union representatives of all shades of opinion have been brought together in a conference. It may seem somewhat unusual to have such a conference outside the established framework of consultation. But we are in an unusual situation”.

Having underlined the unusual, crucial and unconventional character of the conference, did the speeches of the prime minister and the labour minister place before the leaders of the organised working class, assembled there, any new, unconventional or “unusual” line of thinking on the questions facing the working class and the national economy?

We must say that both the speeches, and particularly that of the prime minister, from whom more serious thinking was expected, were very disappointing.

We are not very much surprised if they talked of there being no inherent contradiction, between the employers and the workers, because we are heading for socialism “by common consent”, as the labour minister put it. We thought they should not have forgotten the existence of the seventy-five monopoly houses who are still growing bigger and bigger in the private sector, their sabotage of the public sector, and their grip on our

economy by "common consent" of the reactionary forces in our country. Our main concern is not with these ideological flights and fantasies of the governmental leadership. Our worry is that they picked up with such ease, though with some reservations, the usual bourgeois accusations against the working class, on the matter of production, prices, wages and strikes. On this crucial matter the prime minister betrayed no awareness of any unusual or new thinking at this "significant stage in the evolution of our political and economic system", as she put it.

VIII

They say that production and more production is the need of the hour. We have heard this from every ruling class. But under the so-called mixed economy of the capitalist system in India, is the worker anywhere responsible for production? Did the Second Five Year Plan fall short of its targets due to the workers or due to the deliberate robbery of our economy by the Indian and foreign monopolists? Did the Third Five Year Plan fail due to the sins of the workers? Did the Fourth one lie dead for three years due to the trade union leaders? Where are we, the trade unions or the workers, in the making or executing of the Plans?

History records who failed the Plans and the country. It was not the working class nor the peasantry nor the intelligentsia. We are not responsible for production in the present system, where in the major spheres of economic activity, its decision and execution is in the hands of the tycoons of private capital and where the public sector is guided or misguided by their influences and agents.

Yes, the need of the hour is more production. The working class is aware of it, because it lives only when it produces. And yet, despite starvation, police repression, firing, arrests and all the vile deeds of the engine of oppression that is let loose against it by the employers and the state, why have they to strike, stop production and suffer?

The prime minister says: "Not for a moment am I suggesting that the lower industrial production in the last few years is due solely or even substantially to industrial strikes... But, no

observer of our scene will fail to concede that lack of industrial harmony has surely been an important contributory factor".

Then where does the lack or lag begin? The conference was called to discuss it and almost every shade of trade union thought blamed it on the employers, both in the public and private sector. It should have been the duty of governmental leadership to discuss and propose new policies in this sphere in the new atmosphere. But, it is regrettable that nothing of the kind happened.

IX

The whole of the bourgeois press blames the high prices on the workers' demands for higher wages, dearness allowance, bonus, etc. Even some government leaders are reported to be sharing this view and demand that henceforth wages should be linked to productivity. The usual bourgeois theory of wage-price-productivity link, which is rejected by the trade unions of the whole world still finds shelter in the present planners of the Government of India.

Many people do not know that in almost all areas of production and circulation, wages are already linked to productivity. The employer determines the wage rates, fixed or piece, by calculating efficiency and workload norms—that is, productivity—and the gain that would accrue to him from that wage rate linked to the given efficiency rate. Only the layman does not know how the system operates. What is the net result in terms of wages and profits?

The National Commission on Labour in its report has stated the following:

"The percentage of wages to the value added by manufacture, on the basis of CMI data, shows a decline from about 50 per cent in the period 1949-50 to about 40 per cent in 1958."

This trend continued, and:

"Wages as a percentage of value added declined from about 40 per cent in 1960 to 36.5 per cent in 1964, the latest year for which information is available". (Page 224).

Is it necessary to say anything more as to why most of the strikes take place on the wages and salaries question—that is,

increasing the workers' share of the surplus value produced by him, but appropriated by the employer? And this is only in terms of the prices and returns quoted by the employer himself. The commission had to admit that the share of wages in the growing volume of product is falling.

X

The conference should have asked the trade unions and government to work out a new overall national policy on wages and salaries, by direct bargaining between the trade unions and the employers, in public and private sectors.

The government and the majority of the employers, however, have so far refused to adopt such a policy which would provide an instrument to pave the way to some form of 'industrial harmony', in the relative sense.

Instead they prefer to ban strikes and propose to discuss with the unions, how and where to do it? Even putting the question on the agenda sounds ridiculous in the new period of mass consciousness and the struggle for widening democracy.

Will the TU centres take up the question seriously and expeditiously? That is, to begin recasting the wage and salary map of the whole country by democratic and trade union methods of collective bargaining?

It was rather surprising to hear the prime minister contrapose the small size of the organised working class in the trade unions with the vast unorganised mass outside the TU fold. Such comparisons are out of date and out of taste.

It is the organised mass, even though small, that leads the vast unorganised masses. It is so in India, it is so in all capitalist countries. It was so with the National Congress also in the past history of our national struggle. It is bound to be so in the history of class struggle. The old isolated small individual Spartacus of Roman slavery reappears today as the organised trade union and the political party, though of small numbers. While we of the trade unions would like the masses to come into the unions in large numbers, our shortcomings in the field do not disfranchise us from championing the working class as a whole.

Similarly it is no use putting the employed and the un-

employed into two opposed categories—one being lucky or privileged to get a job and the other unlucky or unprivileged not to find a job. Both, in fact, are the two sides of the same capitalist system, which transfers one category to the other, as it suits the needs of its rate and volume of profits at the given time, on the given lay out of capital.

The only way to overcome the shortcoming of small membership and enable the unions to represent the workers fully is to compel the employer to recognise the unions. And where there are more than one, to decide the issue by ballot. The first conference of the TUs and the Declaration adopted by it is unanimous on this.

The old method of recognition by verification of membership rolls has been found to be partial and undemocratic, favouring those who get initially the help of the government or the employers to enter the factory for enrolment. That method has to go. This conference should have discussed the question. Until it is done, it is no use casting blame on the unions for union "rivalries" disturbing industrial relations, since on the nationwide scale there are no democratically determined industrial relations as such anywhere.

XI

We, therefore, suggest that the trade unions assembled in both the conferences should meet and evolve a concrete outline of principles, procedures and proposals in the matter of:

1. Recasting the wage and salary map in all major areas of employment and specially in the sphere of production to begin with, with a view to establish on a national and all-industrial level, the principles and content of basic wages, dearness allowance, bonus and benefits.
2. Recasting the whole of the industrial relations law and machinery so as to provide for compulsory and direct collective bargaining between the employer and the union, in every field of employer-employee relations and to do away with recourse to the machinery of law courts in any shape or form.

3. Conferring complete immunity from victimisation for • TU workers, in the exercise of their duties, and guarantee and protection of democratic rights and liberties. Eliminating caste disabilities and tribal disadvantages in the matter of equal wage rates and other rights.
4. With such a framework of the new relationship, the Planning Commission should discuss with the whole of the organised TU movement their ideas and proposals of production, distribution and exchange in outline and in concrete forms.
5. This should be followed, if the proper relations are honestly established, by a new Tripartite of National Economy, which alone can hold a useful dialogue on the future of our economy based on peoples' voluntary, conscious and democratic cooperation, without coercion and dictates of monopoly capital.

The masses then will begin to think seriously of the national economy and of their conscious role in it.

We hope those concerned will not delay matters after having taken the step to call such a wide, all representative and unusual meeting of the whole TU movement in the country.

Despite the recent pick up in production and the four years of good harvests, the crisis in the lives of the toiling millions is not abating but sharpening. To that is also added the wail and call of suffering and fighting Bangla Desh, to whom both the TU conferences promised a fraternal helping hand. The AITUC hopes that all the national TU centres and federations as well as the governmental leadership will move to the next stage without delay.

New Delhi
28 May 1971

S. A. DANGE
General Secretary
All India Trade Union Congress

PART I

**Documents relating to the Conference called by
National TU Centres**



New Delhi, 18-19 May 1971

LETTER OF INVITATION ADDRESSED BY AITUC
TO NATIONAL TU CENTRES AND TRADE
FEDERATIONS

24 Canning Lane,
New Delhi,
7 April 1971

Dear Comrades,

The leadership of the Government of India have recently made certain important policy statements on the question of re-structuring the national economy, which require immediate and serious consideration particularly from the working class and the trade union movement. The finance minister in his budgetary pronouncement, then prime minister in her speech in reply to the debate on the President's address, as also the leadership of the AICC, while making the usual statements about fighting poverty and unemployment and reducing disparities in incomes, etc., have come out with proposals and formulas, which are totally harmful to the working class and all working people. And if not combatted now they will not only harm all the toiling masses but also fail to resolve the crisis in the national economy and national life as a whole.

Everybody in India talks of inflation and high prices and the need to fight them. We, of the working class and all toiling masses, are concerned most with this problem, because no amount of dearness allowances or bonus or rise in wages ever gives our real wages full protection against the all-pervading effects of high prices and inflation.

Not only the Government of India, but all governments in all capitalist countries, and first and foremost in the highly developed capitalist economies of USA, UK, France, West Germany

and Japan, etc., are always found to be proposing solutions to this problem of inflation and high prices.

And the one prime solution which they hit upon is to attack the wages and salaries of the working masses, either with a proposal to freeze them altogether or link them with productivity.

And all employers in all capitalist countries have applauded this line. They maintain that high prices and inflation comes out of wages and wage-increases or what they call inflationary wage-increases.

The working-class and trade unions of all these countries have refused to accept this line and have resisted wage-freeze or link-up to productivity through determined strike struggles and defeated this line of the monopolists and their governments in these countries.

It has been the experience everywhere that while wages are frozen or controlled, prices and profits have continued to rise and make for the monopolies more profits than before.

Strange to say, or not so strange, that the new Government of India should pick up this slogan and begin to talk of 'wage-restraints' and linking them to productivity.

This attitude is nothing new. The government, from the very first draft of the first five year plan, some eighteen years ago, has been trying to freeze wages or not allowing enough DA to cover the rise in prices.

The result was that the national economy of India produced the biggest ogres of monopoly capital and rich capitalist landlord groups, all controlling the big banking capital, including the Reserve Bank, which helped the monopolies, with any amount of speculative and inflationary credits, to boost prices and profits. As a result, production grew at a slow rate and never met the needs of the people and the national economy.

The new Government of India, therefore, by repeating the same old policy on wages and repeating the same formula of international capital on wage-price-income policy, is going back on its promises solemnly made to the people during the elections.

It is, therefore, necessary that the trade union movement and workers should meet and discuss this situation and prepare

to defeat this new capitalist offensive, which has not even the merit of assuming a new mask. It is as open as that of the world capitalist system.

Hence, we suggest that all central TU organisations and all trade federations of all industries and services, should meet to hold consultations as to how to defend the workers against this new attack and against the rising prices and inflation.

The working class of India in common with the workers of all countries have certainly positive solutions to deal with high prices and inflation and the national economy as a whole, which also should be discussed at the conference.

We propose that a preliminary consultative meeting consisting of three or four representatives of the central TUs and federations be held, to prepare for a wider conference.

The proposals to be made should be on consensus basis and not on strict majority-minority voting.

All organisations should have representation.

Hostile criticism and accusations against each other, based on party political policies, must be avoided for the conference platform.

A Programme for Action, including proposals for all-India action will be given consideration. In fact, without it, the Conference will be fruitless.

There will be no discrimination in representation following from membership claims or verification records.

Organisational rivalries should not come in the way of representation in the conference.

As the problem affects not only the workers, but all people and the nation as a whole, to evolve unity in action should be the main aim of the conference.

The freedom struggle of the working class and peoples of Bangla Desh has received the sympathy of all sections of the TU movement. At this conference the trade unions could chalk out concrete steps of solidarity with this heroic struggle.

With greetings,

Yours fraternally,
S. A. Dange
General Secretary

LETTER OF INVITATION ADDRESSED BY HMS
TO NATIONAL TU CENTRES AND TRADE
FEDERATIONS

April 9, 1971

Dear Comrade Dange,

In his address to the parliament the President has specifically referred to the government's intention of consulting trade unions. The Labour Minister has also said that he is calling meeting of the representatives of all the central trade union organisations and independent federations for the purpose of broadbasing the tripartite structure. This is something that we in the HMS have always been insisting on. So often in the past the Government of India has said one thing and done another. The Government could get away with such prevarications because of the discrepant voices of the trade union movement.

The presidential address does not spell out the nature of the proposed consultation. The Labour Minister's statement, on the other hand, does not indicate the basis on which the various organisations are to be invited to the meeting. Both these announcements, therefore, leave the initiative with the Government about the matters to be discussed, the context in which they are to be discussed and the probable conclusion to be obtained from such meetings by pre-determining its composition.

How little weight the Government attaches to trade union consultation is underlined by the Finance Ministry's phoney doctrine enunciated in his budget speech: "It is now generally recognised everywhere that without active policy of restraint on wages and prices and, therefore, on incomes, we cannot avoid a price spiral which moves continuously upward from one industry to another".

In these circumstances we believe that in the forthcoming consultation with the government the initiative in all respects should be with the workers and their organisations and not with the government and its bureaucracy. The trade union movement should tell the government about the matters which need discussion. It should also insist on the acceptance of the framework within which it could cooperate with the government in economic development. The movement can only do so if it presses its point of view with maximum agreement, if not with unanimity. We, therefore, feel that the representatives of the various trade union centres and industrial federations should get together and reach a consensus among themselves before meeting the government either in the meeting proposed to be called by the Labour Minister, or such other meetings as the government might call as per the President's address.

We would be very much grateful if we could receive an early reply from you about:

- i. whether you agree that such a meeting of the trade union representatives should be called;
- ii. if you agree to participate in such a meeting who should be invited and on what basis;
- iii. what should be the agenda for such a meeting;
- iv. what should be the procedure for holding such a meeting; and,
- v. what should be the date and place for holding it.

Regards,

Mahesh Desai
General Secretary

JOINT STATEMENT OF AITUC AND HMS ISSUED
AT PRESS CONFERENCE AT NEW DELHI ON
13 MAY 1971

Rapid changes are taking place in India. The masses have amply demonstrated that they will no longer be satisfied with a continuation of the present state of affairs in which prices continue to rise, unemployment increases every year, those who toil have to be content with a barely human existence while on the other hand profits mount and wealth and privileges accumulate in the hands of a few.

With the radicalisation of the mass mood, it is all the more important that the working class in India should be brought into one united movement. Only in this way can it play its due role in not only the field of economy, but also of helping in bringing about changes in the social and political life of our country. For at every step reactionaries and vested interests are putting up, as they are bound to put up, a stiff resistance which stands in the way of our march towards progress.

In such a situation what is necessary first of all is to bring all the democratic and progressive trends in the trade union movement into relationships of a common dialogue and agreement on the urgent tasks and steps necessary to achieve them. Such consultations, it will be our endeavour, should aim at not only common understanding, but united action, ultimately leading to unity of the movement.

The AITUC and HMS feel that the time has come when on the national plane effort should be made to bring all TU centres and Federations together in a joint discussion. Such a discussion will help to identify the areas of agreement as well as those on which differences need to be resolved.

For this purpose we have called a meeting of all national TU centres and Federations on 18th & 19th May at Delhi.

In many respects the policies of the central and state governments regarding labour and industrial relations require immediate change in a more radical and progressive direction.

These have to be fought for. At the same time the trade unions must also formulate positive policies which will enable the working class to play its role in the new situation.

The Government of India has called a meeting of trade unions and federations on 20th and 21st May. We hope that this meeting will take due note of the new developments and will give a new direction to the entire problem.

Mahesh Desai
Gen. Secretary, HMS

Ram Desai,
Secretary, HMS

S. C. C. Anthony Pillai
Vice-President, HMS

S. S. Mirajkar,
President, AIRUC

Satish Loomba,
Secretary, AIRUC

K. G. Srivastava,
Secretary, AIRUC

N. C. Dutta,
Secretary, AIRUC

Parvathi Krishnan,
Vice-President, AIRUC

PROCEEDINGS OF TU CONFERENCE
NEW DELHI, 18-19 MAY 1971

As agreed beforehand, on 18 May 1971, one representative each from the central trade union organisations, i.e. Satish Loomba (AITUC), Mahesh Desai (HMS), Niren Ghosh (CITU), Jatin Chakravarty (UTUC), and Subodh Banerjee (UTUC—Lenin Sarani) met at 11 a.m. to finalise the agenda for the conference and other procedural questions.

The following decisions were taken unanimously:

- 1) That the agenda should consist of the following items:
 - i) Assessment of the situation: working class and trade unions
 - ii) Arising out of this:
 - a) Wages, Prices, Productivity
 - b) Unemployment, Closures
 - c) Need for further and continuing coordination and action
 - iii) Industrial relations:
 - a) Recognition
 - b) Right to strike, collective bargaining, etc.
 - iv) Bangla Desh
 - v) The Maintenance of Internal Security Ordinance
- 2) That the meeting would be conducted by a presidium consisting of: S. A. Dange, S. C.C. Antony Pillai or Shanti Patel, Manoranjan Roy, Subodh Banerjee and Sushil Bhattacharjee.
- 3) That a drafting committee would be set up consisting of: Satish Loomba (AITUC), Mahesh Desai (HMS), P. Ramamurti (CITU).

The meeting commenced at 3.30 p.m. on 18 May 1971. Mahesh Desai proposed the names of members of the presidium who were elected unanimously.

On behalf of the presidium, S. A. Dange placed the proposals agreed on with respect to the agenda and the drafting committee before the delegates for adoption. These were adopted unanimously.

The meeting then passed a resolution mourning the death of Deven Sen, vice-president of the HMS which was moved by S. A. Dange. The participants observed one minute's silence in memory of the departed leader.

A general discussion then took place on the items of the agenda and the following members took part in the discussion: Niren Ghosh (CITU), Mahesh Desai (HMS), Jatin Chakravarty (UTUC), Subodh Banerjee (UTUC-Lenin Sarani), S A. Dange (AITUC), Prabhat Kar (AIBEA), Saroj Choudhury (AIIEA) and S. Y. Kolhatkar (AINEF).

It was then decided that a declaration should be drafted on the points that had come up in the discussion.

The draft declaration was put before the conference on the afternoon of 19 May 1971. After a thorough discussion, various amendments were proposed. Some of these were incorporated in the draft and the amended declaration was adopted unanimously.

A resolution was adopted expressing support and solidarity with the struggle of the people of Bangla Desh, and demanding immediate recognition of the government of the Democratic Republic of Bangla Desh.

A second resolution condemned the promulgation of the Maintenance of Internal Security Ordinance and demanded its repeal.

The third resolution expressed solidarity with the strike of the NGOs of Andhra Pradesh and demanded that government should immediately settle the strike.

The participating organisations decided to meet again on 21 May 1971 after the conclusion of the meeting called by government.

DECLARATION OF CENTRAL TRADE UNIONS AND NATIONAL FEDERATIONS

New Delhi, 19 May 1971

1. The developments taking place in the economic and socio-political life of our country demand that the Trade Unions and the working class should put forward their understanding and point of view before the entire people.
2. Indian economy has developed and is even now developing along capitalist lines. This development has inevitably led to the emergence and strengthening of monopolies which to-day control vital sectors of our production, distribution, trade and even agriculture. The establishment and growth of public sector has not altered this basic reality and has so far failed to dislodge monopoly capital.
3. The hold of monopoly vitiates economic development, and is a prime cause of continuous and sharp rise in prices. Despite the fact that during the last two and a half decades production has risen, and productivity of workers has gone up, prices have continued to rise. Through the manipulation of the price mechanism whatever gain the workers have secured in nominal wages has been neutralised and real wages have remained stationary at the same level at which they were in 1947. This fact is acknowledged even by the employers and it means that in many industries real wages have gone below the 1947 level.
4. In the sphere of agriculture, despite all claims of green revolution and the advance which has taken place, no real break through can be achieved unless genuine land reforms are undertaken immediately which will break the hold of continuing semi-feudal and the growing capitalist relations, the penetration of monopoly in this sector, and of the speculators.

5. Advance in the direction of breaking the stranglehold of monopoly, Indian and foreign, and of land reform is, despite their declared adherence to the Directive Principles of the Constitution, obstructed not only by the central and state Governments, and by the organised resistance and sabotage by the bureaucracy but also by the judiciary through conservative interpretation of laws and the Constitution.

6. Despite all the Plans, and the industrialisation including the public sector, unemployment continues to mount from year to year. The solution to this problem also lies in the same key steps by which prices can be controlled, production increased and equitable distribution attempted, namely, complete break-up of monopoly, genuine land reform and the replacement of the bureaucracy by men committed to national advance.

7. Nationalisation of major banks, while loosening the grip of monopoly on credit, has not brought about the desired results because old policies are continued by agents of vested interests who still occupy the top positions in the nationalised structure.

8. The slogan advanced by the government and the capitalists for a wage-freeze, wage restraint or linking wages to productivity are totally unacceptable and must be rejected. During the last 20 years real wages have remained stationary, the share of wages in the total cost of production has come down and the value added by manufacture has gone up in relation to wages. Nevertheless prices have continued to rise and profits have soared to great heights.

In such a situation these slogans only aim at increasing the exploitation of the working class and increasing the super profits of the employers.

9. It is necessary to state these facts so that the trade union movement can correctly orientate itself and advance policies and programmes of action which would enable it to fight the obstructions in the way of its progress towards its goals.

10. Unfortunately the trade union movement is divided and split. This has weakened its strength and has prevented it from playing its rightful role in bringing about the desired changes in the economic and the socio-political structure.

11. Taking stock of all these conditions which vitally affect the working class, we, the representatives of the major trade union organisations in our country have resolved to take all steps to see that the splits and the divisions in the trade union movement, whatever be the reasons, are overcome and a coordinated, unified movement develops. This will remain the direction towards which all of us shall strive. As an immediate step we decide to establish a machinery to open up continuing dialogue, exchange of views and coordinated and united action on issues of common concern and for reducing and eliminating rivalries.

12. We feel that the most urgent task for which all of us must campaign and work are the following:

- i) Amendment of the Constitution with a view to eliminating the right to property from the fundamental rights so as to expedite implementation of the Directive Principles.
- ii) Elimination of monopoly capital by nationalisation without compensation.
- iii) Genuine and radical land reforms in the interest of the peasants and the landless agricultural labour.
- iv) A wage policy providing for rising real wages. A national need-based minimum wage with automatic linking of DA providing full neutralisation against changes in cost of living at all level of wages, and on this basis complete overhaul of the wages structure.
- v) Provisions of jobs for all able-bodied adults and, in the interim, unemployment relief. Immediate, permanent take-over by the Government of all closed units or those threatened with closure; stoppage of any so-called labour-saving devices as lead to retrenchment or freezing of the growth of employment.
- vi) Public control of all commodities which constitute necessities of life with a view to ensuring supplies at equitable prices.
- vii) Moratorium on foreign debt.

viii) Change in the financial and industrial policy in order to free our economy from foreign influences or dictates.

13. In the field of industrial relations, we feel that the immediate need is for a complete break with the existing pattern of third party interference. It is this interference, whether through the labour departments or through adjudication, wage boards, etc. which vitiates industrial relations, perpetuates divisions and weakens collective bargaining.

We, therefore, suggest that all systems of conciliation and adjudication etc. be immediately scrapped. All disputes should be left to be settled directly between the parties through bilateral collective bargaining and negotiations. The parties, if they so desire, can agree to have recourse to voluntary arbitration. But every attempt to impose arbitration or adjudication by law will be resisted.

14. Should direct negotiations fail, workers and employees in all industries and services must have the unfettered, unrestricted right to strike.

Workers have had recourse to strike only as a last resort and after all avenues of peaceful settlement of the dispute have been denied. To say that strikes have been launched indiscriminately or irresponsibly is a wild slander contrary to the facts and a blatant propaganda to discredit the working class movement.

15. It is the common experience of trade-unionists that police interference is ordered in industrial disputes and repressive laws are used to crush by force the struggles of the working class. We demand an end to all police interference in industrial disputes, which essentially are disputes between the employers and the workers, and an immediate stop to the use and misuse of legal provisions against the workers.

16. The role of the government as an employer is far from satisfactory. Indeed, in certain instances the employing ministries and the bureaucrats, the corporations and the managements act in a manner which is most inimical to the elementary interests of the working class denying rights which have been long established and recognised. We feel that a complete over-

haul has to take place in the industrial relations policy of the departmental undertakings, the public sector and the government departments.

At the same time full trade union, civic and political rights must be guaranteed to all workers and employees in these sectors, undertakings and services.

17. Regarding the choice of a bargaining agent we feel that the democratic way of settling the matter is as a result of the verdict through a secret ballot of the workers and all parties abiding by the results of the verdict.

However even in this we do not want any interference by the government or the employer. The issue must be settled by all the concerned unions themselves.

18. Selection of a single bargaining agent by whatever method including ballot will not automatically eliminate rivalry. Hence we feel that the time has come when this problem should be considered in the context of development of trade union unity, ensuring at the same time due reflection of the opinions and allegiances of all the workers in the bargaining agent.

19. We appeal to all trade unions to rally round this declaration, mobilise their ranks and through suitable forms of united trade union action ensure the achievement of these objectives.

We are sure that the unity which will develop in this process will be all-embracing and far-reaching and will enable us to march towards our cherished goals.

20. We have stressed the need for continuing discussions and common platform with a view to achieve this. We decide to set up a small convening committee with powers to co-opt, which by mutual consultation will decide to call broader meetings whenever the need arises. This committee shall consist of Satish Loomba (AITUC), Mahesh Desai (HMS), and P. Ramamurti (CITU).

SIGNATORIES: All India Trade Union Congress, Hind Mazdoor Sabha, United Trades Union Congress, Centre of Indian Trade Unions, United Trades Union Congress

(Lenin Sarani), All India Bank Employees' Association, All India Insurance Employees' Association, National Federation of Post and Telegraph Employees, All India Defence Employees' Federation, All India Newspaper Employees' Federation, Confederation of Central Government Employees, National Federation of AIR Employees, Indian National Trade Union Congress (Observer). Indian Federation of Working Journalists.

George Fernandes, general secretary, Hind Mazdoor Panchayat, sent a letter on 20 May 1971, stating that the name of his organisation should be added to the list of signatories.

INVITEES TO CONFERENCE OF 18-19 MAY 1971

1. Indian National Trade Union Congress
2. Hind Mazdoor Sabha
3. Centre of Indian Trade Unions
4. United Trade Union Congress, Bepin Behari Ganguli Street,
Calcutta
5. United Trade Union Congress (Lenin Sarani)
6. All India Bank Employees Association
7. All India Insurance Employees Association
8. All India Federation of State Government Employees
9. All India Railwaymen's Federation
10. All India Defence Employees' Federation
11. National Federation of AIR Employees
12. National Federation of Indian Railwaymen
13. National Federation of Defence Workers
14. Confederation of Central Government Employees
15. Port, Dock & Waterfront Workers' Federation of India
16. All India Port and Dock Workers' Federation
17. Indian National Port and Dock Workers' Federation
18. All India Newspapers' Employees' Federation
19. All India Federation of Working Journalists
20. Hind Mazdoor Panchayat
21. National Federation of P & T Employees.

PARTICIPANTS

1. *All-India Trade Union Congress*

S. A. Dange
Satish Loomba
K. G. Sriwastava
N. C. Dutta

2. *Hind Mazdoor Sabha*
S. S. C. Anthony Pillai
Mahesh Desai
Lok Nath Joshi (18th only)
Natwar Shah
Shanti Patel (19th only)
3. *Indian National Trade Union Congress*
H. D. Mookerjee (Observer)
4. *Centre for Indian Trade Unions*
P. Ramamurti
Monoranjan Roy
Niren Ghosh
5. *United Trades Union Congress*
Sushil Bhattacharjee
Jatin Chakraborty
Pratul Chandra
6. *United Trades Union Congress (Lenin Sarani)*
P. Chanda
Fatick Ghosh
Subodh Banerjee
Sankar Saha
7. *All India Bank Employees Association*
D. P. Chadha
Prabhat Kar
8. *All India Defence Employees Federation*
S. M. Banerjee
Santokh Singh
9. *All India Insurance Employees Association*
T. R. Chauhan
Saroj Chaudhari
10. *National Federation of P&T Employees*
R. P. Chatterjee
K. G. Bose

11. *Confederation of Central Government Employees*
• K. N. Nayagam
12. *All India Newspaper Employees Fcderation*
Santosh Kumar
S. Y. Kolhatkar
13. *Indian Federation of Working Journalists*
B. R. Vats
14. *National Federation of Air Employees*
Ashok Bajpai
Mudra Rakshasa

PART II

**Documents relating to Conference of TU representatives
Called by the Government of India**



New Delhi, 20-21 May 1971

LETTER OF INVITATION FROM GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

New Delhi, the 1st May 1971

Sir,

As you are aware the President, in his recent Address to both Houses of Parliament, stated, *inter alia*, that the Government propose to "consult leaders of Trade Unions and Managements in order to evolve sound industrial relations and to secure increased productivity consistent with a fair deal for labour. Improvement in industrial relations is as vital as capital and technology for increasing output".

2. As part of their policy of promoting economic growth with social justice, Government are anxious to improve and stabilise the relations between employers and workers in industry. The central objective is the expansion of the volume of production in a manner unimpeded by strife and uninterrupted by work stoppages. Several important factors enter into the consideration of this matter, such as the provision of adequate arrangements for settling industrial disputes through processes of direct negotiations, failing which by other suitable machinery; identification of a negotiating agent in an establishment or an industry, laying down of ground rules for direct negotiations, problems posed by inter-union rivalry, measures for increasing productivity, workers' participation in decision-making at various levels in an undertaking.

3. For a preliminary consideration of these and allied matters, it is proposed to convene a conference of representatives of Trade Union Organisations in the country. I am writing to request your Organisation to participate in the Conference.

4. The Conference will be presided over by the Union Labour Minister and will be held on the 20th May, 1971 (Thursday) at 5.00 p.m. in Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi.

It is requested that your Organisation send two representatives to the Conference; their travelling expenses etc. will be borne by the Government, you may, if you so wish, send two advisers on behalf of your Organisation.

Yours faithfully,

(Sd) T. S. Sankaran,
Joint Secretary.

LIST OF ORGANISATIONS INVITED TO THE
CONFERENCE OF THE REPRESENTATIVES
OF TRADE UNION ORGANISATIONS

I — *Recognised by Government as Central Trade Union
Organisation*

1. The General Secretary,
Indian National Trade Union Congress,
17-Janpath, New Delhi.
2. The General Secretary,
All India Trade Union Congress,
24, Canning Lane, New Delhi.
3. The General Secretary,
Hind Mazdoor Sabha,
Nagindas Chambers,
167, P. D'Mello Road, Bombay-1.
4. The General Secretary,
United Trade Union Congress,
249, Bepin Behari Ganguly Street,
Calcutta-12.

II. *Unrecognised and unaffiliated to any of the above four
Central Organisations.*

5. The General Secretary,
Centre of Indian Trade Unions,
172-Lenin Sarani, Calcutta-13.
6. The General Secretary,
Hind Mazdoor Panchayat,
204, Raja Rammohan Roy Road, Bombay-4.
7. The General Secretary,
Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh,
Haji Habib Building, House No. 182(3rd floor),
Naigaum Cross Road, Fire Brigade, Dadar, Bombay.

8. The General Secretary,
National Front of Indian Trade Unions,
2-Jawahar Lal Nehru Road, Calcutta-13.
9. The General Secretary,
Labour Progressive Federation,
"Anbagam", 1/104-B, Mount Road, Madras-18.
10. The General Secretary,
Coordination Committee of Independent Trade Unions,
143, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay-1.
11. The General Secretary,
All India Railwaymen's Federation,
125/E Babar Road, New Delhi.
12. The General Secretary,
National Federation of Indian Railwaymen,
166/1, Panchkuian Road, New Delhi.
13. The General Secretary,
National Federation of Posts and Telegraph
Employees,
9-Pusa Road, New Delhi.
14. The General Secretary,
Federation of National Posts and Telegraph
Organisations,
T-8, Atul Grove, New Delhi-1.
15. The General Secretary,
All India Defence Employees' Federation,
No. 4/5823, Dev Nagar, New Delhi.
16. The General Secretary,
Indian National Defence Workers' Federation,
25/19, Karachi Khana, Kanpur (UP).
17. The General Secretary,
Indian Telephone Industries Employees Union,
C/o Shri Mahabir Swarup, Personnel Manager,
Indian Telephone Industries, Ltd., Doorvani Nagar,
Bangalore.
18. The General Secretary,
All India Hindustan Aeronautics Employees Federation,
C/o The General Manager, Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd.,
Indian Express Building, Vidhan Vedhi, Bangalore.

After receipt of letters and representations from the AITUC and HMS, government later invited the following organisations to send observers:

1. UTUC (Lenin Sarani) One delegate and one observer
2. All India Insurance Employees' Association — observer
3. All India National Life Insurance Employees' Federation — observer
4. All India Bank Employees' Association — observer
5. All India Bank Employees' Federation — observer
6. Air Corporation Employees' Association — observer
7. Indian Aircraft Technicians Association — observer

LETTER FROM AITUC TO MINISTER OF LABOUR

9th May 1971

The Minister for Labour & Rehabilitation,
Government of India,
Shram Shakti Bhavan,
Rafi Marg,
New Delhi

Sir,

We are in receipt of the letter of the Labour Ministry convening a conference of representatives of Trade union organisations in the country on 20-21, May, 1971. The Secretariat of the AITUC has considered this letter.

The AITUC, HMS and some other organisations had been for a long time demanding such a meeting. Therefore, the fact of a meeting where representatives of all Trade Unions will be present, is welcome.

In its letter of invitation, the government has said that in calling this conference, their "central objective is the expansion of the volume of production in a manner unimpeded by strife and uninterrupted by work stoppage". And then the letter goes on to list a number of factors which "enter into consideration of this matter". These are:

"The provision of adequate arrangements for settling industrial disputes through processes of direct negotiations, failing which by other suitable machinery, identification of a negotiating agent in an establishment or an industry, laying down of ground rules for direct negotiations, problems posed by inter-union rivalry, measures for increasing productivity, workers'

participation in decision-making at various levels in an undertaking.”

The AITUC feels that a conference called with such proposals is preoccupied only with the question of production, productivity and stoppage of strike somehow. However, the reality is that strikes arise out of conditions of work and life which the workers are no longer willing to tolerate.

While it is important to see that needless strikes do not take place, what is more important is to ensure to the workers an adequate wage, and satisfactory conditions of life and work. These are preconditions before there can be any talk of increase in production and ensuring of industrial peace.

The analysis of the NCL has amply shown that during the last two and a half decades, production and productivity have risen, the share of wages in the total cost of production has gone down, the VAM has increased and the real wages have at best remained stationary. All the super profits earned by the increased effort of workers and through manipulation of prices have been swallowed up by the bigger industrial houses and profiteers.

Social justice and not legal mechanism can alone create conditions in which industrial relations can be peaceful.

Hence, the AITUC feels that the central point of these discussions must be around the question of wages, DA and prices and not around production and productivity.

Any scheme of industrial relations must base itself on safeguarding the cherished TU rights of workers which they have secured through hard struggles and countless sacrifices. Such a scheme must also take into account the realities of the situation existing today and not proceed from outmoded fixed ideas as proposals of the government seem to proceed. In short, a new approach is necessary to strengthen collective bargaining, reduce trade union rivalries and assure participation in industrial matters of all trends of TU movement on basis of equality.

Hence, the AITUC feels that an effort should be made to discuss industrial relations from a realistic and progressive view point rather than on the sterile and reactionary proposals of the NCL.

3. We find from a list of those invited that important organisations representing the overwhelming bulk of organised workers in crucial sectors of our economy have been left out. To cite only a few examples: AIBEA, AINEF, AIWJF, as well as the UTUC (Lenin Sarani). At the same time, completely unknown organisations like National Front of Indian Trade Unions and the Coordination Committee of the Indian Trade Unions have been invited.

An individual union from the ITI and a federation of the public sector group of HAL has been invited. There are several other important unions and federations of groups of industrial houses of public sector enterprises which would fall under the same category. These have been ignored. We, however, feel that in a national conference of a general character such individual unions and federations need not necessarily find a place. It would be better to call them to meetings concerned with their individual problems when the broad framework of the national policy has been settled. To make such invidious distinction between one individual union and another might only lead to unwelcome complications.

4. We are writing this letter so that you may be able to consider these points and take appropriate action.

Yours faithfully,
Satish Loomba
Secretary

LETTER FROM HMS TO MINISTER OF LABOUR

May 15, 1971

Dear Shri Khadilkar

We very much appreciated the courtesy and consideration shown by you to the HMS in inviting me for a discussion on the 8th of this month. We also appreciated the frank discussion at this meeting. Both these facts underlined the necessity for change in the national policies pursued so far in the field of trade unions and industrial relations. We were particularly heartened by your forthright acceptance of the need for such changes and the direction these policies should take. The context in which the decision to call a meeting of the trade union representatives was announced by you in the Lok Sabha also strengthened the impression that the Government of India was seriously re-examining the postulates of the national labour policy.

The Government's letter of invitation to the conference on the 20th-21st May does not carry the list of invitees to the conference. We have, however, ascertained the list and have been surprised by the haphazard and partisan manner in which this list has been prepared. If the Government's intention was to ensure the presence of industrial federations not affiliated to any central trade union organisation the list ought to have contained all such federations on the one hand and should have excluded those federations which are affiliated and are, therefore, part of the national trade union centres. The government has gone out of its way to include those industrial federations which form part of the INTUC giving thereby disproportionate representation to that organisation. This gives an impression that the composition of the conference is deliberately loaded in order to give a bias to the consultative process. On the other

hand, federations of workers in crucial industries like ports and docks, engineering and transport other than railways have been kept out. We strongly protest against this arbitrary and partisan manner of determining the composition of a conference which is being called in pursuance of the solemn assurance contained in the President's address to the parliament.

Another cause of our disappointment is the trite and stale note which has been circulated by the government on the subjects to be considered by the conference. It shows no awareness of the radical changes which have taken place in the country and the expectant, impatient mood in which the working class is at the moment. Its note of overwhelming smugness is, to say the least, curious apart from being totally irrelevant. The issue today is not one of making marginal modifications in accepted policies but of changing the content as well as the direction of these policies. The major issue, therefore, is one of government's place and role of workers and organised working class movement in planning and economic development in the final analysis. This is the perspective in which the organised working class had welcomed the Government's decision to call this conference and we had expressed our willingness to participate in it. We are, therefore, surprised and disappointed by the petty narrow confines within which the issues are framed and on which our answers are sought. We thought it best to bring this to your notice in advance of the conference so that there is greater appreciation of our points of view when they are put forward at the conference.

Regards.

Sincerely,
Mahesh Desai
General Secretary

LETTER FROM AITUC TO MINISTER OF LABOUR

17th May 1971

Dear Shri Khadilkar,

Since I wrote to you on 9 May 1971 regarding the agenda and the composition of the conference of TU organisations convened by you, your ministry has circulated a note on the main points for discussion at the conference.

1. The AITUC has considered this note. It strengthens our fears that nothing worthwhile will be discussed at the conference and that the outcome will be absolutely useless.

The need today is not to pose the issues in the context of past practices and understanding which have led to the present impasse. If all that was needed was to take forward the existent policies with marginal adjustments, there really was no need for such a conference.

In fact what is required is to take stock of the new situation and not, as stressed in the note, increase in production and productivity and "strife-free growth" whatever this phrase may mean. What is really needed is a fresh direction to the whole policies of wages, prices, and industrial relations without which things will not only continue as they are but will even become worse.

Hence the AITUC would like to make it quite clear that the proposed agenda is so unsatisfactory that unless it is thrown out and a new one framed in consonance with the changed circumstances, there would be little point in participating in the conference.

2. The list of invitees, we would like to stress once again is also defective. It includes some organisations which only exist on paper and have no place in the national TU life. Some fede-

rations and even individual unions have been included quite arbitrarily and important organisations representing workers in vital sections have been left out. Even at this late stage we would ask you to invite the AIBEA, the AINEF, the AIIEA, the AIWJF, the UTUC (Lenin Sarani), the National Federation of AIR Employees and the 4 unions in the IAC.

We hope that you will consider both these points and in the interest of having a real discussion on the issues which matter, change the agenda and the composition of the conference.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,
Satish Loomba
Secretary

NOTE PREPARED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF
LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT FOR CONFERENCE
OF REPRESENTATIVES OF TRADE UNION
ORGANISATIONS

New Delhi — May 20-21, 1971

Industrial Relations Policy

The basic assumption of economic planning is sustained growth. This, in the industrial sector, postulates optimum productivity and increased production. Maintenance of sound industrial relations is among the pre-conditions. It is equally important that all concerned—the employers, the workers and no less, the consumers—have a fair share in the increased production. During the third Plan period the rate of growth of industrial production was only 8% as against the anticipated 11%. The growth rate during 1966-67 and 1967-68, which was a period of recession, was extremely low, being only 0.2% and 0.5% respectively. Although the rate registered a recovery in 1968-69 and 1969-70, when it rose to 7%, it was still not upto the expectations. It is clear that the tempo of industrial production in the country needs to be substantially stepped up. This is essential as much for making up the leeway over past performance as for sustaining the growth rate in the coming years. It is in the entire country's interest, and certainly of the workers also, that efforts are concerted in every way possible for maximising production and increasing productivity.

2. It follows that ways must be found to ensure that industrial relations are not disturbed by frequent strikes and lock-outs, which may retard production. It cannot be said, however, that the climate of industrial relations over the past several years has been entirely satisfactory; if, anything, industrial unrest has been on the increase. It is reflected, to some extent,

in the number of mandays lost owing to work-stoppages. The total number of mandays lost increased from about 7.8 million in 1958 to 19 million in 1969. In 1970 the situation was no better. Even public sector enterprises in which the workers are expected to have a greater sense of involvement, have not been free from this adverse trend. The problem that arises is how to minimise, if not altogether eliminate, such losses in mandays. Reduction in the number of mandays lost is of direct benefit to the economy as also to the workers; the workers stand to gain only if there is rapid growth in the economy; if the economy recedes or stagnates, so must the workers' earnings. The imperatives of planned economic development, more so in a developing country like ours, demand the absence of strife and maintenance of cordial relations in industry. The need of the hour is "strife-free" growth.

3. If "strife-free" industrial growth is accepted as the goal, the question arises: what is the labour policy that this objective enjoins? Government, as part of their policy, have been taking legislative and other measures to improve the working conditions of industrial workers, to provide for them better earnings and a measure of social security benefit. Protective legislation now covers workers in factories, mines, plantations, docks, and other industries like transport. More recently, contract workers have also been brought under protective legislation. In respect of wages, a minimum wage on statutory basis has been ensured for workers employed in the less organised industries; for those in organised employments, government have sought to promote payment of fair wages through a system of wage boards. It has also been Government's policy to ensure compensation for rise in the cost of living and a statutory right for the workers to a share in profits. Government have recently introduced a limited scheme of pension for the families of workers who die in harness. It would be the continuing concern of government to secure implementation of these measures and, where necessary and possible, also to improve on them.

4. But this can only be done on the basis, *inter-alia*, of disciplined and efficient service by the workers, such as could promote uninterrupted production and increased productivity.

It is in this context that a fresh look at the existing practices and procedures relating to industrial relations becomes necessary.

5. Some of the issues involved were studied by the National Commission on Labour. Its major recommendations have also been considered at tripartite meetings. The 29th session of the tripartite standing labour committee also reached certain conclusions. But some of the workers' organisations expressed their reservations. The issues nevertheless remain. Solutions have to be found for them for appropriate further action. The basic issues may be seen to relate broadly to the machinery and procedure for settling disputes, the right to strike or lock-out, determination of a bargaining agent, sharing of gains of productivity, workers' participation in decision-making at various levels, and tripartite consultation. These are discussed in the paragraphs below.

(1) *Dispute settlement* —

6. Industrial disputes are, at present, settled through bipartite negotiations, conciliation, and arbitration or adjudication by industrial tribunals set up under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947. Provision also exists for settlement of certain types of disputes by labour courts. The emphasis remains on collective bargaining; the recourse to conciliation under the aegis of government agencies, or failing that to adjudication by tribunals, is made only in the event of failure of direct negotiations. The National Commission on Labour, which examined the existing arrangements in this regard, came to the conclusion that they were dilatory, expensive and *ad hoc* in nature and also liable to be viewed with fears of undue intervention by government. It, therefore, recommended that constitution of Industrial Relations Commissions, both at the centre and in the states, with the functions of conciliation, adjudication and arbitration. At the 29th Session of the standing labour committee the consensus was in favour of three-man IRCs with the function of adjudication (and also of certification of representative unions); as to conciliation, the view taken was that it should continue to remain with the government. The issues that arise in this context are:

- (i) Should the existing machinery for settlement of industrial disputes by one-man Industrial tribunals be replaced by three-man IRCs, comprising a judicial person and two non-judicial members well versed in problems relating to industry, labour or management, and should a time limit be envisaged for the disposal of disputes by the IRCs?
- (ii) Should the parties to a dispute (i.e. both employers and workers), in addition to the appropriate government, be empowered to approach the IRC direct for the settlement of disputes?
- (iii) Should the function of conciliation continue to rest with the appropriate government?
- (iv) Should standing labour courts be set up to deal with certain specified matters such as interpretation and implementation of labour laws, awards and agreements, and cases of dismissal and discharge of individual workmen?

(2) *Right to strike/lock-out*

7. There is then the question of the policy to be adopted in regard to the right to strike or lock-out. In a scheme of things where "strife-free" growth is envisaged, it would be logical to expect that there need normally be no occasion for a strike or lock-out and that outstanding differences between labour and management would be resolved by other means not calculated to cause stoppage of work. The following issues thus become relevant:

- (i) Should the exercise of the right to strike or lock-out, as advocated also by the National Commission on Labour, be subject to certain restrictions in essential services/industries, which are vital to the economy, with simultaneous provision for an effective alternative-like arbitration or adjudication to settle disputes?
- (ii) Should government retain the power to intervene in a dispute at any stage, refer it to the IRC for adjudication, and prohibit the commencement or continuance of a strike or lock-out?

- (iii) Should a trade union be required to obtain a specific majority, through ballot among its members, before resorting to a strike, and also to serve advance notice on the management before staging the strike? (Similar notice may, of course, be provided in the case of lock-out).

(3) *Bargaining Agent*

8. It is well known that multiplicity of unions in the country has led to much inter-union rivalry. This has not only weakened the trade union movement but also affected industrial relations. For reducing this multiplicity, it has been suggested that the number of members required for registration of a union should be 10%—subject to a minimum of 7— of the employees of a plant, or 100, whichever is lower. It would be necessary, in any case, if the ill-effects of inter-union rivalry are to be mitigated, that there should be one recognised and responsible bargaining agent, having representative status, with some minimum strength, which can be ascertained from time to time, to function as the spokesman of all the workers in an enterprise or industry. Such a bargaining agent could be given the statutory right to enter into binding collective agreements with the management; an unrecognised union would then have the right to represent, before a labour court, individual cases of discharge or dismissal.

9. As time has gone on, the existing arrangement for recognition of unions under the voluntary code of discipline has proved to be less than effective. The recommendation of the National Commission on Labour that statutory provision should instead be made, under a central law, for compulsory recognition of the majority unions, as bargaining agents, has been generally endorsed. The idea of entrusting the work relating to certification of unions for purposes of recognition to IRCs has also received support. The question of the procedure for determining the relative membership strength of trade unions has, however, proved controversial; while the more general view has favoured the verification method, some organisations have advocated adoption of the secret ballot method. For purposes of

determining the bargaining agent on behalf of the workers, the following issues arise:

- (a) Should there be a central law to require the recognition of a registered trade union by the management, for purposes of bargaining, as the representative union for the establishment or industry, as the case may be, provided that the minimum qualifying membership for claiming such recognition should be 30 per cent in the case of individual establishments and 25 per cent in the case of an entire industry in a local area?
- (b) Should the conditions for a union's eligibility to recognition include, *inter alia*, a good record of working for twelve months, (without any charge of unfair practice having been established by the IRC) and availability of membership to all categories of the workers in the establishment or industry?
- (c) Should the work of certification of trade unions be entrusted to an independent body like the IRC, and should the method of ascertaining the relative strength of the unions claiming recognition be by verification of membership records or secret ballot?
- (d) Should a recognised union be given the sole bargaining right to negotiate with the management and enter into collective agreements of a binding nature? Should an unrecognised union only have the right to represent cases of individual workmen regarding dismissal or discharge before a labour court?

(4) *Productivity*

10. If the workers are to help in increasing productivity, it would only be fair that they are ensured an equitable share in the gains of such increased productivity. The main hurdle in this regard, however, has been the difficulty in making measurements of the contributions made by the different factors of production in raising productivity. Different formulae have been suggested by expert bodies, but no single widely

acceptable formula has yet emerged. According to some, the question of sharing of gains should be left to mutual negotiations between the workers and their employers; there are others who fear that in such an arrangement the larger interests of the community may be ignored. The fruits of productivity increases should obviously have to be distributed among all the three groups. It would be necessary to give thought to this matter and evolve jointly some workable arrangements at the plant level to tackle the problem of sharing the gains of productivity. In this context the following issues could arise:

- (a) Should a joint committee be set up in each plant to secure increasing production and productivity?
- (b) Should employers and the recognised union enter into productivity agreements for the sharing of gains of increased productivity?
- (c) Should a minimum norm of productivity be fixed for each plant after proper job evaluation study by a group comprising experts and representatives of the workers and the management?
- (d) Should sharing of the gains of productivity by workers be through increased remuneration, with wages above the basic minimum linked to productivity?

(5) *Workers' participation*

11. It has been government's policy to promote understanding between managements and workers by bringing them together for constructive thinking and effort. The policy is presently being implemented through statutory works' committees and the voluntary joint management councils. These bipartite bodies are expected to provide opportunities for increasing the area of joint consultation, sharing of information, and joint decision making in certain spheres of activities. For various reasons, however, these bodies have not achieved all that was expected of them. One basic weakness has been the conflict between a works committee which comprises elected representatives of the workers, and the trade union; absence of a collective bargaining

agent, which could usefully take part in such a committee, has prevented the building up an atmosphere of trust on both sides. The same holds good, in the main, for the joint management councils also. However, if the proposal for statutory recognition of a bargaining agent is adopted, the area of workers' participation in management through works committees or joint management councils or production committees should increase at the plant level. In the case of the public sector, government have already decided to appoint a workers' director on the boards of management of suitable undertakings to provide for workers' participation at the highest level. This would be in addition to the participation at lower levels through works committees and joint management councils.

(6) *Tripartite Consultation*

12. Government's labour policy has been evolved through tripartite consultation at the Indian Labour Conference and the Standing Labour Committee. Over the years, the deliberations at these forums have widened in scope. They have come to exercise profound influence on industrial relations and the labour situation in the country. In the face of heavy odds, and considering the need to reconcile many conflicting interests, the record of agreement at these forums has been significant. It is at these sessions that the various labour laws and policies have been evolved as a result of tripartite consultation; in fact, it was agreed at the ILC in July 1959 that proposals involving any new major point of policy or principle should be undertaken only after consulting the conference or the standing labour committee. Such consultation, where necessary, has also to take place, of course, at the state level and the industry level. But the system of tripartite consultation and consensus seems inescapable, if only because no better and more democratic alternative can be devised; the composition of the tripartite can no doubt be reviewed and restructured by the tripartite itself, to reflect emerging situations better. In that sense the present preliminary exchange of views may itself be seen as a prelude to full tripartite discussion of the various issues outlined above.

Issues for consideration

13. Arising out of the foregoing, the following issues are for consideration:

- (i) A period of "strife-free" growth and increased production.
- (ii) Equitable sharing of the gains of increased productivity.
- (iii) Appointment of three-man I.R.Cs. for the settlement of industrial disputes.
- (iv) Restrictions on the right to strike or lock-out in certain industries/services.
- (v) Determination and recognition of bargaining agents.
- (vi) Workers' Participation in Management at various levels.
- (vii) The continued need for tripartite consultative machinery.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS
BY
PRIME MINISTER INDIRA GANDHI

It must be over a year since I first expressed my desire to have a frank dialogue with representatives of organised labour. I am glad that my colleague, Shri Khadilkar, has now arranged such a meeting, and that you have responded to our invitation. I think this meeting is one of the most crucial in recent years. We are at a significant stage in the evolution of our political and economic system.

Trade union leaders owe allegiance to different political ideologies. Such diversity is expected in an open democratic society. I do hope however, that within the broad spectrum of organised political opinion ranged around this table, there is a basic unity of purpose and a determination to jointly explore avenues of cooperation in tackling our problems of poverty and social injustice.

The Ministry of Labour and Employment has posed certain specific issues for your consideration. I sincerely hope that at the end of our deliberations certain definite conclusions are reached. For this, it is necessary to approach the problems facing us with the temper and spirit required for their solution.

We have here leaders who speak for organised labour, who seek to reflect their hopes and aspirations and to ventilate their grievances. It is perhaps understandable that a segment of society should equate its own sectional interest with those of the whole.

During the last two or three years I have been deeply anxious about the deterioration in industrial relations. Strikes, lock-outs and closures have become more frequent and less peaceful. One wonders whether those who speak for labour or for management always keep in view the larger picture of Indian poverty.

We have strong trade unions to struggle for the interests of labour. We have equally vocal and close-knit organizations of management, keen and able to project their point of view. But who is to look after the interests of the vast numbers of the unorganised and voiceless? I am not speaking merely of consumers, although their interests must also be reconciled with those of labour and management. But in a country with depressingly low standards of consumption, the emphasis even on the interests of consumers becomes irrelevant beyond a point.

When trade union leaders talk of protecting the living standards of the working class, or when managements use sophisticated jargon about "incentives" they hardly seem to show concern whether the economic philosophy which lies at the root of these demands has any relevance to the problems of the really poor. Please do not misunderstand me. It is legitimate for trade unions to champion the cause of their members, and it is not unpatriotic for workers to try to secure a larger share in the fruits of economic growth. Similarly, the question of incentives for innovative enterprise cannot be completely brushed aside. At the same time, industrial relations are too serious and important to be left entirely to employers and the employed. The maintenance of industrial peace is an issue in which the poor and the unemployed, who stand outside the serried ranks of organised labour and industry, have a vital stake. Indeed it is an issue of national survival.

When we talk of the larger social responsibilities of labour, it is said that labour will give of its best only if economic and social policies are more radical and the fruits of economic growth are not monopolised by the few. I believe in radicalism but it must deliver the goods. I am against privilege, if by privilege is meant reward or recognition unrelated to functional efficiency. World economic history and our own experience point to the fact that privileges, however defined, become entrenched in a period of economic stagnation, rather than in a period of growth.

The emphasis on a faster rate of growth does not therefore represent any retreat from radicalism or egalitarian principles. On the contrary, a higher rate of growth is an essential pre-

requisite to welfare on an enduring basis. It does not matter to the privileged if the growth rate is 2 per cent or 6 per cent for, they already have the means of a good life at their command.

A higher rate of growth is vital for those who are currently unemployed or under-employed. A speedy and substantial increase in production is necessary to generate resources for expansion of employment. Ever since independence, industrial expansion has acted as the pace setter for our economy. But in the last two years, it is the increase in agricultural production that has kept the economy moving forward. The growth of agricultural production since 1967-68 has been satisfactory and has helped to maintain a moderate increase in per capita income, industrial production has failed to reach its targets. In the first two years of the Fourth Plan it has been only around 6 per cent, instead of the expected 10 per cent. An increase in industrial output is essential for the structural transformation of our economy. It is also vital for economic and political self-reliance.

Not for a moment am I suggesting that the lower industrial production in the last few years is due solely or even substantially to industrial strikes. Shortages of raw materials, obsolete administrative procedures, mismanagement and misdeployment of resources have also hit production. But, no observer of our scene will fail to concede that lack of industrial harmony has surely been an important contributory factor. I understand that the number of man days lost as a result of strikes has risen nearly three times; from about 6.5 millions or so in 1965 to about 19 millions in 1970. It would be a sterile exercise to seek to apportion the blame for this situation now. What we have to consider is whether we can reduce this wastage within the framework of our present social and political order; or must we wait for the fulfilment of the ideal social order which each political party may have in view.

Let us be frank enough to recognise that this increase in the intensity and duration of stoppages of work has prevented our economy from realising its full potential. Whichever party to the dispute may have emerged victorious from these confrontations, so far as the nation is concerned the strikes have inflicted unmitigated loss. We need industrial harmony not for the benefit

of the classes who control the means of production, not for the further advancement of the affluent sections of the society, but, for the sake of the poorer masses, who suffer an erosion of their low standards of living as a result of these interruptions in production. The unemployed whose only hope lies in a higher rate of capital formation and investment, whether in the public or in the private sector, suffer most in the process.

We are all here today to find a solution to this grave industrial problem, and to consider how to mitigate, if not to end the present stage of anarchy in labour-management relations.

The Ministry of Labour have made several suggestions to promote industrial harmony such as ending the multiplicity of trade unions, the recognition of a single bargaining agent and so on. These lead to other related issues such as how to promote internal leadership within the trade union movement and what agencies should be set up to consider and resolve disputes as they arise. Shri Khadilkar tells me that these points were set out more as a basis for discussion and to help in your deliberations. I do not wish to go into these issues in detail; nor to prejudge or prejudice the discussions. But may I suggest that you evaluate these points and any others which aim with one criterion—whether they will accentuate or abate industrial disputes.

Trade union leaders have always been in the vanguard of progressive forces in our public life. Whatever their other differences, they have stood for the uplift of the poorer sections of society and for the subordination of personal to larger interests. They would be untrue to this tradition if they do not focus their attention on the problem of augmenting production in the economy at this critical juncture, when apart from our other problems three million victims of the reign of terror unleashed across our borders have sought refuge in our land.

The shortfalls in production have also affected Government revenues and reduced potential levels of investment. The increase in unemployment in the last few years, particularly among technical personnel and skilled workers, is directly traceable to lower investment. When you consider ways and means of improving industrial relations as a whole, please do give

special thought to the evolution of a healthy and fruitful partnership between management and labour in public undertakings, in which the nation has such a large stake.

The working class and their leaders have been among the foremost in urging the expansion of the public sector and the nationalisation of key sectors of the economy. Government and the public are, therefore, entitled to expect of workers in public enterprises greater devotion and dedication to work than has been so far evident. I must admit that there is scope for the improvement of communication between management and workers in public enterprises. I do not think that it is enough to give workers representation merely on the boards of management. We need to involve them more intimately in the problems of the enterprise at various levels.

We hear constantly of the need to check the concentration of economic power in the hands of a few in the private sector. I believe that by far the most effective means of checking these trends is to enlarge the role of the public sector and to upgrade its efficiency. The formidable managerial problems of the public sector need immediate attention. But the acceptance of a greater measure of discipline and dedication on the part of labour in public enterprises is also an essential element in our strategy to make the public sector the pace setter in our economy.

It is hardly necessary to remind you that labour is a major participant in the productive process, and the quality and intensity of its efforts are critical in increasing the rate of growth of production and therefore of investment in the economy. The demands for higher wages and other benefits by organised labour are understandable. But these have to be pursued within a policy framework which pays due regard to the general state of the economy and the interests of the unemployed. As I have said elsewhere, in a country where there are millions of unemployed and underemployed, what is needed is a fair distribution of opportunities for gainful employment. In this sense, the employed particularly in the organised sector, who enjoy a measure of social security, should recognise that in our country to be employed is in itself a privilege. Hence they should not seek unilateral gains for themselves but have some com-

passion for those who are willing to work yet are not able to do so because of the comparatively low rate of capital formation in our country.

I am sure that trade unions will interpret their responsibilities in this wider sense and work towards securing for labour—those now employed as well as potential entrants from the rank of labour—an increasing equitable share of progressively rising national product. Our country has gone through a very difficult period but there is every indication that we are poised for rapid advance. So it is specially disturbing that we should be quarrelling amongst ourselves instead of being partners in the common endeavour to take the country forward and give a better life to the masses of our people. I have great pleasure in inaugurating this conference.

OPENING SPEECH

BY

R. K. KHADILKAR

Minister of State for Labour and Employment

Friends,

This is not a conventional conference. We have our formal consultative forums—the tripartite bodies—where it has been our tradition to consider all major matters of labour policy and administration. It has also been our practice to have informal discussions with the delegates attending these meetings. But I think this is the first time that trade union representatives of all shades of opinion have been brought together in a conference. It may seem somewhat unusual to have such a conference outside the established frame-work of consultation. But we are in an unusual situation. I thought I should first take counsel with all of you on how to find a way out of this situation before we convened the formal tripartite.

Simply put, the crux of the present sorry state of things is this: when the need for increasing production is the greatest, we are losing mandays in millions every year due to industrial strife and when expansion of employment is a social compulsion, thousands are being thrown out of employment due to closure of industrial establishments. All this is happening at a time when the upheaval across our borders is imposing heavy burdens on us and causing a drain on our resources. We seem to be drifting towards an impasse just when the economy is set on its way to recovery. This process must be halted. The personal presence of the Prime Minister here to-day underlines the urgency of correcting the present state of disorder in industry.

It is not for me to lay down the lines of trade union strategy. I would, however, like to place before you some thoughts on what the trade union movement can and should do in the context in which we are placed now. The role which trade unions

are to play in a modern state depends on the type of government which is functioning and that too in a given set of circumstances. Trade unions in India, therefore, had a different role in this country in the initial stages when we were under foreign rule and, necessarily, the trade union movement then was a part and parcel of the freedom struggle.

Now that we have a democratically-elected government of our own which, through our five year plans, is making every effort to usher in a welfare state, the role of trade unions needs to be reoriented.

In a society largely capitalist the inherent antagonism between the employers and workers makes the function of trade unions, above everything, defensive in character. As far as we in India at present are concerned, particularly in the context of our avowed desire to establish an egalitarian society based on economic development and social justice, a distinctly different role for trade unions would appear to be indicated. There could be no justification whatsoever for an inherent antagonism between the workers and the employers where the march is towards socialism by common consent. In fact, while moving in that direction, increasing importance is being given to public sector undertakings and here the workers and the managers share in a common purpose which gives unity to the whole society. In our mixed economy even the working of the private sector is being informed and influenced by the same purpose.

It is in this context that I suggest that trade unions cannot be merely on the defensive, nor can they function purely as agitating agencies. They have an obligation to assist, by all means in their power, in fulfilling the objectives which underly government's plans and programmes.

The trade union movement must have a new approach in a revolutionary age like ours and this must give equal importance to increase in productivity. There is no other permanent way to advance the standard of life of the millions of our workmen. If the movement is directed only towards an increase in wages, the inevitable result will be inflation. An uncontrolled inflation is usually paid for by working class sufferings. It is one of the supreme duties of trade union leadership to have a real grasp

of the situation and view the economic policy in the correct political perspective.

We have also to remember that the bulk of our workers are still outside the pale of trade union organisation—and there are millions, who are languishing in stark unemployment. The trade union movement, which speaks for the relatively fortunate minority of organised workers has, I feel, a clear duty to help the government to help the millions who are without work and without a voice.

The government is under an unequivocal mandate to meet the problems of poverty and unemployment with energy and determination. There are also the unsatisfied aspirations of workers already in employment. But the central factor around which all expectations about the success of our action programmes must revolve is the rate of growth of the economy. With this is also bound up the question of the nation's security and the well-being of the people. Placed as we are, can we afford to allow any decline in the rate of industrial growth? What we need is unhampered production and increased productivity. Unless we go all out to step up the pace of production, we may be overwhelmed by our problems. The basic business before us, therefore, is to consider concrete measures that will assist in achieving this objective.

But unhampered production is possible only if we have a system of industrial relations built on the basis of general consent—a system that enables workers to develop a sense of personal involvement in his work and provides for smooth settlement of all disputes.

In a free society, disputes are bound to arise in the industrial field as elsewhere. But there must be an accepted mechanism through which they are resolved in a peaceful manner without causing any stoppage of production. We must prevent a situation from arising where the time-loss in production has to be reckoned in terms of millions of mandays. We must also find a remedy for the recurring cases of closure, not all of which are always justified.

I need hardly tell you that disputes are best settled between the parties through mutual discussion and negotiation. But

negotiations can succeed only when the parties are united, sure of their position and not afraid of making concessions. Unfortunately, divisions in the ranks of the trade unions and the intense inter-union rivalry continue to rob the workers of their bargaining power.

It may be too much to expect that all these divisions will disappear over-night. But now that we are all here together today, can we not devise a way by which trade unions, even where they are separate, can at least function in harmony without weakening each other?

As long as the multiplicity of unions persists, recognition of a single bargaining agent will continue to pose a problem and there is always the risk of one union being played off against another. But clearly there is need for a bargaining agent whom the employers are obliged by law to recognise. A good deal of thinking has gone into this question and a number of suggestions have been made about the method of determining the representative character of a union so that it can be legally recognised as the sole bargaining agent. I hope it will be possible for you to come to an agreed view on this question.

I am conscious of the fact that we have yet to make headway in various directions towards our avowed goal of ensuring a living wage to our workers but this will come only by the measure in which our economy grows and national output is expanded. You will appreciate that the government is taking several progressive steps in the right direction in formulating its overall economic policy towards this end.

May I also say that, as I foresee the future, collective bargaining will have to take on more and more the character of productivity bargaining? Nobody can expect the workers to give of their best unless they are assured of a fair share of what they have helped in producing. It is only the authentic representatives of the workers in every plant, who are in a position to secure their cooperation in improving production and productivity, and only they can have the strength and confidence to strike a proper bargain with the employers for sharing the gains of higher productivity.

Again, when we think of workers' involvement in the production process or their participation in the affairs of management, it is only a recognised union commanding the confidence of the workers which is best able to make a success of any such schemes. Our works' committees, joint management councils and other similar bodies have failed to function with vigour mostly because the support of a self-confident trade union has not been there to sustain them.

Similarly, in minimising the need for strike action, legal provisions can succeed only when we have a strong recognised union as the centre-piece of the industrial relations system. It is only such a union, conscious of its strength, that can afford to show forbearance. A union sure of its own strength is not called upon to demonstrate it. Whatever the position in law, a responsible union recognised as representative by the employers—as also by its rivals, if any—will not lightly ask its members to go on strike.

This will apply equally to unfair practices. An employer will not indulge in unfair practices when he has to deal with a strong recognised union enjoying the support of the workers and the union itself will hardly have occasion to act in a way which is precipitate and not entirely responsible.

Finally, in the matter of improving the process of dispute settlement, to have a strong recognised union will be of immense advantage. For one thing, not many disputes will remain unresolved and for another, the union itself may be given the right of direct access to the machinery for adjudication, a facility which will cut out a part of the procedural delay. Whether the adjudicating body should be of a different composition and character from the one now obtaining is a matter to which you would no doubt give the most earnest consideration.

Friends, you have before you a Note which attempts to set out some of the principal points requiring consideration. The Note is meant to serve only as a basis for discussion and is not to be taken as committing the government at this stage to any particular view-point. Equally, our discussions could well range beyond the points indicated in the Note if that will further our

common objective of effecting a break-through out of the present situation which benefits neither worker nor employer but is, on the other hand, acting as a drag on the growth of our economy. I shall look forward to fruitful discussions in this conference and I have every hope that some agreed conclusions will emerge. This is important for me for another reason as well. My discussions with the employers' representatives day after tomorrow can be purposeful only if the trade union representatives can come to agreed views on the basic issues before this conference.

SUMMING UP

BY

R. K. KHADILKAR

Minister of State for Labour and Employment

In summing up the discussion, which has gone over for nearly five hours, I think I can say that I derive some satisfaction that the conference has fulfilled the purpose which I had entertained for it. The parties have expressed their points of view fully and frankly. Let me make one point clear: we are functioning within the present socio-economic frame-work and our serious attempts are to achieve our objective by democratic methods. I do recognise that these are limiting factors. But nonetheless with the massive mandate behind the Government, we would certainly attempt to bring about certain social transformation, thus bringing our goal nearer.

I would like to say that there is some divergence of views. But there is near unanimity on what are the essential problems demanding solution and also a broad measure of agreement on the lines along which solutions would be found. In my view, this is no inconsiderable achievement.

The broad consensus that has emerged holds out the prospect of our being able to travel further in a direction which should sooner or later bring us to our common goal.

I recognise fully that matters concerning wages, prices and unemployment are powerfully exercising the minds of the workers. There is no evading or escaping these problems. They will have to be dealt with and tackled with energy and determination. But, as I said this morning,—they are intimately bound up with all our plans for economic growth and social justice.

I have been assured by the Planning Minister and the Deputy Minister of the Planning Commission, C. Subramaniam, that he

would not only have informal consultations at the earliest opportunity with the representatives of trade unions, but would also constitute a labour panel so that the labour leaders will have ample opportunity to project their view points in the process of the formulation of the plans as well as the policies concerning these vital issues.

It appears to me that all of us are agreed that in the field of industrial relations, the main problem is one of selecting a bargaining agent and investing it with sufficient authority to influence the relationship with the employer. We have been discussing this matter for several years now and many proposals have been canvassed. But I am glad today's deliberations have thrown up a very broad outline of the solution of this vexed problem. If there are more than one union and if the only union with a majority were to have all the authority for bargaining, then there is the likelihood of its attempts being frustrated by the minority section. Keeping this possibility in view, a suggestion has been put forward that the bargaining agent will have to take into confidence all the minority sections subject to certain conditions.

In my opinion this suggestion deserves further consideration; it may point the way to promoting the much-desired unity in the trade union movement. In any case, it may have the effect of making multiplicity of unions prove less detrimental to the interests of the workers. On the question of selecting the bargaining agent, differing preferences were expressed, for the method of verification and for recourse to secret ballot. Of course, the trade unions will need some time to elaborate and give concrete shape to the proposals for selecting a bargaining agent and also its practical implications and the means of translating it into a reality at the level of the establishment. I wish the recognised All India bodies would give further thought to this suggestion by constituting a small committee or a working group of their own for this purpose which could report within a couple of months.

On the other important subjects of the character and the shape of the machinery for settlement of the disputes, I notice that opinion is generally not in favour of any governmental

intervention. The emphasis has been on collective bargaining and failing that recourse to strike. In essential industries however the necessity for governmental intervention has been referred to by some parties. These views are no doubt entitled to consideration and will be taken into account by the government. But as the Prime Minister reminded us yesterday, industrial relations are too important and serious a matter to be left solely to workers and employers.

We are not living in a stagnant society, but a dynamic one, and precisely because there have been fundamental changes and the pace of change itself is accelerating, the need for governmental initiative and intervention at some stage should not be ruled out. In fact, the suggestion that failing collective bargain, the workers should resort to strike is more a fatalistic approach when the positive role of the state could be invoked for prevention of stoppage of work. I would like to remind the trade union leaders here that even in highly developed societies the role of the state in industrial relations has increased rather than diminished in recent times. In a developing country like ours, this is bound to be so in an even stronger degree. Keeping this in view and even assuming that the present machinery of adjudication or the suggestion of setting up of Industrial Relations Commissions is not acceptable to the trade union leaders, they will have to apply their mind to find out what type of machinery they would like to have to settle industrial disputes expeditiously. I agree adjudication leads to litigation and inordinate delays. One will have to give some thought to this aspect as well.

Tomorrow I am meeting the representatives of the employers before whom I shall present the view points expressed here so that they also will have an opportunity to give some thought to the basic problems facing industrial relations at the present juncture.

JOINT STATEMENT OF TU REPRESENTATIVES AFTER CONCLUSION OF SECOND CONFERENCE

On 21 May 1971, the representatives of the organisations participating in the previous meeting held on 18-19 May 1971 met again on the conclusion of the meeting called by the government. After some discussion the following statement was adopted unanimously:

This meeting of trade unions and national federations has heard the report from the participants to the meeting invited by the labour minister, of proceedings and the discussions held there.

This has confirmed the opinion expressed earlier by us that the agenda prepared by the department of labour will not serve any useful purpose.

We would now stress upon the government to accept unequivocally the consensus of views contained in our Declaration which was again repeated at the meeting called by the government by all the signatories as well as many others, and to take appropriate action to implement these suggestions, immediately:

- (a) on the issues of wages and prices, it has been unanimously expressed by the trade unions at the meeting called by the government and in our Declaration that prices must be controlled and a new structure of wages embracing all industries and services should be worked out on the national level. Details regarding these have been indicated in our Declaration;
- (b) on the issue of unemployment, we have suggested that all those already employed should be protected through government take-over of closed mills and those threatened

with closure. We have suggested that policies for enlargement of employment opportunities must be immediately laid down and implemented.

On all these issues we call upon the government to formulate concrete policies in consultation with the trade unions, and to ensure implementation of these through a machinery in which the TUs find their due and appropriate place.

On the major question of industrial relations, there is considerable unanimity of approach and thinking among the TU movement:

- (a) One of the most important points on which all are unanimous is that third party interference should be cut out. Hence government should immediately decide that till a final policy is laid down there will be no intervention by the government through adjudication, conciliation etc., unless the workers so desire.
- (b) Government interference in the shape of declaring strikes illegal under one or the other law must be immediately stopped. Similarly police interference and use of repressive laws against workers must be immediately stopped.
- (c) Regarding recognition and the related question of rivalries, discussions reveal considerable identity of views, but further discussions are required. Not law but a willing consensus among the trade unions alone can lead to a solution of this problem. Hence the government must declare unequivocally that it will not undertake either centrally or in States any legislation on this important issue till such consensus is reached.

In the light of all these development we reiterate our resolve to carry forward the tasks laid down in our Declaration.

It was decided by the conveners to call a meeting of all participants in June or July 1971.

PART III

**Note prepared by Government for meeting of
employees**



New Delhi, 22 May 1971

NOTE PREPARED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF
LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT FOR
CONFERENCE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF
EMPLOYERS' ORGANISATIONS

New Delhi – May 22, 1971

Government has convened a conference of trade union representatives on May 20-21, 1971, to consider some aspects of industrial relations policy. A copy of the note circulated for consideration at the conference is enclosed.

The matters included in the note are equally suitable and appropriate for consideration at the conference with the employers' representatives and the note may be regarded as the basis of discussions at the conference. In addition, the following points would appear to be relevant.

Industrial unrest in the country has been on the increase. It is imperative that this trend is halted and reversed and measures taken to promote increased production and higher productivity. Full cooperation by workers in securing the objective of "strife-free" growth imposes on the employers a corresponding obligation to ensure that they fully honour the provisions of the various labour laws, awards and agreements. The observance of suitable grievance procedures in establishments and the provision of adequate opportunities to workers to associate and identify themselves with the organisations in which they work are also potent factors in building up stable industrial relations and raising the quality and level of job satisfactions.

Of late, there has been an increase in the number of closures. This is a matter of grave concern, since closures result in loss of production and aggravate the present serious unemployment situation in the country. Closures may be caused by

one or more of several factors like mismanagement of the undertaking over a period, financial difficulties, raw material shortages, etc. Labour indiscipline making it difficult to maintain organised production has also been sometimes described a cause. Whatever the cause, it is essential that efforts are made to avoid closures. One way would be employers giving adequate notice to the workers as well as to the appropriate government concerned, as recommended by the 24th session of the Standing Labour Committee held in February 1966, so that suitable remediable measures may be taken in good time to obviate closures.

If the objective of increasing production and productivity is to be achieved, workers must be assured of an equitable share in the gains of productivity. Employers and workers should come to suitable arrangements in this regard at the plant level.

PART IV

Bangladesh

APPEAL OF WORKERS OF BANGLA DESH

After the conference of trade union representatives, on 21 May 1971, representatives from the trade unions of Bangla Desh met the participants of the conferences and handed over the following appeal to workers of all nations:

“The war for liberation of Bangladesh is going on. In this uneven war, on one side is the invading armed hordes of Yahya Khan killing, looting and plundering innocent and unarmed people of Bangladesh for the sake of perpetuating colonial hold on the 75 million people and on the other side is the armed people fighting and dying for justice and liberation.

The peoples' struggle will continue till the goal of achieving full freedom will come true.

In the following lines, the special position of the working class of Bangladesh in relation to the liberation movement is being narrated for enlightening the fellow brethren all-over the world:

There are four million industrial workers in Bangladesh. These include workers in industries, communication sectors and other allied fields.

The working class people were the worst victims of the colonial rule perpetuated on Bangladesh by the ruling coterie of West Pakistan.

During the last 23 years, the jagirdars-landlords, industrial monopolists and exploiters of West Pakistan, with the active and willing help of the so-called field-marshals, generals and air-marshals of the armed forces have been systematically exploiting the people of Bangladesh.

The economic exploitation was accompanied with continuous and villainous attempts to destroy the distinct and long-cherished political and socio-cultural ideals of the Bengalees. This was done in order to break the backbone of our people, so that they could never consolidate themselves into a homogeneous

entity to assert their rights for economic, political and cultural emancipation. The exploitation and repression, in all its forms and features, gradually took a classic form of colonial rule.

At this stage, in 1966, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman formulated and declared his historic six-point programme to constructively combat the imminent disintegration of the people of Bangladesh. The six-point programme was a comprehensive political formula to ensure economic, political and cultural emancipation for the people of Bangladesh.

The working class being the most conscious section among the masses, immediately saw in this programme a definite promise for economic emancipation and, under the leadership of Sheikh Mujib, came out in the fore-front of the subsequent mass movements. As a matter of fact, in creating the overwhelming mass upsurge in favour of the six-point programme in the late sixties in the face of extreme repression and intimidation let loose by the Ayub regime, in toppling his rule and freeing Sheikh Mujib from the Agartala conspiracy case and, later, in giving the Awami League a historic victory in the last general election, the workers and students of Bangladesh played the most decisive role.

Then again, it was the workers and students who formed the hard-core of the non-cooperation movement launched by the Sheikh for fighting against the Bhutto-Yahya conspiracy. And, finally, when the armed might of Yahya Khan was let loose on the unsuspecting and unarmed people of Bangladesh to put at naught their democratic rights, the war of liberation began. Here also, as in other previous occasions, the workers were the first to join the war of liberation as fighters and volunteers.

The carnage, the ruthless killings, unprecedented mass massacres perpetuated on our people to-day by Yahya Khan and his army have not been able to break the will and determination of the workers of Bangladesh.

About one lakh members of the working class in Bangladesh have been killed so far. Residential colonies of the industrial workers throughout the length and breadth of Bangladesh have been systematically gutted down. In Adamjee Jute Mills pre-

mises, the invaders killed hundreds of workers in a mosque. The West Pakistani Army are now singling out leading workers and their families, killing them at sight, looting their meagre possessions upto the last grain of rice. Those who have escaped the initial onslaught of tanks and mortars are now fighting a slow and painful death due to lack of shelter and food.

In the face of all these odds and atrocities the workers are still continuing their struggle. The non-cooperation call given by the Bangabandhu is being continued in toto by our working class people. For the industrial and communication workers, non-cooperation is an effective weapon to destroy the economic base of the invaders. The same weapon is, however, depriving the poor workers of their work and wages which they could have easily earned by agreeing to cooperate with Yahya. It is thus very clear indeed that the weapon of non-cooperation designed to weaken the enemy will eventually destroy the users of the weapon i.e. the 4 million workers of Bangladesh, if during the fighting period they are not sustained by help from their brethren all over the world.

We, therefore, appeal, on behalf of the fighting workers of Bangladesh, and in the name of humanity and justice, to the working class of all nations of the world to come to our aid at this most crucial and fateful juncture of our struggle for freedom and economic emancipation.

1. We seek economic and material help of varied kinds.
2. We hope that the working people all over the world, through their respective organisations, will chalk out an effective programme and launch immediate movements so that their governments give recognition to the sovereign state of Bangladesh, with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as head of the State.
3. We request our fellow workers of the world to create an economic blockade against the Government of Pakistan. The international seamen's fraternity may please refuse to work in any Pakistani ship or other ships going to or coming from West Pakistan.
4. We will also request our fellow workers to start appro-

ropriate movements so that countries all over the world forthwith stop giving any aid, economic or military, to the Government of Pakistan.

5. We would request you to take initiative in forming an International Workers Co-ordination Forum for giving effective and long term assistance to the fighting people of Bangladesh.

We would request our fellow brethren to consider that time is very important for us and a moment's delay in helping us today may cause us years of sufferings and subjugation. JAI BANGLA

Yours in all
Struggles for Justice and Freedom

THE WORKERS OF THE DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

Mr. Shah Jahan
Acting President
National Workers' League
and Member, Bangladesh
Central Workers' Action
Committee.

Abdul Mannan
General Secretary
National Workers' League
and Convener, Bangladesh
Central Workers' Action
Committee,
Mujibnagar, Bangladesh.

NATIONAL TU COMMITTEE FOR SOLIDARITY WITH BANGLA DESH

The TU representatives present decided to form a united committee of solidarity with the workers of Bangla Desh and Maitreyee Bose, president, INTUC, consented to be president of the committee.

On 22 May 1971, a meeting of representatives of the national trade union centres was held where Maitreyee Bose was elected president. The following were proposed to represent the various centres:

Maitreyee Bose and A. P. Sharma, MP – INTUC

S. S. Mirajkar and S. A. Dange – AITUC

Dr. Shanti Patel and Mahesh Desai – HMS

Srikantan Nair, MP, and Jatin Chakravarty – UTUC

P. Ramamurti and Niren Ghosh – CITU

Subodh Banerjee and one other – UTUC (Lenin Sarani)

George Fernandes and one other – HMP

The committee decided to call itself the National Committee of Indian Trade Unions for Solidarity with the workers and People of Bangla Desh.

A decision was taken to call upon all unions to observe June 19, 1971, as day of solidarity with Bangla Desh. Meetings, rallies, and processions were to be organised and the demand for recognition of the Democratic Republic of Bangla Desh and the safety of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were to be focussed.

Further, the committee decided to see to circulation of documents on Bangla Desh to the delegates attending the forthcoming ILO Session at Geneva in the month of June.

APPENDIX

Data on TU Representation To ILO

APPENDIX

TABLE SHOWING, HOW IN A COUNTRY, WHERE THERE ARE MORE THAN ONE NATIONAL TU CENTRE, REPRESENTATION TO THE ILO CONFERENCE IS MADE IN A COMPOSITE DELEGATION OF ALL CENTRES FOR THE YEARS 1966-1970 *

Year		France		Italy
1966	DELEGATE	FO		CISL
	ADVISERS	FO	— 1	CISL
		CGT	— 3	UIL
		CFTC	— 3	CISNAL
		CGC	— 1	
1967	DELEGATE	CGT		CISL
	ADVISERS	CGT	— 2	CISL
		CFTC	— 3	CGIL
		FO	— 2	UIL
1968	DELEGATE	CFTC		UIL
	ADVISERS	CGT	— 3	CISL
		FO	— 2	CGIL
		CGC	— 1	UIL
		CFTC	— 2	CISNAL
1969	DELEGATE	FO		CISL
	ADVISERS	FO	— 1	CGIL
		CGT	— 3	CISL
		CFDT	— 3	UIL
		CGC	— 1	CISNAL
1970	DELEGATE	CGT		CGIL
	ADVISERS	CGT	— 2	CGIL
		FO	— 2	CISL
		CFDT	— 2	UIL
		CGC	— 1	CISNAL

* Prior to 1966, representation to the ILO from these countries was confined to a single organisation recognised by the government as being the largest organisation eligible for representation to ILO conferences.

Key to Abbreviations:

FRANCE		ITALY	
CGT	— General Confederation of Labour (WFTU)	CGIL	— Italian General Confederation of Labour (WFTU)
FO	— Force Ouvriere (ICFTU)	CISL	— Italian Confederation of Workers' Unions (WCL)
CFDT	— French Democratic Confederation of Labour (WCL)	UIL	— Italian Workers' Union
CGC	— Confederation Generale du Cadres (General Confederation of Executive Staffs)	CISNAL	— Italian Confederation of National Trade Unions of Workers

(N.B. the WCL, World Confederation of Labour was formerly known as the ICFTU—International Federation of Christian Trade Unions.)