

MASS FRONTS

Trade Unions

THE MAIN TASK OF THE TU department in the organisational field was to organise and expand party work in the TU field, in the specific situation created by the formation of the CPM and the active disruption and hostile activities carried on by that party against us. This meant reorganisation of our fractions in the various sectors to counter the disruption and the undertaking of organisational activities and giving assistance to weak centres. The preeminent position of our party in the TU movement has been by and large maintained in all the states and centres which suffered seriously from CPM disruption. The impressive turn-out of our comrades in the Bombay session of the AITUC held in

May 1966 showed that due to the sustained organisational efforts, the weaknesses caused due to the splitting activities of the CPM could be largely overcome.

The period since the Seventh Congress witnessed a most remarkable upsurge in the united actions of the working class in India which was of a magnitude never before witnessed in free India. Vast new sections came into the fold of TU organisation, particularly the middle-class employees and more particularly the state-government employees. In the organisation and carrying out of these struggles and in organising solidarity actions, our party played a leading part. It was possible to build unity in action at national and local levels with trade-union centres under the influence of the left parties and in some cases, at local level, even with the INTUC. At the organisational level, an effort for united action at national level was made with the setting up of the Rashtriya Sangram Samiti. The programme of action envisaged by the samiti on all-India level could not, however, be carried out in 1965 because of Indo-Pak hostilities. State-level actions, such as bandhs, were, however, organised jointly.

Members of the department during their visits to states and various centres have also helped in reorganising party work in the trade unions. The department has been continuing to maintain live-organisational touch with the centres getting newly-industrialised and active assistance is being rendered to local units, through the state councils for taking up new organisational work. Resources, mainly in the matter of trained political cadre, has, however, been a serious inhibiting factor.

During the period since the last Party Congress, two large meetings of the all-India TU fraction were called by the department, one in February 1966 and the other in August 1967. In both these meetings the organisational position was reviewed. The meeting held in 1967 also reviewed the post-election situation and adopted a document to guide party activity in the TU front. The department also convened a fraction meeting to discuss concrete issues connected

with the AITUC session in May 1966, of all PMs present in the Bombay session during those days. Separate industry-wise fractions have also been convened regularly at the time of the trade federation meetings or otherwise independently to review party and TU position in the respective sectors.

The all-India TU fraction which met in August 1967 has laid down concrete organisational tasks—(a) that every factory or establishment to have its party unit; (b) every trade union to have its own fraction in order to improve party functioning in the trade unions. In the new situation of trade unions becoming more multi-party-influenced and the growth of united action irrespective of TU affiliation, the coordinated and improved functioning of the party was called for. The fraction has also called for more open party functioning in the white-collar sector and with a greater accent on politicalisation. The fraction has, in its document, exposed the true nature of the CPM disruption and has laid down a clear line of building TU unity.

In some of the major industrial centres and where the movement is more recent, as the election results have shown, our party has not made an impressive showing. This is so in certain centres in West Bengal and in the steel belt generally. The department and the TU fraction have reviewed the position and action to improve matters is being taken.

From available information, relative position industry-wise can be broadly stated.

In *cotton textiles*, except in Gujarat, we have the dominant influence although this is not always reflected in organised strength of the unions or in concrete terms of party membership and organisation.

The same is true largely of *engineering*, but in this growing sector, the CPM trend is quite active in West Bengal and so-called independents have under them some major units in Bombay.

In *iron and steel*, the improvement in our position is very slow and our cadres face serious disruption of the movement from the side of CPM which is quite dominant in Durgapur and also has hold in Burnpur and Bhilai. Our

position in Ranchi complex is unsatisfactory. Efforts are being made to undertake new organisation in Bihar industrial belt in the Bokaro region.

In the *coalmines*, our position in Bengal and in the public-sector coalfields in Bihar is good but the position is weak in the private-sector coalfields. In Andhra Pradesh coalfields, the organisational position is good. In the iron ore mining, big improvements have been registered in Madhya Pradesh in the public sector, while in Bihar the position is unsatisfactory. In Orissa, both in public and private-sector iron ore and manganese mining, our cadres are in the leading position in the TU movement.

In *ports and docks*, while our position is good in Madras, Vizag, Cochin and Kandla, but in Bombay and Calcutta, the dominance is that of the PSP-led AIPWF. In Calcutta, our position is steadily improving.

In the *sugar and cement* industries our position is weak.

In *road transport*, the overall position is satisfactory.

While no definite assessment of the statewise situation is possible in the absence of detailed reports from the state councils, if functioning of the state TUC centres is any indication, the position in many states is most unsatisfactory.

Even where the movement is relatively more advanced, the standard of work at the level of leadership and coordination is lacking in most cases. This appears mainly due to the fact that there is inadequate consciousness among affiliated bodies to organisationally and financially strengthen the state TU units. This has resulted in most of these offices having only skeleton organisation and personnel, and necessary priorities for releasing leading cadres for exclusive work at these important offices therefore require to be laid down. In these critical days, the cadres of the unions and state TUCs have done commendable work in leading the movement but this is not adequately reflected in the organisational build-up of the state TU apparatus.

It is necessary to keep in view the highly disruptive role played by the CPM leaders and the TU wing in their efforts to capture unions and TU centres at state and national levels,

throwing TU democracy to the winds, setting up bogus rival unions with inflated membership, carrying vicious vilification campaigns against TU leaders belonging to our party. When, by their own left-adventurist tactics and sectarian methods, they get working-class struggles smashed or bogged in a blind alley and unions destroyed and their cadres discredited, they get more desperate and intensify the campaign against the CPI units and its TU leadership.

The disruptive role and capacity of the CPM leadership must not be underestimated. They have strong influence and mass base in some sectors of the working class and white-collared employees in some states. They have been concentrating on taking their politics to the working class to which task we have not paid adequate attention. Their leadership is exerting all its energies and using all means in a frantic bid to capture the AITUC and, failing that, to split it. The working class has to be mobilised for defeating this disruption from the left, for defending TU unity and our unions have to be strengthened as big mass unions on the basis of militant defence of working-class interests and trade-union democracy.

We must keep in view the increased possibilities and the new dangers that are there in the TU field in the postelection period. The INTUC is fast losing ground in several states and sectors, though it is still strong in the plantations (except in Kerala and Tamilnad), in jute, cement, sugar and partly in railways and transport.

An increasing menace is the growing activity of Jana Sangh in the TU field. It is very active in the Hindi-speaking areas, especially in centres around Delhi and in UP and among government employees, teachers and white-collared sections in most states. Their election gains have given them a position of vantage in some states and they have been trying to exploit this position to set up rival splinter unions and get recognition for them. They are also making vigorous bid to build cadres from amongst the workers. In many places, they act hand-in-glove with the management and it is not difficult to expose and isolate them provided we

organise our work there on sound lines and are not altogether missing from the scene, as is the case now in a number of centres or sectors.

The recent communal disturbances have made it clear that they also resort to pogroms against minority community in working-class centres such as Jamshedpur, Jubulpore, Rourkela, Ranchi, etc. in order to consolidate their base among Hindu workers. The massacre of Muslim workers in Hatia recently is ominous.

The activities of such chauvinist forces as Shiva Sena in Bombay also pose another problem to be tackled.

The advance we have made has to be consolidated and carried forward. The situation as it is developing today requires that the working class moves in a big way on both the trade-union and political planes and rallies all national-democratic forces to stem the offensive of reaction and develop a counteroffensive by the democratic forces. This cannot be done without making vigorous and persistent efforts to build the unity of the working class both at trade-union and political levels. For this three things are necessary and urgent.

Firstly, the drawing up and implementation of a plan of work—an integrated plan of strengthening and expanding trade-union work—drawn up by the centre and the states, keeping in view the strategic importance of the various sectors of industry, important sections of the class that are organised but are under other influences and other sections which are still unorganised but are now beginning to move. *It must also give urgent attention to the new and growing industrial complexes, e.g. around Delhi, Bombay, Poona, Ranchi, Modinagar, etc.*

The second most urgent task is to organise a continuous campaign to take our politics to the working class. Meetings and rallies by the party, besides the TU rallies in working-class areas, organisation of reading rooms, sale of party papers and literature, study circles on a mass scale and enrolment of working-class militants into the party—all

these have become urgent measures which must be given top priority in our organisational activities.

The third task is education, training and promotion of working-class cadres in a planned manner and on an emergency basis. Special syllabus must be drawn up and special classes conducted for working-class cadres by the state councils, besides central schools. Concrete measures to promote promising working-class cadres to positions of responsibility in the party must be worked out.

These tasks should be implemented with the consciousness that the party has to make the working class its base of operations, that it must be able to move the working class for the slogans of the party and to rally it as the builder and organiser of the national-democratic front.

The Agrarian Front

In the conditions of an underdeveloped country like India, where about three-fourths of the total population are dependent on agriculture, the unavoidable need of a strong and class-conscious organised peasant movement for the successful completion of the national-democratic revolution needs no emphasis. But here the weakness of the party stands out most glaringly. Vast rural areas in the Hindi belt and in other areas are outside any sort of communist influence and the organised peasant movement. And these areas have become the hunting ground of Indian reaction.

But the important task of winning over larger sections of peasants and agricultural labourers as active participants in the struggle for completion of national-democratic task has been hindered due to the almost total and enforced paralysis of the All-India Kisan Sabha, the premier mass organisation of the Indian peasantry and the continued neglect of the task of building powerful organisation of agricultural labourers. The annual session of the AIKS was not held for the last seven years and thus valuable opportunities for examining, evaluating and reviewing the agrarian problems and formulating correct policies and tasks were lost. Not

only that. The All-India Kisan Committee, the highest authority of the AIKS, between two sessions should 'meet at least twice a year' according to the constitution. But it has not met even once after its first session in March 1961 when it elected the general secretary and other office-bearers. Even a duly signed requisition by about one-third of its members fell on deaf ears and the meeting was not called. Not content with this, the president and secretary, true to the disruptive line of their party (CPM), trampling underfoot all democratic rules and norms of functioning and procedure, decided in 1966 to dissolve majority of the state kisan sabhas and in mid-1967 to disfranchise about half a million members, which is about half of the total membership of the AIKS.

In such a situation, majority of the members of the AIKC decided to hold the 19th session of the AIKS and a successful session has been held in Amravati (Maharashtra) from 10 to 12 January 1968. It is hoped this session of the AIKS will restore the democratic united militant character of the kisan sabha and evolve and advance correct policies and slogans to meet the requirements of the changing conditions in the country in general and on the agrarian front in particular.

Apart from the disruptive and paralysing role played by the CPM leadership in the kisan sabha, our own failure on the agrarian front at the party level must not be lost sight of. Most of state and other units have failed to pay adequate attention to the task of building the mass organisations of the peasants. Even the decision of the Seventh Congress to have kisan departments was not implemented in all states and at all levels. Wherever these departments were set up, they were not fully activated and in many places remained only on paper. Even the central kisan department, which has been meeting more or less regularly, did not give due attention to the task of overall organisation of the agrarian front on a national scale. Its meetings were confined to discussing the affairs inside the kisan sabha and even that mostly

at the central level. The tasks of the mass movement and organisation on a countrywide basis were not given attention to. It held a convention of leading party functionaries on the agrarian front on 1-3 January 1966, but even its decisions were not followed up.

We have also failed so far to work out a *mass line* for the agrarian front to equip our cadres and activate them in the new conditions of today. In the agrarian section of the Party Programme, a broad analysis was made of the class relations and of the trend of development and how it affects sections of the peasantry. After the Party Congress, a convention of kisan cadres was held. Some useful discussions took place and demands were formulated on different problems facing the peasantry. But the plan of mass activities was not vigorously carried out; efforts to activate the mass organisation despite the CPM disruption and obstruction were lacking and there was no training of cadres.

In addition to this, there is no concerted effort by the party as a whole to build the organisation of agricultural labour. Only in some states such as Punjab, Andhra, Bihar and Tamilnad something has been done at state level. But so far what has been done there is also woefully inadequate. In most states, nothing is being done and there is no co-ordination at all-India level, no arrangement even for exchange of experience, much less for guiding mass work on this front.

In conditions of penetration of capitalism in agriculture and rapid differentiation of the peasantry, the kisan movement cannot be strengthened and consolidated into a powerful organised force without basing our work on the agricultural workers and poor peasantry. Failure to do this is the biggest weakness of our past work in many states. Another weakness is the failure to realise the need to activate and build the mass organisations in the rural areas—the failure to attract adequate leading cadres at different levels for this job and to mobilise the party in the rural areas to take it up as one of the most essential jobs there.

It is, therefore, necessary to take the following steps to remedy the situation:

Organise the kisan department at the centre with sufficient leading cadres devoting their main time and attention to this front.

- (a) Set up a separate department for agricultural labour at the centre and wherever possible in the states, besides the kisan department.
- (b) Prepare for an all-India conference of agricultural labour organisations and move the party in the rural areas to help building this organisation.
- (c) Activise and build the kisan sabha as a broad mass organisation basing it, first and foremost, on the poor peasantry. At the same time, we should make serious efforts to widen the base of the kisan sabha and draw in other political elements into it.
- (d) Allot adequate leading cadres at all levels for work in these two mass organisations. Work in one or other mass organisation should be the main job of such cadres.
- (e) Specialised schools for such cadres should be organised by the states starting with a central school.
- (f) Continue efforts to restore the unity of the AIKS on the basis of united working and democratic functioning of the AIKS. Make persistent efforts to develop united actions till the above efforts to restore unity succeed.
- (g) Discuss and draw up a mass line for the agrarian front which should be later concretised for each state on the agrarian front.

Women

Women's department of the National Council has worked regularly since it was set up in the beginning of 1965 and taken decisions regarding the work of the mass organisation of women as well as party work among them. Efforts

have also been made to organise work in the states with the help of the party committees.

In this period, two congresses of the NFIW, which is an organisation representing women of various political opinions were held—one in Delhi in December 1965 and the other in Lucknow in October 1967. The membership of NFIW is nearly 65,000. It has got a regular functional central office and has organised a number of campaigns and done some constructive work also in different states. It has affiliated united mass organisations in Bengal, Bihar, UP, Delhi, Punjab, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala, Pondicherry and some districts in Tamilnad.

The members of the department undertook tours of Andhra, Tamilnad, Bihar, UP, Gujarat and Kerala in this period to understand the problems and to help in organising work among women.

The problem of cadres is very acute in the women's front. Even the number of party members from among women are very few. The party has to take a special effort to recruit women and build cadres from among them. Women have several domestic responsibilities. They are generally less mobile and can work only in limited areas. Therefore, we have to develop part-time workers from among women and give them responsibilities they can undertake while attending to household duties. Since a woman has to make more efforts and sacrifices to disengage herself from family responsibilities and to participate in political work, extraordinary efforts and care are needed to develop cadres from among them. It is important to bring young women into the party and women's movement and help them develop politically. It is also of paramount importance to rally women workers and women from poor peasants and agricultural labourers into the movement and the party.

Political education through party schools for women has to be organised. Special attention should be paid to promote women cadres to party committees and to enable them to shoulder their responsibilities. We must also produce litera-

ture in simple language understandable to ordinary women. A central party school for women cadres has to be organised immediately as well as schools at least in the major states like Andhra, Bengal, Bihar, UP, Tamilnad, Maharashtra and Punjab to train women cadres.

In connection with the fresh recruitment, targets for which have been taken in this Congress, the state councils must also fix the number of women to be taken. Special efforts must be made by party members to bring their wives, mothers and other relations into the women's movement and the activities of the party with the aim of making them party and to recruit as many as possible into the party.

To broaden and deepen the base of the women's movement, it is absolutely essential to pay special attention to the work among the working women in factories, offices and establishments and to make them an integral part of the organised women's movement.

To ensure implementation of the aforementioned tasks, each state council is required to fix a leading comrade to take charge of work on the women's front. To review and plan our work meetings of women cadres should be convened at state level within the next three months.

The Teachers

The recent period has witnessed a tremendous mass upsurge and militant actions of all sections of teachers—primary, secondary and college. Agitations for revision of pay scales and for linking DA with the cost of living index took place on a big scale. In many states thousands of teachers ceased work on different occasions. In West Bengal 2,000 secondary teachers and in Punjab 2,400 private school teachers courted arrest and went to jail to press their demands.

In Delhi about 30,000 school teachers are in the midst of a great struggle. In Bihar and other states also big actions have taken place.

In view of the importance of the teachers' movement and

the recent positive developments the party should do all it can to develop a united teachers' movement and take necessary steps to organise the work of the party on this front.

Student and Youth Front

The formation of the youth and student department helped to a certain extent in drawing attention of the National Council towards the problems of our younger generation, the role our youth can play in shaping the destiny of our country and towards the urgent need for uniting our youth in a militant, progressive organisation led by us.

For a proper assessment of achievements and failures of our work among the youth in the period under review, it is necessary to keep in mind the situation existing in our youth and student front prior to the Party Congress.

Our student organisation, the oldest organisation of the students with a glorious heritage of struggle for the national independence, had ceased to exist as a national organisation almost for a decade. Since 1959, the skeleton centre of our student organisation was abolished. Except West Bengal, no unit remained as a real statewide organisation in northern India. Though in Andhra, Bihar, Kerala and Orissa, units formally existed, but they were inactive and wielded hardly any influence in the mass of students. In MP, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Tamilnad, Punjab, Gujarat and UP some isolated districts or local organisations existed.

Our youth organisation which was formed only in August 1959 was still in an embryonic stage at the time of the Seventh Congress. In two years since its formation, the organisation recorded some advance as indicated in the second conference held in May 1961. It had six functioning units in Andhra, Bihar, Bengal Kerala, Punjab and Delhi. In Maharashtra, Madras, Orissa and Assam some district units also had come into existence. The total membership recorded was 150,000 and the activities conducted in two years were significant.

The innerparty crisis, which developed following the

India-China conflict, had serious repercussions on this infant organisation. By the end of 1962, the organisation became more or less paralysed. Only a few local units still remained alive.

Even before the split in the party, several state youth and student units started splitting. In the first half of 1964 youth and student units in Andhra were split up. This was soon followed by a split in Bengal student unit. In other states, though the CPM boys could not openly set up rival organisations, they silently withdrew from our organisation and started a slander campaign against us. And now the CPM is going ahead with separate organisations in all states.

The first all-India cadres' meeting after the Seventh Congress took place in June 1965. This was attended by leading cadres of our student and youth organisations from 12 states. The meeting, which was attended by our general secretary, adopted a document which, besides defining the character and programme of our youth and student organisations, proposed certain steps to be taken by the National Council for revitalising this front.

The National Council with some amendments adopted this document in its August 1965 meeting. This decision had an inspiring effect on the comrades working in youth and student front. With new enthusiasm they began to prepare for the all-India conference, which was held in Pondicherry from 29 December 1965 to 2 January 1966. About 800 delegates participated in the youth conference and 200 in the students' conference which was also held in Pondicherry at the same time.

This was the third conference of the youth organisation and 17th conference of the student organisation.

During last two years several new units have been formed and old ones revived. State units of the youth federation are properly functioning in Andhra, Assam, Bengal Bihar, Delhi, Punjab and Kerala. In some states the youth federation has only certain district or centre units—Maharashtra (only in Bombay), UP (Varanasi), Orissa (Sambalpur),

Mysore (Bangalore), Tamilnad (Madras and Tanjore) and Rajasthan (Jodhpur).

State units of the students' federation are existing in Andhra, Assam, Bengal, UP, Kerala, Punjab and Orissa. In Rajasthan (Bikaner), MP (Indore and Rewa), Maharashtra (Bombay), and Mysore (Bangalore) some units of the federation exist.

Besides the National Council member responsible for youth and student department, three more wholetime comrades are working at the centre; one for the youth front and two for the student front.

As far as our information goes, there are wholetimers in Andhra (two for youth and four for student), Assam (one for youth and student), Bengal (one for student front), Bihar (one each for youth and student fronts), UP (one for student front), Kerala (one for student front) and Punjab (two for student and youth fronts). There is no wholetime appointed in Delhi, Mysore, Orissa, Tamilnad, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Manipur, MP and Rajasthan.

Though the reported membership of the youth organisation (Pondicherry conference) is about 160,000, proper scrutiny of membership has been done only by the Andhra state unit. In their last conference held in 1966, the membership was announced to be 42,000.

The publications are: (1) *New Generation* (central organ—monthly) (2) *Yuvajana* (Andhra), (3) *Chhatra Avijan* (Bengali), and (4) *Chhatra Lok* (UP). Most of these publications are very irregular mainly due to lack of financial stability and due to lack of cadres.

The composition of the central department for youth and students was finalised by the National Council in its meeting in August 1965. It consisted of seven comrades of whom two were from the National Council and five from leading comrades from different states.

The department has met eight times in the last three years and it convened two all-India cadres' meetings. The first cadres' meeting has been mentioned earlier and the second was convened in April 1967 at Calcutta to discuss mainly

the new problems facing the youth and student movement. The meeting took the following decisions:

(a) To revive the AISF centre by bringing two whole-timers. (b) To hold state cadres' meeting in various states. (c) A well represented all-India cadres' meeting to be convened before the party congress to determine our task in the new political situation.

The first decision has been implemented as the National Council in its last meeting has agreed to the proposal.

Where the state leadership took initiative, the second decision also was implemented. In Tripura, Delhi, Bengal, Orissa, Mysore, Kerala, Andhra and UP state cadres' meetings were held. In Andhra, we had a 10-day class. Kerala held two classes of three days each. Delhi cadre school lasted for four days. In most of the other states the classes were very formal which lasted only for several hours.

From this brief information about the organisational position of our youth and student organisations it is apparent that though some headway has been made and the structure of the organisations has been set up in many states, our influence on the youth as a whole is still insignificant. Our weakness in this front becomes extremely glaring in the face of a communal riot or linguistic discord like the one now developing in several states in the country.

The central youth and student department which was entrusted with the job of assisting the National Council in respect to this front has revealed many weaknesses. Because of its very composition it is not a regular functioning body. Apart from two out of seven members no one was available in carrying out the task of practical implementation of any decision. Since most of the members were dispersed in the states and had other party responsibilities, all of them were not even available for consultations on urgent matters.

The central department was not in a position to establish direct relations with the corresponding state departments

and subcommittees wherever they existed and could not assist them in their work.

One of the major failures in this respect was the absence of cadres' meetings and schools in all the states to explain the line of the party in regard to this front. As the report shows, only in seven states such meetings could be held.

Though several meetings of the department decided to hold a central school for comrades working on this front, yet it has not been held till this day. A similar decision to bring out booklets on various aspects of youth life and on socialism has remained unfulfilled.

The two available members of the department, who were also office-bearers of the mass organisation, were completely bogged down with the day-to-day work of the central organisation.

Perhaps the biggest problem still remains the lack of attention by the party as a whole to this front. Though it is true that in the last three years the central leadership and some state councils have assigned wholtime comrades to work on this front, yet the majority of the state councils have not yet done so.

In some cases, comrades having many other responsibilities have been entrusted with this front and the result is that this front hardly gets any attention.

Except in very few cases, state and district councils seldom discuss the problems of the front. After assigning a particular comrade to this job it is thought that the entire responsibility belongs to that comrade. In cases where the comrade responsible is not a member of the leading party committee, the leadership has no means of keeping any direct contact with this front.

As the youth organisation has to draw in its fold young people belonging to different walks of life, it is imperative that a living contact is built with the youth front and other mass fronts like TU, kisan sabha and agricultural workers' unions.

An attempt was made some years ago to begin joint work with TUs in order to mobilise the young workers and a

conference of young workers was held in Bombay in 1961. But it was not pursued. And today there exists absolutely no coordination between the youth and other fronts.

Developments of the last three years show that vast sections of our student community, being disillusioned with the last 20 years of congress rule that has failed to hold out any future for them, are taking the path of struggle for the realisation of their own demands and participating with their characteristic militancy in the popular struggle that is sweeping the whole country.

The mass upsurge of the student community which shook the country on several occasions in the recent past is comparable only to the student struggle of the preindependence days in its dimension and militancy.

This situation calls for immediate and urgent attention of our party, for in the absence of democratic and progressive orientation, the present upsurge of the students is being made use of by the forces of reaction in several states as was apparent on several occasions.

It is high time that we realise the urgency and importance of our work among the students and all party committees from top to bottom pay immediate attention to this very important front and fast overcome the organisational weaknesses without which we will be able neither to intervene in the situation nor get sufficient cadres for the expansion of our movement to newer sections and areas.