

STATE OF PARTY JOURNALS

THE QUESTION OF PARTY JOURNALS was elaborately dealt with in the Organisational Report of the Seventh Congress. It was pointed out that the state of our party journals, both in regard to their political content as well as circulation, was not at all encouraging. The main reason was that the

party committees did not realise fully the role of party organs as agitators and propagandists of the party. A number of steps were suggested to improve the political content and to increase the circulation.

- (a) Party leaders should regularly write articles for the journals on current political and mass issues; district and taluq leaders must help by contributing write-ups about campaigns run by the party.
- (b) Effective steps should be taken to improve the quality of our journals both as regards their content as well as their get-up, lay-out, news-featuring, etc. For that style of work of the editorial boards should be radically improved.
- (c) All-India conference of editors of party journals, correspondents of *New Age* weekly and other leading comrades dealing with party journals should be called to discuss problems of improving the content and technical standards of our publications.
- (d) An all-India campaign should be run to increase the circulation of party journals.
- (e) A Hindi weekly to be started from the centre.

The National Council set up a central department for party journals immediately after the Seventh Party Congress. But it also had a similar fate as those of many other central departments— at first a few meetings, then no guarantee to get the proposals or decisions implemented, finally getting defunct.

The Secretariat of the National Council called a conference of editors of party journals and correspondents in April 1965. Many experienced journalists who are party members or sympathisers, working in nonparty journals or news-agencies, also attended the conference, participated in the discussion and made constructive suggestions to improve the quality and content of party journals. The conference discussed all aspects of party press—political content, technical standards, circulation, advertisements, setting up a central newsagencies, etc. The resolutions adopted by the con-

ference were placed before the National Council which directed the Central Secretariat to go ahead with the implementation of the resolutions.

The conference actually gave a new concept of party journals. It said that in the new changed situation, our party journals (dailies as well as weeklies) cannot fulfil all the role of a party journal, namely an agitator, propagandist and organiser. They have to be mainly mass agitator-educator (propagandist) with the widest appeal. This meant that other media, apart from our mass dailies and weeklies, have to be developed to carry party circulars, statements, full texts of party resolutions, etc. which are of prime importance to party cadres and members.

The National Council did not seem to have given a serious thought to the far-reaching implications of implementing these recommendations of the journalists' conference, while approving them. Some initial attempts were made to implement them as far as the content and quality of the party journals were concerned. The decision to publish an innerparty monthly journal *Party Life* and also to bring out in pamphlet form full texts of the resolutions of every CEC and National Council meeting was a part of that. The *New Age* introduced some new features and tried to change the style of writing and editing.

Two more conferences of party journalists were held afterwards—the second conference in January 1966 and the third in September 1967. The second conference reviewed how far the decisions of April 1965 conference had been implemented. It made a number of recommendations to carry forward the new concept of party journals, as well as to increase circulation and enhance advertisement revenue. The conference recommended planned and well-prepared circulation drives by party committees with active participation of the party leadership at all levels. It also suggested that each state and district council and party branch should give specific responsibility to one of its members for looking

after and increasing the sale of party literature including the journals. It also decided to conduct a 15-day training camp for party journalists in May 1966.

But unfortunately these decisions of the second conference remained on paper because there was no separate apparatus or even a person specifically responsible at the party centre to see to their implementation.

The third conference was a conference of editors of party journals. It was held from 22 to 24 September 1967. It was convened in accordance with a decision of 1967 April National Council session which directed the Central Secretariat to convene a meeting of the editors of all party journals and create a 'machinery for prompt communication of the news of developments in specially those states where we are participating in the ministry' in order to develop proper agitation and propaganda.

This conference also, after reviewing the postelection situation in the country and tasks of party journals, has made a number of proposals. But will they be implemented? Why the decisions and proposals of the earlier conferences were not implemented? What is the state of our party journals?

The communist press in India is mainly based on weekly publications. We have got six dailies in five states (2 in Kerala, 1 each in Andhra, West Bengal, Punjab and Manipur). There are three central weeklies (*New Age*, *Janyug* and *Hayat*). In some states, we have got weekly journals. The circulation taken together will not be equal to even one of the major daily or weekly of the bourgeois press. This is a very sad state of affairs.

Our party journals are being produced today in conditions which are totally different from preindependence or earlier postindependence days.

The big bourgeois press is developing and using many and varied forms and features, spending huge sums, to attract and hold as many readers as possible and mould public opinion in the interests of reaction and against left and

democratic forces. They are utilising the latest technique in journalism and printing.

We must also realise that masses are also culturally advancing, their tastes and interests have grown and become more versatile. Our mass movement has become more complex, broader and deeper than ever before. It has to face and tackle new problems. It has to respond to new problems and facts of cultural and political life.

Our party journals have to continuously project the political line of the party, concretised in the form of news and proper commentaries on them, to wider and wider sections of the people. It is through the party journals that our party can promptly and effectively intervene in the national-political life of the country and in the fast-developing situation in each state. For this our journals, dailies and weeklies, have to be mass-circulation papers.

The postelection situation offers enormous opportunities and possibilities for building up and expanding the communist press as a potent force in the political life of the country. The need for such expansion is urgent. The two circulation drives of the Tamilnad party prove that circulation of our journals can be increased substantially if the party as a whole is activated for the purpose.

Here again the effort to make a serious breakthrough must begin from the party centre:

- (a) There should be a department of party journals at the centre under the CEC. It must be a real, effective, functioning department. Its function is to guide the central party journals under the overall guidance of the CEC and in conformity with the general line worked out by the National Council and CEC. It should study the experience and problems of the party journals. It must call periodical conferences of party editors and journalists. It should make proposals to and implement the decisions of the National Council and CEC with regard to party journals. It should also make arrangements to train party journalists.

- (b) The party journals department should make arrangements to make available to all party journals the new developments in different states in time. At present the party journals in different states have to depend on bourgeois press for news of party and mass activities in other states and even for the statements issued by the central leadership. *New Age* reaches too late even for our weeklies. So our journals may be speaking in different voices on many issues of national importance. To make our party journals an integral part of a single communist press and effective weapons in the hands of party members, there should be some arrangements at the party centre for collection and communication of news.
- (c) A central Hindi weekly was started according to the decision of the Seventh Congress. But now the situation has further changed. Our party has emerged as a significant force after the fourth general election in Hindi-speaking areas. At the same time, reaction has also enhanced its influence in the Hindi-speaking areas. Consolidating and expanding the influence of our party in the Hindi-speaking states have got national-political significance. Hence it is necessary for our party to have a central Hindi daily as early as possible.
- (d) The state councils and party committees at lower levels must undertake to plan continuously for increasing the circulation of the party journals. It is one of the primary tasks of every party committee. They should also periodically review the results of the work. At the state level, the journal department should be charged with checking up circulation of party journals. In every lower committee, there should be one leading comrade responsible for looking after the sale of party literature, including party journals.
- (e) The financial position of all party journals is quite bad. Apart from making serious efforts to make the

journals self-sufficient through the realisation of dues and advertisements, funds have to be collected through campaigns from party members and sympathisers and from party masses to maintain and improve our party press which is the most potent weapon in our hands to meet the ideological and political offensive of reaction.