

NATIONAL CONVENTION OF WORKERS

MAVLANKAR HALL, NEW DELHI: 30th March 2016

DECLARATION

This National Convention of Workers organized by the Joint Platform of the Central Trade Unions (CTU) of the country along with Independent National Federations of employees of different Industries and Services congratulates the workers for the resounding historical success of the strike on 2nd September 2015 and also for their huge participation in the countrywide National Protest Day on 10th March 2016. This massive unity of the working people in the joint actions has to be further widened and strengthened in the process of struggle against the anti-worker, anti-people policies of Governments.

The Convention notes that attitude of the Govt is profoundly negative and hugely challenging to the working class. Despite readiness expressed by the CTUs through joint letter to the Govt after the 2nd September 2015 strike for commencement of dialogue on the 12 point charter of demands (CoD), the Govt did not respond at all thus arrogantly ignoring the message of such a huge strike by crores of workers pressing for their demands unanimously formulated by all the CTUs. The issues in the CoD relate to basic interest of the country's economy and also issues concerning the livelihood of the toiling people of both organised and unorganized sectors including the scheme workers.

The Govt has not taken any meaningful step to curb price rise of essential necessities and to generate employment except making tall baseless claims through sound-bites in the media. Instead of universalising public distribution system, the Govt is trying to scuttle it through the inherently anti-poor targeting mechanism called 'Direct Benefit Transfer' resulting further exclusion of the common and needy people. The huge dose of additional duty on diesel, doubling of cess on coal, and increase in indirect taxes in the latest Budget (2016-17) and the recent increase in prices of all petro products are bound to fuel further spiralling rise in prices of daily necessities.

The Govt is mysteriously silent on the question of retrieving the black-money stashed abroad. This Govt is equally unconcerned on recovering the Rs 4.04 lakh crore of Bad Debts, euphemistically called Non-Performing Assets (NPA) of Public Sector Banks and almost similar amount on account of unpaid direct tax. Rather in the Union Budget, it allowed further relaxations to both loan defaulters and tax-defaulters. And at the same time, the common and marginal people are being strangled through huge increase in the burden of indirect tax and cut in allocations on social sectors etc.

Whole range of social security measures are under severe attack. The EPF and the ESI schemes are proposed to be made optional by the Govt to pave the way for their ultimate demolition. Post 2004 entrants in govt services, defence, railways etc have been subjected to notorious new pension scheme. And for the vast unorganized sector workers, old schemes are being repackaged and renamed, without providing for funds and implementation-machinery to just fool the people.

Although the Government had to roll back their retrograde budget proposal to tax the EPF withdrawal, they have launched atrocious attack of drastic cut in interest rate on small savings instruments like PPF, Postal saving deposits, Girl Child savings scheme, Sukanya Samridhhi Yojana, Kisan Vikas Patra, National Savings Certificate and even senior citizens' deposit schemes and monthly income scheme. This retrograde move would hit the common and marginal people very hard, more particularly those living on interest income only after retirement.

Totally ignoring the united opposition of the workers, the Government has been moving fast to demolish existing labour laws thereby empowering the employers with unfettered rights to "hire and fire" and stripping the workers and trade unions of all their rights and protection provided in laws. As follow up to the PMO's written communication to the Chief Secretaries of States, state governments are being directed to carry out Rajasthan type pro-management amendments in labour laws. The Labour Secretary, Govt of India has issued executive order on this 12th January granting exemption to so called Start-up Enterprises from inspection and application of 9 major labor laws, thereby legitimizing violations.

The proposed Small Factories (Regulations of Service conditions) Bill prescribes that major 14 labour laws will not apply to factories employing up to 40 workers. Labour Code on Wages Bill and Labour Code on Industrial Relations Bill under the cover of amalgamation, seek to make registration of unions almost impossible, making retrenchment and closure almost free for the employers class. These bills have been put in public domain totally ignoring the trade unions thereby violating the provisions of ILO Convention 144 on Tripartite Consultation. All these amendments are meant to exclude 90% of the workforce from

application of labour laws thereby allowing the employers to further squeeze and exploit the workers. All rights-components in all the labour laws are being demolished to impose conditions of slavery on the working people. Simultaneously, almost in all the states, the work-place level struggles of the workers are being sought to be crushed through repression including intimidation and arrests by the Govt machinery as is being nakedly visible in Rajasthan, Haryana, Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat etc in recent times.

Along with, the Peasantry and Agri Labourers are also under severe attack. Through sweeping changes in the Land Acquisition Act, Farmers' Right to Land and Agri-Workers' Right to Livelihood were sought to be drastically curbed, which ultimately could be stalled temporarily through popular struggles but the danger still remains.

Attack on public sector has been pushed to unprecedented height. Not merely disinvestment, the Govt will now go for 'mega strategic sale'. The main target is the Maharatna CPSUs and those amongst the top profit making CPSUs including banks/insurance. The ownership control and management of our shinning CPSUs are being sought to be handed over to the private corporates, both domestic & foreign. Along with, almost unlimited FDI is allowed in strategic sectors like Railways, Defence and Financial Sector as complementary to the move of privatization/PPP etc.

The anti-worker and authoritarian attitude of the Government is also nakedly reflected in their refusal to implement the consensus recommendations of 43rd, 44th and 45th Indian Labour Conferences on formulation of minimum wages, same wage and benefits as regular workers for the contract workers and granting status of workers with attendant benefits to the scheme workers like anganwadi, mid-day-meal, ASHA, para-teachers etc. On the contrary, the Govt drastically curtailed budget allocations to all those centrally sponsored schemes meant for poor peoples' welfare. The legislation on the issue of Street Vendors is not being implemented appropriately.

The convention reiterates the demand for strict implementation of labour laws and a total scrap of its proposals of so called "labour law-reforms", halting mass scale unlawful contractorisation, minimum wages at not less than Rs 18000 per month with indexation and universal social security benefits and pension for all including the unorganized sector workers, etc. The demands also include compulsory registration of Trade Unions within 45 days and ratification of ILO Conventions 87 and 98.

The Convention urges the Govt. to reverse the direction of the ongoing economic policy regime which has landed the entire national economy in distress and decline affecting the working people the most. The Convention also extends support to the struggles of the govt employees, Railways and defence sector employees, bank & insurance employees, coal, telecom and transport sector employees etc on their just demands and against the policy regime.

The Convention calls upon all the trade unions, federations across the sectors to widen and consolidate the unity at the grass-root level and prepare for countrywide united movement and observe the following programme of agitation and action:

- 1) **Joint conventions and campaigns during June-July 2016 in states, districts and at industry level and take initiative to involve peasants, agri labour and mass of the people in the campaign**
- 2) **Day-long 'Mass Dharna/Satyagraha in the Capital of the States and Industrial Centres preferably on the auspicious day of 9th August 2016 (Quit India Day) in preparation for the Strike**
- 3) **ALL INDIA GENERAL STRIKE ON 2ND SEPTEMBER 2016**

The Convention once again expresses its readiness for arriving at an acceptable settlement to the 12 points Charter of Demands through discussion with the Government. Effective implementation forthwith the consensus recommendations of successive Indian Labour Conferences on minimum wage, on contract workers and the Scheme workers is crucial for the CTUs to prepare for dialogue with the Government.

The National Convention of Workers calls upon the trade unions and working people irrespective of affiliations to unite and make the countrywide General Strike a massive success. Unity of working people and masses have to be defended and strengthened through the process of struggles only. Convention also appeals to the Peasants, Agriculture Labour and the rural and urban toiling people to support and participate in the strike on 2nd September 2016.

BMS INTUC AITUC HMS CITU AIUTUC
TUCC SEWA AICCTU UTUC LPF

AND ALL INDIA FEDERATIONS OF BANKS, INSURANCE, DEFENCE, RAILWAYS, CENTRAL/STATE GOVERNMENTS EMPLOYEES AND OTHER SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS