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Organ of the Central Committee
CPI (ML)

New Democracy

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Increase in Farmers' Income: Modi Govt.'s deception

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NEW DEMOCRACY

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CONTENT

On Bihar Assembly Elections	2
Withdraw Ordinance on Pollution Control in NCR	15
26 th Nov. Strike should Blow Bugle of Fight back	20
On New Labour Codes	25
Aishwarya Reddy: Another Institutional Murder	32
US Presidential Election: What it signifies?	36
US: Will Pandemic trump Trump?	45
On Contempt of SC: Address, Not Suppress	51
Kerala: CPM led Govt.'s attack on democratic rights	56
Increase in Farmers' Income: Modi Govt.'s deception	58

Bihar Assembly Elections & Challenges before People

Retention of power by BJP-JD(U) in Bihar despite widespread anger among the people against the Govts. at the Centre and in the state has increased challenges before the people of the country. When the elections were announced it was propagated to be an easy victory for the ruling NDA but the anger of the people, propelled by crisis faced by migrant workers due to inhuman lockdown imposed by RSS-BJP ruling at the Centre, unleashed resentment against the ruling dispensation. It brought to the fore all the crises inherent in the largely agrarian and rural Bihar. On top of it, RSS-BJP ruling at the Centre which also ruled Bihar in alliance mainly with JD(U) led by CM Nitish Kumar, sought to gain people's approval for its fascist rule, whipping up of chauvinist frenzy and incarceration of pro-people democratic rights activists of anti-CAA activists. They sought to project the electoral verdict as support for their Hindutva project which is another name of their fascist drive.

Sensing the people's anger at their anti-people fascist rule, RSS-BJP and their corporate patrons implemented an elaborate plan to shield their rule. Corporate media started ascribing anti-NDA mood to anti-incumbency which they had themselves dismissed even a month earlier; started praising Laloo Yadav's son and RJD leader Tejaswi Yadav albeit for all the wrong reasons.

Misled by this new found praise and hoping to ride on the wave of anger against the ruling alliance, Tejaswi Yadav forgot how little his Party and its allies had done in sympathy of the migrant workers from Bihar. Obviously ruling JD(U) and RSS-BJP were criminally guilty for the sufferings of migrant workers of which a good part was from Bihar, but even the opposition parties did not stand with them. When workers were forced to march to their homes, none of the ruling class parties were to be seen on the ground. There was a strong wave of anger which Opposition was hoping to cash on but had done little to emerge as an alternative on that score.

So clear were the ruling RSS-BJP on not letting the anger of the people be pinned on the gross and criminal mishandling of pandemic that they employed all tricks to divert the people from issue. From the beginning corporate media sought to project it as an issue of governance in Bihar. They totally ignored, or at best mentioned in passing, the sufferings of people of Bihar due to lockdown. People's sufferings highlighted the questions of jobs, lack of health care and education which force millions of people from Bihar to migrate out of state for the bare survival of their families. Now this anger with inhuman lockdown as its backdrop owed everything to the Narendra Modi led RSS-BJP Govt. at the Centre. Nitish led JD(U)-RSS-BJP Govt.'s insensitive handling had only contributed to this anger. But Narendra Modi and RSS-BJP were continuously shielded by the corporate media. The whole day of reporting on the election results, corporate loudspeakers kept on blurting that results will show whether Narendra Modi is able to overcome the decidedly existing anti-incumbency against Nitish Kumar as if Modi and the ruling RSS-BJP had no responsibility. Firstly, Modi's BJP is a partner in JD(U)-BJP govt. in Bihar and

more importantly it was the Central Govt. which had pushed out millions of migrant workers (estimated to be over three million) back to Bihar from other states. This corporate propaganda is in tune with building the persona of the leader which is so essential for imposing fascist dictatorship.

Not leaving it to media management alone, RSS-BJP egged on LJP leader Chirag Paswan to attack JD(U) while affirming full faith in Modi and BJP. He did that dutifully. Nitish was to be placated by continuous clatter of their commitment to make him Chief Minister of NDA. Nitish, like many other leaders of regional parties, has long renounced whatever he stood for, only clinging to power catering to particular social groups. RSS-BJP and its leaders including Modi, refused to criticize Chirag and his tirade against Nitish. It was useful for them to keep Nitish in check and to divert the attention of the people away from the misdeeds of the Central Govt. led by RSS-BJP and to exonerate RSS-BJP from the misdeeds of Bihar Govt. of which they have been an important part.

At a time when trends were showing that Nitish may not come back to power, JD(U)'s spokesperson K.C. Tyagi let the cat out of bag that "disastrous economic consequences" of Covid were responsible for setback to Nitish Kumar and JD(U). He also insinuated that BJP had allowed Chirag Paswan led LJP to attack JD(U) alone and no attempt was made by BJP to restrain him. This deftly crafted strategy however, may have strained relations among ruling partners in Bihar.

This strategy could succeed in part due to the stand of the main opposition party, RJD, which too focused on attacking Nitish Kumar leaving out RSS-BJP leaders. In fact, RJD led main opposition alliance did not make inhuman lockdown or the fascist

rule of RSS-BJP led alliance as the main planks of their electoral pitch, hoping people's anger alone would pave their way to power, a strategy which is being pursued by Congress and its allies at the Centre and in several states.

Backdrop of the Elections

The present elections were held in the shadow of the hardships imposed on people of Bihar during the lockdown imposed by RSS-BJP Govt. in the name of Corona pandemic, though it had little to do with controlling the pandemic. Millions of Biharis driven out of their jobs and livelihood, uncared for by the govts. of the states they were working in, were treated shabbily by Nitish led RSS-BJP and JD(U) govt. in Bihar. How they were being stopped to being handed over to police had made heart rending stories which are well known. This made the issue of joblessness in Bihar a critical question. Despite being among the states with richest resources-rich land and even richer human resource, people of Bihar have faced tremendous hardships with feudal oppression being among the worst in the country. The State witnessed closure of whatever industries were there, even those dependent on agricultural produce as raw material. With agriculture in stagnation with no govt. taking up meaningful land reforms and total lack of industries, the state faced a very acute crisis of growing unemployment. Unwilling to make any meaningful changes in agrarian relations, ruling classes were unable to create employment. People of Bihar had to migrate to long distances even for sustaining themselves and their families. This was encouraged by the ruling class parties as a safety valve for the sharp agrarian unrest involving landless and poor peasants.

While landless poor peasants waged valiant struggles for land

and means of livelihood and against economic exploitation and social oppression, ruling class forces too intervened in the struggle against social oppression. In fact, this intervention was not sudden, having a long history of fight against social oppression. The main feature of their mobilization was divorcing the struggle against social oppression from the struggle against economic exploitation and oppression in which it was rooted. This was obviously more acceptable to ruling classes which have been pursuing a policy of co-option of some sections from socially oppressed to perpetuate their class exploitation and class rule. It helped the ruling classes in keeping/taking away broad sections of backward classes from the revolutionary movement which represents the latter's basic interests.

In the backdrop of serious struggles of landless poor peasants, struggle of backward classes broke through the domination of upper caste dominated ruling classes and emerged as claimants to power. Bereft of economic justice, this quest for social justice remained half-baked and resulted in the rise of sections from these social groups vying for power. With no programme, or rather opposition to programmes for socio-economic justice, these sections become new leaders of the ruling classes in Bihar. They strove for greater caste consolidation for electoral purpose. Changeover of the upper castes' affiliation towards Hindutva politics further helped consolidate this caste mobilization for the time.

Some important results of the 'success' of this struggle have been marginalization of the struggle of the landless poor peasants, especially sections of backward classes moving away from it or at least not drawn to it, especially in the areas which had hitherto not been areas of sharp struggle, hence acting as a check on its spread.

Another important result of this divorce between struggle against economic exploitation and social oppression in rural Bihar, has been of new sections joining the ruling classes' political outfits giving up land reforms. 15 years of Lalu-Rabri (RJD) Govt. and next 15 years of Nitish Kumar govt. (two of them in alliance with RJD, rest with RSS-BJP) saw no steps for land reforms. Even the Bandhopadhyay Commission Report was consigned to the dustbin. First recommendation of Mandal Commission i.e. of radical land reforms, was buried by followers of Mandal in pursuit of their economic gains and of political power within the existing system.

With these sections emerging as important components of ruling class politics, they did not lag behind in suppression of revolutionary movement of landless and poor peasants. Stagnation in the rural areas continued, with glorifying the migration of labourers – the so-called 'Shramvirs'. No attention was paid to the needs of education and health of the people. A large number of Youth migrated to other cities including for education and Delhi hospitals are a witness to abysmal conditions of health care services in Bihar. There was no emphasis on developing any industry, even saving a few existing ones even after formation of Jharkhand. Bihar became a near pure agrarian state of backward relations of production and witnessed mobilization of social groups in the interest of ruling class politics.

Govt. jobs remained the only form of employment and Govt. contracts only form of business. The latter led to rise of Mafia encompassing all economic activities. The former was taken care of by rising number of contract jobs, increasing job insecurity and depressing wages.

Forging of Mahagathbandhan (Grand Alliance)

The alliance of parliamentary opposition parties led by RJD and comprising of Congress, CPI, CPM and CPI(ML)-Liberation emerged as the main contender for power. Whatever be the arithmetic in the outgoing Bihar Assembly, RSS-BJP were the real leaders of the ruling alliance. Nitish Kumar's turnabout from RJD-JD(U)-Congress alliance and going back to RSS-BJP led NDA which it had quit over BJP naming Narendra Modi as its nominee for Prime Minister in the run up to Lok Sabha elections in 2014 and with whom it had been in alliance since mid 1990s, robbed Nitish Kumar of his own standing. This made him dependent on RSS-BJP and Modi-Shah.

Coming together of main ruling class opposition parties and parliamentary Left has a background. Not only ruling class parties 'championing' social justice, even the revisionist parties like CPI, CPM have long given up struggle of landless poor peasants for land and against social oppression. They had since long been transformed into representatives of the ruling classes. Though they had not been part of Govt. in Bihar but have long participated in the alliances of ruling class parties and have fought elections as part of such alliances. CPI leader from Bihar has been in the Central Govt. in UF Govt. formed in 1996. CPI(ML)-Liberation, which had gained a mass base among landless poor peasants in parts of Bihar through leading their struggles, also has a history of its own on this score. Long back it had renounced struggle for land and sought to use the base gained during earlier phase of struggle for its parliamentary politics. It too has been aligning with ruling class parties starting with its alliance with Samata Party in Bihar, precursor of JD(U), way back in mid 1990s when Samata Party was formed after

splitting away from the then JD. It had come to the conclusion that it has to align with dominant rural sections to achieve electoral success. As it had given up on agrarian revolutionary movement, it adopted the course of hobnobbing with ruling class parties. Coming to last parliamentary elections (2019), Liberation had struck a deal with RJD led alliance in Bihar wherein the alliance had left Aaraha seat for Liberation and Liberation did not field its candidates from some constituencies, namely in Patna wherefrom Lalu Yadav's daughter was a candidate. In that election, CPI and CPM were not accommodated in the alliance though they wanted very much to be part of it. CPI(ML)-Liberation, longstanding votary of 'Left Confederation', had abandoned their 'Left' allies for greener pastures endearing themselves to the leadership of RJD. There is a long history of electoral alliances that these revisionist parties have in Bihar as elsewhere. They couch their alliances in high sounding phrases but are essentially seat hunting as part of their seeking share of power in the present system. Its present context i.e. opposition to RSS-BJP and its allies, is incidental for the revisionist parties.

'Social Justice' Plank Renounced

Grand Alliance anointed Tejaswi Yadav as their leader and projected him as their Chief Ministerial candidate. Hoping to ride to power on the people's anger, Tejaswi Yadav tried to endear himself to the dominant sections of ruling elite. Distancing himself from 'social justice' and terming it the plank of old times, he talked of 'economic justice' which in reality meant to renounce, even formally, the plank of social justice. This counter-posing of social justice and economic justice has been the hallmark of the ruling class politics. In practice it amounted to giving up on the most backward

castes and Mahadalits and seeking to endear themselves to upper caste social groups who have emerged as the new arbiters of power in the context of rise of sections of backward classes to positions of power. This stand of RJD helped Nitish Kumar and RSS-BJP to keep their base among these sections i.e. EBCs (Extremely Backward Castes) and Mahadalits to some extent, despite large scale anger among these sections, being referred to silent voters in specific context of Bihar.

As we have repeatedly noted, main ruling class parties, especially RSS-BJP, have learnt to counter broad social mobilizations with micromanagement of castes. In this, the ruling class parties' attitude of using caste oppression and division only for share of power and not to address the question of caste oppression has been used by RSS-BJP, which mainly relies on upper castes, to mobilize other backward castes against the dominant backward castes vying for power. Same goes for ruling class leaders from Dalits like Mayawati and Paswans. Renouncing the struggle for social justice, they have become appendages of the main ruling class parties, promising to deliver votes of their social base in exchange of share in power. Social justice they have renounced, economic justice they do not even understand, let alone deliver.

Manifesto of Grand Alliance

Manifestos of the ruling class parties are basically like advertisements meant to sell products. They are seldom taken seriously by their writers. Hence one should not determine the character of their rule by their manifestos but by their deeds; not by what they say but by what they do. The Manifestos can only be useful for exposing their going back on what they had promised. However, manifestos are important to decipher not what they say

but what they choose not to say. We will see important glaring omissions in “Our Pledge” released by RJD, Congress, CPI, CPM and CPI(ML)-Liberation. Separate manifestos may be important when there in only seat adjustments but not when there is an alliance with a common leadership. In that situation, such separate documents are meant only to keep the faithful hoodwinked.

The most glaring omission has been no mention of land reforms. Even Bandopadhyay Commission has not even been referred to in “Our Pledge”. This despite the fact that most of the constituents of Grand Alliance barring Congress have been supporting implementation of Bandhopadhyay commission recommendations. What can economic justice be in predominantly agrarian, semi-feudal society without land reforms?

The Pledge talks of providing 1 million jobs, “The process of filling 4.5 lakhs vacancies and creation of 5.5 lakh vacancies will start from the first cabinet meeting.” So only process will be started and there is no mention when it will be completed. There is no concrete proposal on how to develop industries in Bihar, not even re-opening of the closed industries. Significantly The Pledge talks of Special Economic Zones (SEZ) for manufacturing showing what route they wished to take!

Even on migrant workers, whose plight has been enormous, only a vague promise “Immigrant workers families will be helped.” They named it “Karpoori Shramvir Sahayata Kendra” another act of mere symbolism.

There have been several promises but little concrete and essentially no plan for their realization. For example, promise to waiving of agricultural loans but not giving to what extent they would be waived or time frame of the loan waiver. Again, promise of

reduction in electricity rates but not mentioning how much these will be reduced. It is so much in tune with ruling class parties to make vague promises.

Basically, there is no measures against the landlords. There is a mention of opening closed jute mills, paper mill and sugar mills, but no mention of how it will be done. Not even mentioned is the type of capital that will be invested in their revival.

A very significant aspect has been their stand on democratic rights which is vague “Talk to all mass movements. No false case against movement activist or innocent.” There is no commitment that black laws will not be implemented under their rule in Bihar. Regarding false cases, no govt. ever accepts that they are foisting false cases. This is particularly important as the issue of democratic rights has emerged as an important feature against the rule of fascist RSS-BJP.

It is also significant that there is no mention of combating communalism in The Pledge. This despite deepening communal divide under the RSS-BJP led NDA rule in Bihar. It is also noteworthy that leading partners in the Grand Alliance, RJD and Congress, had not taken active part in the movement against CAA-NRC-NPR in Bihar. In fact, the Manifesto (Our Pledge) has definite Congress imprint.

Election Results

While the RSS-BJP and its allies, mainly JD(U), could retain power despite a widespread anger among the people, the victory is being projected as vindication of RSS-BJP’s fascist rule. Modi is being given the credit for warding off “anti-incumbency” against Nitish Kumar. In fact, the two alliances virtually polled same

number of votes and ruling alliance was tipped over the finish line in some seats with help from the Election Commission, continuing on the path of compromising that the state institutions have been taking. BJP's performance was no better than past. In fact they got less seats (74 then 91) than they got in 2010 despite fighting on lesser number of seats (102, this time 110).

We have analyzed how within the constraints of the conduction of elections by the present ruling class machinery, Grand Alliance could not defeat the ruling NDA due to its own lack of commitment to the people's issues. Anger of the people was manifest in the fact that nearly half of the sitting MLAs were defeated.

Another important aspect is that Grand Alliance was disrupted on the eve of the elections with some smaller parties claiming to represent sections of EBCs and Dalits ejected out of the alliance. Given the equal votes polled by the two alliances, the move has proved that Grand Alliance gave less priority to defeating the fascist RSS-BJP and its allies. For revisionist parties it was an exercise in "seat hunting" and not giving setback to fascist RSS-BJP which many people had hoped from them especially outside Bihar. In fact, Grand Alliance did not make Central Govt. or RSS-BJP their main target despite the latter ruling at the Centre and being a dominant partner in the state. Grand Alliance made Nitish Kumar as Chief Minister their main target, hoping to ride to power on this 'anti-incumbency'.

CPI(ML)-New Democracy Call

CPI(ML)-New Democracy had called for defeating RSS-BJP and its ally JD(U). We had also exposed the opposition ruling class parties for their lack of sincerity to people's issues and also in

combating assault on democratic rights by fascist rulers. Our Call was based on what RSS-BJP stands for and its fascist rule, while we tried to remove illusions among the people about ruling class opposition parties. This was a Call in the concrete conditions where country is facing widespread suppression of democratic rights, where state institutions are surrendering before RSS led fascist forces and while attacks on the working class and peasantry are being intensified.

There should be no doubt that struggles of the working class and peasantry will be the main force against fascist rule and increasing stranglehold of RSS over the state machinery. The struggle for the democratic rights has also emerged as one of the main arenas of struggle. Now this struggle is for the existing democratic rights i.e. rights given by the Constitution and laws of the land. This has to an extent influenced form and content of this struggle. The two struggles i.e. struggle against exploitation and oppression and struggle for democratic rights are inter-related and should not be viewed in isolation. We should be vigilant against the disregarding of the struggle against rule of fascist forces and delinking it from the struggle for democratic rights. This will be isolating ourselves from the rising struggle of the people against fascist rule.

However, the struggle of the toiling people especially working class and peasantry, will be the main component of struggle against fascist rule in India and intensifying offensive of the fascist forces. Their struggle against oppression and exploitation will be the main bulwark against fascism. All steps should be taken to gear for this struggle.

Politburo

16.11.2020

CPI(ML)-New Democracy

Stop Targeting Peasants ; Withdraw Ordinance on Pollution Control in NCR

Intensifying attacks on the peasantry and agriculture and continuing its fascist drive to concentrate all powers in the hands of Central Executive controlled by it, RSS-BJP Govt. has promulgated “THE COMMISSION FOR AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION AND ADJOINING AREAS ORDINANCE, 2020”. The Ordinance provides for everything except for controlling pollution in the National Capital Region. The Ordinance forms an omnibus commission and packs it with bureaucrats and representatives of Industry, the biggest facilitators and contributors to pollution in the National Capital Region.

The Ordinance attacks peasants in the name of controlling pollution and specifically targets peasants of Punjab and Haryana clearly for their opposition to the Central Acts, handing over control over agriculture and allied activities to foreign and domestic corporate. It is a patently vindictive act which is obvious from the fact that Commission set up by this Central Ordinance is limited to National Capital Region while pollution is also at alarming levels in several other urban areas of India. It covers states of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and UP, which are epicenters of the present peasant agitation against Central Agriculture related Acts.

Vindictive nature of RSS-BJP Govt.’s action is also clear from the suspension of the movement of goods trains in Punjab when the

peasants withdrew their blockade of freight trains. The same Govt. was earlier holding peasant blockade responsible for stoppage of goods trains. Stoppage of goods trains is being shown by the Govt. to be the reason behind rise in the prices of fertilizers and lack of procurement.

The Commission has been given wide powers of regulatory, administrative and judicial nature. It arms the Central govt. with powers to raid any premises and also of punishments for violations of five years of imprisonment or 1 crore Rs. of fine or both for non-compliance or contravention of any provision of Ordinance or Rules made there under or non-compliance with any order or direction of this Commission (Section 14). Such draconian powers have been given to the Commission without adequate judicial safeguards.

Setting up of this Commission is a calculated attempt at further erosion of the powers of the states. It has been given authority to direct the state govts. That this has less to do with targeting pollution and more to do with targeting federalism is also obvious from the fact that the Commission has no powers to direct the Central Govt. which controls the main activities generating pollution and controls the funds needed for such a control. It has been made clear in the Ordinance that Orders of the Commission will over-ride those by the state govts. and state pollution control boards and pollution control authority of Delhi [Section 3 (6)] but not any orders by the Central Govt. or its agencies.

This Ordinance has been promulgated when this matter was being heard by the Supreme Court and the Apex Court had formed a Commission of Justice (Retd.) Madan Lokur to oversee efforts at pollution control. That Commission would have had the power to direct even the Central Govt., a situation that is not acceptable to

RSS-BJP Govt. Promulgation of the Ordinance is thus also an attempt to bypass the Supreme Court. Supreme Court must not abandon the responsibility it had taken upon itself though it has itself stopped the setting up of its own above mentioned mechanism.

The whole exercise i.e. setting up of the Commission, its composition, powers and functioning is bereft of all transparency and accountability. It is meant to ensure that the real reasons of pollution are not ascertained let alone controlled. Hence it is packed by the very people whose actions have created the havoc of pollution and necessitated the need to control it. Central Govt. does not want to control the pollution but wants to control the narrative about pollution. It is to prevent a holistic approach to the problem of bad quality of the air in Delhi.

For past several years, ruling class parties have been blaming the peasants for the problems of poor quality of the air in the Capital. Parties ruling at the Centre and in Delhi are united in this attack on peasants. But this is far from truth. Before coming to the real reason, it is pertinent to note that air quality has been unprecedentedly fine during the lockdown for at least during living memory. At the time only govt. and police vehicles were on the road, all construction and industrial activities were at standstill. Is there yet any study required to study the real culprits of the pollution in Delhi? *Dhritarashtra*s in different wings of the state would not like to even note this, leave alone mentioning it. Does it not show who are main culprits behind poor air quality?

A number of studies have shown that the main culprits behind the poor air quality in the national capital region are vehicular traffic, construction activities and industrial activities.

These are the biggest contributors of the pollutants. Even burning of the municipal solid waste (MSW) contributes more to the pollution in Delhi (nearly 8-12% round the year) and for this authorities in Delhi are responsible. But nobody dares touch these sharks- automobile majors, giant refining companies, big construction companies or big industries, obviously not those in power who treat number of vehicles as a sign of prestige. Peasants are obviously the soft targets for them and the rising peasant protests of the peasants have given Central govt. added reason to target them.

Peasants and their organizations have made a number of suggestions for stoppage of stubble burning and demanded that the Govt. bear the cost as the peasants are unable to bear it. Govt. which has turned a deaf ear to their demand for remunerative prices, want to put additional burden on them. It is part of the conspiracy to throw the peasants out of land and agriculture and hand it over to the companies. The govt. will then subsidize it as is being done in the western countries. Peasants are a stumbling block in their service of foreign and domestic corporate.

That this Ordinance has an oblique purpose is also proven by a statement of Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar on 16 October. He said that 95 percent of the air pollution in the national capital is due to local factors and only four percent is because of stubble burning. This has been quoted by commentators.

In their drive to target peasants, Govts.- Central and Delhi in this case- even forget the elementary fact that before the smoke travels to Delhi it must be affecting peasants' own houses and villages. But probably their health and well being is not in the

reckoning. Why peasants should not like or be entitled to healthy air in their own villages, which also would automatically take care of smoke coming to Delhi? In fact no peasant has received even the amount announced by the Govt. though it is inadequate. On the other hand cases have been foisted against thousands of peasants for stubble burning resulting in a lot of harassment.

It has been clear to everyone that Govt. should take measures to help peasants and also small entrepreneurs in tackling pollution. These two are the biggest providers of employment in India. Govt. has resources to do so as it is showering lakhs of crores on its billionaire friends. Govt. must pay the peasants to bring stubble to designated centres and must provide for treatment of industrial waste in small and medium industries. Govt. would do well to control the number of vehicles in the capital region and enforce environmental guidelines on construction activities.

Blaming stubble burning and targeting peasants would not solve the problem of bad quality of air in Delhi. It is a political offensive against peasantry and peasant agriculture. Ordinance should be seen in conjunction with three Agriculture related Acts against whom peasants are up in arms. Peasants who are agitating against the three Acts also reject this Ordinance. Let all democratic and progressive forces, all justice loving people should support the peasant struggle and condemn this Act which is an attempt to criminalize peasantry. RSS-BJP are past masters in this game of criminalizing their opponents- those who stand in their way of serving their corporate supporters.

Reject the Ordinance ! Support Peasant Struggle !

Central Committee

CPI (ML)-New Democracy

October 31, 2020

The 26th Nov. Industrial Strike Should Blow Bugle Of Sustained Fight back of Working Class

Aparna
(President, IFTU)

The Covid Pandemic has given cover to the RSS-BJP Central Govt. to attack working class rights as well as sell out India's assets to Private Capital, maximally imperialist Capital. Under cover of a lockdown which reeked of police raj rather than containing an illness, those policy decisions were taken which have been held at bay since 1991 by workers' united struggle howsoever weak and token the latter.

The changes pushed through in labour laws have definable aims. First, there is move to enchain the right to form trade unions, while the right to protest and especially to strike has been virtually done away with. These were rights encoded into labour laws as a result of struggles of working class. Thus, the term 'Industrial Relations' is now tilted totally to upholding the supremacy of the employer by enchainning right of bargaining by workers. Second, are a host of attacks on the safeguards of employment tenure and conditions, with the emphasis on making employer's right to hire and fire the rule and the working hours as flexible as possible. The third move is to virtually do away with even the concept of regular protected employment.

The fact is the changes have not come overnight. There was a growing army of contractual and casual workers in each and every establishment doing same work on regular basis for unequal wages and with no job protection. The failure of the working class movement to challenge and defeat this gradual temporarization of workers doing permanent work, has also weakened to some extent the fightback against the attacks on labour laws.

A further aspect needs to be considered. There is much talk of ‘unorganized’ workers actually being outside the pale of labour laws, without the Govt. explaining what prevented it from extending the coverage appropriately to these sections instead of doing away with the existing labour law framework. For instance, who if not the government decreed that AASHA workers were not entitled to minimum wage or statutory PF and ESI facilities? After deliberately creating sections of workers to whom labour laws were not applied, after rendering the labour law enforcement machinery defunct instead of streamlining it, to fault the then existing labour laws is to create deliberate alternative narrative to justify the attack on the existing rights themselves.

Many other policy decisions which, while affecting the working class, have direct effect on people, have also been taken in the Corona period. This brings up the issue of sale of almost all public sector undertakings. These were established by public money but are to be handed over for a pittance to private sector which will mostly be imperialist capital. Not only that. The huge lands and properties with this sector are also to be disposed off in the same way. The most burning issue in this is the sale of Indian Railways. The privatization of this sector will hit the common people hard.

A simultaneous attack has been launched on the government

employees to muzzle their unions. The clause relating to compulsory premature retirement has been invoked and committees set up to arbitrarily decide who is to be shown the door. No appeal in courts will be allowed against the decision. This draconian move is only and solely to curb expression of the demands of workers.

The attack on working class coupled with attack on Agriculture will lead to less and less spending capacity for vast sections of the people along with rise in prices of basic essentials in food. This will undoubtedly worsen the economic crisis which is essentially a crisis of demand and lead to further worsening of the condition of the people.

There are other issues facing the workers. The lockdown in the name of containing corona has led to widespread job losses. Even where jobs are restored, wages of lockdown period have mostly not been paid and in many cases jobs have been restored on curtailed wages. The burning need of workers is for economic support while the Central Govt. has not even bothered to acknowledge the demand of all central trade unions, except maybe BMS which is linked to RSS, to give a lumpsum amount per month to all without jobs. IFTU has raised a demand of Rs 10,000 a month for next six months. On the other hand, wages of govt employees and big public sector undertakings were deducted in the name of financing corona care response of govts. DA freeze has been implemented of three installments upto July 2021.

The attacks on workers are on in an atmosphere of general attack on democratic rights and in the context of a fairly feeble fightback on this issue. Keeping this feature too in mind, one must assess the Call for Industrial Strike on 26th November. The call was

given by the platform of 10 Central Trade Unions and most militant trade union centres like IFTU have also given a strike call for the same date.

The question is legitimately being asked, that when the threat of change in labour laws was overhanging the workers very concretely since 2019, why no serious fightback was undertaken in pre corona period even and what will a one day strike achieve ? The weak central fightback of the trade unions may have contributed to strengthening the confidence of the Central Govt, but service to imperialism is its inherent policy and the corona lockdown has provided the opportunity. But the 26th Nov strike should be seen in the overall context of workers struggle. Even as labour laws were being attacked, power employees of Uttar Pradesh won a struggle against privatization and also made the Yogi Govt write a no victimization clause into the agreement. Jute workers in Andhra pradesh went on strike and achieved agreement on wages for lockdown period even while the Central Govt. conveniently forgot PM Modi's promise of wage payments for the period and the Courts did not enforce the same. Many other small and large units in various parts of the country also managed to secure such wages, wherever managements wanted to run the industry.

Similarly, Ordinance workers have fought and staved off move for corporatization up to now. Coal workers have been fighting against auctioning of mines to private players. Railway employees have protested in many parts of the country against privatization moves of various kinds, including the move to sell the coach manufacturing units, including the most modern 'state of the art' one. And most herculean of all, while Central Govt. set the police on them and state govts had to be pressurized for

minimum assistance, while the highest Court initially refused to intervene on their behalf, millions of migrants walked throughout the country defying the police enforced lockdown because the Govts did not provide food and shelter to them. This forced the Supreme Court to take cognizance of the workers walking home and start proceedings to monitor facilities though it had rejected pleas to intervene just weeks earlier. Alongwith, trade union organizations in many parts of the country fought their state govts and forced support for migrant workers walking through the state or forced arrangements to be made to bring back workers to the native state.

These and so many more struggles of workers despite the lockdown are the answer the working class is giving countrywide, though the struggles are scattered. The 26th Nov strike must be made into a coordinated response of the voice of all such struggles. Its wide implementation will become a harbinger of times to come.

A widespread struggle of the peasantry is on countrywide to demand rollback of three laws pushed through Parliament in corona period and which are going to have a devastating effect on Agriculture sector. The peasant struggle is an inspiration for the working class that the fight should be fought with the conviction that laws can be rolled back and also undone. The demands of working class in this strike also amount to demanding that all changes in law and policy decisions taken during corona period should be rolled back.

The workers of major sectors like coal, steel, power generation must come forward and participate in the strike which has been called by unions under whom large sections of them are organized. We should also demand that all non BJP Govts not implement labour law changes in the states they rule as labour is on the

concurrent list. The fight must be fought with the conviction that rollback is possible through firm struggles.

The 26th Nov strike must be implemented seriously. Mood must be built for intensifying the struggle, both by all India actions and also sector by sector and state by state.

21st November 2020



The New Labour Codes : Deprivation of Workers Right

Nabin Karmakar

The Lok Sabha, on September 22, passed three new labour codes – the ‘Industrial Relations Code Bill, 2020’, ‘Code on Social Security Bill, 2020’ and the ‘Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code Bill, 2020’ – as the central government seeks to amalgamate 44 central labour Acts into 4 codes, towards simplifying India’s labour laws and improve ease of doing business as recommended by National Labour Commission, 2002. The Code on Wages, which had proposed the universalization of minimum wages, was cleared by Parliament on 2nd August last year.

Code on Wages Bill 2019

The Pay Wage Bill bearing the name ‘Code on Wages 2019’ has been enforced on 8th August, 2019, after receiving the approval of the President. This Bill eliminated 4 existing Labour Laws –

Minimum Wages Act-1948, Wages Payment Act-1936, Bonus Payment Act-1955 and Equal Remuneration Act-1976.

Through the Wage Code Bill, RSS-BJP led Modi government has raised the national minimum wage from 176 rupees to just 178 rupees per day, which is way less than the amount of 375 rupees per day initially suggested by the Union Labour Ministry. The Bill has completely changed the formula for wage determination, which was decided in the 15th Indian Labour Conference. The Union Minister of State for Labour has announced a national minimum wage of Rs. 4,628 per month (Rs 178 daily) on 10th July. It is worth remembering that the Seventh Pay Commission had recommended Rs. 18,000 per month (now Rs. 22,000 per month) to be implemented as the minimum wage from 1st January 2016. It is also worth noting that in July 2018, the Expert Committee of the government (Dr. Anup Satpathy committee) itself had suggested the minimum daily wage to be at least Rs. 375, based on the price index. Modi government's undermining of its own committee recommendation is nothing but a big fraud with the working class of the country. At the rate at which privatization is going on in the country, all government enterprises are being sold to the capitalists and minimum wage is reduced so much in accordance with the law, it is easy to imagine that the capitalists will take advantage of such a 'golden opportunity' for their own interest ! In the name of establishing a national floor level minimum wage, the Bill has been formulated to destroy the struggle for minimum wage altogether. Earlier there was a tripartite system for fixing the minimum wage, in which the workers' representatives from different sectors, employers and representatives of the government together determined the minimum wage. During the 5 years of Modi's first

term, the government completely ruined the tripartite system, diminishing the participation of the workers in the process and destroying the Indian Labour Conference norms which dealt with the matter of minimum wage.

As proposed in the Code on Wages Rules, 2019, the hours of work which shall constitute a normal working day are 9 (nine). This is contrary to the standard practice of 8 (eight) hours of work. The minimum wage is also conventionally set for the eight-hour work period. Making it 9 (nine) hours would reduce minimum wage below the starvation minimum wage.

Many developed countries are reducing working hours. Indirectly Code on Wages Rules 2019 proposes that number of hours of work which shall constitute a normal working day, including a period of rest should be 12 hours. That means the minimum working hour is being set virtually at 12 hours which has already been introduced in several BJP-ruled states. If this is implemented in full pace, there is a possibility that certain employers would take advantage of such an expanded window and reduce three shifts to two shifts.

In a nutshell, this code is determined to give the industrialists a foothold by fully exploiting the labor of the working class.

Industrial Relations Code Bill 2020

With the Industrial Relations Code Bill, it explicitly speaks of corporate exploitation. A number of laws, including the Trade Union Act (1926), Industrial Employment Standing Order Act (1946) and the Industrial Disputes Act (1948), are losing relevance due to this Code.

According to the Code, government permission is now no

longer required for lay-offs, closures or retrenchment of workers in a factory with less than 300 workers. The government can increase this number if required. Earlier the government permission was mandatory for lay-offs, closures or retrenchment in a factory with 100 or more workers. In India, 70% of enterprises have less than 300 workers. The Code states that if there are less than 50 contractual workers in a factory, labor law will not be enforced there. Now the provisions for contractual workers are applicable if the number of workers in the factory is at least 20.

With the bill, the government has sought to amend the definition of 'strike' to bring 'mass casual leave' under its ambit. Under the Code, if over 50 per cent of a company's workers take concerted casual leave, it will be treated as a strike. More importantly, though, the Code also seeks to restrict the rights of workers to strike. If the workers want to go on strike against the employer, they must serve strike notice to the employer at least 14 days in advance. On the other hand if within the period, the government officials i.e. Labour commissioner calls a meeting with the employer/management and the workers' union to find a solution to the problem, then strike cannot be held for 60 days more.

Therefore, this law will make it virtually impossible for workers to strike. What happens if workers do not give strike notice 14 days in advance? The strike will be declared illegal! There could be fines or imprisonment or both! The Industrial Relations (IR) Code, 2020, allows companies to hire contract workers directly through 'fixed-term contract'. Earlier, firms had to go through a contractor to hire contract workers. According to the report, fixed-term contract workers are entitled to all statutory dues that

permanent workers in the same unit get. However, fixed-term contract workers are not entitled to retrenchment compensation like permanent employees. Experts say that its introduction will lead to withering away of permanent jobs in the market. Under the current enactment, companies will be able to hand out contractual jobs to its existing permanent workforce as well. Earlier, the rules mentioned that “no employer of an industrial establishment shall convert the posts of the permanent workmen existing in their industrial establishment...as ‘fixed-term employment’. In this process the owner can lay off the workers at any time.

This IR code also states that only recognized unions among the registered trade unions will have the opportunity to sit for bargaining workers issues with the employer/management and the government representative. It is stated in the bill that if 51% of the workers of the factory are members of a union, then that union will be recognized as a ‘negotiation union’. Needless to say, which trade union will be recognized as a ‘negotiation union’ depends on the political relationship of that trade union with the government.

Under this Code, the employer will have the full opportunity to arbitrarily fix the terms and conditions of service of the workers and fire them at any time.

The Social Security Bill, 2020

Social Security Bill 2020 replaces nine laws related to Social Security including Employees’ Provident Fund Act 1952, the Maternity Benefit Act 1961 and the Unorganized Workers Social Security Act 2008.

The Code talks about establishing a ‘National Social Security Board’ which shall recommend to the central government for

formulating suitable beneficial schemes for different sections of unorganized workers, gig workers (who deliver door-to-door service) and platform workers (Those online staff & workers). Under the Bill, the Central government may notify various social security schemes for the benefit of workers. These include an Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) Scheme, an Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS), and an Employees' State Insurance (ESI) Scheme.

The two codes mentioned above show that the government intends to introduce temporary jobs instead of permanent jobs in factories and various enterprises where the scope of various government welfare schemes is very limited to get the benefits for unorganized workers. Workers will also suffer as the SS Bill, 2020 restricts the powers of the officers to decide the quantum of Provident Fund and Employees State Insurance dues from the employers and also limits their powers to reopen old cases. The relaxation of the penal provision for obstructing inspectors from performing duties will also deter their ability to protect the interests of the workers. In India, over 90 percent of India's total workforce estimated at 50 crore works in the unorganized sector.

As a result, the Social Security Code will exclude virtually all welfare schemes assigned to permanent or temporary workers.

The Occupational Safety Code Bill, 2020

Previous 13 other acts are now merged and a new Code enacted regarding the Occupational Safety, Health, and working conditions of the workers. Under the Occupational Safety Code, women employees will be permitted to work at night. Moreover, it also seeks to register workmen under the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service)

Act, 1979. This code has defined inter-state migrant workers as the worker who has come on his own from one state and obtained employment in another state, earning up to Rs 18,000 a month. The Code has dropped the earlier provision for temporary accommodation for workers near the worksites. It has, though, proposed a journey allowance — a lump sum amount of fare to be paid by the employer for to and fro journey of the worker to his/her native place from the place of his/her employment once in a year. By new legislation, maternity benefit can only be claimed if the women worker puts in a minimum 80 days of employment preceding her delivery. The threshold limits for application of the OSHWC legislation has been doubled and raised to 20 workers in the case of establishments using electricity power and 40 workers for establishments not using power. Further, the provisions of the new law do not provide for a judicial mechanism for hearing disputes, which once again puts the workers at a disadvantage. According to the Contract Workers Abolition and Control Act of 1970, it was illegal to get done any permanent work by contractual workers. Earlier in the case of permanent workers as well as contract workers, all the security, responsibilities were legally borne by the employer.

Under the new Code, workers will be deprived of this right. From now on, contract workers can be hired for any type of work i.e. on permanent or temporary in nature and the employer has no responsibility to protect workers in the workplace. The 'Fixed Term Employment' Act has already been introduced in all public and private sectors. This term may be in three months, six months or so on and will depend entirely on the will of the owner/employer.

According to Trade Unions, the newlabour bills promote

informalization, contractualization and casualization of labour and will impact the number of permanent jobs in factories, enterprises, organizations etc. - which will result in a decline in wages, government benefit schemes and work conditions and also reduced the accountability of employers. As per the fixed-term contracts clause, there will be a reduction in the number of permanent jobs. The ambiguity on the definition of 'trade unions', may lead to diluting workers' rights and more authority to owners on lay-offs. India is currently facing horrible job loss amid COVID-19. As per the International Labour Organization (ILO), at least 41 lakh people in the country have lost their jobs while the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE) estimated 2.1 crore salaried jobs were lost following the lockdown. On the other hand, Adani-Ambani's wealth is increasing and multiplying day after day.



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Aiswarya Reddy Case

Yet Another Institutional Murder ; NEP 2020 & Online Education Started Taking Its Toll

She was a brilliant student. She stood second in the Telangana Board examination with 98.5% marks. She was awarded an INSPIRE fellowship by the Department of Science & Technology (DST). This fellowship is awarded to top 1% of class XII students. She could take admission in B.Sc. (Hons) Mathematics in prestigious and coveted Lady Sriram College (LSR), Delhi. She was very liked among her friends. She cared for them. She aspired to be a civil servant. She hailed from an ordinary socio-economic background; her father was a motorcycle mechanic. On November 3rd, she was reduced to mere news. Why?

We are talking of Aishwarya Reddy. Her father is a mechanic and in March only he invested his savings to open his own shop and lock down began, and so did misery. Even prior to this their condition was not very good. They mortgaged their house to finance her study and her younger sister had to discontinue her studies for this. She was living in a college hostel. When online education began, she started taking it on her smartphone. She returned to her home in February 2020, just when colleges were closed.

She was having lots of difficulty in taking classes on smartphone. As per LSR Students' Union, out of eight hours of classes she could devote less than three hours per day. In addition,

she didn't have a good internet connection and had to buy additional data packs to attend lectures while handling household responsibilities on the side.

"They are teaching well, but I don't have a laptop and my mobile is not working well so I am unable to do any practical work," she said in the Union's survey. She requested her father if a laptop can be procured. Her father was unable to buy even a used one immediately. Despite being awarded INSPIRE fellowship, she did not receive a single *paisa* compounding her misery and distress.

And then in October she was served a notice that as per new policies of the management, only first year students will be given accommodation. She knew the financial impossibility of living in Delhi in rented or PG accommodation. As per her mother, they did not have money to buy a train ticket to go back to college. This turned out to be the last straw.

She felt she is a burden on her family, as due to her the family mortgaged their house, younger sister discontinued her education and now even after this much she is not able to complete her education. And she ended her life. She wrote in her note "Because of me, my family is facing many financial problems. I am a burden for my family. My education is a burden. If I can't study, I can't live," This has posed many unanswered questions before us.

It was not that she did not try to find a way. She represented the LSR Students' Union Committee For Inclusive Education. She apprised them of how additional data packs are not affordable for her family and a laptop not available to her to pursue her studies. Lakshmi, co-convener of this committee told a news channel that it was repeatedly e-mailed to college administration but to no avail. Shamelessly, Suman Sharma the principal of the college denies any

communication about her condition. The Administration, which issued a notice after 5 days for condolence, cannot be expected to be any better. Their apathy is too obvious. Even DST said that they do not delay fellowships and are disbursed on top priority, unless of course there are some technical issues. Those students receiving any fellowship from DST know the bitter truth about this and it seems that DST is ‘technically’ very poorly equipped.

Let us see the questions posed. One is of course impact or intended impact of NEP 2020. Withdrawal of hostel facilities is one such impact. Institutions have been asked to reduce expenditure and many over enthusiastic followers in administration have already started following the dictums not yet formulated. Accommodation issue has forced many students to go back to their native place, where taking education is difficult.

Online education too is the central theme of NEP 2020. And this pandemic has given a chance and excuse to implement it as a pilot project. She is not alone in suffering. It has put most of the students at loss. A large number of students do not have proper equipment to attend online classes. There have been instances that people sold their valuable possessions to buy smartphones for their children. Availability of sufficient data when taking many classes, network connectivity are the issues faced by most of the students not able to afford Wi-Fi (it’s available in urban areas only anyways). In many areas one does not get power for sufficient hours to charge the batteries. That apart viewing a class on a smartphone is very tiresome and not very conducive for learning. And obviously laptops are out of question. The fact that a large number of students are forced ‘not to take’ appropriate classes, is a case of digital divide.

Question of fellowship too is very pertinent. The delays are

mostly the rule, rather than exception. Adopting a total callous attitude towards it, fellowships are delayed for petty reasons for months together making it very hard for students to survive.

And worse is the callous, insensitive attitude of the administration. It refuses to wake up even seeing the plight. They do not react even when being apprised of it. It's not just college, but top echelons too are no different. Just some lip service when something as drastic as this happens and then back to reclining in their ivory tower. We have seen many cases- Rohith Vemula, Payal Tadavi being some glaring examples.

We must understand that this is not suicide but the entire systemic structure posed a situation forcing Aishwarya to commit suicide. This is mainly because undeclared implementation of NEP 2020 has begun. It has put students all over the country in great distress. This is just tip of the iceberg with lot more in offing in times to come. The solution is not in suicide but in advancing the struggle against the impacts of NEP 2020 and Covid-19 lockdown. Such incidents should arouse anger in people and intensify such struggle so that such incidents are not repeated.

(Issued by PDSU, Delhi on November 11, 2020)

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US Presidential Election : What it signifies and what it stands for

With over six million less votes and decisive defeat in the Electoral College, Donald Trump's refusal to concede the race may appear to be incongruous. And yet it fits into a pattern. While personal traits may be and are important, there is a design in the madness.

The glaring obduracy of Trump is but a reflection of growing contradictions in USA's economic and social life. Trump is too much of an insider in the echelons of power and Washington establishment besides being a billionaire businessman, to indulge in personal adventurism. It suits all the major players for Trump to act as he is doing. Firstly for himself, Trump wants to raise enough dust which does not settle over the next four years i.e. first term of Joe Biden. He has all the intentions of running in the next elections and wants to leave enough of a platform which acts as a pressure on the incoming Administration and acts as a springboard for his next bid. There is a historical precedent of discontinuous terms and Trump has all the intentions of emulating that example. His lack of concession will, in his calculation, do no harm to him as that is not what he likes to run as. He has brought to surface all that was obnoxious in US society which had always co-existed with other aspect i.e. democratic character; which made most heinous institution of slavery co-exist with democratic institutions; with most exploitative forms co-existing with egalitarian impulses; all

these reflecting the class contradictions in a capitalist society built on the foundations of elimination of natives and exploitation of slaves along with crudest exploitation of working masses i.e. the plebeians of the land.

Trump's strategy of discouraging early voting, asking his supporters to vote on voting day i.e. November 3 and claim victory as those votes are counted first and fast, was at a discount from the start as nearly two third voted early through mail. These votes whom Trump tried to call 'illegal' have been legal and in vogue in USA, their number going up due to Corona. It was a poor strategy born out of recognition of lack of majority support. It had little chance of success except to throw enough dust which he did. He is making much of the highest votes polled by any incumbent ignoring that he was voted out by highest number of voters in US history.

His party, the Republicans, is going along with his game mainly for its own reasons. First and foremost, the economic crisis assuming alarming proportions has made this "Party of Order" increasingly rely on the whipping up of reactionary credo of enforcing domestic peace and increasingly resorting to racist divisions targeted mainly against African Americans. This racism is all permeating, systemic and ingrained into every day discourse of capitalist distortions of 'survival of fittest.' Republican Party had earlier also utilized an upswing in the struggle of African Americans and fomented reaction against it as well as rode over it to put itself up as a Party of Law and Order. That was Nixon time who saw in that an opportunity to resurrect his political career. With economic decline due to pandemic on top of deepening economic crisis due to inherent contradiction of the capitalism, Republican Party is under pressure to ward off demands for increasing expenditure on the

people to mitigate economic adverse effects of the pandemic on the working people with its concomitant need of raising this money from the corporate. Republicans are whipping up racist rhetoric to divert attention from this. The fierce loyalty commanded by Trump from a section is rooted in the planks adopted by the Republican Party.

Another important reason, and in the immediate context may be more important reason for the majority of Republican leaders to play along with Trump, are coming run-offs for the two Senate seats in Georgia. This traditional Republican supporting state has flipped to Democrats in the recent Presidential election, for the first time since 1992 and only for the second time since 1948. These two seats will decide who control the Senate. If Democrats win these two seats they will control the Senate. Republicans will like to keep control of the Senate for their share in power and prevent any actions which may not be to their liking. Republicans do not wish to alienate or discourage the sections rallying around Trump so close to elections. Hence, their hesitation in asking Trump to make the concession.

This situation also suits the Democratic Party establishment. It helps them to project taking White House away from Trump in itself as a big victory. It helps them to ask the people not to expect anything more. Joe Biden is a candidate of the Democratic Party establishment for whom the most important thing is to keep the support of big capital. Democratic Party has used mobilizations by its progressive sections to garner votes and essentially nothing more. The more Trump whines and delays more it helps Biden and Democratic Party establishment can sing this tune. They are talking about restoration of democracy and the like, in essence restoring status quo which is becoming increasing untenable in the milieu of

deepening economic crisis and growing social contradictions. But this has not detracted Democratic Party establishment from trying to do just that.

In fact Joe Biden Presidency will be more like third term for Obama Admn. in more ways than one. At least that will be the attempt of Democratic Party establishment which will face challenge from the rising struggles of exploited and oppressed in the USA including opposition from the progressive sections of the Democratic Party. Joe Biden presidency will be ridden with contradictions as it is stepping in at the time of sharp escalation of all the basic contradictions of imperialist system. Its attempts *e la* Obama to paper over the internal contradictions and to pursue US hegemony in a world which has undergone much change over the last four years is doomed to fail. However, this will be an interesting period of growing struggles of the people and how these contradictions will play out and how these will be utilized by the progressive and revolutionary forces will be closely watched. In fact, this coming face-off is much in the air. Progressive section of Democrats is already demanding Biden to honour his pre-election promises.

To suit this purpose some myths are being circulated. Firstly, there is much propaganda about Trump base. But a closer look exposes the myth. Trump is currently polling 47.2% votes and his vote share will further decline as vote counts in the states he has already lost are completed. By comparison, Mitt Romney had polled 47.2% votes in 2012 Presidential election against Obama. Even McCain had polled 45.7% against Obama in 2008 after two terms of George Bush with disastrous Iraq War and explosion of great recession. Trump himself had polled 46.1% in 2016 when he had

won due to higher Electoral College numbers. Obviously, the talk of Trump base is definitely exaggerated. Republican and Democratic Parties, as the two main contenders of power, have their traditional electoral bases and vote share is roughly in that range in a non-wave election and votes polled by Trump are in that range. Higher voter turnout this time is partly due to heightened contradictions in US society and partly due to greater opportunity to vote due to expanded time frame due to ongoing pandemic.

Second myth propagated is that Trump has rallied poorer sections around. In 2016 he had rallied anger of working class in rust belt over loss of jobs for which many among them held trade pacts responsible and identified Democrat leader Hillary Clinton with them. But any general mobilization of the sort i.e. of the working masses in his favour has not been there nor was there. In fact, Trump has been the choice of the richer sections of society. He has been the establishment figure posing as anti-establishment to tap the anger of the people against neoliberal policies. In that he was and is backed by the corporate and ruling elite to project two versions of the same policies as choices; differing on many things but not on neo-liberal agenda; differing on sectoral emphasis and concrete measures but not on the general trajectory of showering benefits on the super-rich.

It is also significant that this was the costliest election in US history with more than 6.6 billion US \$ spent on Presidential election alone and over 14 billion US\$ if one includes the House and Senate races. Small contributions have accounted for less than one fifth (20%) of what was spent by and for the candidates for Presidency. Not difficult to see the impact of big money on these elections.

According to an exit-poll conducted by Edison Research published by several outlets, Trump polled much higher among the high earners. Aversion to his crude rhetoric among sections of elite should not be taken as his rejection by the elite. If we take broad categories based on annual family income, Trump polled 54% of the votes of those whose family income was above US\$ 100,000 a year compared to Biden's 43%. This section comprised 28% of the US electorate. His advantage was much more pronounced among those earning between US\$ 100,000 and US\$ 200,000 who comprised three fourth of these (21%) and among whom he polled 57% to Biden's 41%. Compare this to those whose annual family income amounted to less than US\$ 100,000, comprising 72% of the electorate, 57% preferred Biden to Trump's 42%. From these polls it is obvious that Trump has been a preferred choice of the higher earning section of US populace. Contrast this with the widespread propaganda that Trump is more popular among the poorer sections. That is based on Republican Party electoral support base.

Total family income in 2019

		Trump	Biden
Under \$100,000	72% of voters	42	57
\$100,000 or more	28%	54	43

Three issues dominated the US elections this time around. Firstly the issue of Corona pandemic. On this issue Trump has been in denial mode as he did not wish to raise money from the super-rich. (*Analyzed in greater detail in earlier comment published in this issue.*) Second was the issue of systemic racial injustice. Trump sought to overplay this to do a Nixon but failed in this. He unleashed Proud Boys and likes of Ku Klux Klan. He overplayed this and did so

crudely. Moreover, this came in conflict with the growing difficulties of the people including white skinned working people. Here again, he got the majority of votes of white Americans like most Republicans before him also did. His highlighting law and order platform slightly increased his votes among well to do sections of some minority groups which was more than compensated by higher voting enthusiasm among African Americans which was more to defeat Trump and less to elect Biden.

Third important factor was the disenchantment among blue colour workers, most of them white, with their growing difficulties. This played a significant role in the battle ground states particularly rust belt states e.g. Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, the three traditional democrat states which had been instrumental in Trump winning four years earlier.

With election settled in favour of Biden, a decrescendo of noise notwithstanding has ushered USA in an era of unprecedented sharpening of contradictions. Biden Admn. will be called upon to tackle Corona pandemic- medically and more importantly its economic effects, to address systemic racial injustice in USA and to what he called as 'transition to green economy'. All these in a world where US is facing increasing challenge from other imperialist powers, especially China. Biden will have to address the multi-polar world; his attempts to pursue US hegemonic drive will come in cropper. Biden had termed Russia as the main adversary of USA in his opinion in the last Presidential debate. That will make his going even more difficult as he would further cement the growing alliance between the two major powers in the world- China and Russia. If he pursues that line, which he articulated in that debate, it will be more

advantageous to Chinese rulers. His support to all powerful military-industrial complex will only create further hotspots in the world, but will fail to restore the uni-polar world his predecessor Obama tried.

How Biden will address the issues facing his incoming Admn. can not address the roots of the problems. His call to “unite” rather than address the root causes will be hollow and only embolden the privileged sections, for whose benefit it is essentially meant. An important test would be how far he is willing to combat neo-liberalism. That he has been an avid votary of neo-liberalism and has drawn strong support from the corporate and super-rich will come in clash with rising struggles of the people which is also having effect on the Democratic Party with the growing strength of ‘progressives’ in its legislative wing. It may in fact help Biden and Democratic Party establishment if they fail to win control of Senate. In that case they may be able to pin the blame for their inability, in fact unwillingness, on to Republicans while continuing the same economic policies and marginalizing the progressive sections.

Whatever the actual steps of this opera, it would be more like more of the same so far as economic policies go. In that respect, the actual course would broadly vindicate what one of the great teachers of world proletariat, Fredrick Engels had observed long back, “And nevertheless we find here two great gangs of political speculators, who alternately take possession of the state power and exploit it by the most corrupt means and for the most corrupt ends- and the nation is powerless against these two great cartels of politicians, who are ostensibly its servants, but in reality dominate and plunder it.”

Biden Victory and Indian Govt.

Defeat of Trump may have some impact on the ruling dispensation in India. Indian Prime Minister was slow in congratulating Biden on his victory. And importantly, when PM Modi did manage to talk to President Elect Biden, the two sides dished out different versions of that discussion. According to Biden Campaign, in the phone call between the two i.e. Biden and Modi on November 17, Biden talked of “Strengthening democracy at home and abroad.” But the External Affairs Ministry spokesperson dished out somewhat different version with Modi talking of strength of democratic system in USA. Obviously, Modi does not want Biden to be working for strengthening democracy in India; they may not mind US interference in other countries.

RSS-BJP has not hidden its preference for Trump. Friends of BJP in America have worked for Trump. (Mentioned in earlier comment.)

While Biden Admn. will continue to follow the Asia-Pacific strategy to counter China which was inaugurated by Obama under his ‘Pivot to Asia’. In that respect, there may be little difference between Trump and Biden Admns. rhetoric apart. However, there may be difference between types of response to China between the two Admns. and that may have impact on Sino-Indian relations. It may or may not be accidental that Indian Govt. had announced some progress in disengagement plan with China soon after Biden had been declared winner of the US presidential race.

Biden Admn. may not be so indulging in Modi led RSS-BJP fascist agenda in India, its attacks on minorities and attacks on the democratic rights of the kind made by RSS-BJP Govt. Biden is on

record having expressed disappointment with NRC in Assam and CAA law. Vice-president Elect Kamala Harris, referring to Modi Govt.'s actions in J&K, had said, "We are watching... part of the values what we are as a nation is we speak out about human rights abuses and when appropriate we intervene.." It will be pertinent to recall how Indian Govt. had faced criticism on Kashmir issue in US House panel dominated by Democratic Party. This aspect may have some bearing on the developments in India.



On US Elections : Will Pandemic trump Trump?

Elections to the post of President of the biggest economic and military power in the world are only days away. While it will obviously have important effect on different countries and regions, in fact the whole of world, the elections are, as usual, being fought on domestic issues. In fact, in case of USA, the two are intertwined, USA being the biggest exploiter of the world.

In 2016, Democratic Party had chosen to lose the White House but not the support of corporate. While it was obvious that Bernie Sanders could easily beat Donald Trump, Democratic Party establishment anointed Hillary Clinton as the Party candidate for Presidency as Sanders wanted some change in the neoliberal policies of the country. In 2020, Donald Trump has risked his re-election but has ruled out any increase in taxes on the corporate. His Corona pandemic handling is not solely due to his idiosyncrasies but

largely due to his refusal to increase public spending to the level demanded by the situation. And that is due to his refusal to raise money for this expenditure, which must come either by fiscal means i.e. raising the taxes on the super-rich, or by monetary means that would lead to increase in interest rates which again is not to the liking of the corporate.

Donald Trump is among the leaders of those countries who have refused to raise money from corporate, and hence denied the serious nature of the pandemic itself. He termed it an ordinary flu. A type of Flu it is, and mostly non-serious but with high rate of spread and deadly among the elderly especially with pre-existing conditions. US has a large population of elderly who lead an active life and hence have good chance of exposure. Moreover, nCorona being a new virus, human beings have no immunity to it, nor is any vaccine yet available. All this was well known to Trump but he had staked his all in the service of super-rich and hence went on to discredit scientific advice. However he succeeded in discrediting only himself, with Science speaking louder than this demagoguery. With over nine million corona positive cases and over two lakh thirty five thousand deaths, Corona had the better of him. Like the old Biblical god, Corona is a very vindictive virus, does not like those who disregard it or make fun of it.

It is not that Trump did not have or, even if he did not, could not have, scientific advice. But the main thing is that he did not want to lose nor could he afford to lose the support of the corporate. He could definitely have improved his chances of re-election with considerate and scientific handling of Corona pandemic. This is proved by the victory of Labour Party leader of New Zealand, Jacinda Adern, who as Prime Minister was running very low in

opinion polls but scored an unprecedented victory due to her handling of Corona pandemic in her country, a fact admitted by all commentators and Jacinda Adern herself.

Trump has projected handling of economy as his strong point and has simplistic formulae have been giving all benefits to corporate, encouraging local production for jobs and curtailing foreign nationals working in US. But the Economy has taken a big hit during Corona pandemic, rendering millions jobless. In fact, the number of those applying for unemployment benefits has gone up unprecedentedly. GDP has shrunk by biggest margin, something not seen since Great Depression. However, nobody blames or would have blamed Trump for the state of economy during Corona pandemic. But taking steps for Corona control and mitigation would have meant increase in expenditure. Trump could have used this as an opportunity but he is a representative of big capitalists who have scored big during the pandemic. In fact during six months i.e. from March to September 2020, billionaires in US have added nearly a trillion US \$ to their wealth. According to a report in *inequality.org*, wealth of 644 US billionaires increased from US\$ 2.94 trillion on March 18 to US\$ 3.88 on October 13, an increase of 31.6%. On the other hand, homelessness, destitution and poverty have grown among vast multitude. Trump and Republicans have opposed measures to mitigate the sufferings of the poor, quibbling over all amounts.

Given people's hard conditions, Trump and Republicans have seized upon the racial divide as the way out. This is not at all surprising. Given the bad condition of the working people and Admn.'s unwillingness to take measures to mitigate their suffering, Trump and his supporters have poured oil on the burning fires of

racial division. In USA, a big movement has come forth against the systemic racial injustice, especially against the African Americans. This relates to discriminatory and brutal treatment at the hands of police. (We can easily grasp it as there is systemic ill-treatment of Muslims and Dalits by police in our country). This movement, spearheaded by Black Lives Matter which has been in existence for several years, burst forth throughout length and breadth of the country after the chokehold murder of Floyd in Minneapolis. African Americans were supported in this movement by a large number of democratic people drawn from other racial groups including a large number of White people- people of North European descent.

In this situation, Trump is seeking to deepen racial divide for his electoral gain. One can recall how Republican Nixon had sought to use post-segregation situation to deepen the racial divide. Then, like now, was war weariness about wars abroad, then being Vietnam War. But Nixon could succeed because US was not in economic contraction nor was facing economic competition like now. Moreover, Nixon was a mainstream Republican, clicking on the support bases of that Party, having been Vice-President to Eisenhower for eight years. Moreover, Nixon was not an incumbent, hence could pin blame for all the mess on Democrats, who then were deeply divided.

Trump is taking refuge in the racial divisions at a time when his handling of Corona pandemic is being widely questioned; when his support among the industrial working people has been shaken by the sharp decline in living conditions of working masses and he has nobody to blame but himself though he is trying hard to hold Xi Jinping responsible for this, but Xi is not on the ballot.

The importance of these elections does not lie in the candidates who are contesting but the conditions in which these elections are taking place. Democrat Joe Biden is a long time Washington insider, having been Senator since 1973 and Vice-President in Obama Admn. for eight years from 2009. He was running very weak in the primaries till the Democratic Party establishment, Obama-Clinton machine, came forward to call the nomination in his favour. Joe Biden does not inspire change but the real question is what he would be compelled to go along with and what Trump victory would signify for those fighting for racial justice and economic relief in the times of pandemic. Trump has come to signify more of the same, and this same is not being liked by a large number of Americans, least by the forces fighting against racial injustice and economic inequality.

Internationally, whosoever wins the Presidency, though the style may be different, task will be to manage the US decline and playing its role as biggest economic and military power in a multi-polar world. Trump had shrunk US footprints to core areas where he had been belligerent. He was focused on China and in Middle-east he was bent on rallying ruling Arab Sheikhs and dictators around Israel. His only contribution, if it can be so called, was to denude the US foreign policy of high sounding albeit ill suited phrases like Human Rights, Democracy etc.

Significance of these elections lies in its effect on struggles going on and growing in America. Irrespective of the outcome, the struggle for racial justice will grow, though it will face different situation depending on the outcome. The struggle against sharply growing economic inequality will be sharpening. From Occupy Wall Street this trend has not stopped. Right now the focus will be on

increasing taxes on the rich to meet the situation of the pandemic. Biden has not been a votary of the same but the forces growing in America will force him to tilt that way. He will definitely try to be a corporate check on anti-neoliberal agenda of a section of Democratic Party. His running mate- Kamala Harris- has also been close to corporate and establishment in Washington. But as noted earlier, there is growing strength of the movement which will intrude into the reckoning. How far these forces will be able to influence the policy agenda will depend on a number of situations including outcome of the Congress and Senate races where a number of the candidates supportive of these forces are running. Democratic Party is facing a sharp divide and for the time being is united for common opposition to Donald Trump and prospect of coming to power in the ensuing elections.

A word about Indian Americans is not out of place. An overwhelming number of them are against Donald Trump and are likely to vote for his opponent. Friends of BJP in America, an RSS outfit, is campaigning for Donald Trump who has established close partnership with RSS-BJP Govt. Modi had shared stage with Trump in Howdy Modi. And not only he shared the stage with the President Trump but he also called for his re-election paraphrasing a slogan to call for “*Phir Ek Bar, Trump Sarkar.*” This obviously has not gone well with people in USA including a majority of Indian-Americans. But the real reason at present is US efforts to bring India into its anti-China campaign and make India a part of US led India-Pacific military alliance, a sort of Asian NATO. RSS-BJP has been a strong supporter of a closer and open alliance with US hoping to increase its stature in Asia and hoping to attract capital of companies of USA and its allies from China. These are calculations of

RSS-BJP, but section of Indian diaspora, though a minority of Indian Americans, suffers from a sort of schizophrenia, opposing racial injustice in USA but supporting RSS-BJP in India who are targeting minorities, particularly Muslims, and Dalits in India. Though a show of this large ostensible support is orchestrated by RSS propaganda machinery as most of the Indian Americans have been traditional supporters of Democratic Party, however such a schizophrenic response is built in the very fabric of caste system prevalent in India where one protests against injustice to self, but does not hesitate to heap or support injustice on others. Indian Americans should bring this to an end and see this connection between white supremacists in USA and Hindutva zealots in India.



Address and Not Suppress

Selective Truth is a Lie; Selective Justice an Injustice

Granting bail to Republic TV's Arnab Goswami, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud and Justice Indira Bannerjee observed, "If we as a constitutional court do not lay down law and protect liberty, then who will?" Well said especially when people were dying to hear such words from the highest Court. A newspaper editorially commented that Supreme Court will do well to listen to its own counsel. Supreme Court refrained from laying down any law to protect liberty which is at a premium in RSS-BJP ruled India.

Justice Chandrachud reportedly remarked "If we do not interfere in this case today, we will walk on the path of destruction

of personal liberty.” The Bench has reserved its judgement while ordering the bail; and it is eagerly awaited to see how the learned Judges propose to stop the walk towards destruction of personal liberties. One can only hope that that personal liberties are not only secured for only a section of citizens; those subscribing to the ruling ideology and dispensation. Any way they have little to fear, considering the galaxy of cabinet ministers including the Union Home Minister who came forward in his defense. The Central Govt. has many ways to secure their liberties, problem is for those who are targeted by the Executive. Many such examples were brought before the Court and it will be worthwhile to see what directions the apex Court issues or at least what observations the Judges of the apex Court make with respect to them. That will show whether the apex Court has taken a step in the direction of saving personal liberties of individuals, or has paved the way for further assault on the personal liberties of those raising their voice against injustice and oppression.

Many cases had been brought before the apex Court in defense of personal liberty of affected individuals. A recent case of a Kerala journalist, Siddique Kuppen, who was arrested on way to Hathras where a Dalit girl, a victim of gang rape and murder, was burnt by the police and administration, was brought before the apex court. He was framed under UAPA and even not allowed to meet his lawyer. He was advised by the Court to approach the local Court. And there are many such cases including that of a journalist Prashant Kanojia who was granted bail by Allahabad High Court two months after his arrest.

And that makes the good words selective which robs the law of one of its most prescient quality- that of uniformity and equality.

Being harsh or soft, this is one quality essential to very existence of law. Even discretion and classification are rooted in principles of equality before law or equal protection of laws, enshrined in Indian Constitution (Article 14). There is no place of arbitrariness or selectivity. Removal of blindfold from the eyes of Lady Justice renders her prone to criticism of being selective seeing the person/s before her.

If an impression has gained ground over a year or more of the selective nature of justice being rendered by the apex Court, then it is time for the apex Court to do some introspection why such an impression has gained ground. That should always be the first response of learned and sagacious to criticism. Suppressing those who articulate such an impression will not serve the purpose if the purpose is to safeguard prestige of the higher judiciary. That the impression is widespread is apparent from what Supreme Court Bar Association President Dushyant Dave said, "Selective treatment for the high and mighty like Goswami only lowers the credibility of the judiciary as an institution." "In April this year as well, Goswami had received almost instant hearing at the Supreme Court and got relief as well. I am not against the latest verdict or Goswami. I just want that every lawyer and his/her client receive the same access to judicial remedy."

There is glaring difference between fear and honour; peace of the graveyard is not the peace to be strived for. Fear may at times succeed in silencing the opposition but it only leads to driving it underground, in fact intensifying the perception. And there will always be some who will dare to call the emperor naked.

Attorney General KK Venugopal has not exactly enhanced the prestige or protected the dignity of the apex Court allowing eight

people to file criminal contempt cases against Mr. Kunal Kamra saying that he had crossed a line, “It is time that people understand attacking the Supreme Court unjustifiably and brazenly will lead to punishment,” and “Today people boldly and brazenly condemn the Supreme Court and its judges in what they believe is freedom of speech.” But will it cure the disease i.e. the perception about the higher judiciary? AG’s words betray the perception that he would like people to be timid and not bold. And how does one understand “unjustifiedly” i.e. without justification. For that one has to go through whether any basis exists for such a perception. And for that we have go through the recent cases which came before the apex Court of the similar nature and what decisions have been made by the apex Court in those cases.

Moreover threatening tone of AG letter does neither behoove his office nor enhance the majesty of high office he holds. More pertinently and materially, AG in his letter to the advocates seeking his approval for the contempt, said, “This is gross insinuation against the entirety of the Supreme Court of India — that the Supreme Court of India is not an independent and impartial institution and so too its judges, but on the other hand is a court of the ruling party, the BJP, existing for the BJP’s benefit. All this in my opinion constitutes criminal contempt of court.”

Attorney General’s observations raise a number of questions that must be answered. If truth is any defense, then why an attempt should not be made to ascertain whether above given criticism contains any truth or any basis for the impugned statement. Or even truth is no defense according to the jurisprudence followed by the AG. In brief, will it be proper that this aspect that apex Court has favoured the ruling Party, cannot even

be questioned. If so, we have definitely advanced beyond ADM Jabalpur case. And without ascertaining the truth and thereby baseless nature of the comment, only using the sword of contempt, can only silence but not further the truth. As one renowned thinker said “Justice is truth in action.” Though hardly put into practice in the class society, it is the ideal which is put before the people. The question here is whether the higher judiciary is dispensing as per the Constitution or looking over their shoulders to the powers that are.

AG has also raised the question of independence and impartiality of the apex Court as an institution. Should that too not be proved and further, on regular basis? Further, merely prohibiting questions relating to independence and impartiality of the apex Court will not make it so nor guarantee their continuing existence. That will make the institutions not independent and impartial in the true sense of the terms but independent of the very percepts they are to uphold i.e. the Constitution and the rights of the people enshrined in the Constitution and laws made under it.

One has been a witness to many-sided and effusive debate on the question of contempt in a recent case. Even the AG had pitched in with his comments. There were a number of eminent jurists who were quoted that the power of contempt should not be used to suppress dissent or dissenting opinion. So soon after that elaborate discussion, that this issue is being thrust again, is quite surprising.

After AG approval, it is up to the Supreme Court. People will be watching whether the apex Court lives up to its own pronouncements. The institution is not for delivering sermons but ensuring the sermons already existing in the Constitution. And doing so in the spirit i.e. equality before law and equal protection of

laws. That will be the true defense of independence and impartiality of the institution, and not prosecution of a Stand-up comic who articulated his feeling that “Supreme Court” has given a partial decision. It is by guaranteeing Constitutional rights to all, rolling back the gross injustice that is being perpetrated by the Executive against democratic rights activists and anti-CAA protesters without any basis in facts, and stopping such abuses of authority that will go a long way in allying the perception. Do they deserve no protection of law? Ensuring their freedom and legal rights will be the course to correct the perception. Among them are elderly and sick; democratic rights activists and students; writers, academicians and yet Courts have refused to grant them bail or examine the frivolous nature of the charges against them.

Otherwise, we are surely travelling on the path of destruction of personal liberties. Whether it is a warning or prophecy practice alone will unfold.

November 12, 2020



CPM led 'Left' Front Govt.'s Attack On Democratic Rights !

Aparna

In a shocking but hardly surprising step, the CPM led Left Front Govt. of Kerala has vested the police, i.e. controlled by itself at present, with new arbitrary powers to crush dissent. An Ordinance, approved by the Governor on 21st November, has empowered the police to arbitrarily arrest anyone putting posts on social media which do not meet the approval of the powers that be in the state, i.e. CPM. This is quite in keeping with the traditions established by the Left Front in its over three decadelong rule in West Bengal. Its 'harmad'gangs were extortionists and enforcers, hated by the people. It appears that CPM has not learnt any lesson from that.

The Ordinance brought by the Kerala Govt. hardly need surprise anyone. Neo revisionists are part of the ruling classes. But the timing of the Ordinance is at a time when countrywide, democratic forces and organizations and individuals are speaking out against the free use of India's armoury of black laws by the RSS BJP Govts in both Centre and in several states, the fascist clamp down on dissent and on any opposition to the pro imperialist and communal agenda they are furthering. Working class is in the midst of organizing fightback against the brutal slashing of rights through brute parliamentary majority of Central Govt. Peasants are giving serious fight to handing over Agriculture to corporate. Students

countrywide are grappling the pro corporate education policies which have been enunciated by NEP. All the policy changes have been shoved through under cover of the Corona pandemic and the people's fightback calls for the widest unity. The movements need exercise of all the democratic rights to express dissent and to force back steps taken against people's and country's real interests and welfare. Additionally, the very weak democratic movement fighting against witchhunts of peoples movements will scarcely be assisted by this draconian Ordinance being brought by a non BJP state Govt. It is hoped that the Ordinance will open the eyes of those who imagine that the revisionists stand for the people or that their interests or character is other than ruling class.

Fascism is a form of rule by the ruling classes; rule by terror. It includes in attack the other ruling class parties. The BJP RSS are out to impose their agenda on the country and the entire state structure is increasingly subservient to them. At such a time, all forces must call on Kerala Govt. to recall the Ordinance they have issued; the class character of CPI CPM will not change if it does so, but the current fight against attack on democratic rights will have one less distraction.

23rd November 2020.

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**From the forthcoming booklet by
V.Venkataramaiah, President, AIKMS**

“Increase of Farmers’ Income” Modi Govt.’s Great Deception

7. Minimum Support Price (MSP) – Modi’s acrobatics.

“National Commission on Farmers” headed by Swaminathan under the UPA-1 government in 2004 came to the conclusion that the main reason for the crisis in agriculture is due to farmers not getting remunerative prices. In the final report given in 2006, it made an important recommendation in this regard. “There should be an added 50% on C2 for comprehensive production of crops and Minimum support price should be decided at C2+50”. This was not implemented by Congress led Govt. then while in power, nor when it came back to power in 2009 under UPA-2. In the elections to the parliament in 2014, the BJP in its election manifesto promised that it will, as Swaminatham commission recommended, “decide a price that accrues a minimum 50% profit on production costs, will lend agri-inputs and loans at cheap rates. “In the election speeches Modi gave importance to it. After assuming power, there was no announcement of minimum support price with 50% profit. On 28.2.2016 in the meeting of agriculturists in Raibareilly in UP he declared that by the 75th independence day in 2022, he will double the income of farmers.

The Union Finance Minster Arun Jaitley, in the 2018 Budget presentation, declared that the 50% additional profit will come into effect with kharif crops 2017-‘18. This was in the background of the

ensuring 2019 elections and of the pressure of the peasant movement. By then the Kharif season was four months old. Till then the government never made such a statement. Infact, the cost of production was calculated by excluding some expenses from (C2), Land rent, exempting interests on private capital and on investment on constructions in cultivable land. Instead of adding 50% of the production costs, Minimum support price (MSP) was declared on the basis of $A_2+FL+50\%$ instead of $C_2+50\%$. Modi, instead of sticking to the promise made to the peasantry is deceiving with statistics and verbal jugglery. In fact the “Agricultural costs and Prices Commission” declared its assessment on production costs of crops in two ways, A_2+FL and C_2 separately. It is clearly defining the difference in the costs between the two to determine agri-production costs and recommend minimum support price. These are flawed.

The report submitted on 2.8.2015 by “Committee to examine Methodological Issues in fixing Minimum Support Prices”, by Dr. Ramesh Chand, member NITI Aayog pointed out some serious mistakes. In the report, it made 23 recommendations in all. For example, the value of labour power of the head of an agricultural family should not be equated with that of an agricultural labourer but with the wage of a skilled worker. Rent on land should be measured in tune with the actual market value rather than according to tenancy laws. When the farmer gets loan from private individuals for investing in agricultural production, interest payment should not be in accordance with bank rates but on the basis of interest payment made by the farmer. Interest on fixed capital, wear and tear of the machinery, inflation are all factors to be taken into account while calculating. Since foreign trade policies are adversely impacting the prices of crops, CACP should be involved

and its recommendations should be taken into account. It is more than five years since Ramesh Chand committee report was submitted and not a single recommendation has been implemented by the Modi government.

The central government had directed that in order to decide the MSP, apart from production costs, some 12 aspects should constitute the basis. But these are not rational and not with factual perspective. The government policies towards agriculture, and peasantry are discriminatory and biased. They are anathema to the peasantry.

Central Agricultural Minister N.S. Tomar explained the factors which have been taken as the basis for deciding the MSP, while announcing the policy of MSP in the Lok Sabha on 20.9.2020. The factors which have been taken into consideration to announce the MSP to 22 crops are – “Cost of production, situation and outlook for supply and demand of various crops in domestic and world markets, price situation in domestic and international markets along with trade outlook, inter crop price parity, terms of trade between agriculture and non agricultural sector, likely effect on the price policy on rest of the economy and a minimum of 50% as the margin over the cost of production.”

Government is talking about free market and independence of the farmers on one side and on the other side, why the Govt. has included the factors such as “terms of trade between agriculture and non agricultural sector” and above all “likely effect on the price policy on rest of the economy”? We could get the clarity in this regard from the “Price Policy for Rabi crops, the marketing season 2020-’21. Likely impact of price policy on rest of the economy means- “... particularly on cost of living, level of wages, cost

structure and competitiveness of agriculture and agro-based commodities.... Have been considered”. N.S. Tomar’s announcement conceal these factors.

For example, a host of criteria has been decided, like impact on industrial prices, problems inherent in subsidies, impact on standard of life, impact on general prices, international price situation, impact on PDS etc. What is the relation with the deciding of the MSP? It means due to the increase of MSP, the prices of other commodities should not increase, subsidies should not increase. In one way or the other, the govt. policy pursued by successive governments has kept under priced the MSP for agricultural produce. Such are the severe conditions for determining prices of agricultural commodities which are not there for prices of commodities in any other sector.

In fact, in these sectors the producers themselves decide the prices. We will not come across any organizations, individuals deciding prices that are less than production costs. The policy and method being adopted by the CACP to determine production costs and the policy for deciding minimum support price are absolutely flawed. In some form or other, MSP is pushed down to a low level. On several occasions MSP was decided to be much lower than production costs. To put it straight, governments have been adopting policies that protect the interest of industrial, trading corporate houses while putting the noose around agriculture. Whatever be the government at the centre, the ruling classes are adopting such same policies.

For instance, the production costs envisaged by states for 2020-‘21 plus the recommendation of Swaminatham commission, that is addition of 50% to the cost of production. Table-1 shows the details of Additional income accruing for a quintal in 1 ha, and 1 acre.

Table-4: State Governments estimation of cost of production of paddy for

2020-'21 Kharif Marketing Season and the additional income for 1 Quintal, 1 H.A, and 1 Acre, if Swaminathan recommendation of C2+50% implemented and the details of yield for 1 H.A. and MSP announced by the Central Govt.

1.Sl.No. 2.Name of theState 3.Estimationcost of production for 1 Quintal paddy 4. If 50% added to MSP for 1 quintal(Rs.) 5. MSPannounced by the centralGovt. (Rs.) 6. Additionalincomefor1 quintal(Rs.) 7. Yield in 1HA (quintals) 8. Additionalincome(C2+50)1 HA(Rs.) 9. Additionalincomeover MSPin 1 Acre(Rs.)								
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Andhra Pradesh	1902	2853	1888	965	60	57900	23160
2	Haryana	2162	3243	1888	1345	48.8	65636	26250
3	Karnataka	1939	2908	1888	1120	80.0	89600	35840
4	Kerala	2758	4137	1888	2249	37.6	84562	33825
5	Punjab	1868	2802	1888	914	61.7	56394	22558
6	Telangana	2529	3793	1888	1905	51.0	97155	38862
7	Uttar Pradesh	1526	2289	1888	1401	33.13	44443	18577
8	West Bengal	2147	3220	1888	1332	43.9	58475	23390
9	Bihar	1688	2532	1888	644	38.0	24472	9789
10	Tamilnadu	1735	2602	1888	514	47.0	24158	9663

According to the report of the Agricultural Costs and Prices Commission for 2020-21 by the state governments for the kharif season and in accordance with the recommendation of Swaminathan commission, the loss incurred by the farmer for one quintal of paddy is as follows: AP- Rs.965, Haryana-Rs.1345, Karnataka- Rs.1120, Kerala-Rs. 2249, Punjab-Rs. 914, Telangana – Rs. 1905, UP-1401, WBRs. 1332, Bihar- Rs. 644 and for Tamilnadu – Rs. 514.

If the same is seen in terms of acre land holding the income loss of the peasantry is as follows: AP-23,160, Haryana – Rs. 26,250, Karnataka – Rs. 35,840, Kerala – Rs. 33,825, Punjab-22,558, Telangana – Rs. 38,862, UP-18,577, WB-23,390, Bihar-8,789 and Tamilnadu – Rs. 9,663. What is surprising is that only in states of UP, Bihar, Tamilnadu, Punjab the MSP as decided by the central government is more, ranging between Rs. 20 to 350. This is above the production cost estimated by the respective State Governments. But in the rest of the states the MSP for 1 quintal is far below the production costs ranging from Rs. 47 to 690. The state governments by reporting to the centre about production cost feel that they have done their bit and that they have no responsibility in fixing MSP. The government policy of deciding MSP below the production costs leads to the intensification of the crisis and transforms the peasants into beggars. No patriotic, sovereign government would do this and it amounts to treachery and betrayal to the country.

The states, based the Swaminathan Commission's C2 formula, are sending to the Centre the estimated cost of production of different crops. In the recent past the CACP, too at the behest of oral directions of the Central Govt, is recommending the MSP for

different crops not on C2 formula but on A2+FL formula. Some states including the ones under the BJP rule wrote letters to the Central Govt asking the latter to reject the MSP proposals of CACP and adopt C2 formula plus 50%. Nine states asked the Central Govt to fix the MSP for 2019-20 Rabi season crops on C2 plus 50 formula.

1) BJP led Yogi Adityanath government in UP wrote 12 page letter to the central government. In this letter the Yogi government stated that the price estimated using C2 formula for paddy was Rs.1679/- for 2019-20 and asked to fix the MSP at Rs. 2520/- by adding 50%. It asked the Centre to fix the MSP for Bajra at Rs.2265, for Maize at Rs.2225, for black gram at Rs. 6225, for green gram at Rs.635, for Red gram at Rs.5855, for groundnut at Rs. 5390, for Soya at Rs. 4245 and for Sesame at Rs. 6660/-.

2) The Devendra Fadnavis led BJP -Shiv Sena coalition government in Maharashtra asked the central government to adopt C2+50 formula for fixing the MSP in its letter dated 17/5/2019. It urged the Central Govt to fix MSP for paddy at Rs.3921/-, for maize at Rs 4002, for green gram Rs. 9943, for black gram at Rs.8551/-, for groundnut at Rs.9416, for Soya at Rs. 5755, for sunflower at Rs, 7534, for cotton at Rs.7664/-.

3) Ashok Gehlot led Rajasthan Govt urged the centre to adopt C2+50 formula for fixing MSP in its letter dated 13.5.2019 and proposed for Maize at Rs.2650/- for Soya at Rs. 4500, for black gram at Rs. 6200, and for green gram at Rs. 8600/-.

4) Manohar Khattar led Haryana govt in its letter dated 18.5.2019 said the CACP recommendations do not even meet the production expenses and urged the Central Govt to fix the MSP for

paddy between ¹ 2650-2750, for groundnut at Rs.6000, for maize at Rs. 2350, for cotton at Rs.7050, for Red gram at Rs. 7850, for green gram at Rs.9500, for black gram at Rs.7400, and for groundnut at Rs. 6000,-

5) Yadyurappa led Karnataka Govt. while rejecting the CACP recommendations urged the Central Govt to follow Swaminathan Commission's formula. In its letter dated 29.6. 2019, it stated that in Karnataka agricultural expenses and prices commission has been working since 2016 and that this commission estimates production costs and makes recommendations and that the MSP goes up very minutely if the CACP recommendations are implemented and asked the Central Govt to adopt C2+50 formula.

6) Chhattisgarh govt asked to follow C2+50 formula. It urged the central govt. to fix the MSP for paddy at Rs.2500, for red gram at Rs. 6800, for green gram 7300, for black gram at Rs.6800, for groundnut at Rs.5800, for Soya at Rs.3800, for sunflower at Rs.6500, and for Sesame at Rs. 6500. When the central govt. rejected its recommendations, the state govt. urged the central govt. to give bonus but the Centre declined to pay any bonus and it warned the state govt. not to give any bonus and if the state govt. goes against its warning it said it won't buy that paddy which was supported by state's bonus.

7) West Bengal Govt. wrote in its letter dated 8.5.2019 to the Central Govt. that CACP recommendations are not good and urged the latter to fix the MSP for paddy at Rs.2100, by following the C2+50 formula.

8) Tamilnadu govt urged the Centre to fix the MSP for paddy at Rs.2700, for Jowar at Rs.2700, for Bajra at Rs.2150, for Raagi at Rs 3150, for maize at Rs.2100, for Red gram at Rs.6300, for green

gram at Rs. 7700, for black gram at Rs. 6200, for groundnut at Rs.5400, for cotton at Rs 6200 and for long staple cotton between Rs 9000 and 10,000/-.

9) Naveen Patnaik led Odisha govt , in its letter dated 1.7.2019 said the formula $C_2 + 50$ be used for fixing the MSP but not $A_2 + FL$ and asked the MSP for paddy at Rs. 2930, for green gram at rs.7400, for black gram at Rs. 5850, for groundnut at Rs. 5140, for sunflower at Rs.5500, for cotton at Rs.5350 and for long staple cotton at Rs.5650/-.

Modi govt rejected these proposals and in a bid to protect the interests of domestic and foreign Corporates it is declining to adopt the $C_2 + 50$ formula. Chart-5 shows the estimate of the CACP, comprehensive costs of agriproduction (C_2) adding to it the Swaminatham Commission recommendation of 50%, what should be the MSP then, what will be the additional income for the farmer for one quintal per 1 ha and for 1 acre.

Table 5 :

Commission for Agricultural costs and prices (CACP) projected the cost of production (C_2) of Kharif crops for KMS 2020-21. Details of additional income for 1 quintal, for 1 HA and for 1 Acre, if we add 50% to C_2 , according to Swaminathan Commission and estimation of yield per 1 HA and the M.S.P. announced by the central govt. for the Kharif Marketing Season 2020-2021 (Rs.)

1) Sl.No. 2) Name of the Crop Cost of production for 1 Quintal (Rs.) 3) If 50% added to MSP for 1 quintal (Rs.) 4) MSP announced by the central Govt. for 1 quintal (Rs.) 5) Additional income for 1 quintal 6) Yield in 1 HA (quintals) Additional income ($C_2 + 50$) 1 HA (Rs.) 7) Additional income for ($C_2 + 50$) for 1 Acre (Rs.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.	Paddy	1667	2500	1888	632	26.59	16805	6722
2.	Jawar	2393	3590	2620	970	979	9496	3798
3.	Maize	1606	2409	1850	559	29.65	16574	6630
4.	Ragi	2763	4145	3295	850	13.32	11322	4529
5.	Arhar (Tur)	5464	8196	6000	2196	10.73	23563	9425
6.	Moong	6289	9434	7196	2242	4.94	11075	4430
7.	Groundnut	4512	6768	5275	1493	13.93	20797	11314
8.	Soyabean	3513	5270	3880	1390	12.17	16916	6766
9.	Sunflower	5079	7618	5885	1733	8.86	15354	6141

Source: Commission for Agricultural costs and prices, price policy for Kharif crops. The Marketing Season 2020-21.

(Columns No. 4, 6, 8, 9 are estimated by the author on the basis of CACP Report.)

There is more difference between the estimation made by the States and CACP. Which estimation is correct and how to know it? Why it has not been corrected so far? This problem has remained till now as big question and there is no proper explanation to this question. Keeping aside the estimates of various states, the estimates by the “Agricultural costs and Prices Commission,” the affiliate organization of the Union agriculture Ministry, the following income pattern will emerge, if we take into consideration the cost of

production estimated by CACP - the peasantry would get an additional income if Swaminathan commission's recommendation is implemented: For one quintal of paddy Rs. 632, for jowar 970, for corn Rs. 559, for ragi Rs. 850; for redgram Rs. 2196; for greengram Rs. 2242; for groundnut Rs. 1493; for soyabean Rs. 1390 and for sunflower Rs. 1733.

If the Swaminathan commission recommendation of C2+50% is implemented, the peasants will get an additional income for 1 acre is Rs. 6722 for paddy, Rs. 3798 for Jawar, Rs. 6630 for Maize, Rs. 4529 for Ragi, Rs. 9425 for red gram, Rs. 4430 for green grams, Rs. 8319 for groundnut, Rs. 6726 for Soyabean and Rs. 6141 for Sunflowers.

The Central Government is not only not implementing the recommendation of the Swaminathan Commission regarding MSP i.e. C2+50 but not including the increasing cost for seeds, fertilizer, pesticides, ploughing, weeding and harvesting etc – increased input cost for the Kharif Marketing Season 2020-'21. CACP in its report estimated the agricultural inputs cost will increase 5.1% for the Kharif 2020-'21.

Table-6 The MSP commenced by the centre for the Kharif 2020-'21 and

Percentage of increase over 2019-'20 KMS.

Sl. No.	Name of the Crop.	MSP announced for 2019-'20	MSP announced for 2020-'21	% of increase
1	2	3	4	5
1.	Paddy Gen. Variety	1815	1868	2.9
	Grade No.1	1835	1888	2.9

2. Jawar Hybrid	2550	2620	2.7
Gen. Variety	2570	2640	2.7
3. Bajra	2000	2015	7.5
4. Ragi	3150	3295	4.6
5. Maize	1760	1850	5.1
6. Redgram	5800	6000	3.4
7. Green gram	7050	7196	2.1
8. Black gram	5700	5885	3.4
9. Groundnut	5090	5275	3.6
10. Sunflower	5650	5885	4.2
11. Soyabean	3710	3880	4.6
12. Sesame	6485	6855	5.7
13. Linseed	5940	6695	12.7
14. Cotton	5215	5255	4.9
Middlle Variety	5215	5255	4.9
Long Staple Cotton	5550	5825	5.0

The above table shows, how low are the MSP announced by the centre and especially less compared to the raising prices. The MSP for Kharif crop was announced only for 12 crops and even that too was lesser than the increased cost of inputs.

Now we examine the MSP announced for RMS 2020-'21. Let us see the cost of production for wheat estimated by different states, the MSP according to the formula formulate by Swaminathan Commission, the MSP, if it is calculated on the basis of estimation of C2 made by CACP and the MSP as per the formula of

Swaminathan commission C2+50 and the additional income accrue to the farmers for 1 quintal of wheat.

Table-7

Sl. No.	Name of the State	Estimation for 1 Q. cost of production	MSP if 50% is added	MSP announced By the centre	Additional income or less income for 1 Q.
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Bihar	1452	2178	1975	‘203
2.	Gujarat	1504	2256	1975	‘281
3.	Haryana	1461	2192	1975	‘217
4.	H.P	2163	3245	1975	‘1270
5.	Jarkhand	1681	2522	1975	‘547
6.	M.P	1314	1971	1975	G4
7.	Maharastra	2408	3612	1975	‘1637
8.	Punjab	1238	1857	1975	G118
9.	Rajastan	1354	2031	1975	‘56
10.	U.P	1521	2282	1975	‘307
11.	Uttarakhand	1429	2144	1975	‘169
12.	Average-India	1425	2138	1975	‘163

(Agricultural costs and prices commission, RMS 2021-'22, P.120)

(Columns 4 & 6 are calculated by the author)

MSP was Rs. 118 more in Punjab and Rs. 4 in M.P. than the cost of production+ 50, estimated by the respective States. But, in the remaining states MSP was less by Rs. 56 to Rs. 1637 than the cost of production + 50, estimated by the states and to that extent, the farming communities are losing their income. Even if 50% added to C2 estimated by CACP, the farmer could get an additional income Rs. 163 per quintal of wheat.

Farmers not able to get the MSP in the market declared by the centre on the basis of A2+FL also. MSP for wheat during year 2018-19 in the market was on an average less than 2.9%. But, during the year 2019-'20 the wheat average price in the market was 1.3% more on MSP. But in U.P. and Rajasthan States it was less than MSP in the market and pulses' average rate was less than the MSP. According to the CACP report, it was 7.0% 2020-'21 (P.90).

Keep aside the estimation on cost of production by states and CACP, the MSP has not been increased even on par with the increase of prices also. The above stated report of the CACP said, input cost of production could increase 6.4% for rabi crops (p.82) but the MSP was increased only between 2.1% to 6.2%.

Modi Government announced the MSP to Rabi crops, and they are less than the increased cost of inputs. Hence, the MSP announced by the centre is not increasing the income of farmers but decreasing their income and drowning them in debt.

OED and ICRIER joint study report clearly came to the conclusion that whichever Government is in power, it consciously keeps the MSP at low level. The policies pursued by the government kept the MSP under pricedfor agri produce.

“This implies that domestic producers were implicitly taxed.

Table-8

MSP increased for the RMS 2021-'22 by the centre and the percentage of increase in Rs.				
Sl. No.	Name of crop	2020-21 MSP	2021-27 Announced MSP	Percentage increased MSP
1	2	3	4	5
1.	Wheat	1925	1975	2.6
2.	Barley	1525	1600	4.9
3.	Redgram	4875	5100	4.6
4.	Maruri Pulse	4800	5100	6.2
5.	Mustard	4425	4650	5.1
6.	Sefflower	5215	5327	2.1

This is partly policy, induced and partly related to other inefficiencies in the marketing chain policy. Induced inefficiencies are due to minimum support prices being set below international prices for several commodities at different periods between 2000 and 2016, to domestic regulations, and to trade policy measures”.

“... Negative market support indicates that the prices received by farmers, as measured for the purposes of this report, are lower than the prices prevailing on international markets for the comparable commodity. Almost all of the commodities studies individually experience at least one year of negative market price support in the 2000 to 2016 period”. (ibid, P.36)

“For paddy, on the other hand, the MSP was set below the international price of paddy in all years in the 2012 to 2016 period” (ibid, P.161).

It was stated in the CACP Report 2020-'21, the price of paddy in the market is less 4.7% in 2018-'19 and 3.8% in 2019-'20 than the announced MSP by the centre.

The policy of deciding the MSP less than the cost of production and even lesser than the increased prices is leading the farmers into debt trap and making them paupers. For development and self sustainability no patriotic government could do this kind of betrayal and treason.



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