

Comrades,

Today we find that the life of a worker in India had become truly very difficult. Prices have risen. Wages do not keep up with the prices. The real wages of the workers are falling. This means that, with rising prices, even with wage hikes, workers are not able to buy the same goods and services that they could earlier. Many industries like Air India, IDBI, LIC and even up to the the railways are being privatised. Due to this there will be a loss not only in the number of jobs available with these industries but also in the quality of the jobs available. The private employers are already trying to take away the rights that the workers have won after years of struggle. Though the Government talks of its concerns for the poor workers, the minimum wages are still fixed far below even the subsistence level. The right to organize into unions and the right to protest including the right to strike is under attack. The new pension scheme is a scam to deprive the workers any security in the evening of their lives.

All this is being done to give more incentives to investors, mainly foreign investors. The theory of the Government is that if the large corporates are allowed to make massive profits then some of the benefits will filter down to the whole population. This is completely a lie. The only effect is that the Ambanis and Adanis are growing richer than ever before but the common worker is poorer in real terms. He today has not real health security. The ESI scheme is tottering with neglect. Money is being silently stolen from the PF funds in various ways. All in all, the worker, upon whose labour the country has reached the level of being in the top 5 economies in the world, has been thoroughly chewed and is now sought to be spat out.

The focus of this policy of the government to oppress the worker and to give benefits to the big corporates is the new labour codes. These codes are being enacted to ensure that the concept of “permanent worker” is abolished for ever. The policy of “hire and fire” is being given free rein. Under the new codes a worker may be employed at any time and removed at any time as per the wishes of the employer. His wages will be negotiated with each individual and not necessarily with unions. The right to form unions is being curtailed. The right of the employer to lay-off or retrench workers and to close industries is being strengthened. Now, wherever 100 or more workers are employed the permission of the Government is required for lay-off, retrenchment or closure. After the new codes come into force, this will apply only to establishments employing more than 300 workers. The right of contract workers are being curtailed. Today there is some minimal protection – like registration and license, rest room etc wherever there are 20 or more contract workers. Now this will only apply if 50 or more contract workers are employed.

Though the new laws have already been passed by parliament, the new labour codes have not yet been implemented due to the rules governing such laws not being formed by various states. In the November session of parliament, if the states have still not made the rules, the Centre, we believe, intends to amend the codes to allow the centre to make all the rules. The Central Government is hell bent upon bringing these new labour codes into effect by the end of this year.

The working class needs to fight this challenge. Almost all Central Trade Unions and other large unions have condemned these new labour codes. We need to therefore come together across union lines to fight this attack on the workers rights. We are therefore holding a dharna on 5th, 6th and 7th November at Jantar Mantar in Delhi to have an open discussion on this issue. We shall invite all the major trade unions to address the workers during these three days about their views on the four labour codes. We hope that this will be the basis for forming a broad platform of the workers all over the country to fight these laws.

The farmers of this country have set us a great example. We are inspired by their fight. Now it is for us to pick up the baton and fight for our rights – for our very existence. We call upon all the workers all democratic organizations and individuals to come to join us and make this beginning of the protest a great success.

Workers of the World Unite

Long live workers-farmers unity

Down with the new four labour codes

Come to the streets and fight for our hard worn rights.

Trade Union Centre of India.