

ALL INDIA INSURANCE EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION

LIC BUILDING SECRETARIAT ROAD HYDERABAD

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To all the Zonal/Divisional/State/Regional Units:

Dear Comrades,

GENERAL ELECTIONS 2009 – OUR TASKS

The General Elections 2009 have been announced. The people of India have been called to elect the 15th Lok Sabha. The elections would be held spanning over a period of one month beginning from April 16, 2009. These elections in the midst of the general crisis of capitalism assume great importance and significance.

Elections are not just another event in the life of a nation. It is the expression of democratic aspirations of the people. It is an occasion to debate the economic and social policies and the manner in which we want to build our international relations. This is the time to thoroughly scrutinize the policies and programmes of the political parties and place before them a comprehensive agenda of nation building through mobilization of people. The nation cannot be built without fulfillment of the aspirations of the common people. Unfortunately, the vested interests in collaboration with the media are trying to reduce the whole electoral exercise to just a clash between personalities and individual ambitions. This attempt to divert the attention of people from issues of national importance and issues relating to their lives and livelihood has to be defeated. There is also a desperate attempt to sell the argument that Indian politics is bipolar with no space for a third alternative. Such conspiracies too have to be defeated.

The 2004 General Election results shocked and surprised the NDA. The NDA had hoped that its shining India campaign would ensure its victory. The ordinary people groaning under misery rejected the NDA and gave a verdict in favour of a secular formation. The people had also hoped that this secular formation would pursue pro-people policies as against the policies of the NDA that had enormously increased the inequalities. The UPA government led by the Congress with outside support of the Left adopted a National Common Minimum Programme for governance. Though the NCMP was not a revolutionary document, the major effort was to ensure the flow of at least some benefits of development to the ordinary people.

The four and half years till the Left withdrew the support witnessed a continuous struggle between the Congress and the Left over the implementation of the NCMP. The Congress was too keen to implement those policies which would advance its class interests and was least interested in pursuing the policies that would improve the conditions of the working class. It was the consistent pressure of the Left that some progressive legislations could be passed by the Parliament. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, the Right to Information Act, The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act to protect the rights of the tribals were a few prominent steps that benefited the Indian society.

But the over-all policies of the UPA government were no different from the policies of the earlier NDA government. It pursued the same neo-liberal policies causing tremendous hardships and miseries to the people. These policies hugely widened the gap between the rich and the poor. The much touted 9% growth of economy produced a few billionaires but condemned over 77 percent of our population to a miserable life. When such large section of our population were able to spend only Rs.20/- or less a day on needs of their life, it is not difficult to imagine their pathetic living standards. The UPA government also fell tremendously short in terms of their promises on health and education spending.

The forces of communalism have continued their divisive and violent activities. Parallel to this the terrorist violence continued to stalk the land. The victims of the communal riots in Gujarat are still awaiting justice. In the name of culture, a reign of terror is let loose on women and religious minorities in Karnataka by communal forces. Horrific crimes were committed against Christian minorities in Orissa. On all these issues, the UPA government refused to take a firm stand and demonstrated a lack of political will to fight communal forces.

Today the speculative finance capital has brought disaster to the world. India could not escape from the impact of this disaster. We do agree that the impact is not as great as it is being felt in America or Europe. But this is thanks to the Left not allowing the UPA government to proceed with capital account convertibility, privatizing the pension funds, amending the banking regulations that would have effectively handed over Indian private banks to the foreign capital, and the FDI hike in insurance. If the UPA government had succeeded in implementing these measures, Indian economy would have sunk deep into a terrible crisis. Nevertheless the impact of the financial crisis is already being felt. Millions of jobs have been lost. Thousands of manufacturing units specially engaged in export activities have closed down. The living standards of the working class have been severely affected. Instead of reversing the economic policies and making massive investments in infrastructure, the government is continuing the same fiscal and monetary policies. The crisis, therefore, is bound to become much more serious.

The UPA government betrayed the Indian people by developing strategic relationship with the United States and enhancing the defence relationship with Israel. The 10 years Defence Agreement with the United States, the agreement to open up the Indian economy to the foreign capital and the civil nuclear deal is clearly an abandonment of the long standing independent foreign policy of our nation. This is unacceptable to the Indian people.

The AIIEA has always considered elections as a great opportunity to mobilize people on issues of national unity, economic sovereignty, protection of our industry and advancement of the interests of the working class and the peasantry as a whole. The intentions of the Indian ruling classes are very clear as far as our industry is concerned. They want to further liberalise the industry and privatize the public sector. This is evident from the two bills that were introduced in the Parliament on December 22nd, 2008. The massive strike by the insurance employees and the support of the Left and some friendly parties ensured that the government did not succeed in passing these legislations. The Bills are now with the Standing Committee. The Bill introduced in the Lok Sabha to increase the capital of LIC may lapse with the constitution of the 15th Lok Sabha. But that does not mean that the danger would subside. Fresh attempts would be made in this direction and therefore, the composition of the 15th Lok Sabha would have a tremendous bearing on our struggle to protect our industry.

The last 5 years have unmistakably demonstrated who our friends are. It was the unwavering support of the Left that helped our struggle to thwart all attempts to privatize our industry so far. It was the support and help of the Left that enabled us to secure a handsome wage revision in 2005. It was Left again that prevented the sell out of the public sector units. Therefore, the Left parties have to be supported and strengthened. It is no secret that not just the Indian ruling class but also the world imperialism are making all efforts to weaken the CPI (M) and the Left. This conspiracy has to be defeated. The efforts of the Left to create an alternative to both the forces of neo-liberalism and communalism have to be supported. The insurance employees must join this campaign with conviction. The People for India Forums should be utilized to mobilize and educate the people. Efforts should be made to unite the trade unions and other oppressed sections of our population in this direction. We must, therefore, work tirelessly to defeat forces of neo-liberalism, forces of communalism and for the victory of the Left and third alternative. This is the major task before the insurance employees.

Comradely yours,

General Secretary.