

# ALL INDIA INSURANCE EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION

LIC BUILDING SECRETARIAT ROAD HYDERABAD

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

**Dear Comrades,**

## **Elections 2009**

The nation is in the midst of hectic preparations for the Lok Sabha polls between April 16 and May 13, 2009 to elect the 15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha. Simultaneously, elections to the State Assemblies of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Sikkim are also taking place.

Com. Salomi Minz, Convener, Working Women Subcommittee and Joint Secretary of Sambalpur Divisional Unit is contesting from Sundergarh (ST), Lok Sabha seat (Orissa) as a candidate of the CPI (M). Com. B. Madhava, former President and General Secretary of our Udupi Divisional Unit and presently the President of CITU, Karnataka state committee is contesting as the candidate of the CPI (M) from Mangalore Lok Sabha seat. AIIEA congratulates Com. Salomi Minz and Com. B. Madhava and wishes them every success in the coming elections. Leadership of AIIEA has toured these constituencies and the Zonal and Divisional Units are campaigning for the success of the comrades.

During the last Parliament elections in 2004, AIIEA appealed to the employees and the people of the country to reject the BJP-led NDA government, which ruled the country for six years with disastrous effects. People rejected the NDA government. Left parties extended support to the Congress-led UPA coalition so that a secular government could be formed at the Centre. National Common Minimum Programme was announced by the UPA government, which included certain promises to the people at the insistence of the left parties.

The CPI (M) and the Left parties consistently worked to see that the UPA government implemented the pro-people commitments made in the NCMP. Legislations such as the Rural Employment Guarantee Act and the Forest Tribal Bill were adopted only due to the continuous pressure of the Left. The left parties constantly demanded increased allocations in agriculture, education and health in keeping with the promises in the NCMP. However, the Congress-led government did not adhere to the understanding of the NCMP. It persisted in pushing through neo-liberal, anti-people policies and violating the commitment for an independent foreign policy.

Five years rule of the Congress-led UPA government has widened further the divide in society. India is ranked at fourth place in the world in terms of number of billionaires while India had 456 million people or about 42 per cent of the population living below the new international poverty line of income less than \$1.25 per day. Neo-liberal economic policies have resulted in distorted growth accompanied by agrarian crisis, rising prices, unemployment and depleting wages.

NCMP promised higher allocations for education and health. Two per cent Education Cess was imposed in the Budget 2004-05, and Secondary and Higher Education Cess was introduced in 2007-08 budget. People felt that this was their humble contribution towards their lesser fortunate brothers and sisters. But, the government continued with rampant privatisation of health and education systems, thus depriving the common people of health and education facilities. The people have suffered from continuous price rise of all essential commodities. Even though the government claims that the rate of inflation has come down, the prices of food items continue to rise.

The rights of workers and employees have been curtailed. The government has promoted contractualisation and casualisation of labour. A new concept of fixed term employment was introduced. The government passed an Act in parliament which makes a mockery of the rights and protection for workers of the unorganised sector. Though PFRDA Bill is yet to become a statute the government is pressurizing the banking and insurance sectors to introduce New Pension Scheme for the new recruits.

Wage revision for the employees and workers in various public sector undertakings and the insurance and banking industries are delayed though the concerned public sectors do not seek any assistance from the government.

Allowing FDI in real estate and encouragement of real estate speculation has led to land grabbing and a massive increase in land prices in and around urban areas. It has become impossible for even the middle class employees to own even an apartment, not to speak of an independent house.

One third reservation for women in the legislatures and parliament was one more promise that was breached.

The global financial meltdown has exposed the horrors of unbridled liberalization. The sentiments of the people were against these disastrous economic policies. But the government unashamedly went ahead to introduce two Bills in the Parliament amending the insurance laws. These Bills were intended to increase the strength of the foreign capital in the Indian insurance sector and also to weaken the public sector insurance through disinvestment. The massive strike action of the insurance employees and the spirited opposition put up by the left parties led by CPI (M) supported by the TDP and the AIADMK made the bills to be referred to the Standing Committee on finance. While the Bill in Rajya Sabha will continue to be debated, the Bill in Lok Sabha would have lapsed once the new Parliament is constituted.

While the UPA government was trying to force these Bills, the main opposition party quietly diverted itself away from these Bills. In fact, the BJP spokesman was reported to have queried as to why the Congress Party opposed 49% cap when BJP proposed it in 1999. It was there for all the insurance employees across the country to see how both these parties were committed to the same neo-liberal policies.

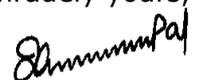
The elections have given us yet another opportunity to campaign and project the demand that public sector insurance should be protected to keep the people's savings in safe hands. Our campaign must convert itself into a political campaign against the entire gamut of the economic and social policies of the government.

The workers across the country, insurance employees included, had the first hand experience of the advantages of a strong left party contingent in the parliament. Be it the 2005 wage revision of the insurance employees, be it the successful stalling of the further liberalisation of insurance sector for 5 long years, be it the implementation of the NREGA Scheme, be it the stoppage of disinvestment of BHEL, Neyveli Lignite, NALCO etc., be it the stoppage of the passing of PFRDA Bill, the Banking Amendment Bill – all these were possible, only when there was a space for the workers to struggle and a matching support was there in the Parliament from the CPI (M) and the other left parties. The natural corollary of this experience is that the left should be strengthened in the Parliament. There cannot be any other alternative.

AIIEA wants the jobs and service conditions of the insurance employees to be safe and to improve them further. AIIEA wants the pension scheme to run smoothly and with improvements. AIIEA wants the LIC and PS General Insurance Companies to be strong. All these are possible only when we have more friends in the parliament. This is possible when both the Congress and BJP led alliances are not given the mandate.

AIIEA's appeal is plain and simple. We should work for the victory of those who will help us and not for those who are already committed to harm the interests of the insurance employees, the workers and the people at large. On 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2009 workers across the world demanded reversal of the neo-liberal policies. In India this slogan can take the form of a political demand in these elections. Defeat the neo-liberal policies, defeat the communal politics and strengthen the left and democratic forces. People should assert their will now. Insurance employees are part of the people.

Comradely yours,



General Secretary.