

EAST CENTRAL ZONE INSURANCE EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION

Jeevan Deep Buildings (1 st Floor), Exhibition Road, Patna-800001
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To, All members

MAY DAY 2013

May Day- the International Labour Day- is the day of international solidarity and unity of the working class. This day reminds us of the tremendous sacrifices courted by the martyrs to protect and uphold the interest of the working class. The heroic struggle of the American workers in Chicago (1886) demanding 8 hours of work, 8 hours of recreation and 8 hours of rest, is too well known to be repeated here. Needless to add, this struggle of 1886 paved the way for the concept of 8 hours work schedule which all of us have taken for granted today. The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) has rightly coined the slogan "Chicago showed us the way" for this year's May Day.

May Day is a day of celebration for the working class. This is also a day of remembering the sacrifices made by countless fighters and reiterating our commitment to carry forward that legacy of struggle. Today, the working class all over the world is in the midst of a grim struggle. The world economy has not yet come out of the crisis of 2008. Both the US and the European Union are neck deep in trouble. The US economy is reported to have shrunk at an annual rate of 0.1 per cent in the October-December (2012) quarter. The Euro Zone as a whole is expected to contract by 0.3 per cent in 2013. According to the Global Employment Trends Report for 2013 released by the ILO, global unemployment rose to 197.3 million in 2012. The report further says that the epicenter of the unemployment crisis has been the advanced economies of the world, accounting for half of the total increase in unemployment since the onset of the crisis. Unemployment in the US has reached to 7.90 per cent as of January 2013. Greece is having an unemployment rate of 22 percent, while it is 15 per cent in Portugal and 25 per cent in Spain. France, Italy and the UK are also experiencing more or less the same set of problems. As is the wont of capitalism, this crisis is sought to be passed on to the shoulders of the workers through the adoption of severe austerity measures. These economies are resorting to spending cuts on just about everything. Workers have had to bear the brunt of the spending cuts. Naturally, there have been fierce agitations of the workers. The US had to contend with a wave of workers' struggles in recent times. The workers' struggle in Wisconsin (in US) and their victory against the autocratic attitude of the governor is a landmark. There has been a wave of workers' protests in Greece, Spain, Italy, Belgium, France, UK and so many countries in the developed capitalist world. True to the traditions of the May Day, workers have simply refused to accept exploitation of the capitalist order.

The situation in India is no different. Price rise, unemployment and ever widening inequalities continue to haunt a vast majority of our people even after two decades of liberalization and economic reforms. The ease and élan with which the government is genuflecting to foreign capital, defies comprehension. Whatever is good for corporate India and international finance capital is sought to be portrayed as good for the aam admi. All sections of the working people are facing a critical situation, with their livelihood under threat. While prices of almost all essential commodities are going up, real wages of the workers are going down. According to

the global wage report 2012-13 of the ILO, even in sectors where productivity has increased wages have declined considerably. This is because, the share of profits in the value added has more than doubled as compared to the share of wages. The most deplorable condition is that of the farmers. According to The Hindustan Times, dated 17 April 2013, “ One Indian farmer kills himself every 37 minutes. More than 2,70,000 farmers, according to the National Crime Records Bureau, have taken their lives between 1995 and 2011. About 14,000 did so only in 2011.” While the workers, peasants and ordinary citizens have been the worst sufferers, the politician-bureaucrats-corporate nexus has been the biggest gainer of the process of neo-liberalism. One can very well say that neo-liberalism has been a liberalization of corruption. While corruption has always been an inseparable part of capitalism, one had never seen the depths of corruption that one is witnessing today.

An important aspect of these policies has been the systematic attempt to denigrate and destroy the public sector. The public sector was created as a bulwark against the intimidating tactics of imperialist powers. The very concept of public sector was rooted in our anti colonial movement. Now that is being systematically dismantled. The government has fixed a target of Rs.55,000 crore from the disinvestment of public sector undertakings as per the union budget 2013-14. While we must take a firm pledge to fight this out, we must also be on our guard against the retrograde proposals of the Insurance Laws(Amendment) Bill which seeks to increase FDI in insurance from 26 to 49 per cent and disinvest shares from the public sector general insurance companies. To do this, we must coalesce our struggle with that of the other toiling masses. That precisely is the message conveyed by May Day- a message of unity, of integration and of developing common cause with other toilers.

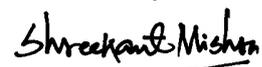
And that is precisely what we have been doing. The historic two day strike of 20-21 February 2013 which is reported to have registered the participation of around 10 crore workers was a classic demonstration of the workers’ resolve not to be swayed by the propaganda offensive of neo-liberalism. Insurance employees were a proud partner of this struggle. While we should be proud of our participation in this struggle, we must also pause and ponder over the kind of attacks the strikers were subjected to. This was the most powerful resistance movement against the neoliberal economic trajectory. Naturally, the attack of the ruling class was also the most brutal; after all, the neo liberal order itself was at stake!

We are happy to note that the spirit of struggle and sacrifice which the May Day has imbibed in the working class, is still very much visible in abundant measure. This spirit to fight shall continue to inspire us as long as exploitation of man by man has not ended.

Long Live May Day 2013. Chicago has indeed shown us the way.

With Revolutionary May Day Greetings,

Comradely Yours



General Secretary