

The 5th Triennial General Conference of ECZIEA
A Conference of Confidence, Commitment and Consolidation

The 5th Triennial General Conference of ECZIEA at Sambalpur from 29 September to 01 October 2019 was a historic success. The Conference was held at R. Govindarajan Manch in N.M. Sundaram Nagar- Tapaswini Auditorium- situated right at the heart of the serene, tranquil and lush green environs of Brooks Hill Sambalpur. In terms of planning, execution and display of organizational unity, the Conference was a great success. In spite of the approaching Durga Puja festivities, the Conference saw a record attendance of Delegates and Observers. What was striking, however, was the unprecedented attendance of women comrades from Odisha divisions, particularly from Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. The presence of our all India leadership, including Com. Amanulla Khan, President AIIEA; Com. V. Ramesh, General Secretary AIIEA; Com. B. Sanyal, Joint Secretary AIIEA and Com. B. S. Ravi, Treasurer AIIEA, gave the Conference a pan Indian look. Since the Conference came immediately after the historic achievement of one final option for Pension in a politically hostile environment, there was a justifiable sense of elation, jubilation and confidence amongst all the participants.

Flag Hoisting: This sense of jubilation and confidence in the organization was probably nowhere more visible than in the Flag Hoisting Ceremony. Com. Pradip Kumar Mukherjee, President ECZIEA, hoisted the red flag of the ECZIEA amidst the shouting of slogans. The President of ECZIEA, all the Secretariat members and all the Delegates and Observers paid floral tributes at the martyrs' column and reiterated their commitments to carry forward the legacy of the martyrs.

Rally and Inaugural Session: The Inaugural Session of the Conference was preceded by a huge and colourful procession. Even a conservative estimate would put the total number of participants in the procession at about 600. Women comrades of Sambalpur Division, all draped in red Sambalpuri sarees, led the procession from the front. The overwhelmingly large participation of women comrades in the Rally was the high point of the 5th General Conference of ECZIEA. While full throated slogans espousing the causes of the working class, unity of the people, protection of public sector and myriad other peoples' issues reverberated in the air, the Rally traversed a long distance of about 2.5 kilometers. Different trade unions of the city of Sambalpur greeted our Procession on the way and declared their solidarity with the struggle of insurance employees led by the AIIEA.

The Inaugural Session commenced with the rendition of two beautiful Opening Songs by a choir of physically challenged children from Government High School for the Blind, Burla. **Com. Pradip Kumar Mukherjee**, President ECZIEA presided over the meeting and introduced the Guests present on the occasion. The Chairman of the Reception Committee **Dr. Dillip Kumar Panda**, eminent economist from Sambalpur, gave the welcome address and exuded confidence that the three-day conference of the ECZIEA would deliberate and discuss the issues confronting the working people and chart out a course of action for future. Inaugurating the Conference, **Com. Amanulla Khan** president AIIEA, congratulated the rank and file of the organization for having made significant progress during the course of the last three years. Describing the achievement of one final option for pension as something astounding, he called upon the members to remain united under the banner of AIIEA to protect LIC in the public sector and secure all the pending issues including the much sought after demand of wage revision. **Com. V. Ramesh**, General Secretary AIIEA, recounted the heroic struggles of AIIEA in very trying situations in the past and exhorted the comrades to draw inspiration from those struggles. He called upon the members to unite with a firm conviction in the ideology of the working class and shun the divisive policies of the ruling classes. **Com. B. Sanyal**, Joint Secretary AIIEA, came down heavily on the NDA

government at the Centre for their anti-people and anti-working-class policies. He complimented AIIEA as a great organization and said that AIIEA's greatness lay in its capacity to adapt to changes while keeping its ideological moorings intact. **Sri M.K. Panda**, Sr. Divisional Manager of LIC Sambalpur Division; **Com. Bamadev Mishra**, President OSGIEA; **Com. Ashok Kumar Beriha**, General Secretary of LIC Class I Officers' Federation Sambalpur Division and **Com. D.N. Rao**, General Secretary of NFIFWI Sambalpur Division greeted the Conference and wished all success. **Com. Shreekant Mishra**, then General Secretary of ECZIEA, proposed the customary vote of thanks.

Delegates' Session: The delegates session commenced with the placing of the Report of the Working Committee by the then General Secretary of ECZIEA. The Report covered a wide gamut of issues starting from the international scene to the local issues of the zone. The issues covered in some detail in the international section of the report were the crisis of global capitalism, sustainability of the globalization process, widespread prevalence of poverty and inequality at the global scale, the emergence of the right wing as a manifestation of the growing economic crisis, the emerging popular struggles all over the world and the possibilities of a pro people alternative. The National Section of the Report dealt with the General Elections 2019, growing recessionary tendencies in the economy, agricultural crisis, attack on public sector, growing authoritarianism and attack on democratic and constitutional values, ill-conceived labour reforms, the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. There was a special mention of the growing resistance of the people against the neoliberal economic policies and the urgent need to speak truth to power. The section on the three states of Bihar, Odisha and Jharkhand tried to portray as to how liberalization process was destroying the essentially agricultural economies of the states. The section on Industry covered the multi-faceted attack on LIC as a public sector institution notwithstanding the huge strides made by the institution. A brief mention was made of the many employees' issues that were clinched in the past three years and the kind of struggle that was needed to settle the issues still pending for resolution. The Organisation Section of the Report dispassionately dealt with the strengths and weaknesses of the organization. While it commended our efforts on the demonstrative aspects of organization, our inadequacies in relation to action oriented programmes were highlighted. The Report concluded with a brief delineation of the Tasks ahead.

Com. Sudhanshu Shekhar Singh, then Treasurer ECZIEA, placed the audited statements of accounts for the three years ending 2018.

Com. Abhay Kumar Das, General Secretary of CDIEA Cuttack, initiated the discussion on the Report. In a brilliant analysis of the issues and challenges confronting insurance employees and insurance industry, he drew a road map for future struggles and set the tone for the debate that ensued. A total of 27 comrades, including three women comrades namely, **Com. Manorama Mohanty**, Convener Women's Sub Committee of ECZIEA; **Com. Sanghamitra Sarangi** (Sambalpur) and **Com. Swarnalata Mishra** (Bhubaneswar), placed their views on the Report, enriched it qualitatively and expressed their agreement with the basic formulations of the Report.

The leadership of AIIEA intervened in the discussion and guided the Conference. It was for the first time that **Com. B.S. Ravi**, Treasurer AIIEA, attended any Conference of ECZIEA. In his unassumingly simple yet inimitable style, he opined that ECZIEA had been growing from strength to strength over the years and this was being reflected in the fact that ECZIEA invariably recorded the highest strike percentage in almost all the strike actions of the recent past. He implored that this commitment should be replicated in other programmes of action also so that the organization matures still further. **Com. B. Sanyal**, Joint Secretary AIIEA, made a brilliant analysis of the different contours of our organization. Explaining the class position of AIIEA on issues confronting the industry, the employees and the society at large, Com. Sanyal drew the attention of the house to the need for a broad-based struggle for social change. **Com. V.S. Baghel**, Joint Secretary CZIEA, greeted the Conference and lauded the remarkable unity and unanimity in the organization. The General Secretary of AIIEA, **Com. V. Ramesh**, intervened in the debate and made an impassioned plea to strengthen the organization ideologically. Congratulating the

employees for achieving most of their economic demands in the background of seemingly insurmountable odds, he explained that this had been possible because of the ideological cohesion of the organization. He said that in a situation where democratic rights are being attacked, we must remain vigilant to protect our hard-won trade union rights. Com. Ramesh felt that this would be possible if insurance employees made common cause with other sections of the toiling people and joined the developing movements. In this context, he called upon the members to join enmasse the proposed One Day Strike on 8th January 2020 as per the call of the National Convention of Central Trade Unions and Independent Federations held at new Delhi on 30th September 2019. **Com. Amanulla Khan**, President AIIEA, addressed the Delegates Session and explained in minutest details as to how the insurance industry was a prime target under the disinvestment programme of the NDA government at the Centre. He said that the political arrogance of the government had made it impervious to any saner advice. This, he felt, finds reflection in the thinking in the government circles to list LIC in the Stock Market. He was critical of the fact that the government was out to curtail the democratic rights of the working people by invoking false notions of nationalism and patriotism. He cautioned the employees to remain vigilant over the moves of the ruling classes to pit one section of the workers against the others. He said that the best antidote against such nefarious moves was to build broader unity between the organized and unorganized sections of the working people and thwart all divisive tendencies. He made a very incisive analysis of the idea of India with syncretism and pluralism at its core. He exhorted the members to protect this idea of India and launch a powerful movement against neoliberalism, against privatization and the divisive policies of the present-day rulers.

The then General Secretary of ECZIEA, **Com. Shreekant Mishra**, summed up the debate and appreciated the absolute unanimity of opinion expressed by all the delegates who spoke in the conference and pointed out that this was reflective of the unity that has been brought about throughout the zone. Following this, the Report and the Audited Statements of Accounts were unanimously adopted by the house.

Decisions of the Conference: The 5th General Conference of ECZIEA decided that: (i) Each Divisional Unit will collect minimum of 1000 signatures from prominent personalities of their area in a Memorandum addressed to the Finance Minister of India against 18% GST on Life Insurance and Medical Insurance Premium. This is to be done by 31.12.2019. (ii) Each Divisional Unit will organize at least one Seminar commemorating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. (iii) Each Divisional Unit will undertake a special campaign to ensure Zero SB Outstanding as on 31 December 2019. (iv) Each Division will take maximum organizational steps for recruiting New Members (v) Widespread Campaigns, including live contact with membership, have to be taken in preparation of the 8th January 2020 Strike Action (vi) Each Divisional Unit should pool our resources for imparting training to Agents.

Adoption of Resolutions: The Conference unanimously adopted 13 Resolutions. These were Resolution against open invitation to FDI in crucial sectors of the economy, Resolution against the Policy of Disinvestment of PSUs, Resolution against proposed FDI hike in Insurance, Resolution against the Labour Law Amendments, Resolution against the ill-conceived move to list LIC in the Stock Exchange, Resolution against the undermining of LIC Board's functional autonomy, Resolution on Empowerment of Women, Resolution Demanding Wage Revision in LIC, Resolution demanding withdrawal of GST on Life and Medical Insurance Premium, Resolution demanding separate income tax exemption limit for life insurance premium, Resolution demanding improvements in the Pension Scheme and Scrapping of the Defined Contribution Scheme, Resolution against Hate Crimes and Resolution Demanding Recognition to AIIEA.

Election of Office Bearers: The Conference unanimously elected a 50 member Working Committee with **Com. Pradip Kumar Mukherjee as President, Com. Trinath Dora as General Secretary and Com. Sadhan Kumar Mishra as Treasurer.**

A Rich Cultural Programme: The artists of Sambalpur Tribal and Folk Art Centre, under the guidance of guru Sri Alok Kumar Panda, made a rich presentation of Sambalpuri dance and

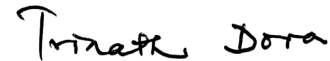
music encompassing a beautiful mosaic of village life and culture. It was a rich repertoire of Dalkhai, Mailajada and Rasarkeli to the accompaniments of Dhol, Nishaan, Tasa and Muhuri.

A Great Job Indeed, SDLIEA Sambalpur: Comrades of Sambalpur Division Life Insurance Employees' Association (SDLIEA) left no stone unturned to make the Conference a memorable one. Over hundred volunteers, including women comrades, tirelessly worked to ensure all round success of the Conference. Right from planning to execution, from receiving the delegates to seeing them off, from quality of the arrangements to the warmth of affection- everything was flawless. A sense of camaraderie and bonhomie left an unmistakable imprint in whatever they did. We convey our Red Salute to the comrades of SDLIEA Sambalpur.

Comrades, the 5th General Conference of ECZIEA was held against the backdrop of our historic achievements on the issue of Pension and Recruitment. Both are anathema to neoliberalism. So, our victory on these two issues is essentially a victory against neoliberalism. That gives us Confidence. We clinched this victory by displaying remarkable unity. That unity was nothing but a reflection of our Commitment to our ideology. The Confidence and the Commitment will certainly help us register further Progress. What is needed is Consolidation. And that we must do. That is the Call of the Conference.

With Revolutionary greetings,

Comradely Yours



General Secretary