

WP/KS

ADDRESS OF
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PRESIDENT

RECEPTION COMMITTEE
12TH ANNUAL SESSION
ALL INDIA KISAN SABHA

MOGA, SEPTEMBER 13—19, 1954.

Price As. -/2/-

COM. PRESIDENT, DELEGATES, OBSERVERS AND FRIENDS,

I welcome you all heartily to this Conference of the All India Kisan Sabha. It is for the second time in the history of organised peasant movement in India that the Punjab has been given the honour to hold Annual Session of All India Kisan Sabha.

Eleven years ago, when the organised peasant movement in India was still in its infancy, the Punjab had the proud privilege to hold the Annual Session of the All India Kisan Sabha at Bhakna.

To-day when the organised peasant movement in India has become a mighty force embracing over one million of organised peasantry, Punjab & Pepsu have once again been given this honour. In between this period of 11 years, friends, we in Punjab & Pepsu had to suffer very hard and sacrifice the most in order to defend the gains of our peasant as well as National movement. After Bhakna Session in 1943, to-day you find our dear land cruelly partitioned into two. Nearly 10 million people had to migrate from one part to the other. During the process of this cruel partition, nearly 1500 of our villages of East Punjab & Pepsu alone have been razed to the ground, lakhs of acres of crops were destroyed and people rendered homeless.

The worst communal forces organised by princes and feudal elements were let loose, killing lakhs of our people. Some of our best Kisan leaders like Com. Gehal Singh of Chhajal Wadi-then the President Punjab Kisan Sabha, had to sacrifice their very lives in defending the lives of Muslim

brethren against the hands of communal forces.

With all humility therefore, I say that the peasant movement in this part of the country deserved this honour. It goes without saying that the peasantry of the Punjab and Pepsu have always been in the forefront of our National movement. As a matter of fact despite the lack of political philosophy to guide and an organisation to assure continuity of their resistance, since the beginning of this century, the peasants of Punjab and Pepsu have been the tall blazers of the mighty people's movement that arose and developed during the last two decades. As early as 1907, Sardar Ajit Singh, and many others led the oppressed peasants against British rulers. In those very times, the peasants who had migrated to foreign countries like America and Canada, organised themselves into the Gadar Party which had fearlessly fought against the foreign rule for about forty years.

The memories of the brave sacrifices of the heroes of Gadar Party, the martyrs of Jallianwala Bagh and Babar Akalis are still fresh in our minds. The mighty Akali movement after 1920 is one of the biggest mass action of the peasants of Punjab & Pepsu against Imperialists and Feudal domination over the Gurdwaras.

The peasantry of Punjab & Pepsu formed the backbone of our National movement since very early times.

The peasant youth in our National movement has always been self.- sacrificing and radical in its outlook. When the upper strata leadership in our National movement failed to lead the people forward, Nav Jwan Bharat Sabha was organised. Here, I may remind you in passing, brothers, that the present Red Flag of the All India Kisan Sabha, was hoisted in Punjab for the first time in our

country in May, 1926 by the leaders of Nav Jwan Bharat Sabha. In 1930, an attempt was made to organise the Kisan Sabha in Punjab but it was banned. In 1936, when the foundation of All India Kisan Sabha was laid, a strong contingent led by Baba Jawala Singh, participated, and immediately after that the Provincial Kisan Sabha was set up in Punjab and Pepsu which is functioning regularly since then despite many onslaughts and heavy odds. The struggling peasants especially the tenants in Pepsu have suffered very hard in their struggle. They have braved firings many a time. Many of their best sons have laid their lives even during the recent periods.

It is to this land of great martyrs like Sardar Bhagat Singh a peasant youth of Doaba, Sardar Kartar Singh of Sarrabha, Baba Jawala Singh and many more, that I once again welcome you.

COMRADES, the Reception Committee of the All India Kisan Conference have selected Moga as the venue of this Session, not only because the area surrounding it, is one of the strongholds of the Kisan movement in our part but also because of the fact that the best sons of this soil have laid their lives while defending the just struggles of the people.

Since the year 1948 alone, when the Congress rulers unleashed beastly repression against us, half a dozen stalwart leaders of this district have died. Baba Rur Singh veteran peasant leader and one of the founders of Gadar Party died when he was forced to serve the people by remaining underground. Pandit Chhajju Ram of Kokri, the well-known young leader of this area got drowned in an attempt to cross a streamlet, when he was being chased by the Police. Cold blooded murder of Com. Shangara Singh took place just before the eyes of Pandit Nehru at Ferozepur. This Comrade

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wanted to present a Memorandum to Pt. Nehru on behalf of Refugee peasants, but instead of giving patient hearing, he was shot dead by the Police. Com. Chanan Singh of Daudhar also died in the fields while serving the people by evading his arrest after 1948.

Recently, we lost another veteran peasant leader Baba Nidhan Singh M.L.A. Because of prolonged hunger-strikes and lathi-charges inside Congress jails, he was physically wrecked. Despite this, he continued serving the people, and very recently he died on June 24, 1954. In him, and in other comrades, we have lost valuable workers for the cause of the peasantry. We express our profound sorrow at the death of all these comrades.

Let us begin our work in this Session with paying homage to the memory of those who have fallen in battle for the defence of the interests of the peasantry and the people not only in this part of the country but all over India.

Comrades, you are meeting after one and a half year. During this period we have faced many problems which are coming under your discussion at this Session. India being a vast country, its land system and peasant problems vary from region to region. But still I understand that many of the problems faced by us in Punjab and Pepsu are quite similar to those experienced in many other parts of India. Moreover, we all have to face a uniform policy of the Central Govt. all over India with regard to land problem, taxation, repression and Civil liberties. For many years during the past, we in all parts of India, have jointly struggled against the oppression on peasantry. We have received active support and guidance from each other. We have inspired each other by our heroic struggles and gained valuable lessons through our rich experiences. To-day,

therefore, friends, whether you come from the South or East or West, our peasants feel most closely related to you, the representatives of the organised and struggling peasants of these parts. Despite your various languages, which the peasants of Punjab and Pepsu do not understand, they are eagerly waiting for your call for action.

Our peasants in Punjab and Pepsu are facing some very serious problems. They are eagerly looking to you, friends, for their guidance in this Session. You will excuse me, if I take some of your time to place before you some of our urgent problems.

EVICCTIONS of tenants has assumed a very serious character in Punjab and Pepsu. Govt. Policies with regard to tenants, and the so called tenancy laws have helped the landlords to resort to large scale eviction of their tenants. So much so, that even the Central Govt. has been forced to confess utter failure of these laws.

This serious problem of eviction of tenants has brought to the forefront the entire land problem in these areas. Some propagandist of the Government and Agents of landlords falsely preach that Punjab is a land of peasant proprietors mainly and as such the tenant problem is not so very large. There is no doubt that very big landlords and princes own large portion of our lands in Punjab and Pepsu. Lakhs of tenant families are being exploited by them.

But the peasant owners too are becoming more and more dependent for their cultivation on others because of ever increasing pressure on land. More than 50 percent of the owners in Punjab own less than 5 acres and the number is even higher in hilly areas and in Doaba districts. Normally, a cultivator in our part requires at least 8 to 15 acres of land in order to carry on one plough cultivation. Therefore, we come across lakhs of families of tenant cum owner culti-

vators in Punjab and Pepsu. In certain districts 50 percent of the tenants are tenant cum owners. Therefore when we talk of tenant problems, these concern a very large majority of the cultivators whether small owners or the landless.

On the other hand during the last few years of Congress rule the landlords have received free support from the Govt. to evict their tenants. When many thousands of Muslim tenants migrated to Pakistan in 1947, the landlords occupied all their lands, and refused any settlement for tenants uprooted from Pakistan. Up to 1950 there was absolutely no law forbidding eviction of tenant. Therefore, by evicting the tenants, the landlords in Punjab and Pepsu have developed very large farms. It is reported that in Pepsu there are 1000 tractors. In this district of Ferozepur, where we are holding this Session, there are nearly 800 tractors working on the Landlord Farms.

All these regions are industrially the least developed, and whatever we had has been ruined mostly after partition.

Pressure on land, therefore, is very serious. That is why despite Rent Control up to a maximum of one third most of cultivators have still to pay half Batai and the cash rent in certain areas is as high as Rupees 200 per acre of land. The problem for the cultivators of land here, therefore, is not of eviction only. It is now also closely connected with the grant of Land to poor peasants. This cannot be granted unless the Land controlled under big farms is taken over and also vast areas of Waste Land are distributed.

IRRIGATION. Water rates have been increased by 50 percent quite in line with the All India Policy of the Govt. In Punjab it is all the more unjustified because the peasants have paid very heavily upto now for the Canal waters. Irrigation department has always been a source of huge profits to the Govt. Not only, that water rates have been

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increased, various other wicked tricks and devices are practised in order to increase the total realizations of water rates. Abiana has been increased but the water supply is ever on the decrease. The same amount of canal water is distributed on more lands in order to increase the area to be charged for water tax. Thus the crops do not properly mature and total earnings of the peasant are greatly reduced. There is much talk of big irrigation Project in Punjab and Pepsu, but the peasants are crying for canal water for their fields. You will be astonished to know, that where as there is much talk of early completion of Bhakra Project, quite recently the Irrigation department has announced its inability to provide even the normal supply of canal water in Gurdaspur and Amritsar districts. In addition, the peasantry in Punjab alone will have to pay Betterment charges of 75 crores.

BURDEN OF TAXATION

Taxes have been increased very much during the past few years, 50 percent increase in Abiana is already reported. Local rates and Professional taxes have been enhanced. Quite recently surcharge on land has been imposed from 25 to 40 percent of the normal Land Revenue on land holdings of over 5 acres. Besides these, burden of many more indirect taxes on the people has fallen. In 1947-48 the Budget income for this part of East Punjab was Rs. 8 crores only which has increased to about Rs. 24 crores.

In certain districts heavy burdens have been imposed on the peasants shoulders under the cover of Bogus and unplanned, least helpful development schemes. In Gurdaspur, Amritsar and Ferozepur, the peasants have been asked to pay more than a crore of Rupees for drainages.

Under the cover of collections for National Loan the peasants have been cheated and looted. Heavy quotas for National Loans are being placed on the Panchayats. A

novel method of getting National Loan has been adopted. The Government takes loan from big banks at the rate of 6 percent but National Loan returns are $3\frac{1}{4}$ percent from the Government. This difference in interest to be paid to the Bank is being realised from the people. For every Rs. 100 Loans from a bank, the Government Officials catch hold of a peasant to pay Rs. $2\frac{1}{2}$ /. In this Welfare State the poor peasants and people have to part with their incomes and earnings in order to pay full interests to capitalists. It is a Welfare State, no doubt. But of whose welfare becomes clear from this naked example. Coercive methods are used in order to collect National Loan. Scores of Panches have been removed for their failure to collect National Loan.

REPRESSION.

We are facing serious repression and curtailment of civil liberties. A very large number of our Kisan workers are still being tried in Courts. Against the struggling peasants especially tenants Sec. 107/151 is freely used. In order to help the landlords to evict their tenants, various types of false cases have been started. People in general are terrorised. During the past few years the police have been granted licence to kill our citizens. People are most brutally beaten in Police Stations and many cases of death of under-trials in Police lock-ups have many times been criticised in our Press. There are cases of murdering and shooting the persons, who are even wanted for trial in courts. Memories of brutal, inhuman police repression in Rohtak district is quite fresh in our minds. Quite recently about a dozen persons have been killed in Amritsar district. After shooting the persons it is reported that death occurred in encounter with the police. But strangely, not one policeman in all these cases received any injury. Comrades, Fascist methods to terrorise the people are practised. False murder and dacoity cases have been framed against Kisan workers. Many of

these failed in law courts.

Sec. 144 has permanently come to stay in one form or the other. Novel methods of banning public meetings are devised. For example, public meeting is allowed but the use of loudspeakers is banned. Here in Moga, Comrades, inspite of our repeated demands, inspite of the demand by over thirty M. Ps., the Punjab Government did not remove the ban on loudspeakers in Moga. For these days of the Conference we had to take special permission from the District Magistrate. Still we are not permitted to use the loudspeaker in order to make any announcement in the town.

Thus in order to defend the interests of the peasants the Kisan movement in Punjab and Pepsu has to struggle against eviction and against increasing tax burdens. It has to struggle under heavy repression and under seriously curtailed civil liberties. Comrades in line with the Kisan movement in other Provinces, the Kisan Sabha Units and its workers have bravely stood with the peasants in all their struggles. We are proud to announce that the Kisan Organisation in Punjab and Pepsu embraces all the glorious revolutionary traditions of this country. Revolutionaries of the Gadar Party are under the banner of Kisan Sabha. In spite of their old ages, Baba Gurmukh Singh, Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna and many more are working in the peasant movement. The heroes of Akali movement like Sohan Singh Josh, the Babar Akalis, comrades like Pt. Kishori Lal, the associate of Sardar Bhagat Singh, the Navjwan Bharat Sabha, and leading selfless Congressites of anti-imperialist traditions are in our Kisan Sabha. That is why all attempts of certain misguided persons to set up rival Kisan organisations in Punjab and Pepsu have miserably failed.

We are glad to announce that our neighbours and close allies, the peasants of Himachal Pradesh have also organised and affiliated to the All India Kisan Sabha. The

peasants of these two Provinces have very close ties and we assure you comrades, that the Kisan organisation in Punjab will help this new unit of the All India Kisan Sabha.

As desired by the All India Kisan Sabha, an independent mass organisation of the Rural Workers has come into existence in our province. We render all possible help to this organisation and our experience has shown that an independently organised Rural worker is the most helpful and solid ally of the Kisan movement.

The peasant movement here is not confined simply to the problems stated above. We are awakened to all the national & international events. In recent times the importance of a strong peace movement is much more emphasised. The achievements of Geneva Conference and of Nehru-Chou En Lai declarations have revealed that the peace movement of the people can mobilise a very wide support for peace and against war. It can isolate the war-mongers and to a very great extent foil their nefarious designs. Peasant movement in Punjab and its people have been playing their worthy role. We are proud that two respected sons of Punjabi soil Dr. Saif-U-Din Kitchlew and Dr. Sahib Singh Sokhey received International Stalin Prizes for Peace. We carry the message of peace to our people. At our Chabewal Provincial Conference we held a Peace Session, which was addressed by Dr. Kitchlew. Here too we have organised a Peace Session in order to mobilise the public for Asian Solidarity as called upon by the Peace movement. We in Punjab and Pepsu are much more keen on preserving peace. The wounds of the communal carnage of 1947 have not yet healed. Machinations of American Imperialists in Kashmir and Pakistan create a very dangerous situation for us. A slight vibration of communal or war tension endangers our very lives.

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Such are the problems in face of which our people are anxiously looking towards this vast mass organisation of peasants for lead and guidance. Despite the loss due to fall in prices of food grains two months prior to this day, despite the heavy tax burdens, the peasants and rural workers have generously contributed to make this Session of the All India Kisan Sabha a success. The people of Moga town itself have contributed and helped a lot in it. For day and night the peasant volunteers have worked for this conference. Volunteers from the working - class centres, the students and women are all shouldering various responsibilities of the Reception Committee.

On behalf of the Reception Committee I have no hesitation to say that whatever arrangements we have made are due to the assistance of all these friends and comrades.

There is no denying the fact that we have failed to make proper arrangements in many respects inspite of our best efforts. Still we hope that you will carry back to your provinces the sincere affection of our people towards you and through you to the people of your respective provinces.

Finally, I once again greet you, delegates and friends who represent the peasants who waged glorious struggles in Telengana and all other parts of the South, the people of West Bengal and Tripura, the peasants struggling in Bihar, U. P. and Rajasthan, in Gujerat and Marathi areas.

LONG LIVE ALL INDIA KISAN SABHA.

INQILAB ZINDA BAD.

Moga, Sept, 17—1954.

Jagjit Singh Lyallpuri

GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT
to the 12th Session of the
ALL-INDIA KISAN SABHA

Moga, September 15-19, 1954



ALL-INDIA KISAN SABHA

REPORT OF THE WORK OF THE ALL-INDIA KISAN SABHA

(May 1953 to September 1954)

The Twelfth Session of the All-India Kisan Sabha is meeting at a time when world important developments are taking place in the international situation. The seven year old war in Indo-China was stopped and cease-fire agreement was arrived at. As a result, the international situation, which was threatened by war clouds, is to an extent eased and great possibilities were opened for peaceful reconstruction of the economies of all countries.

This very favourable situation is vitiated by a big economic crisis on the agrarian front which is assuming alarming proportion day by day and which has enveloped India also. Large surpluses of farm produces are lying unsold in the big capitalist countries especially in the USA, Canada, Argentina and Australia and there is a sharp price fall in these countries. This had its effects on the agricultural prices in India also and in the recent period, we find a sharp fall in the prices of food grains, oil seeds and other crops. This development, if unchecked, is fraught with serious consequences for the entire economy of our country, for, agriculture stands as the main base for the entire economy of the country.

The fall in prices is only a symptom of the general crisis that has set in in the agrarian economy for a long time and is its aggravation. Though the international situation is eased to an extent, yet, the warmongers are making hectic efforts to organise war blocs, as the SEATO, and are drawing countries, neighbouring to India, into these blocs. All these have immense importance to the peasantry. Therefore, it is necessary to study how, in the intervening period between the 11th and 12th sessions, the agrarian crisis developed, what are its effects on the life of the peasants and agricultural labourers and how the peasants fought and won.

In this period, the agrarian crisis developed into a national crisis and is being more and more clearly seen by all sections of the people. The rural unemployment has grown to unpre-

cedented heights and the purchasing power of the rural masses has incredibly fallen. This can be seen by the fall in the offtake of food ration during famine times from the ration shops even in scarcity areas. This crisis had repercussion and effects on the entire national economy. The internal market for the production of industrial goods is diminished and this is shown in the big crisis that the handloom cloth industry is facing. Growth of the rural unemployment has tremendously increased, thus leading to a further fall in the purchasing power of the people and thus complicating the question of shrinking internal market. The railway earnings have fallen and so on. Thus, it is more and more becoming plain that at the root of the national crisis stands the agrarian crisis and that unless the latter is solved, no other single problem in the country could be solved.

The Central and State Governments manned by the Congress, are coming out with various plans and schemes, which profess to solve this problem. But all these schemes and plans of the Congress Governments miserably fail in solving even one single aspect of the crisis, as in reality, they do not seek to abolish landlord exploitation and foreign and native monopoly loot and on the other, go to aggravate and complicate it.

The Cannanore session discussed these issues and adopted a number of resolutions, of which the following are some of the important ones:

- a) Evictions should be resisted. Foolproof legislation against evictions and for tenancy rights should be demanded.
- b) Increase in canal rates be stopped.
- c) Famine relief should be organised.
- d) Agitation to stop repression and for the release of all arrested persons should be carried on.
- e) Peace campaign should be strengthened.

Even though resolutions could not be passed on several other issues, owing to lack of time, the historic Policy Statement, adopted by the Cannanore Session put forward the basic and urgent demands of the kisan movement. Ever since, the Policy Statement has become a source of inspiration and guidance to the entire kisan movement in our country.

GOVERNMENT PLANS

The much-boasted First Five-Year Plan, the blue print of the Congress Government says that: "The future of land-ownership and cultivation is perhaps the most fundamental issue of national development. The pattern of economic and

social organisation will depend upon the manner in which the land problem is solved." It commends a plan by which, "It is necessary on the one hand, to achieve agricultural targets in the Five-Year Plan, and on the other, the land policy should be such as will reduce disparities in wealth and income, *eliminate exploitation, provide security for tenant and worker*, and finally, promise equality of status and opportunity to different sections of rural population."

The plan promises tenancy reforms, ceilings on landholdings, construction of major and minor projects, establishment of gram panchayats and co-operatives, community projects and so on, which, it claims, will solve the land problem and bring prosperity to the peasants and agricultural labourers.

AGRARIAN REFORMS AND THEIR RESULTS

In pursuance of these grandiose schemes and policies, the Congress Governments in the Centre and the States have passed a number of legislations. They are claiming that in all the Part 'A' and several of the Part 'B' States, they have passed Zamindari and Jagirdari Abolition Acts, thus abolishing intermediaries, tenancy laws giving security to the tenants and fixing fair rents and ceilings to landholdings, laws for the consolidation of small holdings and prevention of subdivision of holdings; constructing huge multi-purpose projects, extending rural development under community projects and National Extension Schemes and so on. But in their totality, what do they amount to?

By the passing of the Estates Acquisition Act of 1953, in all Part 'A' States, zamindari system has been 'abolished'. By this acquisition, the right of the zamindar and jagirdar to collect rent from the peasants has been taken away by the States. The rights over irrigation sources, forests, pasture lands, etc., were also acquired by the States. To this extent, the zamindari and the jagir acquisition is beneficial. But at what price? The recent review of the working of the plan by the Planning Commission says that the total amount of compensation together with rehabilitation grants to zamindars and jagirdars come to about 450 crores of rupees and if we include the interest charges to this, it would easily go beyond Rs. 550 crores of rupees, which also is the estimate of the Research Department of the All-India Congress Committee. (This does not include hundreds of crores of rupees which the peasants in the Punjab, UP and other places have to pay to get landownership rights.) Secondly, in many States, the rent burdens were not reduced

at all, as for instance in UP, Bihar, Bengal, and the same old high rents are being collected now by the State. Thirdly, lakhs and lakhs of acres of land, in the name of 'Sir', 'Khud-kasht', 'Bakasht', 'Khas', 'Kamatam', 'Pannai', etc., were left to the zamindars—the real Bhoodan made by the State! In one State, UP, it is estimated that the zamindars were left with 23,00,000 acres of land in this manner, the land which the peasants were always cultivating. In several States, even after this 'abolition' of zamindari, the peasant was not made full owner of the land but had to pay a heavy price for acquiring such right—in UP, this price is 10 times the rent and in PEPSU, it is 12 times for occupancy tenants.

Thus the Zamindari Acquisition Acts place a colossal financial burden on the entire nation and robs the peasantry of tens of millions of acres of rich, fertile land. This greatly prevents the national development which is so much required, in that, hundreds of crores of rupees will be spent to feed a parasitic class which otherwise would have gone to finance so many irrigation, educational and such other schemes.

In several States, the tenancy laws were passed, it is true, giving a very uneasy sort of security to tenants and reducing rents. During the period under review, tenancy laws were passed in Hyderabad, PEPSU, Madras (the law being applicable only to two districts and one taluk), Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, etc. The broad features of these tenancy laws are:

a) Two types of tenants are recognised: the protected tenant and ordinary tenant. A tenant in continuous possession for a fixed number of years is a protected tenant and gets fixity of tenure in perpetuity, subject to the condition that the landlord can evict the tenant and resume the land under the tenant for his 'self-cultivation', up to a certain limit. The ordinary tenant is given fixity of tenure for 5 to 10 years.

b) Maximum rates of rent are fixed, either in terms of gross produce or in terms of multiples of land revenue. The rates range from 60 per cent of the gross produce (Tanjore Tenancy Act) to 4 to 5 times land revenue (Hyderabad Tenancy Act).

c) In some States, the tenant is given the right of pre-emption to purchase land. The price fixed ranges between 90 times the land revenue or Rs. 200, whichever is less (PEPSU Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act) and market price.

d) Future acquisition of land beyond a maximum limit is prohibited in several states.

Some of the provisions of these laws, as, for instance, the

fixation of maximum rents, have provided limited relief but in their totality, these laws have become the instruments in the hands of the landlords to launch a big offensive against the tenants. All these laws invariably give the right to the landlords to evict tenants and to resume land for self-cultivation and today in many States, this particular right given to the landlords, has created such a serious situation that it is unprecedented in the recent decades. Lakhs and lakhs of tenants are evicted and are still being evicted from millions of acres. These evictions are taking place under various pretexts—resumption of land for 'self-cultivation' by landlords; alleged failure of tenant to pay rent and so on. Even the survey settlements are leading to eviction of tenants on a mass scale. In UP, Bihar, Punjab and other provinces, the names of the tenants are unceremoniously removed from the records and not at all entered in the records while the survey settlement is conducted. This resulted in large-scale eviction of tenants and in UP alone more than 70,000 petitions were sent through the offices of the Kisan Sabha and other organisations for correction of records. Aj, a pro-Congress Daily from Banaras, reports: "Only in Bareilly district, the local District Magistrate has come across 75,000 wrong entries. Similarly, in Musafirkhāna tehsil of Sultanpur District, 59,000 wrong entries were found out.... If enquiries are conducted in all the 51 districts of UP, probably the number of wrong entries would go up to crores." (Editorial—dated 24-7-1954.) Thus, this most vicious provision, which gives the right of resumption of land to the landlord in the name of 'self-cultivation' has proved the biggest weapon in the hands of the landlords.

This provision is not just a flaw in the law but is a deliberate attempt on the part of the Governments. The whole might of the State is thrown in behind the landlords in their nefarious game of eviction in the name of resumption for 'self-cultivation'. This is a part of the Congress plan to promote 'efficient management of land', 'progressive agriculture', etc. by creating a class of capitalist landlords at the expense of the vast masses of peasants. This right given to the landlords should be looked at together with the other facilities extended by the States. The advances paid for purchasing tractors, for sinking tube wells, for setting up electric pump sets and diesel engines and so on, all flow into the hands of the landlords who are taking up to 'self-cultivation', which is defined as even management by a supervisor.

Thus, in fact, the tenancy laws and the Zamindari and Jagir Aquisition Acts, while giving some concessions, some

of which are even substantial, are, at the same time, resulting in large-scale eviction of the peasants, throwing additional burdens on the mass of people and augmenting the number of landless peasants in the rural areas.

TAXATION AND PRICE POLICIES

Together with these tenancy and land reforms, the taxation and price policies followed by the Government are directly resulting in throwing additional heavy burdens on the peasantry and are helping the imperialist monopolists to loot the peasants, by manipulating the import and export trade and the price mechanism. Especially, in the name of financing the irrigation and other development projects of the Five-Year Plan, the Government is imposing ever new taxes and is increasing the already existing heavy taxes. The Planning Commission suggested, in order to finance the irrigation projects, the creation of a non-lapsable Irrigation Development (Ways and Means) Fund. This fund should be created by the State Government into which a definite sum of money could be paid every year, either from the general revenues or from loans, or from savings and to which should be added loans and grants, if any, from the Central Government and the proceeds of Betterment Levy, increment in water rates, etc. The Commission further lays down that the State Governments should re-examine the water rates and increase them and proposes that all State Governments should levy a betterment fee on all new irrigation projects. Several State Governments have already implemented these directions and have increased water rates and imposed betterment levy, development tax, etc.

Together with these, a multitude of other taxes are imposed in the recent period, the burden of which falls mainly on the masses of peasants and agricultural labourers. The surcharge on land revenue, the fee for consolidation of holdings, the panchayat tax, local rate, profession tax, the multi-point sales tax, the compulsory 'voluntary' labour service by the villagers for 'development works' and so on, and such other direct and indirect taxes, are proving a heavy burden, eating away a substantial portion of the meagre incomes of the rural masses. Thus, the promises made by the Faizpur Congress Agrarian Resolution, which was reaffirmed times without number, that tax burdens would be decreased and that a graded tax on agricultural incomes in the place of present land tax would be introduced, was unceremoniously put into cold storage and the tax burdens are increased.

The price policy pursued by the Government is measured to suit the conveniences and benefits of the imperialist and Indian monopolists, rather than the bulk of the peasants or the consumers and this is best seen in the price manipulation of sugar cane and the government refusal to interfere in the fall in prices of several agricultural commodities. The price of sugarcane was arbitrarily cut down from Rs. 2 per maund to Rs. 1-12 and then to Rs. 1-5 and during the last season was raised only by 2 annas to Rs. 1-7, whereas, contrary to all promises made that sugar prices would be brought down, it was actually allowed to sky rocket, even up to Rs. 41 per maund. As a result of this uneconomic price for cane, the sugarcane growers lost, during one season alone, i.e., 1952-'53, more than 15 to 20 crores of rupees. Similarly, the price of tobacco has fallen, particularly of flue-cured Virginia, as a result of the refusal of the Indian Leaf Tobacco Development Company, a British concern which has got monopoly in trade of this variety of tobacco, to buy, and the refusal of the Government to curb this monopoly hold of the British concern. Similarly, the price of jute, oil seeds, etc., have fallen, in some cases more than 50 per cent, but still the Government refused to come to the aid of the growers, as such aid would hit the interests of the monopolists. The case of groundnut is another example. While exports of groundnut oil was totally stopped just when the harvest is on and the crop is coming into the market, thus bringing down the prices precipitously, the unlimited export of vanaspati, the production of which is largely concentrated in the hands of Tata, Birla, Lever Brothers and such other magnates, was allowed freely.

Thus, all these policies pursued by the Congress Government in the Centre and the States, are leading more and more to large-scale eviction of peasants, to fresh burdens of taxation on the already overburdened agricultural population, to further widening the gulf between the prices of agricultural products and those of industrial goods, more pauperisation and increase in unemployment. This, together with the falling purchasing power of the workers, low paid employees, handicraftsmen and such other sections of the population, has led to the great crisis in the national economic life which we are witnessing today. This results because, the Congress Governments do not seek to carry on any fundamental reforms by abolishing landlordism and imperialist loot.

PERIOD OF RISING STRUGGLES

It is against these pro-landlord and anti-peasant policies pursued by the Central and State Governments and the large-

scale offensive of the landlords and increased loot of the imperialists, that the peasants and agricultural labourers all over the country are fighting. Big struggles have been conducted in wide areas against evictions and for corrections of land records and finding that the overwhelming majority of petitions were rejected, the kisans started satyagraha by entering lands from which they were evicted. In Azamgarh district, struggles were started, both by the UP Kisan Sabha and the PSP, separately but both struggles were not in the form of mass struggles but in the form of satyagraha by batches. Even then, the Government with its police force intervened in favour of the zamindars and arrested a few scores of kisans and Kisan Sabha workers. Satyagraha continued for a few days more in towns and later on was stopped on an assurance given by the District Magistrate that corrections would be made afresh, which assurance was promptly contradicted by the Revenue Minister. In Surahatal area in Ballia district, the zamindars attempted to harvest the crop that the peasants had raised and sent goondas with guns and lathis but the peasants from all over the Tal area mobilised, chased away the goondas and saved the crops. In Bihar, particularly in Monghyr, Bhagalpur and other eastern districts, this resistance was conducted on a large scale, which in several cases turned into physical resistance to zamindars' goonda gangs. Here also the police intervened, arrested more than 500 kisans and Kisan Sabha leaders and posted punitive police in dozens of villages, terrorising the kisans. Sections 144 and 107 are freely used and even holding the Bihar State Kisan Conference was prohibited two times in Bhagalpur district. In the Punjab, PEPSU, Rajasthan and Bengal also wide agitation has been conducted and resistance organised which was sought to be suppressed by repressive methods of the Government and terror regime of the zamindars and landlords. In Rajasthan, 8 peasants were killed by the jagirdars and bhoomias in Deorala, Jhasti and Abavas villages. In PEPSU, flying squads of Armed Constabulary were sent to terrorise the tenants and punitive police camps were set up in several villages. In the whole of Punjab, prohibitory orders under Section 144 were enforced and in some districts, such prohibitory orders are in force for years together.

A feature of these tenants' struggles is the big rallies and demonstrations held by the peasants in various states. In Telangana, the Telangana Kisan Sabha led a big demonstration to the Assembly Chambers in Hyderabad. In Malabar, a kisan jatha toured all the taluqs in the district collecting

signatures on a petition and then proceeded to Madras, hundreds of miles away, to present that petition to the Ministry. In Bihar, the Kisan Sabha led a demonstration of 30,000 peasants to the Assembly Chamber in Patna on March 10. In Andhra a kisan march of 8,000 was led to Kurnool on the question of evictions and other issues.

In the Punjab a series of rallies were held, attended by 5,000 in Gurdaspur, 8,000 in Fazilka, 5,000 in Kangra, and 30,000 in Chabbawal.

In Bengal, large-scale eviction of occupancy ryots, sharecroppers and others have begun and against this the PKC initiated a campaign with the demand that an ordinance should be immediately issued amending some of the anti-kisan provisions of the law, checking specific loopholes in it for eviction and providing necessary executive action to stop extensive abuses of the law by corrupt officials. It was a terrific campaign, mobilising lakhs and lakhs of kisans in all the districts, a part of which was a big rally of 20,000 kisans, workers and others in Calcutta on 19th April 1954.

Eventually, the Government had to come down, though very late. An ordinance was promulgated on June 9 which, though not fool-proof as demanded, was yet of substantial help to the kisans from the point of view of the law. It scared the land holders and enthused the peasants who, led by the Kisan Sabha and even independently, took advantage of it extensively.

The ordinance was a great victory of the Kisan Sabha, which, in its organised areas, was able to reduce the number of eviction cases to a small minimum, while in the unorganised areas also, the general effect of the struggle of its success was great in that the eviction offensive was, in a large measure, weakened. Tens of thousands of peasants, who had been either actually evicted or notified for eviction, were restored to their lands, some only in part.

An important factor in this anti-eviction campaign was the effort for a compromise with small land holders who leased out their lands. There were thousands of such cases of compromise which benefited both the kisans and the land holders and helped in achieving a large measure of democratic unity in the rural areas.

When it was found that in certain areas land holders were not bending even before the ordinance where the Kisan Sabha was strongly entrenched among the peasants, as in parts of the 24 Parganas, the masses were roused to establish their legitimate rights in the lands. Scores of ploughs were

brought out in a procession with the Kisan Sabha flag above them and a large number of people behind them. They started ploughing and there was nobody to face them. Thus thousands of acres were ploughed and sown and the kisans victoriously established their rights through a real form of mass action.

Thus the general mass of the peasants and the Kisan Sabha workers found that the anti-kisan policy of the Congress Government can be changed through a mobilisation of the masses, if it is sufficiently strong and well organised.

This important achievement of the struggle against eviction has, however, been followed by wide-spread repressive action of the police.

Often, the eviction drive is helped by certain decisions of the law courts. In Andhra and Madras, the inamdars have begun large-scale eviction drive against the peasants, taking advantage of the provisions which excluded the whole inam villages from the purview of the Zamindari Abolition Act and of the High Court decision which said that the Rent Reduction Act does not apply to a large number of inams. As against this, very wide agitation is going on in Andhra and Tamil Nad and the PSP has actually started satyagraha in Karivena village in Kurnool district. The leader of the Andhra Legislative PSP Party and some MPs and MLAs have offered satyagraha in this connection and were arrested.

In Tripura, agitation has been carried on against restriction on *jhum* (shifting) cultivation and against evictions by zamindars and jotedars. In Assam, struggle has been carried on against the East India Tea Company, a British concern, against evictions by this company of the peasants who were cultivating some fallow lands. About 80 peasants, including 6 small boys and 19 women, were arrested in this connection, under various charges like criminal trespass, theft, attempt to murder, etc. The aboriginals of Mewas of Gujarat are fighting against the Thakurs who have robbed them of their forest land to get back the lands. A number of arrests have been made so far.

This struggle of the peasants against evictions and for tenancy rights is ably supported by the members of the democratic parties inside the legislatures. In the Punjab, Hari-kishen Singh Surjit had introduced a Bill for total banning of evictions and allowing only small landowners to resume land, for genuine self-cultivation, upto 20 acres only and this Bill was supported by peasants outside in large demonstrations, rallies, meetings, etc. In Bengal, Bankim Mukherji, then Pre-

sident of the Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha, submitted a Minute of Dissent to the Report of the Select Committee on the Estates Acquisition Act, and this Minute of Dissent was supported by the entire peasantry in Bengal. In Andhra, Madras, Rajasthan and PEPSU, the representatives of the Kisan Sabha who are inside the legislatures have carried on fight to modify the Land Reforms Bills in favour of peasants.

These struggles of the kisans were attempted to be suppressed by Government repression and landlord terrorism. In many places, the landlords took the law into their own hands and even in some cases actually murdered the kisans and Kisan Sabha workers. Rajasthan incidents are already reported. In Sandeskali, Bengal, two peasants were shot dead by the police. In 24 Parganas and Jalpaiguri, 3 others were killed by the jotedars. Two kisans were shot dead by Rai Sahib Dr. Yadmira Singh and his brother in Bakarganj, Bihar. In UP, Sitaram of Unnao and Shiva Poojan of Ballia and a third in Etawah were murdered by the goondas of the zamindars. Two peasants in Kulu valley and 4 peasants of Mardan Hari circle were killed. Even in such cases, the Governments do not take any action or if any action is taken, it will be taken generally against the kisans.

It was because of these wide-spread struggles and resistance that the Government is forced in several States to pass legislations making some substantial concessions to the peasants. In Bengal, an ordinance was passed to stop all evictions of bargadars and future evictions are made cognizable offences, punishable with imprisonment and fine. In Hyderabad, the Tenancy Act was amended to fix maximum rents at 4 and 5 times the land revenue, fixing ceilings for resumption of land up to 3 family holdings, while leaving one basic holding to the tenant and fixing compensation to be paid by the tenant, if he purchases land, at 6 to 15 times the rent, in 16 annual instalments. Also a ceiling to existing land holdings has been fixed at 4½ times the family holding, the excess land of which may be taken over by the Government for management. In UP, the Government has recently ordered for the correction of land records for which the Azamgarh satyagraha was carried on. In Malabar, the Tenancy Law was amended incorporating many of the suggestions put forward by E. M. S. Namboodiripad 15 years ago and which should have been accepted then. In Andhra, an ordinance to protect the Inam Tenants is published which seeks to prohibit evictions in certain classes of inams. In PEPSU, two Acts were passed, the first of which makes it obligatory on the occupancy tenant to acquire the land on payment of compensation at 12 times the

rent, in instalments, and the second, which fixes rent at 1/3 of the gross produce and gives the right to the tenant-at-will to acquire land on payment of compensation to the landlords at 90 times the rent or Rs. 200, whichever is less.

But none of these reforms, though they are compelled to give concessions, go to root out the main cause of agrarian crisis. On the other hand, some of them contain very harmful features also: the Hyderabad law reduces the period of tenancy from 10 to 5 years. The Rajasthan Jagir Abolition Act, modified as per the recommendations of the notorious Nehru Award, allows the jagirdar to retain 500 acres as his khudkasht, even evicting the tenants up to that limit. The Andhra ordinance reduces the occupancy ryots to the status of tenants-at-will. Hence, while the favourable provisions of these legislations should be utilised, the reactionary provisions must be fought against and struggle should be continued and intensified for the abolition of landlordism without compensation and distribution of land free to poor peasants and agricultural labourers.

STRUGGLE FOR WASTE LANDS

The movement did not confine itself to struggles against evictions alone: it broadened into a struggle for land. In Andhra, a big campaign was launched for distribution of cultivable waste lands already under cultivation, among agricultural labourers and poor peasants. The history of this struggle is long. During the war period, due to our persistent agitation, the then Government allowed the peasants and agricultural labourers to bring under cultivation cultivable waste lands. Lakhs of acres were thus brought into cultivation. After the war, the Government tried to assign these lands to demobilised soldiers, which the cultivators resisted. Later, when the Congress Government was formed, it assigned these very lands under the cultivation of agricultural labourers and poor peasants, to Congressmen, who are styled 'political sufferers'. Very rich Congress leaders like Sri. N. Sanjiva Reddi, Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra, were also allotted land in the name of 'political sufferers'. The cultivators naturally resisted and the Congressmen could not take possession of lands already under occupation. As a result of this, the Government passed orders temporarily stopping assignment of land to 'political sufferers'. In June 1953, Sri. Kolla Venkayya, President of the Guntur District Kisan Sabha, moved a resolution in the Madras Legislative Assembly that all waste lands should be allowed only to agricultural

labourers and poor peasants free of any cost. Promising that auctioning would be stopped until the Andhra State is formed, the Madras Government could defeat the resolution by a narrow majority. Again, the matter was discussed in the 1954 January session of the Andhra Assembly and again the Government defeated the move by a bare majority of 2, after promising to solve the problem soon.

Meanwhile big agitation was carried on throughout Andhra. Peasant marches were led in several places: agricultural labour conferences were held demanding distribution of land free. In Guntur, Anantpur and several other districts, agricultural labourers and poor peasants occupied afresh unoccupied waste lands. For instance, in Kalyanadurgam taluq of Anantpur district, 10,000 acres of sivaijama land were occupied and cultivated. In Tumrukodu village of Guntur district, 600 acres of forest banjar were occupied and cultivated. These struggle were crowned with success when the resolution moved in the Andhra Legislature by G. Nageswar Rao, Joint Secretary of the Andhra Provincial Agricultural Labourers' Association, which demands immediate distribution of all cultivable waste land in the province to agricultural labourers and poor peasants, was unanimously accepted by the Legislature.

But the matter did not end here. The Government declined to implement the resolution and so the agitation continued for the implementation of the resolution. The kisan march to Kurnool put this matter as one of its main demands and at last the Government declared that it would distribute 13,00,000 acres immediately. Rules were actually passed for the distribution at the rate of 2½ acres wet and 5 acres dry land to each family. But even in this, a lot of mischief is being done by the Government. The assignment of land to 'political sufferers' is revived and the best cultivated and cultivable lands are excluded from distribution. Also, a multitude of caste organisations and bogus cooperatives are being formed by careerists and opportunists for getting land. Already, in a number of places, this is leading to clashes and scores of kisans have been arrested. Now the struggle for waste land, especially in the form of defending the lands already under cultivation of poor peasants and agricultural labourers, is going on in full swing.

In Pardi taluq of Gujarat, the PSP launched an agitation for the distribution of grass lands to the tribal landless people in the areas. The Government remained adamant not to acquire and distribute these lands, saying that these grasslands

are required for growing fodder to cattle in Bombay and the PSP organised a satyagraha by entering the fields to cultivate. The Government came down with a heavy hand and all usual repressive measures in its armoury were used. Hundreds of kisans, together with PSP leaders including Asoka Mehta, were arrested and sentenced. This struggle, started by the PSP, was supported by the Gujarat PKS and when the "starve the zamindars" campaign was started, it was the Kisan Sabha that actually campaigned mass support to it and saw that strike-breakers from the neighbouring tribal areas were not imported. The Pardi satyagraha was later on withdrawn, on the false ground that cultivation season had expired.

Again, under the leadership of the PSP, satyagraha was started in Tikamgarh district in UP against the forest restrictions and in Dharampur taluq in Vindhya Pradesh. They were given up later. In Aurangabad district of Hyderabad State, the landless Harijans have started satyagraha against the attempts of the Government to evict them from lands they were occupying. The satyagraha was withdrawn later and partial gains were achieved. In the Punjab also, wide agitation is being carried on for the distribution of waste lands to agricultural and other rural labourers and thousands of petitions were sent to that effect. A resolution was also moved in the Assembly by Achhar Singh Chinna.

BHOODAN

Finding that all their tenancy laws, Jagir and Zamindari Abolition Acts are not cutting much ice among the peasants, after they were put into operation for an year or more, the Congress and the State Governments are more and more favouring Bhoodan Yajna initiated by Sri. Vinoba Bhave. The biggest exploiters of the kisans are today donating land to the Bhoodan Yajna and often these lands are those in possession of peasants or in dispute or worthless. The biggest princes and zamindars have become champions of Bhoodan. Even though all the big estates were taken over by the Bihar Government in its State, Giriwar Prasad Narain Singh, Raja of Ranka (Palamau district) donated (!) 1,02,001 acres and the family of the Raja of Ramgarh about 2,50,000 acres. Similarly Maharaja Amar Singh, brother of Bikaner Maharaja, donated (!) 2,84,500 bighas and so on. More: Bhopal Nawab, who donated 2,000 acres. A priest had donated 5,000 bighas of land which belong to a temple trust in Himachal Pradesh and the Government there had to institute criminal proceedings against

him. Similarly, several jagirdars in Vindhya Pradesh whose jagirs had been taken over by the Government under the Jagir Abolition Act of 1952, had donated large areas to Bhoodan movement and here also the State Government had to order an enquiry into this Bhoodan. Quite recently, the UP Government also has asked all the District Magistrates in the Province to compile a list of Bhoodan of displaced plots of land. This is Bhoodan in actual practice.

Rashtravani, the Bhoodanite paper of Bihar, says:

“About a year and half has elapsed since the Bhoodan movement started in Bihar. In this period, Vinobaji has covered nearly all districts in his tour. It has been announced, he has so far received about 18 lakhs of acres of land which is non-arable nor have the donors legal title to these. It is clear that such land cannot be distributed nor can it help in any way the solution of the land problem.

“Such lands mostly are the gifts of big landlords. After the abolition of landlordism all such lands which they could settle with the ryots have gone out of their hands and now vest in the Government. Evidently they have neither moral nor legal right to make a gift of such lands.”

This Bhoodan movement is more and more clearly coming out against the organised peasant movement and as a screen to cover the nefarious activities of the landlords. The Raja of Naspur (Adilabad district, Telangana) who had been evicting tenants on a large scale had donated 1,000 acres and became the leader of Bhoodan! In Pardi, when the tribal people are fighting for land, Bhoodan was pitted against it. When in Azamgarh and other places the tenants are offering satyagraha and courting arrests not a single Bhoodan champion appeared and took up their cause. But still Vinoba Bhave goes on saying that all those who participate in Bhoodan Yajna are *devatas* and those who do not *rakshasas*. He advises Bhoodan workers saying that he did not want to go into the question of land or to sift the merits of a case and dispense justice. He wanted to have the work done through love. He would persuade the zamindars to give back the land to landless who had been ejected and that it is an act of *Dan*. He would ask people not to put forward their claims before him but to examine their own faults. For, claims were made before law courts. They would succeed if they worked on this line. He felt that work was not done in this line.... The ejected kisans

must not leave possession of land. But nobody should try to exploit the situation for political purposes.

STRUGGLE AGAINST TAX BURDENS

The Government has always followed a taxation policy which puts the main burden on the poorer sections of the people and give relief to the monopolists and foreign traders. In pursuance of this policy, the Central and State Governments have increased the incidence of taxation in several cases and imposed new taxes on the already overburdened peasantry. Canal rates have been increased progressively in Bengal, Bihar, UP, Rajasthan, PEPSU, Punjab and Maharashtra and this increase ranges from 37.5 per cent to some times 300 per cent. The case of UP is typical. Here the water rates have been increased in the last few years in the following manner:

Water rates in UP

Canal	Crop		Prior to 1948 Rs.	On 1-4-'54 Rs.
Sarada	— Rice	per acre	6-0-0	14-0-0
	— Wheat	"	5-0-0	12-0-0
	— Sugarcane	"	15-0-0*	32-0-0
Ganga & Agra	— Rice	"	6-0-0	14-0-0
	— Sugarcane	"	13-0-0	32-0-0
Doon	— Wheat	"	5-0-0	12-0-0
	— Sugarcane	"	15-0-0*	32-0-0
Bundelkhand	— Tobacco	"	4-0-0	12-0-0
	— Sugarcane	"	7-0-0	16-0-0
Bijnor	— Wheat	"	2-8-0	10-0-0
	— Rice	"	4-8-0	10-0-0
	— Sugarcane	"	4-8-0	16-0-0

* Increased from Rs. 10 to Rs. 15 in 1944.

Similarly, in several States, betterment levy, development tax, surcharge on land revenue, panchayat tax etc., have been imposed in recent times and the local cesses like the education cess, road cess, are all increased to about a third and more, of the taxes on which they are to be paid. Together with these direct taxes, there are a large number of indirect taxes which are always more oppressive to poorer sections of the people. This can be seen from the following table.

Percentage of taxation to total tax revenue

	<i>Direct tax</i>	<i>Indirect tax</i>
1947-48	47.0	53.0
1948-49	43.7	56.3
1949-50	37.0	63.0
1950-51	35.2	64.8
1951-52	29.2	70.8
1952-53	30.4	69.6
1953-54	28.3	71.7

All these new taxes and increases in old taxes are being imposed at a time when the prices of agricultural produce are coming down and rural unemployment is growing to unprecedented heights and the tenants are being evicted on a mass scale and foreign and native monopolies' loot is increasing. The case of tobacco is a glaring example. The ILTD Co., British monopoly concern which has a monopoly in the trade of this variety of tobacco, refused to purchase the lower grades of tobacco. As a result, the prices of tobacco fell sharply and large stocks of tobacco, estimated to be about 800 lakhs of lbs. in one season alone, were left unsold in Guntur district with the growers and tobacco traders. This has created a very serious situation in the tobacco growing areas, in that, the growers will have to pay heavy excise duty, at the rate of Rs. 7-8 per lb., even though the price fell to annas 6 per lb. In Rajasthan, the excise duty on country tobacco is Rs. 30-12 per maund whereas tobacco itself is selling at Rs. 20 per maund, so low have the prices fallen.

It is against this taxation policy of the Government that wide agitation and struggles have been carried on. The struggles against increased water rates are particularly widespread, covering several States and continuing for months together. In Bengal, the kisans refused to take water from the Mayurakshi Project unless the high rates charged were reduced. For the last two years, the Government refused to yield and the kisans refused to take water and hence, the Government is forced this year to reduce the water rate to some extent but, at the same time, it issued an ordinance, making it compulsory for the kisans to take water. In Bihar, wide agitation, led jointly by the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha and United Kisan Sabha and others, was carried on and a bold call was given to the kisans not to pay increased water rates, unless the increment is cancelled. In connection with this struggle, the Government has so far arrested about 1000 kisans and Kisan Sabha workers, under various charges, but this did not deter the kisans from their resolve to con-

tinue the fight against the heavy tax. In UP, the UPKS held a series of local rallies and demonstrations in district towns and collected lakhs of signatures on petitions demanding cancellation of increased water rates, culminating in the huge mass demonstration in Lucknow on March 10. Hundreds of kisans and Kisan Sabha workers were arrested. Later, the PSP also took up the issue and started satyagraha. The Government wanted to suppress the movement by the promulgation of Special Powers Act and the satyagraha developed into violation of the provisions of this hated Act. The UP Kisan Sabha organised widespread agitation for the repeal of this Act and even observed a Protest Day against it. About 2,700 members of the PSP and kisans, including Rammanohar Lohia, the General Secretary of the PSP, were arrested but the High Court invalidating this Act, most of them were released subsequently. Still the struggle is continuing. In Ganganagar district in Rajasthan, an All-Party Sanja Morcha (United Front) was formed, which is carrying on satyagraha against increased canal rates. The Kisan Sabha, the district Akali Dal, Congressmen and others are participating in this satyagraha and so far, more than 800 people have been arrested. In Punjab also, wide agitation has been carried on against this increase in canal rates. Thus the agitation against increase in canal rates has enveloped several provinces and has assumed an all-India character.

The agitation for decreasing the tobacco excise duty, particularly for lower grades of virginia and for country tobacco, was carried on in Andhra and Rajasthan. The Government used coercive measures in Rajasthan to collect the duty, together with the arrears, since the time of integration of the State with the Indian Union. In several cases, properties were attached and auctioned and even cattle, camels and jewelry were distrained. Similarly, struggles were carried on in several States against levy of panchayat tax, education tax, etc. as a result of which agitation, in several areas, the panchayats refused to collect the taxes or impose new taxes. In Tamil Nad and Andhra, very extensive agitation has been conducted against the proposal to levy betterment levy at 50 per cent of the increased value of land with retrospective effect and against surcharge on land revenue and bus fares. This was ably supported by the opposition put forward by the pro-kisan groups inside the legislature, as a result of which, the Bills for the imposition of these taxes were defeated even in the Select Committees. Hence, the Madras (composite) Government withdrew the proposals. Now, only after Andhra

is separated, did the Madras Government impose betterment levy on lands under Lower Bhavani Project.

As a result of these wide and continuous struggles, the State Governments had to yield and give some concessions in many forms. The collection of a part of the arrears of tobacco excise duty in Sikar district of Rajasthan is postponed; the rates of the excise duty on unsold stocks of lowgrade virginia tobacco of 1953, were lowered; increase in canal rates in Punjab and Ganganagar was reduced by 25 per cent; 9 lakh rupees out of the 12 lakh rupees of penal rates in Bihar and a similar amount in irrigation dues in Mathura (UP) were cancelled; in Bihar and Bareilly district in UP, the collection of irrigation dues were postponed for several months; in Bijnor, Mirzapur and Dehradun districts of UP, irrigation rates under small canals were reduced and so on.

PRICES

The question of prices is one of the most important factors of agrarian economy. Because even the small peasants have to sell a part of their grains in the market for cash and because commercial crops are playing an important role in agricultural economy and in the trade and commerce policies of the Government and also because, very large sections of the population, who are consumers, are affected by the fluctuations of price, the question of prices of agricultural produce has a very important role.

So far the policy of the Government with regard to prices is generally unfavourable and some times even ruinous, to the kisans. No attempt has been made by the Government to fix floor prices when the prices of agricultural produce fall nor to bring down the prices of industrial goods to the parity level of the former. Over and above this, the foreign and native monopolists, who virtually control the market of some of the major commercial crops, are given free scope to loot the peasants by way of stopping purchases, by way of forward trading and hedge contracts, by giving low prices and so on. The case of tobacco and sugarcane has already been dealt with. The export of groundnut oil was totally stopped just at the time of harvesting of the crop and hence the prices of groundnut kernels and oil fell precipitously. While the prices have fallen so low, the prices of Vanaspati, which is the finished product of groundnut, is not at all brought down and export of it in unlimited quantities, is allowed. Similarly the case with jute, cotton, other oil seeds, etc. Even the prices of onions, potatoes, etc., have registered a steep fall, necessitating

the growers to leave the crops in the fields unharvested and rotting, since the price that these crops get do not even meet the labour of harvesting them. The Government is refusing either to build cold storages in sufficient numbers or search alternative markets for these crops.

The trade policy of the Government is already responsible for the crisis in prices of agricultural produce. The Government does not compel the British and native monopoly concerns to purchase at fair prices nor does it curb their activities nor does it enter into trade relations with democratic and socialist countries, at governmental level and implement them. Similarly, the placing of certain special commodities imported from People's China, etc., on Open General Licence, is a deliberate policy of checking the development of trade with these countries. The policy of operating import and export duties also is heavily loaded against agricultural produce, as in the case of groundnut oil, on the export of which a heavy duty of Rs. 350 per ton was recently imposed, which did not result in any increase in export. (The duty was later reduced to Rs. 225 on representations made by Kisan Sabhas and trading organisations.)

All these policies led to a sharp fall in recent months in the prices of several agricultural products like oil seeds, jute, cotton, potatoes, onions, sugarcane, tobacco and several others. In the case of some crops, the fall, though steep, may not be ruinous but in the case of others, like tobacco, sugar-cane, jute, onions, etc., it is so. The Government supinely refused to intervene and, on the other hand, welcomed the fall. It characterised the steep fall in prices as a healthy trend and as the result of their wise policies of decontrol, grow more food schemes, etc. Quoting the indices of wholesale prices by the Government, to show that the prices of food grains and raw materials have previously soared high and are now coming down to proper levels (!) is mischievous. The peasant, as a producer, gets much less for his produce than the wholesale price and also pays for industrial goods, much higher than the wholesale price. At the same time, the consumer also is not benefited and the only person to be benefited is the monopolist and profiteer. With the prices of industrial goods remaining stationary, with the loss of our markets, and with the debt burden remaining as a tremendous load on agriculture and the credit being contracted, this fall in prices is fraught with serious consequences on agricultural economy.

Wide agitation has been carried on in all sugar growing provinces, particularly in Andhra and UP, for a price of Rs.

1-12 per maund of sugar-cane. In UP, a number of rallies and demonstrations, led by the UP Kisan Sabha, were held, supporting this demand and the PSP led a strike in the form of non-delivery of cane to factories. But this cane-strike was badly conducted, as it was started very late in the season and at a time when the mills have sufficient cane stocks with them for crushing and hence, it did not achieve the desired end. But later, at the fag end of the season, the Government directed the sugar mills in western districts of UP to pay four annas more per maund of cane supplied, as bonus. In Andhra, because of the strong agitation carried on, the South Indian Sugar Mills' Association has agreed to pay an extra price according to a certain formula, which is called the SISMA formula. This formula linked the price of cane to that of sugar and to recovery of sugar and enabled the growers to get Rs. 3 to 12 more per ton. This higher price was given by selling sugar at extremely high prices and thus fleecing the consumers and making huge profits by sugar magnates. Hence this year, the sugar-cane growers rightly demanded Rs. 1-12 per maund of cane, without increasing the price of sugar and agitation is going on in Andhra on these lines.

Agitation has been carried on in Andhra on a big scale for finding export markets for tobacco, as a result of which the Central Government sent a Trade Delegation to East Asian countries. The delegation recently returned to India after getting an order from People's China for the supply of 450 lakhs of lbs. of low grade tobacco. Similarly, wide agitation for allowing groundnut oil exports and for fixing floor prices for groundnut was carried on in Andhra, which resulted in the Government allowing small exports of oil. But the heavy export duty of Rs. 350 per ton proved a deterrent to export and as a result of the agitation that was continued for reducing this duty, it is now reduced to Rs. 225 per ton.

The prospects for the coming year are gloomy. Huge stocks of grains are piling up in the exporting countries like USA, Canada, Australia, Argentina, and these countries are repeatedly reducing their export prices in order to dump the over-seas markets. Under the International Wheat Agreement, India is compulsorily purchasing wheat at high prices and this will have bad effects on our prices and production. Our trade relations are linked with imperialist countries, whose economies are in doldrums and our economic ties with USSR, People's China and other countries, whose national economies are progressing and know no crises and slumps, are deliberately not being developed. Our markets are being

lost and competitors to our commercial crops like tobacco, groundnut, etc., are coming into the world market. The recent downward trend of prices of food grains and the steep fall in the prices of commercial crops is a sharp reminder of the extremely rickety character of our economy. This, viewed in the background of landlessness, growing rural and urban unemployment and falling purchasing power, raises the question of government intervention in the form of price supports for agricultural produce, checking the control of foreign and native monopoly concerns and bringing down prices of consumer goods. This alone will secure fair price to the producers and to the consumers. Any other extravagant demand that prices for agricultural produce should be fixed at the level prevailing before the fall or that no intervention by the Government is demanded and that the fall in prices is a healthy trend, will be harmful and set the producers against the consumers and *vice versa*, to the advantage of profiteers.

RURAL INDEBTEDNESS

The question of rural indebtedness is as serious as at any time. The propaganda about the greater prosperity of the peasants and money flowing into the villages due to high prices during the war, proved a myth by some of the investigations made by official committees themselves. From a reply given in the Parliament, by Mr. V. V. Giri, Labour Minister, it will be seen that 45 per cent of the agricultural labour families are indebted and the average debt per family is Rs. 105. The position of the peasants also is similar. A number of laws seeking to control usury failed and the rate of interest ranges some times from 30 to 80 per cent per annum. All the Debt Relief Acts so far passed, miserably failed to tackle the problem. The case of Madras Agriculturists Relief Act passed in 1938 by the Rajaji Ministry—comparatively probably the best of the Congress Debt Relief Acts—is a glaring example. Even while this Act is in force, the rural debt in Madras (composite) rose from 200 crores of rupees in 1935 to 271 crores in 1939 and fell to 217 crores by 1945. This reduction between 1939 and 1945 is not because of the Act, which, between 1938-1945, reduced the total debt by only 9,95,07,022 rupees but because of sales of land worth Rs. 45,86,90,000 and due to the war-time rise in prices, to the tune of Rs. 24,73,99,978.

The problem of fall in the prices of agricultural produce and of the increasing burden of taxation are bringing in the question of liquidation of rural indebtedness and supply of

cheap credit to the forefront. In Tamil Nad, wide agitation has been carried on for moratorium, as a result of which the Government of Madras passed a law for moratorium for one year. But, during this period, no Bill for debt relief is brought before the legislature and the period of moratorium is going to end in November. So agitation is continuing for extending the moratorium for 3 years more and to pass legislation for the liquidation of rural debt.

Encouraged by the moratorium declared in Madras State, agitation has been carried on in Andhra for moratorium and the Minister promised to bring in legislation for it. But so far nothing has been done.

AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS

Now I come to one of the most important questions of the movement—the question of the agricultural labourers. According to the report of Agricultural Labour Enquiry of the Government of India, 26.3 per cent of the rural population are agricultural labourers, whose principal means of livelihood is wage-labour in agriculture.

This vast section, potentially the most revolutionary section, live in inhuman conditions and toil. The wages are miserable, often below subsistence level. Most of them are unemployed for the greater number of days in the year. The A.L.E. Report says that, on the average, the agricultural labourers are employed for 189 days in the year in agriculture and 29 days in non-agricultural work, and unemployed for 100 days and self-employed for 50 days. The average family income per annum is Rs. 447 and expenditure is Rs. 468 and average debt is Rs. 105. 45% of the families are indebted. Often they have no roof on their heads and in most cases, the huts they live in belong to the landlords. A big section of them are untouchables and are subjected to all sorts of social discrimination.

Last year, due to bad seasonal conditions, in several provinces, agricultural labour could not get sufficient work, and wages also were depressed. This happened particularly at a time when prices are going up in Andhra, Tamil Nad, etc. In Bihar and UP also the labourers could not get sufficient work due to floods and consequent dislocation of work.

The Minimum Wages Act was put in the Statute Book in 1948 but so far it is only on paper. Very few provinces applied that Act in few regions. In Bihar, rates of minimum wages in agricultural employments were fixed covering the Patna division only. In UP, minimum wages for employees

in organised farms of 50 acres and more were fixed in the districts of Sultanpur, Pratapgarh, Azamgarh, Banda, Barabanki, Jaunpur, Rae Bareilly, Faizabad, Hamirpur, Ballia, Ghazipur and Jaulgaon. Minimum wages were fixed for the whole States by the Governments of Ajmer, Bilaspur, Coorg, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Kutch, PEPSU, Punjab, Rajasthan, Mysore and Tripura. In Vindhya Pradesh, minimum wages were fixed in the district of Sidhi. In West Bengal, they were fixed for the districts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri and in Assam, for Cachar.

Draft proposals for fixation of minimum wages were notified by the Governments of Madras, Bombay, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Bhopal, but so far no legislations have been passed.

These wages fixed or proposed by the State Governments, are generally below the existing meagre wage rates, as can be seen from the following examples:

	Existing rates	Proposal or fixed rates.
	Rs.	Rs.
Madras:		
Ploughing with bullocks	2- 8-2 adults	1- 8-0
Transplantation	0-12-3 "	
Weeding	0-13-8 "	0-12-0
Harvesting	0-15-2 "	
U.P.:		
Ploughing (1948-49)	1- 2-4	1- 0-0
Sowing	1- 2-3	"
Transplantation	1- 0-9	
Weeding	1- 0-7	
Harvesting	1- 4-3	"
Punjab:		
Ploughing (1949-50)	1-10-4)	
Sowing	1-10-0)	2- 0-0 to 2- 8-0
Weeding	1-10-3	1- 00 to 1-12-0
Harvesting	4- 4-0	2- 0-0 or 5% of the crop harvested.
Rajasthan:		
Ploughing ('49-'50)	1- 7-5 male	1- 4-0
Sowing	1- 3-2 male 0-15-4 female	
Weeding	1- 0-8 male 0-13-7 female	0-14-0
Harvesting	1- 3-7 male 0-15-8 female	

In Andhra, where a Provincial Agricultural Labourers' Association exists for a long time, vigorous campaign was launched for fixing minimum wages. A series of meetings and conferences were held and demands put forward. The agitation was backed by the Kisan Sabha also. Even though agitation was carried on extensively, due to lack of clarity on the principle as to how to determine minimum wage, a uniform demand could not be put forward. Some demanded the minimum wage fixed in proportion to wages existing in 1938. Others demanded simply higher rates than were existing at the moment; again others demanded wage enough to meet the requirements of the labourers. Hence it is necessary that we clearly enunciate the principle by which minimum wages have to be determined.

Today, agricultural labour also has become a commodity. But because of the pauperisation of the peasantry, of increasing number of landless workers, of growing number of poor peasantry, who seek subsidiary earning on the side seasonal nature of work, of the existence of feudal conditions of work like forced labour, etc., agricultural labourers are not getting fair price for their labour-power. Hence we demand that they get fair price for their labour-power. We should demand that the wage for the normal working day should be enough to give the labourer his normal requirements of that day.

Today in Andhra, the Agricultural labourers, shoulder to shoulder with poor peasants, are fighting for defending the waste and fallow lands they are already cultivating and for distribution of other waste lands. Such struggles are going on in Malabar and to a small extent in Bihar, Maharashtra and other States. In Andhra the agricultural labourers are particularly fighting against the pro-landlord scheme of putting to auction the lanka (river island) lands which are under cultivation of field labour co-operatives and against giving Romperu lands under their occupation to 'political sufferers'. In Tamil Nad they are agitating for higher waram and wages also with the help of tenants. In Andhra, Bihar and Telangana, they had gone on strike in a number of places for higher wages.

Apart from these wage demands, we should also demand free house-sites for the agricultural labourers, full employment by taking up national reconstruction works, etc., or unemployment relief, drinking water facilities, etc. All these have to be studied and properly formulated.

A large number of agricultural labourers are untouchables and are subjected to inhuman discriminations. We must

champion their cause for the removal of these social discriminations. Equal wage for equal work, use of all public institutions and places, should be demanded and fought for. It is by championing the cause of the scheduled castes for social justice and by co-ordinating their struggles for social justice with the struggles for political and economic rights that we bring the agricultural labourers into the agrarian movement and thus strengthen the movement itself.

FAMINE RELIEF

During the first period under review, the food position throughout the country was a little bit improving, but still in some areas scarcity conditions continue to prevail. But the difficulty arose from the actions of the State Governments. In Bengal, the food prices have been increased. In Andhra, the gruel centres run by the Government and the cheap grain depots, also run by the Government, are being closed, particularly in the period when food prices have shot up by about 200 per cent in Andhra, as a result of large exports made to the South. Price of paddy went up from Rs. 10 to Rs. 18 per maund in the exporting districts. This happened particularly at a time when the agricultural season was slack and labour could not find sufficient employment, consequent to which wages fell. As a result of this, serious conditions arose in Bengal and Andhra. The Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha decided in its Annual Conference that agitation against high prices should be started and a large demonstration should be led to Calcutta. Wide agitation was carried on and a huge demonstration of peasants was planned for September 28. But the Government of Bengal prohibited the kisan march, held up the peasants in the districts and even fired upon the peasants proceeding to Calcutta, as result of which one person was killed. In spite of such repressive measures, about 30,000 peasants reached Calcutta and with the active and full support of Calcutta public, held a huge demonstration in Calcutta. As a result, the Government, which just a week before totally refused to reduce the food prices when a women's demonstration was made, had to eat the humble pie and reduce the rice price from 9 annas to 7 annas per seer in Calcutta and from Rs. 17-8 to Rs. 15 per maund in the distressed areas.

In T-C State, in the months of June and July, the prices of rice had doubled. Its cost went upto one rupee per edan-gazhi (about $\frac{3}{4}$ seers) in the open market where formerly the price was only eight or ten annas. This shooting up of the price is the result of the so-called "progressive levy", a reform introduced by the Congress regime in commandeering paddy.

This "progressive levy" was really designed to propitiate the paddy kings and big landlords who are free to sell paddy at prices they dictate. As a result of this deliberate policy of giving free hand to grain hoarders and speculators, prices shot up and several starvation deaths and suicides were reported. Hence, the Kisan Sabha units put forward the demand for an increase of the rice ration to 12 ozs. per adult. Hundreds of meetings were held and jathas led. As a result, the Government ordered an increase of 2 ozs. per adult twice a week at the rate of 12 annas per edangazhi. That does not touch even the fringe of the problem and so the agitation continued, ultimately in a giant food rally at Trichur on July 25. The rally demanded 12 ozs. ration, daily distribution of increased ration of 2 ozs. and the price to be kept at 7½ annas per edangazhi. A mammoth memorandum, signed by 22,000 people was submitted to the District Collector. When Sri G. L. Nanda, Planning Minister, was camping in Trichur, the PSP started a satyagraha on this food issue. It was attempted to be suppressed by arrests and other usual repressive methods.

In Andhra, during the months of July and August hundreds of hunger marches were led in every firka in every district. Peasants and agricultural labourers numbering from 100 to 5,000 have participated in them. [To show only a few: Bhimawaram 4,000 (10,000 signatures also), Penugonda 500, Tadepalligudem 1,500 (6,000 signatures), Penumantra 1,200, Hajipuram 1,500, Attili 5,000, Palakole 1,000, Pileru 3,000, Kadiri 4,000, Doddibatla 400 (1,000 signatures) and so on.] In some places like Punganur taluq, the people have squatted before the Tahsildar's office for two or three days demanding food grains and left only on officers supplying the grain. As a result of this persistent and wide agitation the cheap grain depots and gruel centres were not closed and those closed were reopened.

In Maharashtra, as a result of incessant agitation and campaign carried on by the Kisan Sabha and the United Famine Relief Committee in various districts affected by famine and on the basis of organised strength of the people, the Kisan Sabha was able to secure concessions to the people from the Government. It was able to get some major relief works started. It could secure increase in daily rate and allowance for Sunday. It could check and curb the harassment and corruption of the bureaucratic and corrupt officials. It could compel the Government to make better arrangements for housing and medical aid for persons working in relief centres.

IRRIGATION PROJECTS

Out of an estimated total annual flow in India equivalent to 1356 million acre-feet of water, only 76 million acre-feet, i.e., 5.6 per cent of water is utilised for irrigation at present. Even the Five-Year Plan admits this and plans out some multi-purpose river-valley projects and minor irrigation works. But except continuing the work on the projects taken up already before the drafting of the Five-Year Plan, little progress has been made in the construction of the projects. Even in the case of projects under execution, the work is being unduly delayed for reasons of bureaucratic intervention, red-tapism, corruption, inefficiency and so on.

Agitation has been carried on in varied degrees for the construction of irrigation projects, but it was in Andhra that this problem has been taken up as one of the main issues. The scheme of the Rajaji ministry for the construction of the Krishna-Pennar Project which denies water to Rayalaseema was successfully buried deep and very wide agitation has been carried on for the immediate taking up of Nandikonda Project. The vicious attempts of the Congress leaders to shelve the construction of this huge project by pitting Sidheswaram Project against this and thus trying to foment regional rivalries between the people of coastal districts and Rayalaseema, was also successfully fought. Also the mischief done by some interested persons in revising the original scheme and showing heavy expenditure and less irrigation, was also exposed and thus the Andhra Provincial Ryots' Association took the initiative at every stage and is now carrying on agitation for immediate taking up of the project. Just recently, Telangana Kisan Sabha also took up this issue, as this project will irrigate two districts in Telangana also and conferences are being held demanding early construction of the project.

The persistent agitation carried on by the people, supported by the members of the Andhra Assembly and Andhra MPs, compelled the Andhra and Hyderabad Governments to submit a joint report favouring Nandikonda Project. The Planning Commission is holding it up on the pretext of lack of enough finances for taking up such a huge project and hence agitation is still going on for getting the sanction of the Planning Commission also for the project.

Apart from this large multi-purpose project, there are a number of medium irrigation projects for which the Andhra Provincial Ryots' Association carried on wide agitation, particularly for projects in Rayalaseema, the home of famines. As a result, the Government has sanctioned some schemes. But

these are only a few and agitation is going on for taking up two vital projects for Rayalaseema, Gandikota and Tungabhadra High Level Canal.

Other provinces also should study their irrigation needs and carry on agitation for the construction of those projects. In Bombay, the Government has taken up Koyna Hydro-electric Project but a conference in which several parties participated, demanded three irrigation projects to be taken up. Only one is executed—Kakrapara. The Maharashtra Provincial Kisan Sabha should take up the question of construction of other projects and agitate for them.

FLOOD RELIEF

Unprecedented floods have occurred in August and September 1953 in several Provinces. The worst affected are Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Andhra. According to the statement of the Bihar Revenue Minister, all the maize crop and 50 per cent of the standing paddy crop is lost: crops in 20 lakh acres were completely lost or damaged; 60,00,000 people were affected and 77,000 houses collapsed and total loss amounted to Rs. 35 crores. This is all the more terrible in that that the floods occurred specially in those areas which were a prey to famine the previous year, when crores of rupees were spent for relief. In UP, no complete picture can be ascertained, as floods occurred twice in some districts but an idea can be formed from the devastation that occurred in the districts of Allahabad, Kanpur, Jaunpur, Ballia and Azamgarh. Total villages affected in these five districts are 5,000 and area submerged, 10 lakh acres (rough estimate). In Andhra, the loss sustained by the Godavari floods is estimated to exceed 10 crores of rupees in three taluqs alone of East Godavari District. Besides these taluqs, Rajahmundry town and taluq, Polavaram, Tanuku, Narsapur and Bhimavaram taluqs in Andhra and river border taluqs in Telangana, suffered serious losses.

In Orissa, in Cuttack district alone, 300 villages were affected and crop in about 10,000 acres lost. Floods have occurred in Malabar, Tamil Nad, Assam and Bombay Provinces also.

The loss sustained is stupendous. Neither the Government nor any public organisation by itself could cope up with the task of providing relief: all resources have to be mobilised. Particularly, public agitation is necessary for moving the bureaucratic machine of the Government, to send relief in proper time and full public participation in relief work is

needed. In Andhra and Malabar, Kisan Sabha units took up relief work in right earnest and did meritorious work. In Andhra, United Flood Relief Committees were formed with all political parties and mass organisations participating in them. Kisan and Agricultural Labourers' Associations did yeoman service in collecting money, grain, clothes and other necessary things and in distributing them to the flood-stricken people. Persistent agitation was carried on for prompt relief being given by the Government also and as a result, the State Government sanctioned Rs. 3 crores for flood relief.

The flood havoc in Bihar and UP was also similarly great and much more extensive. But the relief work and agitation carried on in these provinces is small compared to the needs of the situation. In UP, investigation into finding the extent of havoc was started late and organisation of a Relief Committee also was delayed long. On such occasions, the Kisan Sabha units must be very active and take the initiative in organising relief committees and actual relief also.

This year again, the floods have visited Bihar, Bengal, Assam, Nepal and parts of UP and the devastation they have done far exceeds that of last year. Estimates are made that about 50,000 sq. miles are hit badly by them. The whole rural life itself is uprooted. Hence the Bihar and Bengal Kisan Sabhas have taken up flood relief work as a major issue today and work is being carried on for it. It is necessary that all available sources be utilised for extending relief to the stricken people.

OTHER STRUGGLES

Apart from these, in almost all the provinces, the Kisan Sabhas have carried on agitation and struggles on several local issues which concern their provinces or zones in their provinces. It is very difficult to report on all of them and in detail but to show how in all States and throughout the country, the movement is revived and going forward, a bird's-eye-view of it will be given here.

In Maharashtra the struggle for waste lands was taken up on a big scale by the Adivasis in Nasik District. The struggle started partly because of the government efforts to eject peasants from the waste lands on which they had been already settled and also because of the refusal by the Government to give such land to new claimants to the extent demanded. Nearly 1,200 satyagrahis, including women, were arrested and jailed in this struggle.

In Maharashtra, big sugar-cane planters and companies

have leased thousands of acres of lands from small peasants at a nominal rate of Rs. 2 to 5 per acre, for long terms, ranging from 20 to 99 years. The British-owned Belapur Company leased 5,000 acres for 87 years at the rate of Rs. 2 per acre. Maharashtra Sugar Factory in Nagar district and Sakharwadi Sugar Factory in Satara district leased 16,000 and 10,000 acres respectively on terms similar to Belapur. Struggles were conducted for the termination of leases and return of land to peasants and in the meanwhile, for a rent of 1/6 of the gross produce, according to the terms of Tenancy Law applicable to all other lands. The Government tried repression but to no avail. At last, the Government reduced the lease period in the case of Belapur Company to 30 years and a rent of Rs. 20 per acre. In Sakharwadi mill area, struggles broke out and the peasants entered their lands and occupied them. The police interfered and arrested more than 550 peasants and their leaders, including Sri Nana Patil, Vice-President of the AIKS, and Sri Madhavrao Gaekwad, Joint Secretary, Maharashtra Kisan Sabha.

Similarly in Maharashtra, when the Government demanded the peasants to pay compensation to the ruler of the merged State of Phaltnan, at the rate of Rs. 20 per acre, the kisans refused and said they would pay only land revenue.

In Thana, forest workers organised themselves in the Kisan Sabha and fought and succeeded in getting proper wages for themselves and in getting the work done by them recorded properly. In Tripura, huge agitation has been carried on against unjust forest laws which restrict *jhum* (shifting) cultivation, for cancellation of arrears of rent, for postponement of collection of taccavi loans, etc. A number of demonstrations and conferences were held to voice their demands. As a result some unjust collections are cancelled, collection of taccavi loans postponed, etc. The agitation is still continuing for the cancellation of arrears of rents and for the application of Indian Limitation Act to Tripura. In Bihar, the State Kisan Sabha led movements against the forcible realisation of taccavi loans and of the cost of minor irrigation works. As regards the former, the Kisan Sabha demanded that the loans should be realised in 5 instalments and that the loans should be reduced proportionate to the fall in prices of agricultural produce. As regards the latter, the minor irrigation works were executed by Congressmen, without consulting the local kisans and a lot of misappropriation has occurred. The Government now wants to realise the money from the peasantry and so the kisans are agitating that no money should

be collected from them, as they were never consulted and as the works do not benefit them.

As soon as the Congress came to power in Bihar, they passed a law depriving the kisans in the jungle areas, of their age-old rights, in the name of preservation of forests. Kisan Sabha has taken up the cause of the peasants and is carrying on agitation, especially in the Singhbhum district, for the restoration of their customary rights.

In Assam, the kisans have carried on agitation for assignment of grant lands which are lying fallow and are owned by tea planters, like East India Tea Company, a British concern. When the tea planters tried to occupy these lands, the peasants also occupied and cultivated them. When the harvesting season arrived, the planters, promising land, set the plantation labourers against the peasants and got the latter's houses destroyed and burnt. The peasants protested but the police arrested about 80 peasants, including 19 women and 6 small boys. These small boys also were fined 15 rupees each or sentenced ten days' imprisonment.

The peasants of Karyat division in Changad taluq of Belgaum district agitated for the postponement of the collection of taccavi loans and a demonstration of 500 went to the District Collector's office with the same demand. The District Collector has agreed for postponement for one year. In the Bijapur district, the Kisan Sabha agitated for receipts of payment of rents from the local Desai and compelled him to give them. In Madhya Bharat, persistent agitation was carried on for the reduction in tractor charges which resulted in a substantial reduction.

STRUGGLE FOR PEACE

Kisans are as much interested in peace as any other section of the people, for their economy and life will be ruined by war. That is why the whole peasantry, with one voice, hailed the decisions of the Geneva Conference and peace in Indo-China. They promptly supported the Chou-Nehru Communiqué which embodies the peace aspirations of the entire people. Numerous meetings were held, supporting the Chou-Nehru declaration and demanding the Government of India to follow it up by taking measures for building Asian solidarity.

The Kisan Sabha must agitate for peace in concrete terms. Today our whole economy is linked with that of the Anglo-American imperialist bloc and this is creating a series of crises in our economy, particularly agrarian economy. In the report elsewhere we find how the British grip is strong

on the price mechanism and export trade of several agricultural products and how this is resulting in crises in these sectors. Similarly our links with America through the International Wheat Agreement, Technical Co-operation, etc., are resulting in our own markets being flooded with cheap and rotten American wheat and other goods. If the international situation worsens, we will be faced with such a catastrophic situation that our entire economy will be ruined, for the simple reason that our economy is linked to that of Anglo-American imperialist bloc. Hence the struggle for peace also requires struggle against the policies of the Government in tying us to imperialist economics, struggle against the policies of the Government which hinder development of economic and trade relations with the peace-loving USSR, China, Czechoslovakia, etc., and for close ties with the latter. The refusal of the ILTD Co., the British monopoly concern, to purchase tobacco and the refusal of the Government to interfere and compel that monopoly to purchase and the orders placed by People's China for a large quantity of tobacco, thus greatly relieving the situation, shows the immense possibilities of linking our interests with peace-loving countries and not with the imperialist, war-mongering bloc.

The war mongers, though frustrated in their plans in Korea and Indo-China, in bringing about the EDC and SEATO, are still making fresh efforts for war. It is necessary that the kisans participate in the struggle for peace and Asian solidarity much more energetically than in the past.

FORGE UNITY AND BUILD THE ORGANISATION

From the report in the foregoing chapters, it will be clearly seen that all over the country, in every province, even in the States newly coming to the movement, there is a great awakening among the peasants and agricultural labourers. Even those sections which so far remained outside the movement, are also being gradually drawn into it and the movement is spreading to new areas also. From the course of the movement during the period under review, some broad, general lessons could be drawn, which would be of immense value for the guidance of the movement in future.

The first thing that strikes is that, in every province, the biggest and most widespread struggles are related to the basic question of land—abolition of landlordism and giving land to the peasants and agricultural labourers. The tenants' struggles in UP, Bihar, Bengal, Punjab, Rajasthan, Malabar, Andhra, everywhere, are for the defence of the land of the

peasants in the form of struggle against evictions. The struggle for waste lands is a direct index of the land hunger and how this is driving the great masses of the rural people into the movement. More and more, the demand for ceilings of landholdings is coming up from every quarter, even from the following of the ruling party. Thus, the biggest opportunity to unite all sections of the rural toilers against landlordism has arisen and it is the task of the kisan movement to take advantage of this opportunity and unite all these sections in the struggle for land. This can be done by taking up the defence of peasantry against evictions, for rent reduction, distribution of waste lands and thus making the question of land, i.e., the question of abolition of landlordism and giving land free to peasants and agricultural labourers, the central task of the entire movement and boldly leading struggles towards this end.

Secondly, this big awakening and movement of the large masses of the rural toilers is forcing every political party and group, irrespective of their political ideologies, to take up the question of land. In several provinces, even the Congressmen were forced to take up the kisan question and this happened particularly in those provinces where the kisan movement is strong and organised and its impact is felt by the ruling party also. The attitude taken by the 22 Congress MLAs in Hyderabad on the question of ceilings, the resolution of the PEPSU Congress Executive Committee in regard to the question of extension of time given to the biswedars to resume land for 'self-cultivation', the representation made by 8 Congress MLAs to Nehru on the question of evictions in Punjab, the voting of Congress MLAs also in Andhra on the question of distribution of waste lands, the opposition in several areas by Congressmen to imposition of new taxes—all go to show that the strength of the movement will certainly make other parties, including sections of the ruling party, to move on kisan issues and oppose the anti-kisan policies of the Government.

But, at the same time, it is also seen that these parties often adopt policies and tactics, which, in their final conclusion, will harm the interests of the kisan movement itself. The deliberate policy of the PSP leadership not to unite with the All-India Kisan Sabha even for joint work and even when simultaneous struggles go on for the same objective, the communal virus being instilled by reactionary parties resulting in division of the toilers on caste and religious lines, the deliberate steering of mass movement into futile forms of actions

in which masses do not play any role—all these and such others, are extremely harmful for building and developing a broad-based, united common organisation and movement.

Thirdly it will be seen that the Government which uses demagogic language in respect of the kisan cause, is using all its repressive laws to suppress the movement. If we look at the number of arrests of kisans and Kisan Sabha workers, which go into even thousands in some provinces like UP and Bihar, we find that the Government, in spite of all its pretences and promises, is not going to tolerate any harm being done to the interests of the class of landlords, whom it represents. At the same time, the nature of repression also is to be seen. Firstly, civil liberties are being systematically crushed: in Punjab, prohibitory orders under Section 144 are in force throughout the State and in Bihar, it is so in several districts. Even the old British-enacted Dramatic Performances Act and Acts which are *ultra vires* of the constitution, like the Special Powers Act, are being used against the movement. Secondly, hundreds of cases under all pretexts—for trespass, for theft, for disorderly behaviour, for rioting and for murder and attempt to murder—are being filed against Kisan Sabha workers and kisans and they are made to hover round the courts for months and years together. Thus, repression is used in all states in order to paralyse the movement and carry on the Government plans.

But repression alone is not the method the Government is following. Wherever the movement is strong, there the Government is manoeuvring through several means, to sow illusions and win over sections of the peasantry to its side. These concessions, won by the strength of the movement, are no doubt big achievements for the movement but they do not go to alter the basic structure of land relations.

Even the tenancy reforms, the distribution of waste lands and others are being implemented in such a way that they go to disrupt the unity of the peasantry and agricultural labourers. Tenants are pitted against landless poor, caste organisations are being fostered, bogus organisations are formed and patronised and the militant, national organisation of the kisans—the All-India Kisan Sabha—is systematically ignored and bypassed. Wherever the Kisan Sabha waged big struggles and forced the Government to yield concessions, there the Congress would organise some paper organisation, and go on deputations, to show as if the concessions were given as a result of the representations made by the Congress-led organisations. Consolidation of holdings, extending taccavi loans,

introducing improved technical machinery, all of them generally go to benefit a small section of well-to-do peasantry but yet create illusions that the Government is doing so much for the peasantry.

Thus the Government which is losing its hold on the rural masses as a result of its anti-kisan, pro-landlord policies, is attempting to regain its influence by sowing illusions and by disrupting the movement.

In spite of all its manoeuvres and its repressive policies, the Government in many cases has to yield and give concessions which some times are even big. The movement is to organise the kisans to take up day-to-day issues, carry on struggles and get redressal of these grievances, at the same time fighting together with other democratic forces fighting for the same cause. If this understanding is there, we can force this Government to grant some concessions by the strength of the movement. These successes will give confidence to the movement, rouse the backward sections and draw them also into it and thus carry the movement forward for achieving the objectives of the All-India Kisan Sabha.

An important lesson that emerges out of the experiences we gained during this period is that wherever we gave a bold call to the kisans at appropriate times, to agitate and fight for their demands, we see that the movement is growing fast and the Government is forced to give concessions. It is the initiative and going into action of the poor peasants and agricultural labourers led by the Andhra Provincial Ryots' Association and Agricultural Labourers' Association that forced the Andhra Government to begin distribution of waste lands. The struggles of the bagchasis and the struggles for food forced the Bengal Government to issue an ordinance on the first, and reduce prices on the second issue. No doubt, heavy repression is used and even firing is resorted to but the struggles succeeded in winning, even though partially, their demands.

Yet, this lesson is not learnt everywhere. In several places, we find that there is great hesitation, and diffidence to lead the kisans into struggles. Various arguments that if the kisans enter into action, repression would follow and the organisation would be destroyed are being advanced for this hesitation. This falling into the vicious circle is leading in some provinces and areas to a paralysis of the movement and demoralisation among the people. This also gives an opportunity to other interested parties and the landlord sections to sow dissensions and disrupt the unity of the kisans, and sidetrack the movement.

Similarly, we find in many areas that struggles are breaking out on many issues and large masses are joining them but still appropriate and correct methods are not being followed in respect of them. Often the Kisan Sabha units are following forms of agitation and struggles which do not envisage and on the other, debar, participation of the largest number of kisans in them. We give a call for struggle but soon the struggle transforms into satyagraha in towns by squads, thus shutting out the masses from participating in it and leaving the villages where the kisan masses are found. Hundreds may go to jail but the Government is free to do what it likes in the villages and thus the objective of winning a particular demand by mass struggle is soon lost.

Today we find that great masses of rural toilers are coming into the struggles and it is the duty of the Kisan Sabha to give a bold lead to them and carry the struggles forward. The question of evictions, of increased water rates and other taxes, of falling prices and market manipulations, of landlord offensive against agricultural labour and so on, are there and unless we lead the kisans boldly, unless the broad masses of them are brought into direct participation in struggles, we cannot beat back the offensive of the landlords and the repression of the Government.

Another factor which should be noted is the linking of the movement with legislative work for defending the interests of the kisans. Often this is ignored, resulting in losing advantages that can be gained from even the existing legislations. In a number of provinces, survey and settlements are going on and in others, consolidation of holdings is going on. We should intervene in such matters and see that the kisans are done justice. Similarly in the case of jamabandi or work of Land Commissions or Conciliation Boards like Bagchas Boards and so on. It is true that these Boards or Commissions or investigations are often loaded with pro-landlord, bureaucratic personnel but still, if the Kisan Sabhas intervene with all the strength of the movement, these bodies could be utilised in the interests of the kisans. The Bengal example shows this.

For our legislators, it is not enough that agitation is carried on. It should be supported by lobbying and influencing the progressive sections in the legislatures. Also, we should prevail upon the members of the legislatures to move resolutions, Bills, etc., in their legislatures, embodying the demands of the kisans. This is particularly necessary at this time when large sections of the ruling party itself are falling out from the

Kisan Sabhas to 22. They are: 1. Manipur, 2. Assam, 3. Tripura, 4. West Bengal, 5. Orissa, 6. Bihar, 7. Uttar Pradesh, 8. Vindhya Pradesh, 9. PEPSU, 10. Punjab, 11. Himachal Pradesh, 12. Rajasthan, 13. Madhya Pradesh (including Bhopal), 14. Gujarat (including Saurashtra), 15. Maharashtra, 16. Berar, 17. Malabar, 18. T.C. State, 19. Tamil Nad, 20. Andhra, 21. Telangana. 22. Marathwada.

Thus, we have only two large areas left out, where no Provincial Kisan Sabhas are formed: they are Karnatak and Mahakosal.

During the period under review, a number of District and Provincial Kisan Conferences were held. Two Provincial Kisan Conferences in Bengal were held, one in May 1953 and the second in the first week of June 1954. The Punjab Provincial Kisan Conference was held in November 1953. So also Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh Conferences. This year, a series of Provincial Kisan Conferences were held, as a preparatory for the All-India Kisan Sabha Session. The 5th Annual Session of the Utkal Provincial Kisan Sabha was held at Nimapura in the third week of May 1954 attended by about 80 delegates, 50 visitors and 15,000 people in the open rally. The Maharashtra Kisan Conference was held at Nasik in the last week of May, attended by about 300 delegates and about 3000 people in the open rally. The Berar Kisan Conference was held at Palsi from 29th June 1954 attended by about 250 delegates and 5,000 people in the open session. Fourth was Assam Provincial Kisan Conference which was held at Boke from 7th to 9th May 1954 attended by 229 delegates. The first Tripura Kisan Conference was held from 30th April 1954 attended by 305 delegates, 1000 visitors and 3000 people in the open rally. The Tamil Nad Provincial Kisan Conference was held at Dindigal from July 30th to August 1st, 1954 and was attended by about 140 delegates, more than 100 visitors and about 50,000 people in the open rally. Besides these a number of District Kisan Conferences were held in many places.

Besides these, a number of huge demonstrations on local and provincial kisan issues were held in several provinces, the most important being the food and anti-eviction rallies in Calcutta, the anti-canal rate demonstration in Lucknow and Patna, the kisan march in Kurnool and the anti-eviction rallies in Punjab. Peasants and agricultural labourers, numbering from 500 to 50,000 have participated in them, braving all repressive measures of the Government. The Calcutta food rally was participated in by 30,000 peasants and 40,000 of the

Calcutta labourers and middle class people, the Bihar demonstration by about 30,000 peasants, the Ganganagar demonstration by about 8,000, the Kurnool march by about 8,000, the rally for waste land in Ernad (Malabar) by about 10,000 and so on.

Besides, in a number of Provinces, a series of local rallies and demonstrations were held. In UP, rallies were held in villages to protest against the increase in canal rates and against the hated Special Powers Act. In Punjab, protest demonstrations were held in several places against the curtailment of civil liberties in the whole province. In Andhra, a series of rallies were held on the questions of waste lands and famine. Thus, in every province, we find greater awakening of the masses of the peasantry and agricultural labourers, and their rallying behind the Kisan Sabha.

This year, except in Tamil Nad, in all other provinces the Provincial Conferences were attended by the largest number of delegates and visitors, who are also active Kisan Sabha workers. In Tamil Nad the nomination to District Boards' elections clashed with the conference and so the attendance was about 60 per cent of the total delegates but in other provinces, it goes up to 80 per cent and more. The delegates also showed keen interest in the discussions and every resolution was thoroughly discussed and only then adopted.

Last year, the AIKS was strengthened by the joining of the Peasants' and Workers' Party in Maharashtra. In Berar, this party, which wields great influence in the Marathi-speaking regions, had joined the Kisan Sabha even during 1952 and a United Kisan Sabha was formed last year itself. This year, this unity was broadened by the joining of a large number of workers of the Scheduled Castes Federation in Berar. Negotiations were carried on with the Peasants' and Workers' Party in Maharashtra also for building a united Kisan Sabha in that province which resulted in success by the PWP joining the Kisan Sabha. There are good prospects of widening this unity by drawing in the workers of the SCF who are already working in close co-operation with the Kisan Sabha in many areas.

Several attempts were made by us to similarly forge unity with the United Kisan Sabha also but no progress could be made. In the month of May, the General Secretary met the General Secretary of the United Kisan Sabha, Pandit Yadunandan Sharma, when the latter proposed to convene their CKC meeting in Delhi along with that of the CKC of the AIKS. But this has not materialised so far. But it is grati-

fyng to note that joint work on all issues is going on between the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha and United Kisan Sabha on the question of flood relief, evictions, increased water rates, etc. Joint committees were formed and united agitation was carried on. Efforts should be still made to forge organisational unity also with the UKS.

Millions of kisans, who see their needs and aspirations embodied in concrete demands and slogans, are moving into action to achieve the same. Even large masses of peasants and Congressmen, who have still great illusions that land relations can be basically altered through the Congress and its Governments, are all the same desiring that these demands be soon fulfilled and aspirations realised. It is this that makes it possible for united struggles against the most reactionary elements in the country and develop broadbased kisan movement and draw in all these elements to join the Kisan Sabha.

So it is necessary for the Kisan movement to make utmost efforts to draw in more and more masses and workers of all parties into united actions. We must make special efforts to work unitedly with the workers of the UKS, HKP and other kisan organisations.

Before going to report on the state of organisation in the centre and the provinces, it is necessary to see what work has been carried on by the CKC.

The General Secretary of the All-India Kisan Sabha alone is functioning from the office of the CKC. During the period under review, the General Secretary attended Provincial Kisan Conferences in Bengal, UP, Punjab, Tamil Nad, Maharashtra and Berar and Amritsar district conference in Punjab. He had also attended the Andhra Provincial Agricultural Labourers' Conference held immediately after the Cannanore Session. Besides, he attended the Working Committee meetings of the PKCs in Bengal, UP, Rajasthan, Andhra and PEPSU and toured some districts of Bihar and UP. He also attended a number of local conferences on several issues in Punjab, PEPSU, Rajasthan and UP.

The Joint Secretaries, besides carrying on their jobs entrusted by their respective PKCs, had, in spare time and when need arose, helped the adjoining provinces—Com. S. G. Sardesai going to Berar, Dr. Ahmed and Com. Jagjit Singh Lyallpuri going to PEPSU, Bihar and Rajasthan.

Twenty-three circulars in all—11 in 1953 and 12 in 1954 up to July—were issued from the CKC office. The total number of press statements issued are 17 and total number of information documents sent to all PKCs are 7.

Now I come to the functioning of the CK Office.

The CKC met thrice during the year, once at Cannanore immediately after the AIKC meeting, and twice in Delhi in July and November. The meetings held at Delhi were poorly attended by the members—the November meeting being compelled to adjourn for one day for lack of quorum on the first day. Also the decisions taken in the CKC meetings are expected for implementation and the CKC members have the responsibility of seeing that they are implemented, but here again we find that much is wanting in this respect, i.e., finance, reports, *Kisan Bulletin*. Reporting is practically nil and barring two or three provinces, the CKC does not get reports from any province. The following are the number of reports received from the provinces. (But all these cannot be termed real reports.) Manipur—nil, Tripura—2, Assam—1, W. Bengal—3, Bihar—4, UP—2, VP—nil, PEPSU—nil, Punjab—nil, HP—nil, Rajasthan—2, MB—1, Gujarat—1, Maharashtra—2, Marathwada—nil, Berar—5, Malabar—3, S. Kanara—1, T-C State—3, Tamil Nad—nil, Andhra—3, Telangana—1, Orissa—3.

Unless the functioning of the CKC is improved and the CKC members keep in constant touch with the office through correspondence and reporting, the CKC cannot discharge its duties satisfactorily. As was decided at Cannanore itself, the CKC office was shifted to Delhi, the place where the General Secretary is staying. But still the office could not function as it should, for the reason that only the General Secretary was manning the office and the job is a herculean one, beyond the management of a single person. This could be improved only by manning the Central units by more persons, experienced and able.

The contact between the Centre and the Provincial Centres is, though a little bit improved in the recent period, not yet satisfactory. Some reports came and only a few provinces sent them. Some sort of contact with the provinces is also being maintained by personally going to the provinces, but as I said earlier, this cannot be done by a single person. This can only be improved from both ends—by manning the Centre with more number of experienced persons and by the PKCs making it incumbent upon themselves to send regular reports.

Financial position, not only of the CKC, but as reports go, of the Provincial Kisan Committees also, is bad. No provincial unit except Punjab has sent its quota of money and PEPSU has paid partly (Rs. 300 out of Rs. 1000 promised). Our treasurer, Baba Gurumukh Singh had gone to Jamshed-

our for collections and brought a net amount of about Rs. 2500 and all our gratitude goes to him and to the generous donors. This amount, together with the contributions, was small and so, the office had to be run by raising loans. This sorry state of affairs could not continue for a long time, unless the provinces send quotas they promise.

The provinces could send their quotas to the Centre when they themselves raise funds. But it is exactly here the weakness lies. It is due to our defective style of work. We are leading big campaigns, holding big rallies and meetings but we don't take care to collect funds during these campaigns or preparations for rallies. At best, we collect only for that particular immediate purpose, that of holding a rally or conference, but not for the organisation. This weakness is manifest in all our big campaigns that we led this year. Hence we should make it a practice to raise funds for the organisation also—not only for the immediate purpose—whenever we launch campaigns or hold rallies and meetings.

Because of this financial trouble, the office had to stop publication of the *Kisan Bulletin*. In the July meeting of the CKC, several members expressed that if a Hindi edition of the *Bulletin* was published, it would be useful to a large part of the country and hence the CKC decided to bring out a Hindi edition also, in addition to the English *Bulletin*, provided financial assurances came forth from the provinces. Accordingly, circulars were sent but there was no satisfactory response and hence, the Hindi edition could not be brought out. On the other hand, as was already said, the English *Bulletin* also had to be stopped for financial reasons. It cannot be restarted unless the proposition becomes financially sound and unless the leaders and workers of the movement take more interest and send their experiences, etc., in the form of articles.

Last year, in November, a World Conference of Agricultural and Forestry Workers and Working Peasants, sponsored by the Trade Unions International of Agricultural and Forestry Workers was held in Vienna. AIKS also had participated in it, being represented by our President, Sri. Indulal Yagnik. Two delegates from Peasants' and Workers' Party and one from the Bombay Salt Workers' Federation also attended the World Conference as delegates. In the conference, our President had announced the affiliation of the AIKS to the TUIAFW, subject to the approval of the AIKS.

This year the total membership reached a figure of ten lakhs—highest in the history of the All-India Kisan Sabha.

Many provinces, notably Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Assam and Madhya Bharat, have registered a big advance in membership, reflecting the growing movement in these provinces. In West Bengal, Telangana, Tamil Nad and Bihar also, the membership has increased than last year. But in the other provinces, notably in Andhra, Punjab, PEPSU, Malabar and UP, the membership has fallen than last year. These figures are not a correct index of the growth of the movement, since it is in these provinces where the membership has not increased that the greatest amount of work was done and the movement had advanced.

ORGANISATIONAL TASKS

From the foregoing organisational picture, it can be gathered that the organisation is lagging far behind the immense opportunities that have arisen for broadening and strengthening the movement. In many provinces, we could not take up big problems that faced us or we could not proceed further, after reaching a stage in the movement. This is clearly reflected in the agitation in UP on water rates issue. Similarly, we could not reach all those areas where the kisans are spontaneously rising and coming into struggles. Also we could not even consolidate all our influence, as is shown in the fall in membership in some provinces, or bring into action all the vast masses that are today behind the kisan organisation.

The perspective before our movement is one of rising struggles on basic questions like tenancy rights, ceilings, tax burdens, indebtedness, etc. The whole report shows how the struggles are already breaking out. Unless the Kisan Sabha is well organised, broadened and strengthened, unless every unit of the All-India Kisan Sabha is activated and brought into action, the movement will go over the head of the organisation and we will only trail behind the events.

This brings up the question of our style of work. We generally take up issues, carry on agitation, collect signatures, lead deputations, hold demonstrations but neglect to build up the Kisan Sabha Units at the same time, collect funds, enrol members, sell literature, etc. Also when we take up any issue of any section of the rural population, we confine ourselves to that particular section and neglect to win over the sympathy and active support of the other rural population. This gives the movement a local character.

This weakness should be soon removed. Broad unity of the rural masses, particularly of the poor peasants and agricultural labourers, should be built up, by taking up common

issues and by winning the sympathy and support of one section to the other in their struggles. Also we should build the units of the Kisan Sabha, which are the blood cells of the organisation and without which no decision of the Kisan Sabha, however good and correct it may be, can be implemented. This basic organisational task cannot but be too much emphasised, as herein lies the main weakness in our style of organisation and work.

Lower units of the Kisan Sabha have to be built up and they should be activated—just electing a committee and being satisfied is no use. Today, absence of such committees and their activation is the rule. Hence, a beginning should be made to organise in every village, taluq and district, one Kisan Sabha unit, set up an office, appoint a person whose job is to come to the office regularly at particular times and run it and keep the files, attend to the correspondence and to the petitions, etc. If these minimum jobs are done, we will find in a short time, a great many units becoming active and the movement forging ahead.

Another basic question of organisation is the question of organising agricultural labourers in their organisations. The history of the movement shows that these agricultural labourers are now entering everywhere into big struggles for land and it is this factor that makes those struggles for land, widespread and strong. But so far, very little steps have been taken to build those organisations and bring them into the All-India Kisan Sabha. In Bihar, a District Agricultural Labourers' Conference was held and a Committee formed. In Punjab, a provincial Rural Labour Organising Committee is formed. More than this, concrete steps were not taken in any other province for forming the Agricultural Labourers Union. In the coming year, every province must take up the issue of building the agricultural labourers' organisations as one of its primary organisational tasks.

Connected with this is the task of forging unity between the struggles of the peasants and of the agricultural labourers. Whenever, the agricultural labourers go into struggles for land, for tenancy rights, for wages, for the removal of social evils, there the Kisan Sabhas should fraternise with them, actively support their cause by all means and thus strengthen the struggles. Only thus can the basis be laid for the fusion of the struggles of both these sections and for the building of a strong, united, common organisation for all the rural toilers.

Hence, building unity and organisation becomes the most

important task facing the movement today. For this, the following steps have to be taken:

a) Democratic functioning of the Kisan Sabha should be developed. This does not mean formal democratic functioning but drawing in kisans more and more into the day-to-day functioning of the organisation and conducting struggles, into formulating the policies and programmes and into the working out the details of the day-to-day activities. This should not confine to Kisan Sabha members alone but all peasants and agricultural labourers in the area should be asked to participate in discussions and formulating policies.

b) Lower units of the Kisan Sabha should be built up and the whole edifice of the organisation should rest on them. Individual functioning should be given up. A beginning should be made by organising committees in every village, through election, setting up offices and putting one person in charge of each of them.

c) Kisan Sabhas must take up every issue that concerns the rural life. Not only struggles against evictions, against tax burdens, etc., but issues like running schools, libraries, night schools and adult education, writing petitions and documents to the peasants, organising co-operatives, participating in Village Panchayats, starting cultural activities, of the Kisan Sabhas. This all-round activity will make the Kisan Sabha the real leader of the rural population and make it strong and broad-based.

d) Entering into struggles by all sections of the rural population imposes upon us the task of organising joint work and formation of Joint Committees or United Committees from issue to issue. This will not only coordinate all the struggles going on under the leadership of various organisations but will also create conditions favourable to building a broad-based, united kisan organisation.

e) In more and more places, agricultural labourers are coming into struggles. The Kisan Sabhas must support every such struggle of the agricultural labourers and mobilise support from other sections also. Thus, conditions will be created for forging unity between the peasants and agricultural labourers and for building a common organisation for both.

f) Agricultural labourers' organisations should be built up everywhere. Close co-operation and co-ordination of work of the units of the Kisan Sabha and Agricultural Labour Union should be maintained.

g) The poor peasants, who form about 60-70 per cent of the peasantry and are the most exploited among them, should

be brought in large numbers into the Kisan Sabha. The interests and demands of this section should find the major place in our campaign. Towards this end, orientation in the work of the Kisan Sabha should be brought about.

h) The Government is doing all its best to sow illusions and to disrupt the unity of the rural masses, by means of its grandiose plans, its patronisation to Bhoodan, etc. The whole press is utilised for this and every single act of the Government is tremendously boosted up. We should expose them, show how they are the achievements of the struggles of the people, show how they are only a tiny fraction of the needs of the country and how their execution itself is done by throwing heavy burdens on the common people.

I hope that by taking these steps, the All-India Kisan Sabha would become united and strong and be able to lead the kisan masses in their struggles to reach their goal.

I request to be permitted to submit this Report for discussion and adoption.

New Delhi,
September 5, 1954.

N. Prasad Rao,
GENERAL SECRETARY.