

# All-India Kisan Sabha

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## *REPORT* *to the Thirteenth Session*

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by  
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*Eight Annas*

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*June 1955*

## I. DECISIONS OF MOGA SESSION

It was only eight months ago that we met in the Twelfth Session of the Sabha. It was an important Session in this respect that thorough discussions followed by almost unanimous decisions took place in the Central Kisan Council (CKC), and then, in the Delegates' Session, on important issues facing the peasant movement such as eviction of tenants, ceiling to land ownership, waste land distribution, fall in prices of agricultural produce, growing tax burdens, demands and organisation of agricultural workers, flood relief, drought and refugee rehabilitation. Important slogans were evolved on these burning problems through collective discussions. The Session did not confine itself to economic issues of the peasantry. The question of world peace occupied the central place in the deliberations of the Session and a highly impressive cultural peace rally was held. A comprehensive resolution was passed condemning U.S.-British intrigues through SEATO, U.S.-Pakistan Pact, etc., to make "Asians fight Asians", while welcoming the Geneva Pact as a victory of the forces of peace and freedom and conducive to lessening international tension, and demanding ban on weapons of mass destruction like atom and hydrogen bombs. The Session expressed appreciation of the growing movement for peace and Asian solidarity and extended its full support to the same. A resolution was passed demanding liquidation of foreign pockets in India and greeting the people of French and Portuguese possessions for the heroic struggle they were waging against foreign oppressive rule and for merger with the Indian Union. The Session

adopted resolutions expressing sympathy and solidarity with the working class of India struggling against rationalisation, retrenchment and increasing work-load, and also greeting the peasants of Pakistan struggling for better life, and condemning the repressive policy of the Indian Government in ruthlessly suppressing the growing struggle and organisation of masses.

An important resolution was passed on *Swadeshi* which worked out concrete slogans for protection of national industry against foreign onslaught right in the tradition of national movement. This shows that the AIKS fights not only for specific class demands of the peasantry, but also for the interests of the whole nation.

It was felt that in order to develop the kisan movement, it was essential to strengthen the kisan organisation. For, it was organisational weakness that was responsible for the low level of the movement in the country as a whole. It was the first time that the question of Kisan Sabha organisation was discussed in all its varied aspects and a comprehensive resolution was adopted emphasising the importance of building the kisan organisation, dealing with the style of work, importance of basic units, problem of peasant unity and democratic functioning of all units.

To facilitate the drawing of new sections of the peasantry of all political views into the Kisan Sabha organisation and setting up of kisan units in new areas, a resolution was adopted permitting Provincial Kisan Sabhas to have either the all-India flag or a flag of red background, with the name of the unit in white lettering. This was subject to the proviso that the units which have their own flag accept the AIKS flag on all occasions directly connected with the AIKS, the AIKC and the CKC.

## II. DEVELOPMENTS SINCE MOGA

Let us now review the developments that have taken place in the last eight months and the activities of the

Kisan Sabha in implementing the slogans of the Moga Session, initiating and leading kisan struggles and building and strengthening kisan organisation.

Among the foremost of our slogans at Moga was the "Stick to the Land!" slogan to beat back the eviction offensive of the landlords backed by Government machinery. In areas where the slogan was taken up seriously, a considerable measure of success has been achieved. Tenants have been able to retain their lands, despite *goonda* terror and where organised kisan movement did not exist, evictions have taken place despite tenancy laws.

In Telangana, the government had launched an unholy offensive to evict peasants from waste lands which they had occupied in their grand struggle period and brought under cultivation with hard labour. These lands measure about 8 lakh acres. The peasants under the leadership of Kisan Sabha, organised "Stick to the Land" resistance. The Government has been compelled to climb down. *Bazar* land distribution committees have been set up taluq-wise and *pattas* are being issued to agricultural workers in occupation of those lands. Besides retention of lands, peasants have forced the Government to stop recovery of arrears of penalties for the pre-1949 period. Big peasant demonstrations were organised in each area. The Government stopped recovery of those old arrears and is considering the question of reducing them.

In Uttar Pradesh, the landlords have been evicting kisans, particularly sub-tenants on a large scale by resorting to force and fraud. They bribe the *patwaris* to get their names recorded for lands occupied by kisans and use *goondas* to forcibly eject them. Against this, the kisans have been heroically struggling particularly in eastern and central districts of U.P. and the Kisan Sabha has raised the demand that all false entries should be corrected and evictions banned. The Government which had refused to concede these demands during the Azamgarh satyagraha later announced record-checking operations all over U.P. in August 1954 and nearly more than 29 lakh wrong entries have been de-

tected. Taking advantage of these operations, many landlords tried to get their names recorded by bribing the revenue officials. Their special targets were the lakhs of Adivasis. Acting on the Moga resolution, the Kisan Sabha asked the kisans to resist these evictions in an organised manner and a wave of struggles started in Faizabad, Benaras, Ghazipur, Ballia, Azamgarh and Unnao. The Congress Government, which had previously planned to evict 27 lakh Adivasis had to amend the Zamindari Abolition and Land Revenue Act and grant *sirdari* rights to these Adivasis. Even after this amendment the evictions did not stop and the landlords tried to force the kisans to sign papers declaring surrender of land. A powerful agitation—big meetings and demonstrations—against these fake surrender deeds forced the Government to announce that these deeds shall not be accepted.

The landlords aided by the police and administration have now adopted a policy of harassment and terror. False criminal cases from far off districts are instituted against kisans. They are also organising *goonda* bands. The Kisan Sabha is leading the kisans in the struggle against these acts of terror and *goondalism* and only in those places where the kisan organisation is strong, the various anti-eviction enactments of the Government could be implemented.

In the Travancore-Cochin State, the introduction of land bills by PSP Government in the Assembly, under the pressure of the mass movement, had become an excuse for the landlords to intensify eviction proceedings. The Government also resorted to measures to evict thousands of peasants who occupied Government waste lands under excuse of utilising them for their new colonisation schemes. Because of the agitation carried on by the Kisan Sabha against these evictions, the Government and landlords could not implement their intentions smoothly. In many places, agricultural workers and kisans put up organised resistance against eviction by landlords and successfully retained their lands. In some places, homesteads of of agricultural workers were forcibly destroyed by

*goondas* of landlords. But the local kisan workers intervened immediately, reconstructed the huts and secured re-entrance of evicted labourers. Thus where strong units of the Kisan Sabha existed, the slogan "Stick to the Land" has been successfully put into practice. In the weaker areas, however, the landlords have succeeded in forcible evictions.

The Kisan Sabha conducted intensive agitation in this period to force the government to promulgate an ordinance to prohibit all kinds of evictions. On 27th January, 1955, a huge peasant demonstration—5,000 strong—was staged in front of the Legislative Assembly. *Jathas* from northern taluqs of the State marched more than 200 miles in 17 days, covering almost all taluqs. The demonstrators submitted a memorandum demanding the prohibition of all evictions. The PSP Ministry was forced to bring forward a bill to prohibit, with certain reservations, all kinds of evictions. But the Congress Ministry that succeeded wanted to delay enactment because of strong pressure of the landlords. State-wide agitation was conducted by the Kisan Sabha calling upon the Government to promulgate an ordinance banning all evictions. 25th March was observed as "Anti-Eviction Day" throughout the State. The Congress Ministry has been compelled to pass the law prohibiting evictions.

In Delhi State, where a new unit of the Kisan Sabha has been set up only recently, 2,500 demonstrated in front of the State Assembly demanding changes in land reforms, and in particular, the fixation of ceilings. The Chief Minister assured consideration of the peasants' demands.

In Malabar, the Malabar Tenancy Act has been amended incorporating many of the changes demanded by the Kisan Sabha. Under the amended Act, rent courts have been set up to determine rents and implement their awards. In the whole of Malabar, including Kasargode taluq, ten rent courts have been set up and fair rents are being fixed. More than 90 per cent of the cases were settled in favour of

the peasants and contract rents were reduced to 50 per cent and less.

In West Bengal, after the passing of the Estate Acquisition Act, wide-spread eviction of share-croppers had begun in all the districts. The Provincial Kisan Sabha held hundreds of meetings and mobilised lakhs of peasants against eviction and demanded anti-eviction ordinance. The Government had to yield and promulgate an ordinance in June 1954. The ordinance had many loop-holes; yet it was a victory for the organised peasant movement and the peasant movement took full advantage of its provisions. As a result of continued mass pressure, the authorities exempted court fees and expedited decisions. Under the ordinance, about 20,000 cases against eviction were filed in most of which land was restored to the share-croppers. Many more thousands of cases of eviction were settled by mutual consent and local pressure. In certain parts of 24 Parganas and other districts, where organised kisan movement was strong enough, eviction was stopped through organised resistance.

Jotedars and police officials combined to attack the struggling peasants. Thousands of peasants were arrested on false charges; nearly 2,000 peasants and kisan workers were arrested in 24 Parganas and Midnapore alone. During the lean period of the year, the jotedars refused paddy loans to share-croppers to crush their resistance. They demanded that share-croppers should sign a bond stating that they were wage-labourers. The Kisan Sabha demanded of the Government to give share-croppers paddy loans from Government stocks and force jotedars to give them loans. As the movement could not develop the necessary momentum, the peasants succumbed to jotedar pressure.

Summing up the anti-eviction struggle, the PKC report says: "It can be said that eviction has been successfully fought in those areas where we have Kisan Sabha units. But it is also a fact that in large parts of the Province, where there is no organised Kisan Sabha, eviction has occurred."



Before harvesting season began, the Kisan Sabha decided to organise the share-croppers for tebhaga movement. The Kisan Sabha slogans were "Stock the Paddy in Panchayat Barns and Not in Jotedars' Barns! Come to **Com**-promise with Small Owners and Middle Classes!" The tebhaga movement was conducted in wide areas. Panchayat barns were organised for about 15,000 acres of land in Midnapore, 15 to 20 thousand acres in 24 Parganas. Tebhaga cases were filed by a large number of share-croppers. In the districts of Maldah, West Dinajpore, Jalpaiguri, Sili-guri, tebhaga movement was organised in wide areas. Pro-landlord boards placed many obstacles in the way of recognising panchayat barns. Many peasants were arrested on flimsy grounds. The boards gave a few judgments for 2/3 share. Yet in the majority of cases share-croppers got more than 50 to 60 per cent of the produce. Panchayat barns were recognised in most cases.

In Rajasthan after the last conference, though there have been no big peasant movements as in the year 1953-54, but even then struggles, agitations and campaigns have taken place throughout the State on old and new issues.

While resuming the Jagirdaris, the Government, through a new survey and settlement, has launched an offensive of increment in rent rates which varies from 50 to 300 per cent and there have been an enormous number of irregularities in recording kinds and classes of lands. In these areas, the peasants, under the leadership of the Kisan Sabha, have and are waging relentless struggles against these increased rent rates. In some areas the Government has been forced to declare some reductions (20 to 50 per cent). Recently, the Government has also issued an ordinance to hear afresh the objections of the peasants in this regard.

Another big question has emerged out of the notorious Congress-Jagirdar pact in Rajasthan. Apart from the compensation to the tune of Rs. 40 crores to be paid to jagirdars; the jagirdars, in the name of "self-cultivation" have and

are grabbing thousands of acres of best and irrigated lands by ejecting the tenants-at-will. This ejection offensive has been legalised through reactionary amendments in the Jagir Resumption Act and a reactionary section in the recently passed Tenancy Act. Under this clause of the Tenancy Act, all those lands which were in possession of jagirdars for five continuous years, i.e., from 1945 to 1949 can be acquired by jagirdars for "self-cultivation" even by ejecting the tenants. "Self-cultivation" has been allowed up to 500 acres. Before 1949, i.e., before the coming into existence of Rajasthan, the jagirdars were the sole masters in their jagirdaris; and so, with the help of the old feudal loyalist officers, they are able to prove their claims and thus ejecting thousands of tenants, the jagirdars are raising big farms.

In this process, the agricultural labour as a class has grown to nine per cent of the whole population of Rajasthan. The number of landless and poor peasants is on the increase. Land hunger of the peasant is also going up. This has brought on the agenda of the day, the struggle for land in a more intensified manner.

In Assam, the Government, the landlords and the tea estate owners had launched a planned eviction attack in 1954. In this State, the Government is the biggest holder of waste and fallow lands, running into lakhs of acres. Thousands of kisan families driven by hunger and unemployment had settled on these lands in the last few years. The Government, in the name of planned settlement, has been trying to eject them as encroachers. It intensified the drive ten-fold at the time of harvesting. Elephants were let loose to smash crops and houses; the crop was confiscated and auctioned at 4 to 5 per cent of the actual sale price. In one case, 3,000 maunds of paddy were auctioned for Rs. 1,000 only. Following the Government, the landlords too let loose a reign of terror and police came to their assistance.

Under the leadership of the Kisan Sabha, kisans have resisted the attack stoutly.

In Bangalmara, where 540 kisan families were sought

to be evicted, the kisans defied arrest and terror let loose through elephants and forced the police to retreat. Over a thousand kisans came to meet the District Collector in Dhubri, surrounded his bungalow and remained there for the whole night, raising slogans and demonstrating.

The Provincial Kisan Sabha gave a call for observance of 10th January 1955 as "Kisan Demands Day", with meetings, rallies and marches in all important centres. The central demand of the day was stoppage of all evictions. 15,000 signatures have been already obtained on a memorandum to the Government on this subject. When democratic members gave notice of an Adhjar Act Amendment Bill in the State Assembly, the Government came out with the announcement that it was itself introducing a bill in the Assembly.

In this campaign, the Kisan Sabha and kisan panchayats led by the PSP are participating against the recovery of old arrears of rent and evictions. The landlords evict tenants on the ground of non-payment of rent even where rent has been actually paid but due to illiteracy, tenants did not secure receipts for the same. Due to cattle epidemic and fall in prices, it has become impossible for peasants to pay rents at existing levels and also the arrears. Acquisition and requisition of land by the Government also leads to eviction of peasants. The Kisan Sabha is mobilising the kisans for stoppage of all evictions, for distribution of waste land, either at the disposal of the Government or in the hands of the tea estates and for a suitable Tenancy Act.

The South Kanara (Mangalore) District Kisan Sabha has been agitating for a long time for the fixity of tenancy in the district. After much agitation, the Madras Government was forced to pass a legislation in the last session fixing the tenancy for one year. Now the Kisan Sabha is carrying on agitation for the permanent fixation of the tenancy. Several struggles were conducted against evictions also.

In the Mysore State, the Kisan Sabha of Kolar District was agitating for the abolition of *jodi inams* system

in the State. 500 peasants from Kolar district and other villages demonstrated before the Assembly at Bangalore during the last session demanding the abolition of *jodi nam* in the State.

In Punjab, the eviction offensive of landlords was in full swing in 1953-54. According to Government figures, about 60,353 tenants were given eviction notices up to May 1954 and about 13,700 tenants were evicted. Cases against 12,177 were pending in courts. 2,228 families of evicted tenants were rendered totally landless. 29,538 tenants became victims of a Government policy of compromise, who were afterwards partially or totally evicted. Illegal evictions by force are besides them. The Punjab Kisan Sabha has been seriously fighting eviction onslaught since 1953. As a result of persistent and wide-spread kisan agitation, the Punjab Government issued an ordinance on October 19, 1954 which stopped evictions for the future and provided for restoration of those already evicted on certain conditions which were rather rigorous. But the Government intentionally delayed issuing of this ordinance so that landlords could get enough time to evict tenants and sow *rabi* crop. The Government, however, succumbed to the pressure of the landlords and failed to enact the ordinance into law in the December session of the Assembly. It lapsed on 19th December and the hopes of tenants for legal restoration were dashed to ground. But it did one good to the tenants. The landlords could not issue notices to tenants for eviction in November, 1954, for then the ordinance was still in operation. In the budget session of the Assembly, a tenancy law has been passed in the teeth of bitter opposition by a large section of Congressmen as well as Akali and Zamin-dara League MLAs. This tenancy law is no doubt full of loop-holes like its predecessors, but it prevents ejection even from the reserved area (below 30 standard acres) unless and until the tenant to be ejected is accommodated in "surplus" area. A tenant of six years' standing can purchase the tenancy land above the permissible limit of 30 standard acres at three-fourths of the market value. The

law, however, complicates the small owner-tenant relations. It does not restore lands to ejected tenants either.

The fight for the stoppage of evictions and for the restoration of land to evicted tenants has continued unabated. In the districts of Kangra, Pathankot, Fatehabad (Hissar), Jalalabad, Fazilka and Guruhar Sahai (Ferozepore) and Ambala, partial successes have been achieved in certain areas. In certain places illegal evictions were successfully resisted.

The Provincial Kisan Sabha gave a call to celebrate the last week of February 1955 as Anti-Eviction Week. Big anti-eviction demonstrations took place at Batala, Moga, Jalalabad, Guruhar Sahai, Fazilka, Makhu, Hensi, Hamirpur, Palampur, Dehra and Kangra. Thousands of peasants participated in these demonstrations.

It is these struggles that have compelled the Punjab Government to pass the tenancy law, although it is defective in many respects.

The present kisan movement in Manipur relates to Tenancy Act, eviction, fishery, irrigation, forest toll station, education and the right of Assembly.

On October 12, 1954, there was a large demonstration of 5,000 strong tenancy rally at Imphal under the leadership of Manipur State Kisan Sabha. The general public accorded the demonstration a warm welcome.

On October 15, 1954 there was a meeting at the Chief Commissioner's residence, Imphal, between Sri Amir Raja, Deputy Secretary, Food and Agricultural Ministry, Government of India, and the kisan leaders regarding the introduction of Tenancy Act in Manipur. The kisan leaders were Com. Achinta Bhattacharja (Assam), Com. Ibotombi Singh, President of the Manipur State Kisan Sabha, Kundo Singh, Ex-Secretary, Manipur State Kisan Sabha, Th. Bira Singh, M. Janaki and Soyam Satradhari.

There is large-scale eviction from land. But no accurate figures are available. In spite of a deputation sent last year, the local peasants are not allowed by the fishery *pattadars* even to collect dry hyacinth for fuel. Any strug-

gle to stop such repression results in the peasants being kept in jail by the *pattadars* with the help of the court.

In spite of the deputation, which included the General Secretary, the erection of bunds on Nambol river, Leinambi and Sanapat on 15th August of every year has been postponed up to 15th October. This change of time does not bring any good result to the peasants. Because due to the blockade of water when the crops are nearing harvest, the inundated water damages all the crops. Due to our protests, the PWD agreed to remove the bunds in the river but no action has so far been taken.

In the PEPSU State, due to the pressure of biswedars who now dominate the Congress Ministry and Assembly Party, the right of tenants-at-will granted to them under Presidential Act to purchase lands at 90 times land revenue or Rs. 200 per acre, whichever is less, above the permissible limit (which is half of tenancy area subject to maximum and minimum limits of 30 and 20 standard acres) has for the present been taken away. But at the same time, evictions cannot take place for the present even from the area below these limits. The life of the Act has been limited to 31st December 1955. The biswedars want reactionary amendment of the Act—to raise the limit of permissible area and the purchase price of land at market value.

The peasants have successfully resisted eviction attacks in most places this year. The tenants of Dhabian have succeeded in getting restoration of lands from which they had been ejected wrongfully. The tenants of Naiwala marched with their entire families in bullock-carts—a distance of 50 to 60 miles—to Patiala and demonstrated and set *dharna* in cold winter before the civil secretariat. They left for their village only when the Chief Secretary personally went to them and promised favourable consideration. The Government has, however, gone back on its promise.

There are lands in PEPSU from which tenants were evicted on paper in the past but of which they never gave up possession. Now the Government has promised the

biswedars to eject tenants summarily from these lands on the plea of unauthorised occupation. It is in pursuance of this promise that a big police force went to evict tenants at Rampura in Bhatinda district recently. The entire peasantry of the village including women came out in a body into the fields to resist eviction. The police had to beat a retreat.

The heroic resistance of Harijans to eviction from *nazool* land in Phagwala tehsil shows how these poor down-trodden people are entering the arena of struggle for land. Harijan Devi Dass sacrificed his life in defence of land and his family continues to occupy the land to this day.

In Tamilnad, the State Government had promulgated the Moratorium Act for a year and this expired on the 6th of February of this year. The Government extended the life of the Moratorium Act till the 1st of March and passed a new legislation on the debt question. The legislation has not been of great help to the poor peasants and middle peasants. The new Agricultural Debt Relief Act stipulates that the debt has to be repaid in 4 instalments. In the first instalment one-eighth of the principal and the accumulated interest and the rest of the principal with interest in 3 instalments, or the entire debt in 4 instalments with interest. With the fall in the prices of the agricultural commodities, the peasants have not been able to pay back. Now the new documents are being executed for old debts. The Tamilnad Vivasayigal Sangham (TNVS) had put forth proposals to the Government and agitated for the same. It held several conferences in the districts demanding extension of the life of the Moratorium Act.

The proposal of the TNVS was that an Expert Committee should be appointed to go into the nature of the debts and then all those debts which are considered unjust should be wiped out and in the rest of the cases, the debts should be scaled down. For this purpose Panchayat Boards' powers should be extended and Special District Munsiffs should be appointed. The Government turned down all these proposals.

In this year there have been struggles for waste land

in Chingleput, Dindigul, Salem, Madura and other districts. The Government has come forward with a proposal to distribute 50 thousand acres of waste land in Athoor taluq in Salem district. In Madura district the Government has foisted cases against peasants entering the waste lands.

The Tamilnad Congress Committee' appointed a committee to investigate and recommend land reforms. The recommendations of the committee have been published. The recommendations propose fixity of tenure to all tenants who are tenants on the date of publication of the Report. The recommendations fix 36 acres of wet land or 75 acres of dry land for personal cultivation and for a joint family double the amount of land. The share of the crop is fixed at various rates for various kinds of lands. The TNVS has demanded certain modifications in the recommendations as an interim measure. After the publication of this report the landlords have begun an eviction drive with the intention of bringing under their direct control as much land as possible because according to the recommendations well-knit farms will not be broken. The report recommends that landlords who are not self-cultivating any land or are in possession of land below ceiling may receive land up to that unit after 1958.

The Government promises land reforms to agriculturists, but sends police help to the landlords to eject the tenants from land and house sites. Hundreds of tenants have been arrested for resisting eviction.

There has been a fall in the prices of paddy and other foodgrains but the steep fall is to be seen in the prices of commercial crops like cotton, groundnut, gingely, chillies, onions, etc. Agitation is going on for the fixation of minimum prices of these articles and to persuade the Government to buy these goods from the peasants.

The Government has imposed more taxes on the peasantry over and above the development taxes in areas of irrigation projects. The Government now has increased the stamp duty and also tobacco duty. The TNVS is agitating against these taxes.



Attempts have been made to set up separate agricultural labour organisations. In Thirukoiloor taluq of South Arcot district an agricultural labour organisation with a membership of 1200 has been started.

This year delegates' conferences were held in all districts and the Provincial Conference was held at Satyamangalam on 23rd and 24th of April.

In Ramnad and Tanjore districts, there are hundreds of inam villages where the inamdars are trying to evict all the inam peasants claiming entire land of the villages as their own *pannai* land (self-cultivated land) though they have not seen the land so far. They are using the loop-holes in Estates Abolition Act. The inam peasants are bitterly fighting against this eviction. Recently a district inam peasants' conference was organised in Ramnad district, where peasant representatives from inam villages attended. The Conference was a big success and the Kisan Sabha spread to several inam villages in the district.

In Maharashtra, small owners had leased their lands to sugarcane plantations for 40 to 90 years. The plantation owners paid them only nominal rent of Rs. 2 per acre per year. Here the small rent receivers were looted by rich capitalists. Therefore, they agitated for return of their land and as a compromise settlement demanded that the rent be fixed by law at one-sixth of the produce. The peasants started struggle. They entered land to begin cultivation. The police arrested their leaders. At last, after the second round of struggle, the Government agreed to reduce the period of lease to 30 years since its commencement and increase rent to Rs. 30 or Rs. 40 per acre.

In Orissa, as a result of Kisan Sabha campaign, struggle and demonstrations, an ordinance prohibiting the eviction of tenants from land held by the landowners having more than 33 acres of land was passed. Further, the Government brought a bill named Tenant Relief Bill in which the following provisions were made: i) no tenant will be evicted; ii) the share will be one-fourth of the gross produce instead of two-fifths of the gross produce; iii) right to resum-

ption for self-cultivation up to 7 acres of wet land which includes the land already under his self-cultivation in 1954 (1 acre of wet land = 2 acres of dry land); iv) the right to deposit the share in cash.

The kisans in Ganjam district have fought against the double water tax system in ex-zamindari areas. As a result of demonstrations, deputations and resistance to pay the excess water tax, the kisans have got a relief of nearly eighty thousand rupees excess water-tax imposed on them.

The kisans, specially the poor and landless peasants, have been fighting for Government waste lands since 1946. They have also been fighting against the system of penalty which was imposed upon the occupier of such land and also against the system of collecting premium from the occupier. The Government has passed an order recently that Government lands (*sivaijama* lands) will be assigned to the occupiers having less than 5 acres up to the total of 5 acres.

In Bihar, the Government was forced to move a bill in the special session of the Assembly held in December 1954 which gave certain concessions to under-raiyats such as restoration of evicted land since January 1953 and reduction of rent from one-half to seven-twentieths but ultimately the Bill was left pending before the Select Committee. The Kisan Sabha is continuing the struggle for restitution of land since 1946, for constitution of *batai* boards and to make eviction a cognizable offence. Last month, i.e., in April 1955, the Kisan Sabha filed a petition through an independent MLA in the Assembly with one lakh signatures demanding the immediate passage of the Bill with the above amendments. Wide-spread movement is going on to force the Government to pass the Bill while eviction is being resisted on a large scale.

In the State of Andhra, big agitation was started after the Moga Session for the abolition of inams or at least stoppage of eviction of peasants from inam lands. The Kisan Panchayat started satyagraha and resisted the evictions. The Government published a Bill saying that if current year's rates together with two years' arrears are paid, a ryot

would not be evicted. The Kisan Sabha characterised the Bill as unsatisfactory and demanded improvements in it.

Recently the Government of Andhra decided to deprive the agricultural workers of *bansar* lands in the district of Guntur and allot the same to Congressmen. The occupiers started satyagraha. Seven hundred persons were arrested while resisting evictions. Now the Government proposes to sell these lands and against it a movement is growing.

There are thousands of acres of land in Kolleru Lake in Andhra which are cultivated when the level of water falls. These lands require water by mechanical lift and so naturally, they are let to landlords by the Government. The landlords simply set up engines to pump water and give the land on high rents to peasants, normally 50 per cent of the crops. The Kisan Sabha has taken up the issue and carried on agitation for the lands being given on lease to poor peasants and agricultural labour only. Several deputations were led and hundreds of petitions with thousands of signatures submitted. As a result, the Government ordered that where the peasants and agricultural labourers get engines, they will be given lands; otherwise, they would pay to the engine-owners two-fifths instead of half of the whole crop as rent. Thus, a partial victory, covering 50 villages was won.

This review of anti-eviction struggle in the country after Moga Session which gave the clarion call for "Stick to Land" shows that where Kisan Sabha units have seriously taken up the issue, eviction has been stopped or the edge of eviction offensive has been considerably blunted. Tenancy laws have been passed to stop evictions. But they are full of loop-holes which the landlords fully utilise to evict tenants.

Anti-eviction struggle remains the most burning issue of the movement.

It is the anti-eviction struggle of peasantry which has made Nehru declare: "It is a crime to evict peasants"

though basically his Government policy continues to be pro-landlord and anti-peasant.

It is again the anti-eviction movement of the peasantry which has made the Sarva Seva Sangh to pass a resolution calling for stopping of all evictions. The resolution says: "The All-India Sarva Seva Sangh notes with concern and sorrow that for some time past, in several parts of the country, actual tillers and bataidars have been evicted from their land. In fact, justice demands that an actual tiller should have complete and continued right to the use of land under his tillage, and no one else should have any right to share the fruits of tillers' labour." The resolution concludes: "The Sarva Seva Sangh hopes that landowners will respect the basic right of bataidars indicated above. But if they fail to do so, the bataidars must *face the trial and stick to their right* at all costs."

Thus, the "non-violent" Bhoodan Samiti *too has had to recognise the justness of the right of tenant to stick to land at all costs.*

While the Congress leaders talk of introducing land reforms and giving land to the tiller, in practice, they do not take really effective steps to stop eviction, even though they admit the enormity of it. The Tenancy Laws they enact are full of loop-holes. Before their eyes, landlords sell and transfer lands and secure falsification of *girdawari* records to evade provisions of these laws. They look on and take no steps to prevent these malpractices. The incongruity between their word and deed exposes their pro-landlord policies.

It is only through development of a strong country-wide movement that evictions can be effectively stopped, land restored to ejected tenants and rent reduced.

### III. PROBLEM OF FALLING PRICES OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE

At the Moga Session, we viewed with concern the steep fall in agricultural produce prices. We passed a resolution captioned "On the Prices of Commercial Crops". We did not at that time quite realise that there would be such a steep fall in the foodgrains prices too, which would disastrously hit agricultural economy. A section of delegates, however, pointed that fall in price of foodgrains was equally serious. We demanded floor prices for commercial crops at such a level as to cover cost of production and cost of living of growers. Where the prices fall below this level, the Government should enter the market as purchaser. With regard to foodgrains also, we demanded floor prices in order to protect peasant interests, while, at the same time, ensuring that the consumer gets his food at reasonable prices. This could be done by controlling the profits of the profiteers as well as by the provision of food subsidies where and when necessary. The Government was urged to adopt a policy of price support and develop export trade with foreign countries and conclude long-term trade agreements with such countries as the Soviet Union and China, as are prepared to trade with us on equal and favourable terms. The Government was urged to develop industries to utilise our raw materials. It was further demanded that parity should be established between prices of agricultural and industrial goods.

The problem of fall in prices of agricultural produce, both industrial raw material and foodgrains, has become far more acute than it was at the time of the Moga Session. Immediately after the Moga Session, the Provincial Kisan Sabha units started agitation on the issue in the light of this resolution. The Avadi Session of the Indian National Congress also viewed with concern the gravity of the situation. All political parties expressed concern and demanded positive action on the part of the Government. Even industrialists and manufacturers had to note with gravity the situa-

tion. They feared that a further fall in prices of agricultural produce would hit industry and trade, and undermine the Government schemes and projects of the Five Year Plan. The issue was debated in the Rajya Sabha on a motion by a PSP member where all sections expressed apprehension and demanded Government action.

Sri D. S. Nag, in an article in the *Eastern Economist* wrote: "The recent fall in agricultural prices has cast a gloom over rural economy. The decline of 40 to 50 per cent in prices, particularly of foodgrains, has made the future prospects bleak. As a result, the agriculturists have become nervous, if not panicky. A sudden fall in their purchasing power has disillusioned them about prosperity. Since farm costs and cash liabilities remain unchanged, the cultivators are finding it difficult to balance their budgets. If transactions of indigenous moneylenders are any indication of rural economy, the marginal farmer has already been pushed to the point of mortgaging his ornaments with the money-lender."

Sri Nag comes to the conclusion that planning will be impossible in the face of falling agricultural incomes. Industry will be hit consequent on fall in purchasing power of 80 per cent of our population.

The fall in prices of agricultural produce would have affected the peasants less if there had been a corresponding fall in the prices of manufactured goods. In fact, prices of manufactured goods have risen. Their price index was 364.3 in January, 1954. It rose to 381.1 in May; then, there was a slight fall and it stood at 377.2 in November, 1954.

The price index of sugar went up from 273 to 301, while it is well-known that the Government reduced the price of sugarcane from Rs. 1-12-0 to Rs. 1-7-0 per maund. The price index of raw jute fell from 420 to 400, and that of jute manufactures rose from 423 to 457.

Thus, the demand for arresting the fall in prices of agricultural produce became a national demand. In almost all State Assemblies, in their budget sessions legislators de-

manded Government intervention in the situation and price support measures.

In Travancore-Cochin Assembly, a resolution was passed unanimously for the constitution of a Tapioca Marketing Board.

In PEPSU Assembly, on the motion of the State kisan leaders who were also members of the Assembly, two resolutions were passed unanimously. One of them demanded that sugarcane price be fixed at Rs. 1-12-0 per maund. The second resolution demanded that economic price should be fixed for agricultural produce to save the national economy.

Outside the Assembly, the PEPSU and Punjab Kisan Sabhas have carried on persistent agitation for economic prices for wheat, gram, cotton, chillies and groundnuts which have registered further heavy fall in 1955.

In the State of Punjab, the following comparative price chart of agricultural commodities vividly illustrates the price fall. It further shows that at the time of harvest, when peasants have to sell their produce, prices touch the lowest level, but when produce has passed out of their hands, prices again generally rise to the disadvantage of consumers.

*Prices per maund*

<i>Commodity</i>	1945-50	1954	1955
	<i>Rs.</i>	( <i>harvest time</i> ) <i>Rs.</i>	( <i>afterwards</i> ) <i>Rs.</i>
Wheat	14 11 0	9 3 0	14 0 0
Gram	9 13 0	9 0 0	6 10 0
Rice	10 11 0	6 8 0	8 4 0
Maize	9 8 0	7 7 0	8 4 0
Mung	20 8 0	8 0 0	10 0 0
Mash	17 6 0	10 0 0	10 0 0
Gur	25 8 0	10 0 0	11 12 0
Peanut	17 8 0	6 4 0	8 0 0
Cotton	26 12 0	12 0 0	14 0 0
American cotton	33 0 0	12 0 0	20 0 0

The PEPSU Directorate of Economics and Statistics has compiled index numbers of agricultural wholesale prices with 1950 as base year, as follows:

Year	(1950 = 100)			
	Cereals	Pulses	Oil-seeds	General
1951	101.7	134.5	99.8	106.8
1952	99.8	146.7	69.5	98.5
1953	99.1	138.4	81.1	102.6
1954	98.3	85.4	75.6	89.3
1955 Jan.	94.8	61.3	59.2	75.2
1955, March 16	80.5	49.3	49.3	61.4

As compared with 1951, in January, 1955, there is fall of 31.6 points in general index, of 40.6 points in the case of oilseeds, of 73.2 points in the case of pulses and 7.1 in the case of cereals. In March (16-3-55) there has been further fall in general by 13.8, cereals 14.3, pulses 12 and oilseeds 10 points.

The real fall in the prices which are paid to the peasantry immediately after the harvest is not brought out here. The fall in prices of cotton and chillies which are important commercial crops in PEPSU is also not revealed in this chart.

#### *Fall in Prices in U.P.*

	Nov. 53	1 Jan. 54	1 Jan. 55	23 Apr. 55
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
Rice	16-12	16-12	11- 8	12- 0
Wheat	15-10	16- 4	13- 2	10- 0
Gram	14- 8	14- 8	7- 4	6- 0
Gur	15-14	15-14	11- 4	10- 4

Due to fall in prices, the total value of agricultural produce has been falling year after year as shown below:

✓ 1948-49	Rs. 851.37 crores
1952-53	Rs. 788.19 crores
✓ 1953-54	Rs. 690.44 crores



This loss in value in the year 1954 is estimated to be nearly Rs. 250 crores.

Fall in gur prices in U.P. caused a loss of over Rs. 160 crores in 1952 alone.

In Travancore-Cochin, heavy fall in the price of tapioca has become a serious problem for the majority of peasants. One candy (600 lbs.) of raw tapioca which sold at Rs. 50 in 1951-52 is now sold at Rs. 10 registering a fall of 80 per cent. In Travancore-Cochin, the majority of poor and middle peasants owning between one to five acres cultivate tapioca. It is cultivated over 7 lakh acres which is one-fifth of the entire cultivated area of the State. Tapioca constitutes an important food article of the poor masses. The State Kisan Sabha has carried on agitation demanding of the Central Government to take the following steps: 1. Find export market for tapioca; 2. convert large quantities into industrial goods as starch, glucose and sago; 3. use it in textile mills to ensure fair price.

The organisation of tapioca cultivators has also carried on agitation for fair price for tapioca. It has held a number of meetings and passed numerous resolutions. A memorandum was sent to the Government of India and a deputation went to represent their case at the Centre. The Chief Minister of the State has announced that the Government is considering purchase and storing tapioca at a floor-price to give relief to the cultivators.

In Andhra, the price of country tobacco went down from Rs. 700 to Rs. 200-150 per candy. Wide-spread agitation has been carried on and numerous meetings, conferences, etc. were held. A deputation was led to the Central Government also and demands were put that markets should be found in foreign countries, that a trade delegation for country tobacco should be sent to the Far East and Middle East and that tobacco excise duty, which is greater than the price of tobacco, should be reduced. As a result, the trade delegation going to the Middle East was asked to study the market conditions there and tobacco excise duty for 1953-54 stocks was reduced from six to five annas per lb.

In Telangana, there has occurred a huge fall in the price of oil-seeds which is the main commercial crop of the area, leading to the ruination of the peasantry.

In Madhya Bharat, groundnut price has fallen so low that the peasants have to pay half the crop for clearing the fields for next sowing.

In West Bengal, the Kisan Sabha has conducted agitation for fair price for jute. Several mass meetings have been held. A mass petition was drafted demanding Rs. 35 per maund. About 15,000 signatures were collected on the memorandum and sent to the Central Minister for Agriculture. A deputation met the Minister in New Delhi. Due to less production this year, price of jute was a little higher than last year.

The problem of fair price of jute remains a serious problem of the State. The Indian Jute Mills Association, led by British magnates in co-operation with middlemen, fleeces the cultivators. The Government refuses to check their monopoly profiteering and help the peasants. The price of tobacco in the State has fallen precipitously ruining the peasants. High excise duties and sale restrictions further deprive the peasants of whatever price they can get even now. The Provincial Kisan Sabha has taken decisions on this point also.

In Assam the Kisan Sabha has conducted a state-wide campaign for demanding fair floor price of paddy at Rs. 9 to 10 per maund and direct purchase by the Government in various areas. There has been a precipitous fall in the price of paddy. At the height of harvesting season, it has gone down to Rs. 4-8-0 per maund in distant places and generally to Rs. 5 to Rs. 5-8-0 in others. New rice is sold at Rs. 9 to Rs. 12 generally in all rural areas. In one area, it was sold at Rs. 8 per maund. The Government promised to purchase when price tended to decline, but the promise was never fulfilled. The Government has finally stopped all ration supply to Government and semi-Government employees.

Jute prices have fallen by Rs. 32 per ton since 1952

March. Oranges cultivated by tribal peasants are selling at Rs. 10 per thousand, while across the the Pakistan border they sell at Rs. 65 per thousand.

In the tea garden estates, British owners have put forward the decline in agricultural produce as the main plea for attacking the wages of the workers. But the fact of the matter is that decline in prices of agricultural produce has not brought about commensurate decline in the consumer cost of living index.

#### IV. FIXATION OF PRICES BY GOVERNMENT THIS YEAR

The prices fixed are generally very low. When the price of wheat prevailing in the market was Rs. 12 per maund, the Government fixed its purchase price at Rs. 10. Besides, the Government has not purchased to the extent announced in its own plans. The Government of India has decided to grant a loan of Rs. 12 crores for purchase of wheat. Out of this, only one crore has been given. Only 58,000 maunds of wheat have been purchased so far. In U.P. a scheme to purchase Rs. 50 lakhs worth of gur was announced but only Rs. 6 lakhs worth was purchased after which purchase was stopped.

But the few specific *mandis* at which the Government proposes to purchase wheat are out of reach of most of the peasants. Secondly, the Government purchases only limited quantities. In practice, Government agents refuse to purchase average quality wheat at Rs. 10 per maund. Therefore, the Government has failed to arrest the fall in price of wheat below Rs. 10.

We already see wheat in many places selling below Rs. 10 per maund. For instance, in the first week of May, price of wheat per maund at Amritsar was Rs. 9-8-0, at Hapur Rs. 9-8-0, Delhi Rs. 9-8-0, Bhatinda Rs. 9-4-0 and at Fazilka wheat sharbati Rs. 9-8-0. The Government is not purchasing gram on its own. Gram price per maund at Hapur

was Rs. 5-14-0; at Moga Rs. 5-3-0, at Bhatinda Rs. 5-4-0, at Fazilka Rs. 5-3-0 and at Ambala Rs. 6-0-0.

Nor is it taking any steps to narrow down the growing disparity between prices of agricultural and industrial goods.

Hence it has become *all the more urgent* at this Session to evolve a concrete programme of building a nation-wide campaign to ensure fair price for agricultural produce in order to protect the peasantry from utter ruin, to protect our agriculture, our trade and industry from break-down.

## V. GOVERNMENT ADAMANT ON QUESTION OF SUGARCANE PRICES

The Kisan Sabhas in U.P., Bihar, Andhra, Punjab and PEPSU have conducted agitation over the question of increase in the price of sugarcane to Rs. 1-12-0 per maund. The Sugarcane Advisory Boards of Bihar and U.P. recommended increase in price to Rs. 1-12-0. The Central Sugarcane Committee has made a similar recommendation. A large number of MPs of all parties have supported the demand of the peasantry. Sugarcane growers of U.P. have conducted a province-wide agitation and even launched strikes refusing to sell sugarcane to mills. But Government has been adamant on the question of sugarcane prices.

The third-year Progress Report of the Planning Commission has admitted it unequivocally that consequent on decrease in sugarcane price from Rs. 1-12-0 to Rs. 1-5-0 and then Rs. 1-7-0, area under sugarcane has decreased and also sugar production has fallen from about 15 lakh tons to 10 lakh tons a year. As a result of the fall in sugar production, we have had to import sugar from abroad and spend valuable exchange. But the Government does not see logic. Neither the producers nor consumers nor the nation as a whole has gained from Government policy in the matter. They have all been losers. Only a handful of sugar magnates have garnered increased profits by selling sugar at high prices.

This year, after 1st May, the millowners have been permitted to pay to the cane growers on the basis of recovery, which means a fresh attack on the value of their produce.

We have again to consider the question at this Session and plan steps to conduct a country-wide movement on the issue to force the Government to yield to the voice of reason, justice and national interest.

## VI. INCREASING TAX BURDENS

The problem of organising struggle against increasing tax burdens has become ever more urgent since the Moga Session, due to a further fall in prices of agricultural produce. The incidence of taxation on peasants rises as the prices fall. The Central and State Governments are preparing to increase direct and indirect taxes on the peasantry to finance their Five-Year Plan projects. Last year, betterment levy of Rs. 75 crores to be realised in 15 years has been imposed on the Punjab peasantry. This year, the PEPSU Government has passed a law proposing to collect Rs. 28.77 crores as betterment levy in 15 years. In Andhra the decision of Prakasam Ministry, taken under the pressure of the kisan movement, to exempt small peasants from land revenue has been cancelled. Governor Trivedi has announced the decision to impose betterment levy on lands which would be irrigated by new projects. In Punjab and PEPSU, Rs. 180 per acre would be realised for lands which would get perennial supply. In certain areas, this levy amounts almost to existing market price of land. Thus, the Government will compel the peasantry to pay purchase price of lands to be irrigated by Bhakra canals. The Government argues: 'You will benefit by irrigation projects; therefore, you must bear the burden to finance them.' The British Government also dug canals; but it dared not impose such betterment levies for fear of mass resistance. It spread the project costs over a number of generations. To pay for

the capital cost and interest charges, it imposed high *abiana* and water advantage rates. It kept on increasing these charges from time to time. The Congress Government continues the British policy of fleecing the peasantry through unconscionable irrigation charges and goes a step further than its predecessor. Yes, money is needed to finance projects. But it should be secured through tapping other sources. Taxes should be increased on the landlords and the rich capitalists who can bear them. Allowances of Rajpramukhs and Princes, and cash jagirs paid to old British toadies should be stopped and these crores utilised for irrigation projects. Waste and extravagance should be eliminated. Expenditure on bureaucratic administrative machine should be cut down. The example of China is before us. Big irrigation and other projects are under construction there. Yet, at the same time, incidence of taxation on the peasantry has been lightened during these years. Now the peasants there have to pay only a single tax and they pay no more than *one-tenth* of their produce. About 70 per cent of the Central Government's revenue comes from profits of State and State-capitalist enterprises. We have to learn a lesson from our great friendly neighbour how to finance and execute projects.

While the income of peasants has shrunk consequent on steep fall in prices and cumulative effect of existing tax burdens, rent and interest charges, the Government is proposing to impose fresh tax burdens on the peasantry and all this, in the name of financing the Five-Year Plan development projects. Besides betterment levies, the Central Government has instructed State Governments to find additional revenues through imposition of tax on agricultural income, cess on commercial crops, still more increase in irrigation rates, increase in land revenue through resettlement, surcharge on land revenue and increase in sales-tax. For its own part, the Central Government has increased excise duties on cloth and sugar which will hit the agricultural workers and peasants still more.

There is enormous discontent among the peasantry

against these tax burdens in the background of steep fall in prices of agricultural produce. The tax structure that the Government is erecting on the back of the peasantry is bound to crash when the masses unitedly move to shake off the unbearable load.

The experience of U.P. shows that the mighty Congress Government can be made to retreat under the pressure of mass movement. In the movement against enhancement of irrigation rates there, 3000 workers of Kisan Panchayat and Kisan Sabha had been arrested. The entire peasantry demanded reduction with one voice. Lakhs of signatures were obtained on a memorandum and hundreds of meetings were held on the issue. The Congress Committees of many districts supported the peasant demand. When the Government did not budge even under pressure of this united demand and kisan satyagraha, there was no alternative left for the peasants but to resort to non-payment of rates. A conference of 100 representatives of 7 district Kisan Sabhas of Western U.P. met in a village in Mathura district on 23rd and 24th November. The conference gave a call to the peasants to withhold payment of irrigation charges till the Government accedes to the demand for reduction of irrigation rates to the level of April, 1953.

The kisans delayed payment till the Government started arrests and confiscation of property. Police terror has been used in several districts and scores of comrades have been arrested. The pressure of the movement led to raising of the issue by 60 Congress MLAs and the Government had to grant a 50 per cent rebate in the enhancement made since 1953. The movement continues for the total cancellation of the enhancement.

In Bihar, drought and flood havoc coupled with fall in prices rendered it still more difficult for peasants to pay enhanced irrigation rates. Last year, the Government failed to realise more than 50 per cent. The peasants offered mass resistance to forcible realisation of irrigation rates. Fifteen thousand kisans rallied at the Shahbad District Kisan Conference and protested against enhanced rates. On the eve

of paddy harvesting, the State Government issued attachment warrants. In several villages, kisans successfully chased out canal officials.

In U.P. nearly Rs. 330 lakhs of panchayat taxes were imposed. The kisans refused to pay them and hardly 10 per cent could be collected. The Government tried to collect arrears of 4 to 5 and even 6 years, but the kisans resisted and in most of the districts, particularly, in places where the Kisan Sabha is strong, no realisation has been made despite terror.

Now the Government has come out with a new device to collect these taxes. The panchayat elections are coming. By a recent amendment to Panchayat Raj Act, it has been made a compulsory qualification for every candidate contesting the elections that he should have no arrears of panchayat tax against him.

Demonstrations in thousands are taking place all over U.P. against panchayat tax and the above amendment. Anti-panchayat tax movement has become a very powerful campaign in which all sections of the peasantry are rising.

In West Bengal, the Government decided to pass a Development Levy Bill. Everything from primary education, roads and public health to major and minor irrigation projects were declared development works and for these, it was proposed to impose annual recurring levies for actual or 'likely' increases in yield and, moreover, lump sum betterment levies for actual or 'likely' increase in the price of land. The Kisan Sabha organised a mass protest movement against the new taxation proposals. Numerous meetings were held and 6,000 campaign pamphlets were sold. A mass petition with 30,000 signatures collected in 10 to 15 days was submitted to the Speaker of the Assembly. The mass movement had repercussions inside the Congress Party. One hundred Congress MLAs urged the Government not to push the Bill through. The Congress Ministry beat retreat and the Bill was withdrawn from the Assembly agenda.

The Government imposed in the Mayurakshi project area a canal tax at the rate of Rs. 10 per acre for *kharif*



crop. The peasants of Birbhum, under Kisan Sabha leadership, launched a protest movement against this tax. The rate was reduced to Rs. 6-8-0 per acre for the present in Bankura district. The Kisan Sabha has been able to secure remission of canal taxes for certain small irrigation works.

The Kisan Sabhas agitated against the octroi and other taxes levied in Madhya Bharat as a result of which the cart-stopping tax and wheel tax were totally abolished and partial relief was given in regard to octrois. In the same State, agitation and demonstrations were carried on against panchayat taxes, as a result of which, some partial relief was given.

In the Punjab, a strong protest movement developed against fresh tax burdens. Demonstrations were held in Amritsar, Jullundur, Gurdaspur, Ferozepur, Ludhiana and Karnal districts in which more than 40,000 kisans irrespective of their party affiliations, jointly participated.

In the aggregate, tax burdens for the peasantry have increased  $3\frac{1}{2}$  times since 1947. Land revenue surcharge, betterment levy and local drainage works charges in the context of disastrous fall in prices are proving unbearable burdens.

Canal drainage works were carried out in Ferozepur, Gurdaspur and Amritsar with the help of peasants and agricultural workers. Yet the Government had the check to impose tax at the rate of Rs. 5 per acre for these works.

In 129 villages of Amritsar and 200 villages of Gurdaspur district, arrears of 9 instalments of water advantage rate, at the rate of Rs. 1-8-0 for half-yearly and at Rs. 3 for perennial canals per acre began to be collected. Including local rate and Panchotra charge, the tax comes to Rs. 2-6-0 per acre on half-yearly canals.

In Jullundur district, tail water was let off from the new half-yearly Bist. Doab canal and promise was held out that no *abiana* would be charged for this water. Breaking this promise, the Irrigation Department levied *abiana* at Rs. 2 per acre for this tail water. Over and above this,

water advantage rate including local rate has been imposed at the rate of Rs. 3-4-0 per acre.

There was huge discontent against these fresh burdens. The kisans held conventions, rallies and demonstrations against drainage and other charges. Action Committees were set up to resist realisations. The peasants of eighteen villages of Gurdaspur district on their own set up Action Committees and gave notice to the Government that they would not take canal water unless these charges were reduced. In Ferozepur district, too, a similar notice was given to the Irrigation Department by a number of villages.

As a result of the peasant movement, the Government had to defer partial realisation of these charges.

In PEPSU, where revenue tax per head is the highest in the Indian Union according to the Taxation Enquiry Commission Report, a protest movement is developing against betterment levy. The land consolidation fee had been increased from two annas per bigha in the beginning to ten annas per bigha besides four annas extra for local expenses. The peasants especially in the district of Sangrur launched a movement against excessive fee and the Government was forced to reduce the fee to the level of the Punjab State where it is Rs. 4 per acre.

The experience of the peasant movement against tax burdens shows that all sections of kisans, including those under Congress influence, combine to resist fresh tax burdens. The fall in prices has enormously increased the incidence of tax burdens, besides the Government's fresh tax measures. All-in peasant unity is quite possible in resistance against increased tax burdens. Though the level of the movement is very uneven and low, yet in certain areas the peasants have passed beyond stage of rallies and demonstrations and have delayed or withheld payment of enhanced and new rates. They have offered satyagraha and courted arrests. They have bravely defied attachment warrants. Where the movement has acquired wide-spread character as in U.P., the Government has been forced to yield and make substantial concessions.

## VII. MOVEMENT AND ORGANISATION OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

A gratifying feature of the period is the emergence of agricultural workers' organisations in different provinces and their struggle against wage-cuts, social oppression and taxes, for waste land and free house-sites and other demands.

The Travancore-Cochin report speaks of a huge upsurge visible among agricultural workers in almost all parts of the State. Spontaneous struggles have taken place against wage-cuts. The landlords and rich employers began to cut down wages on the plea of fall in prices. By resistance to wage-cuts in an organised manner, the agricultural workers forced the landlords to retreat.

At Kuttanad, where agricultural labour union has been in existence for ten years, the workers had wrested many concessions through organised struggles. But this year the biggest landlord of the place, having ten thousand acres under his direct cultivation, started a wage-cut offensive. The labourers struck work for 17 days. The landlord's attempt to recruit blacklegs miserably failed. He had to climb down and concede the demand.

At Kuttanad, another big landlord, who is an ex-Minister and Congress MLA, attacked the existing concessions in the paddy harvesting season. There has been the custom in this place that two days of harvesting is followed by a day of rest in which workers are given certain quantity of paddy for food. The landlord this year insisted that he would give this concession after three days of work. The labourers struck and to break their strike, blacklegs were recruited. Under their union leadership, the labourers started picketing. Police came to the assistance of the landlord and arrested dozens including the president of the union and an advocate. There was state-wide agitation conducted by TUs and Kisan Sabhas against these arrests.

A fairly strong organisation consisting of 50 thousand members has been built up in this period. Units have been

set up practically in all taluqs. In Malabar too, units have been organised in various taluqs.

In the State of Bihar, there has been great upsurge among the agricultural workers, and in many areas their unions have been set up. They were the hardest hit by last year's floods and drought. They marched to the forefront of relief movement. The Kisan Sabha units gave active support to them in their fight against wage-cuts in several villages during paddy sowing season.

Sixty representatives of agricultural workers belonging to 32 villages of Mukandpur Thana, Gaya District, held a conference on 17th October 1954 to discuss and find out a solution for their problems. An open rally of 4,000 was held and resolutions adopted formulating demands of agricultural workers regarding wages, waste land, interest-free loans, right to fish in common ponds and graze cattle. A Khet Mazdoor Sabha was set up.

Successful struggles have taken place against landlord oppression in Bhagalpur district and on the basis of these struggles, agricultural labour unions are arising.

The organisation of agricultural labour has been undertaken in 6 or 7 districts of U.P., and a State Sub-Committee has been appointed for organisation throughout the State. The struggles of agricultural labour, conferences of khet mazdoors and rallies for their demands have started taking place. In the recent session of the U.P. Kisan Sabha, the delegates working amongst agricultural labour met separately and decided to extend the organisation to every district of U.P.

Even in Gujarat, where the kisan movement is weak, agricultural labour movement is getting momentum beyond expectations. More and more agricultural workers are drawn into the movement. Recently, in Baroda nearly 5,000 agricultural workers of the District of Baroda gathered in conference on 27th December. They marched through the city. A District Agricultural Labour Union was set up. Wage strikes have been conducted in a number of places in Gujarat and Bhopal.

In Andhra, toddy-tappers thrown out of employment by the Congress Government's prohibition policy have conducted satyagraha in which thousands were arrested and sent to jail.

In Punjab and PEPSU, rural workers' movement and organisation have made significant headway in the course of the year. The first provincial delegate session of Dihati Mazdoor was held at Khan Khanan, in the district of Jullundur, in December last year. On the basis of 16,000 membership, 169 delegates were elected from 11 districts, of whom 132 delegates attended the session. A constitution of the Sabha was adopted and provincial Working Committee elected. Resolutions were adopted on all important issues facing the movement: waste land, wages, free house-sites, unemployment, taxes, protection of cottage industry, etc. About 5,000 attended the open rally. There has been further progress in the growth of the movement and organisation. This year's enrolment is expected to go up to 35 thousand by 31st May. The Dihati Mazdoor Sabha has conducted a state-wide campaign for distribution of waste land. Eighteen thousand signatures were secured on a memorandum to the Punjab Government last year. Hundreds of rallies and meetings have been held. At the call of the Provincial Sabha, 16th March this year was observed as "Land Day". There was wide-spread response to the call. Eight thousand rural workers participated in the demonstration at Taran Taran and three thousand at Mukatsar. The Taran Taran demonstration was so impressive that a Congressman remarked that such a demonstration had not been seen in the city since the 1930 days of Civil Disobedience. The Kisan Sabha units have supported the demand of the rural workers for reservation of free house-sites at the time of consolidation and land has been secured in a number of villages in Jullundur, Ferozepur, Bhatinda and Hoshiarpur.

The Punjab and PEPSU Governments have had to make some concessions to rural workers as follows:

1. Village Common Lands Law has been passed in

PEPSU as in the Punjab and non-proprietors were made owners of their house-sites. Moreover, between four to five lakh acres of common land have been vested in elected village panchayats to be used for the benefit of entire village.

2. An amendment has been made in the Land Consolidation Act in the Punjab enabling rural workers to send their representatives into Consolidation Advisory Committees to safeguard their interests.

3. Arrears amounting to fifty thousand rupees of Professional Tax due from Harijans of Rohtak district have been written off.

In West Bengal, a district conference of agricultural labour was held in the district of Midnapur in which about 200 delegates attended. An organising committee of agricultural labour union has been formed and enrolment is going on. In a local area of 24 Parganas, efforts at separate organisation are being made. The Kisan Sabha in Bengal reports that it is confronted with certain problems and difficulties. The Provincial Kisan Council and the annual kisan conference have considered their concrete problems and decided that agricultural labour would be organised in certain places in separate organisation, and in others, within the Kisan Sabha, otherwise, they thought, many complications might develop. Movements on local scale on unemployment, wages working conditions are being organised in different places. Thousands of agricultural labourers have been enrolled as Kisan Sabha members there.

In the light of Moga resolution, it is the task of all PKCs and lower units of the Sabha to render still more active support to the struggles of rural workers all over the country and thus forge the unity of rural workers and peasants in struggle which is the guarantee of further development of agrarian movement.

## VIII. STRUGGLE FOR WASTE LAND

While heroic struggle for retention of Government waste lands already under occupation of agricultural workers is going on in Andhra, a campaign has been launched for distribution of these lands among agricultural workers and poor peasants in other States. Certain concrete struggles have been conducted in this period.

In the Travancore-Cochin State, struggle has been conducted for securing marshy waste land at Kanimangalam in Trichur for cultivation by agricultural workers and poor peasants. For two successive years, despite protests and memoranda of poor peasantry, the Government leased the land to rich outsiders. At last, when the Government refused to listen, the landless peasants of the area occupied the land in an organised manner and did not allow the rich Government lessees to enter the fields. Three hundred of them including women defended the fields day and night. The Police arrested a number of them, yet the peasants continued the struggle.

In U.P. the movement was launched in the Lucknow district to restore to the kisans the *Usar* and cultivated land taken away by the British Government for erecting a field firing range. *Usar* land was used for pastures by nearly 50 villages and due to the refusal of the Government to restore it back to kisans and bring it under the forest department, the fodder problem has become quite acute. After nearly two years of struggle during which arrests, fake cases and even looting and burning of a village took place, the grazing rights have now been given and previously cultivated land restored to the kisans.

In Jhansi, the Government is trying to take over nearly 25 villages for military purposes. A movement is going on under the leadership of Kisan Sabha against this forcible evacuation.

In West Bengal, in the districts of Burdwan, Midnapur and Nadia, 1200, 800 and 800 bighas of waste land respec-

tively were occupied and brought under cultivation by the peasantry.

Apart from the big "self-cultivated" tracts of land, in Rajasthan, there are waste cultivable lands and Lakhs of acres of lands being reclaimed through the Bhakra, Chambal, Harike and some minor development schemes. Government policy in allotting these lands aims at depriving the agricultural labour, landless and poor peasants of having any access to these lands.

The Kisan Sabha has taken up this question and a campaign has just started demanding that these "big self-cultivation" tracts of land be broken, the waste cultivable lands and the lands reclaimed through projects and plans be distributed among the agricultural labour, landless and poor peasants free of cost. The demand for ceiling to landholdings has also been taken up.

In the Malabar district, in the Taluq of Ernad, peasants began to cultivate waste lands but the Government arrested them for the crime of bringing them under cultivation.

The Government of Madras had taken the property of 40,000 acres of land of one feudal landlord Koothali Nayar who had no descendants. Formerly peasants cultivated the land. After it became Government property, the Government posted its Estate Tehsildar and obstructed the cultivation. Since 1946, the Malabar Kisan Sabha has taken up the issue and after a big struggle and severe repression and arrests of so many peasants, Government was forced to give 1200 acres of land for cultivation.

This year also the Malabar Kisan Sabha took up the issue and asked the Government to give 30,000 acres of fallow land out of 40,000 acres for cultivation. For that an organised satyagraha of peasant volunteers was offered before the Estate Tehsildar's office in Kurumbranad Taluq and before the Malabar Collector's Office at Kozhikode.

When the satyagraha volunteers entered the forest and began to cultivate, the police arrested some 15 of the volunteers and Kisan Sabha sympathisers. Now the Government has promised that if there is fallow lands in the



particular area, the Government will survey and give the land.

The movement for waste land is on the whole yet weak. In most of the States, it is yet confined to general agitation. The Congress Government is no doubt reclaiming waste lands but at a slow speed and without ensuring the co-operation of the peasantry. The reclaimed lands are generally given on lease to rich capitalist farmers or to their co-operatives. Lands assigned for lease to agricultural workers and landless peasants are auctioned in open bid and high rents are charged as for *nazool* lands in PEPSU and evacuee lands in Punjab. No material assistance is rendered to cultivators.

In the light of the Moga resolution, we should develop concrete movements in different States for distribution of all waste and fallow lands of the Government, princes and landlords, among agricultural workers and poor peasants.

The unemployment problem among rural workers, artisans, poor peasants is becoming very acute. An important step in the solution of this problem is to distribute the crores of acres of waste land among the landless.

Tremendous mobilisation of the land-hungry millions is possible in the struggle for waste land.

## IX. CONCRETE APPLICATION OF CEILING ON LANDS

The Provincial Kisan Sabhas have popularised the principle of putting a ceiling to ownership of land and distributing excess land among the landless peasants. The demand is becoming extremely popular with agricultural workers and poor peasants.

But only three PKCs, namely, Andhra, Travancore-Cochin and Bihar have tried to apply concretely the principle to their States.

The Andhra PKC has decided upon a ceiling of 20 acres wet and 30 to 60 acres dry land (for different regions).

The Bihar PKC divided the whole province into two regions from the point of view of fertility and availability of land. These two regions are: (i) Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas and (ii) rest of Bihar. There are three categories of land in each region. The land of canal, tubewell and town vicinity yielding roughly 20 to 25 maunds per acre was placed in the first category. The land yielding roughly 15 maunds per acre was placed in second category, while that yielding 10 maunds per acre was placed in the third category.

The following ceiling in terms of acres was decided:

	<i>1st class</i>	<i>2nd class</i>	<i>3rd class</i>
1. Chotanagpur and Santhal parganas	18	27	36
2. Rest of Bihar	12	16	20

The Travancore-Cochin PKC has decided upon a ceiling of 10 acres of double crop and 15 acres of single crop land.

The Congress Government and the Planning Commission talk of ceiling, but are not doing anything in practice. The talk, however, alarms the landlords who are also taking note of the growing demands of the agrarian movement. Therefore, they are trying to sell away their lands to convert landed property into liquid cash to evade the ceiling.

Hence, alongside our demand for ceiling, we must carry on an intensive campaign for ban on sales of land by landlords.

## X. PROBLEM OF RURAL CREDIT

Last year too, in my report, I drew the attention of the delegates to the seriousness of rural indebtedness. A draft resolution on the subject was prepared but it could not be discussed for want of time. This year, the CKC has drafted a resolution which will be placed before the delegates for discussions and adoption.

The problem of rural credit has a two-fold aspect. The first aspect is to liquidate the chronic indebtedness of agricultural workers and peasants. The second aspect is to protect them from the clutches of usurers in future and provide them cheap credit facilities for developing agriculture.

Investigations have recently been conducted by a Committee of the Reserve Bank into the question. The total amount of rural indebtedness is estimated at Rs. 900 crores which is equal to the debt burden of the peasantry of the whole of undivided India in 1931.

The Report of the Committee estimates that cultivators have to obtain a credit of Rs. 750 crores a year. Of this, the Government supplies only 2.3 per cent and co-operatives 3.1 per cent. It is admitted in the Report that even this meagre credit given by the Government and co-operatives goes to bigger agriculturists. It means Government assistance is available to landlords and a handful of privileged peasants. Who then supplies credit to the peasantry? The Report reveals that the professional moneylender, agriculturist moneylender and trader "still reign supreme in the field of rural credit". They supply 70 per cent or more of total requirements. The moneylender charges exorbitant rates and as trading creditor, he has grip over the processing and marketing of the produce of the cultivator. Moneylenders have in many cases entered into co-operatives and controlled them to their own advantage.

The Committee has recommended establishment of a State Bank with branches at district headquarters to supply rural credit. The Committee, however, has not recommended any step for the liquidation of old debts.

The Government of India has taken steps to convert the Imperial Bank to a State Bank following the recommendation of this Committee. But it does not propose to liquidate the existing debts of peasants.

An enquiry into rural indebtedness has recently been conducted in PEPSU by the Economics and Statistics Board. The total debt of non-refugee peasantry comes to Rs. 10.6 crores. Refugee peasants' debt is estimated at Rs. 55.7 lakhs.

Per family the average comes to Rs. 256-9-0. The rate of interest is 19 per cent per annum. Three-fourths of the tenants are in debt and 81 per cent agricultural workers. The Government and co-operative department have failed to protect peasants from the clutches of moneylenders who have advanced 87.6 per cent of outstanding debt. The Report made the following recommendations:

1. Debt contracted before 1939 be cancelled, those contracted between 1939-45 be scaled down by 50 per cent and those contracted between 1945-51 be scaled down by 25 per cent.
2. Maximum rate of interest be fixed at 12 per cent per annum.
3. A debt adjusting machinery be created to clear scaled-down debts in suitable annual instalments spread over a number of years.
4. Legislation be passed to regulate moneylending.

Both the Reserve Bank Report and the PEPSU Enquiry Report conceal the real causes of peasant indebtedness which lie in the exploitation of the peasantry through rents, taxes and unequal exchange.

The problem of indebtedness has been neglected by the Kisan Sabha for long; now with fall in prices, it is bound to become very acute. Even the Government has been compelled now to talk of provision of rural credit.

The question should be concretely studied in each State and movement launched for liquidation of old usurious debts, scaling down of other debts, redemption of mortgaged lands, control of usury, supply of cheap long-term and short-term loans for agricultural operations to the labouring peasantry, and provision of cheap food and seed loans to agricultural workers and poor peasants.

Kisan Sabha units should be in the forefront to get the best benefit for common peasants of loans that the Government is already forced to give for fertilisers, wells, seed and implements. They should assist weavers' unions to benefit to the extent possible through Government scheme of grants

and interest-free loans for weavers. Whatever advantage is possible must be taken of the existing co-operative credit societies. Negative attitude in this respect is harmful.

## XI. FLOOD AND DROUGHT RELIEF

This was organised by the Kisan Sabha in Bihar, and Bengal and to a certain extent in Orissa too.

Unprecedented floods followed by severe drought did immense damage especially in North Bihar. Mass destitution, mass unemployment and mass exodus was the result. The Government relief measures were inadequate to meet the situation. Their execution was marred by inefficiency and corruption. The Kisan Sabha organised huge mass rallies and demonstrations in villages and towns in which over 3 lakh people participated in order to put pressure on the Government to increase the relief budget and distribute relief democratically. In many places, relief work was entrusted to the Kisan Sabha in opposition to landlords. The Kisan Sabha on its own started free kitchens and medical centres in Bhagalpur and Darbhanga districts. A significant development of relief movement was the formation of united relief committees consisting of Praja Socialists, Communists, workers of the Kisan Sabha, Congressmen and notable independents.

The Kisan Sabha has mobilised masses for speedy execution of Kosi project in order to prevent floods and suggested improvement in the Government scheme.

The West Bengal Kisan Sabha organised relief collections and distribution among victims of North Bengal floods with good results. Later, when authorities stopped Government relief measures, the Kisan Sabha organised satyagraha in Toofanganj before Sub-Divisional Officer's office in February, 1955, for eleven continuous days. Nine kisan leaders were arrested. A mass rally marched to the District Headquarters. The Government was forced to give loans, seed loans and relief in other forms.

## XII. ALL-SIDED CONSTRUCTIVE ACTIONS

In the Policy Statement adopted at the Cannanore Session and in the Resolution on Organisation adopted at the Moga Session, stress was laid on the importance of Kisan Sabha units engaging themselves in all-sided activities including constructive, self-help and relief work in the service of masses. This is yet to become a systematic part of Kisan Sabha work. Nevertheless we find increasing orientation in this direction on the part of kisan workers and units. They have taken positive attitude to such constructive activities of the Government and local authorities which benefit masses, while opposing all that is harmful to popular interests. They have helped in opening schools and hospitals, building roads and tanks, digging wells and paving village streets.

We find that great amounts are being spent for Community Projects but so far we have not paid any attention towards them. Though they do not go to solve the basic problems of land, though the Government is trying to satisfy the rural masses only with them and is thus attempting to side-track the question of abolition of landlordism and distribution of land, yet the Kisan Sabhas cannot ignore these Community Projects and such other development plans. They satisfy certain needs of the peasants such as for schools, hospitals, roads, irrigation, etc. This development is very limited but yet where it is done, we find the peasants taking advantage of these schemes. Where kisan workers and units have intervened correctly, benefit has accrued to the entire peasantry. Elsewhere, landlords and a handful of upper peasants linked with the ruling party get the cream of benefit, while all have to pay for financing the schemes. Experience also shows that it is by such positive intervention that labouring peasants can be protected against imposition of heavy burdens.

The right of assembly is a popular demand in Manipur. The agitation was strengthened by the formation of United Assembly Demand Committee comprising of the Communist

Party, the Kisan Sabha, the All-Manipur Youth League and the Mahila Sammelaney. On December 20, 1954 nearly a lakh of people assembled at Lamphel in Imphal in a meeting convened by the United Assembly Demand Committee. A Resolution to observe complete Bazar Hartal on the 23rd was passed in the meeting and it was made successful. In the early morning of that day, five persons, including the Secretary of the Kisan Sabha, were arrested. Others were arrested later.

A signature campaign was initiated by United Assembly Demand Committee, within 20 days 20,226 signatures were collected. The Secretary of the Manipur Kisan Sabha was deputed to Delhi with the signatures who met Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, Home Minister, and submitted the signatures to him.

Kisan Sabha units in all parts of the country have led numerous other local struggles of the peasantry against oppressive forest laws in Assam and Orissa, against landlord and police terror, corruption, for rehabilitation of displaced peasants and various day-to-day demands of peasants.

In U.P., the Kisan Sabha in Gorakhpur district has taken up the question of erosion of river bank by Sarjoo river. A number of villages have been washed away and nearly a score more face this danger. Due to a powerful campaign launched by the Kisan Sabha, the Government has now been forced to take up the issue although in a very half-hearted and halting manner.

Intervention in the work of cane co-operatives and panchayats has been undertaken at the initiative of the U.P. Kisan Sabha. Elections were contested and won in several districts to the Board of Directors and Kisan Sabha directors have become quite popular with kisans.

Firing on kisans took place during land struggles in Azamgarh and Badaun. More than 70 comrades were arrested in Ballia under Dramatic Performances Act. They are facing prosecution. In Unnao, Kisan Sabha agitation led to punishment, suspension and transfer of 8 Sub-Inspectors. In Banaras, a whole police station staff was suspended.

During this period, village panchayat elections have taken place for the first time in Rajasthan. The Kisan Sabha has fought these elections. In spite of the repression, harassment, official vandalism and interference, the Kisan Sabha, in its strongholds, has either defeated the Congress or maintained an equal position. This is what happened in the districts of Pali, Jodhpur, Alwar, Bikaner, Churu and Jhunjhun. Apart from this, there are a number of villages where the Kisan Sabha has maintained the above position. This has so far checked the Government intentions to levy new taxes through these panchayats.

In Belgaum district, several struggles were organised. Gokak taluq kisans are fighting against the recovery of collective fines imposed on the villages of Laxmiswar who are supposed to have cut down trees during the forest satyagraha movement launched by the Congress in 1932. A huge demonstration was organised to the Mamlatdar's office and the Government was forced to stay the collection of fines for the time being.

The kisans of Khanapur are fighting for the restoration of the possession of guns. Khanapur being a forest area, the peasants are allowed to possess guns to fight against wild animals. The Government suspecting that many peasants were in possession of non-licensed guns, raided the peasant houses and took possession of the guns. The kisans organised two big morchas to the Collector's office, with the result the guns are being returned to the peasants.

In Bijapur, multifarious activities are being carried on by the Kisan Sabha. Kisan Sabha is carrying on an agitation against evictions and for registering the names of the actual tillers in the land records register. We carried on a campaign against the closure of lift irrigation schemes started by the Government, thus forced the Government to postpone the closure by 8 months. We are campaigning for proper issue of receipts by the landlords for the payment of *lavani*. Our other activities include securing of *taccavi* loans to peasants for the purpose of digging wells, constructing bunds, etc. We are persuading the District Development



Boards and District Local Board to open schools and dig drinking water wells in backward, particularly in Lamantandas. We have forced the Government to launch a case against a big landlord who issued post-dated receipts for payment of *lavani* by the tenants. We participated in Samyukt Karnatak movement and 12 peasants underwent conviction of one month each.

The Kisan Sabha units have extended active support to the struggles of the working class, students and middle classes. Significant to note in this connection is the glorious fraternal assistance in food and cash rendered by the peasants of Amritsar District to the 20 thousand textile workers on general strike for full one months.

### XIII. POLICE REPRESSION

As in previous years, police repression was launched against the peasants in various forms. The landlords use *goonda* force against peasants and their leaders. The Kisan Sabha workers became the special targets of landlord-*goonda* attack and police repression.

Comrade Gotu Sahai, Secretary, Madhya Bharat Kisan Sabha, fell victim to murderous attack at the hands of hired assassins of landlords in the month of February last. We salute the great martyr who laid down his life in the noble cause of peasant emancipation from landlord loot and oppression!

Tenants in their anti-eviction struggle have been subjected to terror at the hands of hired *goondas* who do not spare even the honour of kisan women. The police invariably goes to the assistance of landlords. Sections 107, 151, 447, 448 have been most lavishly used to arrest and prosecute peasants in all States. Sections 109 and 110 are used to harass the peasants in general. In Assam, elephants were used to smash crops and huts of kisans. In Valod the police opened fire on peaceful Adivasi tenants who protested against eviction. Nine innocent peasants were martyred and

a number of them were wounded. In Bihar lathi-charges were made repeatedly against the mass of flood-stricken kisans who went to demand relief from the authorities and Kisan Sabha workers who led this deputation and marches were arrested in scores and sent to jail.

Section 144 is used again and again to ban meetings and demonstrations. Ban is placed on the staging of progressive dramas.

Security Acts have been used to detain kisan workers and launch prosecutions for alleged objectionable speeches.

False cases are instituted against kisan workers at the instigation of landlords and corrupt officials.

In times of kisan struggles inhuman atrocities are committed against peasant men and women. Their crops are destroyed, ornaments and property looted and women dishonoured.

Like the foreign rulers, the Congress Government imposes punitive police posts and collects lakhs of rupees as collective fines from the peasants. Collective fines are also imposed on entire villages for alleged breach of canal banks without proving the guilt of the people.

Inhuman torture, leading in many cases to death, is perpetrated against persons in police custody. There are instances where police shot dead persons in custody and then announced that they had been killed in police encounter.

Such is the nature of police repression against the peasantry. Despite police repression and landlord *goonda* terror, the kisan movement and the kisan organisations have advanced. Kisan units have been set up in new areas. New sections of peasants have been drawn into the fold of the Kisan Sabha. Solidarity of agricultural workers and peasants has been forged where kisan units have supported the struggles of workers. Peasants of all political views have jointly demonstrated and struggled for their demands. Old barriers between Kisan Sabha masses and masses yet outside the Kisan Sabha are breaking down.

Constant attempts are being made by the Government

further development of the peace movement on the widest basis.

In the period since the Moga Session, the AIKS and its units have quite vigorously participated in the peace movement. A rally for peace has become a regular part of every kisan conference. Resolutions in support of slogans of peace are passed in all rallies. Lakhs of peasants throughout the country have appended their signatures to the Peace Council Appeal for ban on nuclear weapons. Kisan Sabha units have independently run the signature campaign. The Malabar Kisan Sabha gave the call to peasants for "One Signature and One Pice", and in response to the appeal collected sixty thousand signatures and as many pice. The Bengal Pradesh Kisan Council has decided to collect 5 lakh signatures.

Kisan units all over the country elected delegates to the Madras Congress for Peace held in the first week of January. The President and General Secretary, AIKS, and some other kisan leaders attended the Congress. 60 ordinary peasants came 300 miles from Tanjore to attend the Congress. The kisan delegates who could not attend sent messages of greetings and support.

Despite all this, however, it is a fact that we are yet lagging behind. The Indian peace movement can become a real people's movement only with the vigorous and conscious participation of the entire peasantry. It is the task of the Kisan Sabha, therefore, to mobilise the entire peasantry for participation in the movement.

## XV. ORGANISATIONAL POSITION

Now, I come to the report on the organisational position of the movement.

At Moga, we discussed the organisational problems of the Sabha on the basis of concrete experience of the past many years in building the kisan movement and adopted a

comprehensive resolution on organisation. That resolution laid down the following tasks:

1. Utmost attention should be paid in building the basic units (primary kisan committees) of the Sabha which are directly connected with the people.
2. Take up multi-form activities that concern the daily life of the people.
3. Form joint committees comprising of all peasant organisations and peasants of different views on all issues facing the peasants and thus laying basis for a broad united peasant movement.
4. Function the organisations democratically and function offices properly at all levels; thus making them centres of rural life.
5. Reporting from bottom to top and vice versa should be made a regular feature in all units.
6. Proper attention should be paid to educate the kisan cadre by organising schools and reporting.
7. Financial position of the various units of the Sabha should be strengthened in order to carry on the normal activities by collecting funds.

These tasks were not ambitious, but were such that unless fulfilled would seriously restrict and hamper the further development of the movement.

Did we seriously implement the above tasks laid down in the organisational resolution? Taking the country as a whole, not excluding the CKC office, we have to accept our failure. Whatever reports from various provinces are available to the CKC office, they are silent about the organisational position. And whatever information we could gather goes to show that there is no big improvement in developing the organisation.

There is no doubt that in spite of the shortness of the time between the Moga and Dahanu Sessions and in spite of the fact that because of general elections in Andhra, two major units of the Kisan Sabha—Andhra and Telangana—could not enrol kisan members; the total membership of

the Sabha has exceeded one million mark and is equal to the last year's figures. It will not be out of place to mention here that the units of West Bengal, Malabar, Punjab and PEPSU have done very well in this respect. They have not only increased the membership as compared to last year but have also fulfilled the quotas taken by them.

The Kisan Sabha has also spread to new areas. A new provincial unit has been formed in Delhi. In Punjab, district units have been formed in all the districts. In Karnataka, a district unit has been formed in Bijapur. In Madhya Pradesh, a district Kisan Sabha has been formed in the Marathi-speaking district of Chanda. In Maharashtra, the movement has spread to Colaba district.

It is also a hopeful feature that the majority of the provincial units sent their membership fees in time and there is a slight improvement in sending reports to the centre also.

Some progress also has been made in relation to the question of peasant unity. The Peasants' and Workers' Party in Marathwada has joined the All-India Kisan Sabha and this has no doubt laid the basis of a very strong peasant movement in Marathwada. The U.P. Kisan Sabha took initiative in calling a conference on the question of sugarcane price and in forming a broad-based committee to struggle for the increase of sugar cane price. The Punjab Kisan Sabha made some beginning in mobilising the peasants of all shades of opinion on the issue of taxation.

Initiative also has been taken in helping the agricultural labour to build their organisation. The provincial units have been formed in Punjab and PEPSU. In the T-C State, this organisation has been formed in all districts. In Malabar and Bihar, organisations have been formed at district level. In the Tanjore district of Tamilnad, Vivasayigal Sangham (District Kisan Sabha) which was mainly an organisation of agricultural labourers has decided to transform itself into the Agricultural Labour Association and the Vivasayigal Sangham will be re-organised by drawing mass of the peasants into it. This has become necessary

in view of the fact that because of the predominance of the agricultural labour in the Vivasayigal Sangham, the peasants were feeling diffident to join the Sangham under the circumstances prevailing today. Some steps also have been taken in other provinces like Gujarat, Bhopal, etc.

Some of the provinces like West Bengal, Malabar, Punjab and PEPSU have improved their functioning after Moga. For the preparation of the All-India Kisan Sabha Session, almost all the provinces have held their provincial conferences. Although reports from all the provinces are not available, from the press reports, it seems that good discussions have been held among the delegates everywhere. While most of the provinces could not hold big rallies because of the time factor, some new features have been introduced.

Immediately after Moga, the first annual conference of T-C Karshaka Sangham was held. It was not only attended by kisan delegates but also by an equal number of agricultural labourer delegates. A novel feature of this conference was that along with the kisan conference, at the initiative of Kisan Sabha, a separate conference of kisan women, a conference of writers and a peace conference were held. They are very important steps in building the Kisan Sabha as a national force.

In spite of all that is mentioned above, the fact remains that we have so far been unable to build a really strong broad-based Kisan Sabha. The organisational problem remains to be the key problem in today's situation. We have not registered any significant improvement in this respect. Let us take the functioning of the CKC and its office first.

After the Moga Session, only one meeting of the CKC has been held (at Vallur, Andhra). That also was not attended by most of the members, and an important problem like the price of foodgrains, not considered at Moga, could not be thoroughly discussed and clinched at the meeting. No meeting of the office-bearers could be held in this period. No arguments are required to prove that the functioning of the CKC registered no improvement at all.

As far as CKC office is concerned, efforts were made at Moga to improve its work. Proceedings of the Moga Session were published as a booklet. A series of pamphlets were planned in order to explain various decisions of the Sabha, but only one pamphlet, *Stick to the Land*, could be brought out. Three provincial reports which were received in October-November were cycloed and circulated as information documents. But the work again began deteriorating in January, when the General Secretary had to be away because of general elections in Andhra. And afterwards when he became seriously ill in April the office remained practically closed.

A number of provinces have demanded personal visits of the functionaries of the CKC and this is very important in order to learn the experience of various provinces as well as to help them in solving their problems. But these demands could not be fulfilled except in a few cases.

At a time when major developments are taking place in the political and economic fields, when so many agrarian reforms are being placed on Statute Books, when development schemes are being prepared, when four years of the Five-Year Plan are over and the attention is being drawn to the Second Five-Year Plan, the office has not been able to assess all these developments and help the organisation in directing its activities.

The main reason for all this weakness lies in the fact that properly speaking there is no real centre. Practically it is the General Secretary who is supposed to do all the jobs. And now and then Com. Harkishen Singh Surjeet's help is available.

The situation in most of the Provinces is in no way better. Reporting to the Centre is very unsatisfactory and several circulars sent by the CKC office remain unattended.

The most important task laid down in the organisational resolution remains untouched. The primary units of the Kisan Sabha for all practical purposes do not exist or exist only on paper. Even those units which are said to be func-

tioning, function bureaucratically. Kisan Sabha functionaries take all the decisions and they are enforced on the units and foisted on the peasants. No living contact is maintained by the units with the mass of the peasantry, and the peasants are not drawn in formulating the tasks embodying their demands. The mass of peasants have no active role in the organisation. Thus the "Leader-follower" pattern is followed—which hampers unleashing of mass initiative and energy. And this is the root cause of the weakness of the Kisan Sabha organisation. This also hampers in forging unity of the peasant masses which is necessary in order to build a broad-based kisan organisation. It reduces the units to merely committees of political workers. Unless this grave error in the functioning of the Kisan Sabha is immediately corrected, unless democratic functioning of the Kisan Sabha units from top to bottom is restored, we cannot lay the basis of a united broad-based Kisan Sabha.

Similarly, we have not been able to make a turn in our style of work. Our main form even today remains general agitation and propaganda. Immediate orientation towards multi-form activities, positive attitude towards the development projects beneficial to the peasants, is required. Narrow approach still hinders in developing united action. There is hesitation also in developing the struggles even when there is urge among the wide sections of peasantry.

This weakness is clear from the way various units of the Sabha have implemented the slogan of "Stick to Land!" Wherever we have seriously taken that slogan, movement has advanced and at other places a sign of demoralisation and frustration is seen.

No attention has been paid in educating the cadre. Our kisan cadre lacks even the proper knowledge of Government measures and departments. This results in abstract agitation.

The financial position of the Kisan Sabha remains the same. Sometimes even offices have to be closed because of difficulty in paying rent and running the office.

This in brief is the state of affairs in the organisation of



the Kisan Sabha and these weaknesses are hampering the work of the Sabha to a great extent.

The last eight months have shown a general upsurge in the peasantry with the tremendous possibilities of building a powerful peasant movement in the country. But this can only be done if we are able to develop our organisation. Therefore from this Session we must go with a ringing call for the implementation of the Moga Resolution on Organisation in order to build a united broad-based Kisan Sabha.

## XVI. CONCLUSION

As is clear from the review, the past eight months were months of rising struggle of the peasantry in which all sections of peasants participated. The peasants and agricultural labourers have fought against the evictions from landlords' lands and Government waste lands and their fight has exposed the claims of the Government of introducing comprehensive agrarian reforms and solving the land problem, so much so that the Bhoodan Samity and the Prime Minister of India had to come out openly against the eviction offensive.

This period has shown a tremendous upsurge among the agricultural labourers and the growth of their organisations in a number of provinces.

The fall in prices, followed by rising tax burdens, are having disastrous effects on the peasant economy and a vast number of peasants are being utterly ruined. The debt burden on the peasants is increasing and the problem of rural credit has become so acute that even the Government has to take a serious note of it.

Experience has shown that lack of positive attitude towards development plans, in spite of extravagance and heavy administrative expenditure, creates confusion among the peasantry.

Experience has also shown the tremendous possibilities

of developing and strengthening the peace movement by drawing in the vast masses of the peasantry.

The various Provincial reports show that the Kisan Sabha in this brief period has extended its influence to new sections and new areas. They have also noted that our organisation did not keep pace with the developing struggles and thus not only failed to build a powerful broad-based united organisation of the peasantry but many provinces could not even consolidate the gains of the struggles.

Therefore in this Session we have to learn from the experience of various units of the Sabha and work out immediate tasks in order to develop a powerful peasant movement in the country which is able to defend the peasantry against the attacks of landlords and the Government and which can ensure the fulfilment of the legitimate demands of the peasants.

### 1. *On the Land Question*

- Fight against evictions and for restoration of land from which they were evicted constitutes even today a very important task.
- Struggle for the distribution of waste lands to the agricultural labourers and poor peasants.
- Concretising the slogan of ceiling and popularising it so that the struggle for the distribution of excess land is developed.

### 2. *On the Question of Prices of Agricultural Commodities*

- Floor prices of the agricultural commodities should be fixed and the Government should step in for purchases.
- Disparity between the prices of agricultural commodities and industrial goods should be done away with by controlling profits.
- Trade monopoly should be broken; trade with the

Soviet Union, China and other democratic countries should be developed.

- Industries should be developed to utilise the raw material.
- Import of foodgrains should be immediately stopped and India should rescind the International Wheat Agreement.

### 3. *On the Question of Taxation*

- Cancellation of increment in water rate and water advantage rate.
- Cancellation of betterment levy and surcharge on land revenue.
- Replacement of existing unscientific tax system by a graded tax on agriculture with exemption to the poor peasants.

### 4. *On the Problem of Debt and Rural Credit*

- Immediate moratorium on debts.
- Comprehensive legislation to relieve the peasants from debt burdens, including the formation of Debt Conciliation Boards.
- Establishment of a network of credit banks for cheap and long-term credit.
- Simplification in the procedure of co-operative societies and their securities.

### 5. *On the Government Development Plans*

- Participation in all the development plans which benefit peasantry, while fighting against extravagance, corruption and high administrative expenditure.
- Helping the peasants in formulating schemes of agricultural development, irrigation facilities, health, education, etc., and fighting for their implementation.

### 6. *On the Agricultural Labour Problem*

- Build unity of agricultural labourers and peasants by supporting the just demands of agricultural labourers.
- Form co-ordination committees at various levels.
- Help them in being organised in their organisations.

### 7. *Fight for Civil Liberties, Against Repression*

- Repeal Preventive Detention Act and Security Act.
- Repeal Section 144.
- Ban the use of 107|151 and similar sections.
- Withdraw all cases pending against Kisan Sabha workers, other political workers, workers, peasants and other sections.
- Release all political prisoners.

### 8. *Solidarity With Other Sections*

- Popularise the just demands of workers, middle class employees, students and other sections of the people.
- Mobilise the peasants in support of the struggle of workers and other sections.

### 9. *On the Question of Peace and Freedom*

- Mobilise the peasants in support of the freedom struggle of the Goan people.
- Mobilise the peasantry in support of the struggle for peace through signature campaigns, meetings, rallies and demonstrations.
- Observe Hiroshima Day.
- Observe Helsinki Month.

## 10. *Build a Broad-Based Kisan Organisation*

Implementation of all the above tasks is not possible unless we are able to broaden and strengthen the Kisan Sabha organisation. This has become a key factor in the situation.

In order to remove this weakness it is necessary:

- To educate the peasant cadre.
- To produce cheap and popular literature on various problems facing the peasantry.
- To draw in vast masses of the peasants in formulating the immediate demands through discussions.
- To function the Kisan Sabha units democratically and function offices properly.
- To activise basic units of the Sabha through multi-form activities.
- To form joint committees consisting of peasants representing various shades of opinion from issue to issue at all levels.

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In all corners of the country peasants are moving into action. Peasants under the influence of different political parties are uniting in their struggle against evictions, for agrarian reforms, for stable prices, against growing tax burdens, against rising debt burdens and for credit facilities, for economic development and also for world peace. There are tremendous possibilities for developing a powerful peasant movement in the country—the movement which is not only able to defend the peasants against the onslaught of the landlords and the Government but also which can lead the struggles of the peasantry for basic agrarian reform. The great responsibility for this lies on the shoulders of Kisan Sabha workers. They can discharge this respon-

sibility by seriously taking up the above tasks and carrying out the decisions arrived at in this Session.

I am confident that we will be able to find out correct solutions for the problems facing the peasants of our country and implement these decisions with a zeal and thus lay the basis for a united broad-based Kisan Sabha.