



# WORKING CLASS AND NATIONAL DEFENCE

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**R E P O R T  
O N  
P R O D U C T I O N .**

*(Submitted by Comrade B. T. Ranadive to the First Congress of the  
Communist Party of India on 28th May, 1943.)*

**PEOPLE'S PUBLISHING HOUSE,  
BOMBAY**

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# **Working Class And National Defence**

## **A REPORT ON PRODUCTION**

*[Submitted by Comrade B.T. Ranadive to the First Congress of the Communist Party of India on 28th May, 1943]*

The political resolution draws our attention to the precarious situation on the production front. What is the essence of the situation? Production, the key base of national defence, is tottering at a time when the danger of invasion faces our country—this threatens the country with dislocation of transport, and industries in the midst of the food crisis and famine of industrial articles and creates the danger of blowing up the rear completely.

Such a situation directly endangers the front, the army of defence itself, which requires an ever-increasing stream of industrial articles and efficient transport to take armaments to the front.

The danger to our nation, inherent in this situation, is self-evident. Yet it is not realised as intensely as it ought to be, especially the fact that, it directly menaces our country's defence by threatening to cut off the supplies to the army. Its vital and direct connection with National Defence is not acutely felt and acted upon.

### **I. CRISIS IN PRODUCTION**

The production crisis with its attendant dangers is part and parcel of the national crisis through which our country is passing. It is part of the economic crisis which finds expression in speculation, high prices, inflation, food-hoarding. The production crisis is not an isolated phenomenon to be tackled on industrial front.

It manifests itself as follows;

- (1) failure of Government to develop any production plan;
- (2) Government's failure to secure the co-operation of the Indian Employers to harness the industrial machine to the needs of national defence, and requirements of the people;
- (3) the hostility of Indian Employers to any schemes of control sponsored by Government, which leads to continuous friction between Government and Industry – friction which has tremendously increased since the attack against the Congress and the incarceration of the national leaders, and on account of the Employers' failure to look at

production except from the profit end;

(4) refusal on the part of both Government and owners to invite workers' co-operation; on the contrary a policy is followed by both towards Labour which refuses to do justice to the workers and provokes them to stop production to secure their immediate demands.

Here we get the same combination of forces as on the National plane.

The imperialist policy of defending India as a colony and denying power to the people, a policy of obstructing industrial development in the interests of British monopoly capital which drives the industrialists into hostility.

The industrialists, in common with other patriots, get provoked by Government's attack and denial of power, follow for a time the policy of deadlock and then end by taking to sheer-profiteering, under the guise of non-co-operating with war-efforts. They look upon any plan as interference with their legitimate rights and freedom to manage their industry as they think best.

With their opposition to the workers' legitimate demands, and deliberate provocation of workers which leads to stoppages – the owners create ideal conditions of work for the fifth columnist to bring production to a standstill.

And finally the workers, led by the Party, do their best to save production: to keep off stoppages, to isolate and smash the fifth columnist and the saboteur, and to expand production for defence.

### **Face Of The Crisis**

At a time when the danger of invasion is acutest, when the threat of civil disruption on the food front itself is menacing, the crisis threatening our entire national economy, the front and the rear, and the complete disruption of our life must be looked upon as a major danger and its face must be studied in all its aspects.

Firstly, the crisis manifests itself as a crisis of declining production when for the very existence of our country our production should be developing at breakneck speed.

A few figures will suffice to prove that production of vital commodities is actually declining or, at best steady, except in a few cases.

The monthly Index for Industrial Production<sup>1</sup> in

February, 1940 ... 116.9

February, 1943 ... 110.2

Indices for individual commodities are as follows:

**Cotton consumption:**

February, 1940 98.6

February, 1943 142.6

**Jute**

**manufacture:**

February, 1940 149.2

February, 1943 117.9

January •do 92.0

**Steel Ingots:**

February, 1940 136.4'

February, 1943 165.3

**Pig Iron:**

February, 1940 149.7

February, 1943 143.6

**Coal:**

February, 1940 123.0

February, 1943 115.0

The increase in the consumption of cotton does not mean that the problem of cloth has been solved—that the problem of meeting the need of the Army and the people has been met. Had it been so there would not have been a cloth famine leading to cloth riots; and cloth prices would not have soared by 4 to 5 hundred percent.

To take but one example of the rapid rise of cloth prices in the working class cost of living Index Number<sup>2</sup> for Bombay City,

the cloth Index was 255 in March

374 in April

For Ahmedabad 264 in February

315 in March

For Nagpur 308 in February

450 in March

For Jubbulpore 374 in February

445 in March

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<sup>1</sup> Production Index from 'Capital', March, 1943.

<sup>2</sup> Bombay Labour Gazette, April, 1943, Page 553.



For Madras            107 in February  
                                 205 in March

In spite of the increase in cloth production people's needs are not met; that is plain.

Jute manufactures decline by 20 per cent and steel ingots register an increase of 20 per cent; at the same time, the vital commodity of pig iron shows a decrease of nearly 4 per cent. In the thirty-six months since February 1940, only three times did the production of pig iron exceed the 1940 level.

Most alarming, however, is the situation on the coal front. India's industrial structure, electric plant and entire transport depend for their motive power on coal. The demand on our railway transport, and consequently on coal, has become very heavy now that India is a theatre of war after the arrival of the Japanese armies of invasion on our frontier. Railways have to carry far heavier traffic for the army, for its supplies; at the same time, they have to meet the heavier demands of traffic for civilian needs – transport of food, etc. All this means production of coal must increase at a terrific tempo. Instead, what do we find? Coal production going down below the 1940 level when neither our industries worked night shifts all-round nor our railways worked extra and carried much heavy traffic. Can anything provide a more serious warning of the breakdown of the industrial machine at the most critical juncture! Should we be surprised if factories are closed for months for want of coal, if textile factories had to close down when people were demanding more cloth?

### **Disruption From The Economic End**

The production crisis, secondly, manifests itself as a strike-crisis to which the workers are driven by the policy pursued by the owners and Government. The immediate cause here is the growing disparity between wages and cost of living—disparity which throws larger masses of workers in vital and strategic industries to stop work to save themselves from immediate starvation.

The rise in the working class cost of living is seen in the following figures:

City	For August 1939	For March 1943
BOMBAY	105	208
AHMEDABAD	73	173
SHOLAPUR	73	160
NAGPUR	64	165
JUBBULPORE	58	161
PATNA	109	243 (Jan.)
CUTTACK	103	239
MADRAS	98	170
LAHORE	120	317 (Jan.)
CAWNPORE	100	246
CALCUTTA	100 (Pre-war)	286 (May)

Needless to say, this enormous rise is not followed by an equal addition to working class incomes. Automatic adjustment of wages to cost of living, fixation of dearness allowance by reference to the rises in the cost of living, exists in a few industries only and that, too, has been enforced after strikes. Even here the allowance granted is totally inadequate—in the most favoured circumstances it is 60 per cent of the actual rise—barring the solitary exception of Ahmedabad. In almost all cases it is a mockery of compensation, hardly offsetting more than 20 per cent of the rise.

The Railways under Government control, the coal mine owner, and the jute bosses are the worst offenders in this respect. The Railway Board very nearly provoked an all-India General Strike of Railways by its policy of denial of adequate dearness allowance to stave off starvation; it was only the organised Railway Unions that prevented such a development.

The situation on the industrial front is then as explosive as the situation on the national front was on the 9th August. If it has not burst into conflagration it is because of us, our Party, which has built the Trade Union movement during the last fifteen years.

Nonetheless the situation is extremely serious. It furnishes ideal ground for the fifth columnist to operate on. Fifth Columnism, which paraded as patriotism for some days, can masquerade here as the champion of the exploited and as the militant defender of the economic interests of the workers and can attempt to delude the workers into a Go-Slow movement, into sabotage of industrial production through



strikes and prolongation of strikes.

The spontaneous indignation of the workers itself runs into the channels of strikes, thanks to the policy pursued by employers and Government.

The policy that provoked the patriot to hit at national defence, is provoking the worker to hit at national production, when the worker should be building national production for the defence of his country and people.

The industrial rear is unsafe. Production, the key base of national defence is tottering.

## II. OUR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Comrades, in this critical situation what way did we show to our people, and to the working class? We, alone, of all the patriotic parties, developed a national and positive outlook towards production and attempted to implement it against heavy odds.

The patriots of the National Congress did their best to disorganise production after 9th August—in fact paralysation of production was their main instrument to win freedom immediately after 9th August. The National Congress leadership never developed a positive and patriotic outlook towards production as a weapon of national defence and, therefore, as the common concern of all people.

The Muslim League, has no outlook, no policy whatsoever on questions of production; on this as in matters of National Defence it leaves the initiative in the hands of the Government. The disorganisation of production, etc., has no importance in the eyes the League.

For us, on the other hand, national defence was not a mere phrase, nor a conditional bargain. We realised that the very existence of our country depended on its being able to defend itself against the Japanese invader; that our very future depends on how far the people of this country seized the initiative in defending their motherland.

We knew at the same time that defence and production went hand in hand in modern times. We, therefore, declared production—its organisation and expansion—to be our job, the job of all honest workers, just, as national defence is the job of all patriots irrespective of what conditions are offered or created by others.

The close relation between production and anti-fascist defence and

our policy towards the former cannot be more simply summarised than in the following words of R. P. Dutt:

“The problem of strategy and production are closely related. In modern mechanised warfare it is estimated that four to five industrial workers and auxiliaries are needed behind every soldier in the firing line. Production is thus the main field of effort for the majority of the people in the fight against fascism. Here every man and woman can play their part and express the will to victory over fascism.

“The resolution to fight and defeat fascism means that we must equip the armed forces with adequate weapons of war to meet and overpower the Nazi military machine. We must ensure the effective transport of such weapons of war in time to the fighting front and , produce the necessary industrial materials and machinery. We must provide the means of livelihood, food, clothing, etc., for the fighting and producing forces to maintain standards of efficiency. This all-out effort for production and for victory is not merely the job of the Government or those in command of industry. It is the conscious job of everyone to participate with : the highest personal effort and to assist in .the tasks of organisation and the overcoming of obstacles.

“Fascism can only be finally defeated not by heroism alone, but by superior weight of planes, tanks, guns, shells, to arm that heroism. This is the decisive test in modern war, which is in the last resort not merely a test of fighting capacity and of morale, but an industrial test of equipment, organisation, skill, and the capacity for ' united effort and sacrifice.” (*Britain in the World Front.*)

### **We Are Tested**

The 9th August crisis put us to a severe test. It was a test of our political influence over the working class.

It was above all a challenge to us to implement our production policy in conditions of extreme political provocation.

The challenge, here, was to keep production itself going. And we won the first round. Throughout flic country, wherever we had influence, industrial production was disturbed to a very small extent, things returning to normal within a couple of days in places like Bombay; no disturbance whatsoever took place in places like Sholapur.

This first round was won not merely because we were the undisputed leaders of the Trade Union movement but because we had been vigorously popularising among the workers the patriotic policy of National Unity and National Defence against Japanese aggression which threatened our country.

When after the arrest of national leaders, enraged patriots and fifth columnists began to call upon the workers to come out on general strike and to bring about deadlock in production, we boldly opposed this move, saying that strikes, instead of enabling us to force the bureaucracy to yield us National Government, would have exactly the opposite result. Strikes would not only have paralysed the key base of National Defence, but would have intensified a thousandfold the conditions of anarchy and disruption, which followed in the wake of Government repression and fifth column-provoked sabotage. Strikes would /have created extremely favourable conditions for the Japanese invader who was mustering forces on our frontier to attack our country immediately.

Workers who had for years followed our political lead stuck to their post of duty. They succumbed neither to the provocation of police repression nor to the instigation to go on strike, which was being conducted in the name of patriotism.

The result was that the saboteurs from the beginning had to rely on the owners, on lock-outs, on hired gangs to create trouble and bring about a stoppage. The first onslaught against production was thus warded off; the nation was saved; but for us the entire industrial structure, including transport, would have gone up in smoke. We are rightly proud of the part we played in these critical days.

On the heels of the national crisis came the food crisis and the economic crisis, leading to an outburst of a spontaneous wave of strikes which, but for us, would have spread all over the country.

The worst period was between December 1942 and February 1943.

There were strikes for food and for dearness allowance. There were strikes in railway workshops, producing for war; in textile factories; in engineering shops, working for war; in dockyards and in the tram services. Workers in backward industries on strike; workers in organised industries on strike—such was the situation which faced us in the period—December-February.

It was no doubt a very critical situation. It seemed that what patriotic anger could not achieve, the disruptive economic policy of

Government, driving the workers to desperation, would achieve, viz, complete paralysis of industry. And it would have done so, but for our Trade Unions and our patriotic policy.

Comrades, who averted an all-India Railway Strike when the Railway Board was refusing to grant additional allowance .and when strikes were breaking out in Railway workshops ? It was we who conduct some of the biggest Railway Unions like the S. I. R. and conduct other Unions in co-operation with other elements. But for our firm hold on the railway workers, There would have been spontaneous actions spreading all over India. We held back the strike-wave. We roused the workers to defend production, the key base of national defence, against the suicidal policy pursued by Government.

We prevented strikes from spreading; or intervened in spontaneous strikes and speedily settled them; or withdrew them pending settlement of disputes.

Thanks to us, not only did strikes not spread but the loss of working days in spontaneous strikes was minimised, the strikes were short-lived and often operated as merely minor disturbances.

We succeeded in saving thousands of days for production and keeping hundreds of thousands at their job in spite of provocative economic conditions.

That was because we had realised that we could not make merry with strikes when the nation required our workers to be at their job for all the 24 hours.

We, to a large extent, succeeded in keeping production and transport running in Calcutta when Japanese bombs rained on that city. The treacherous fifth column tried its hardest to spread panic and to dislocate production and transport, in the interest of the Japanese invader. But the bulk of engineering workers and the tramway workers stuck fast to their post of duty. The patriotic tramway workers, under Communist lead\* kept the trams running right through the air raids and set an example of courage which inspired the citizens of Calcutta and keyed up their morale.

Comrades, once more, no other Party can claim that it has rendered such signal service to our country on this front; no other Party has. We alone, of all the parties, took the defence of our country seriously and, therefore, safeguarded production as determinedly as we would defend a fortress on our frontiers.

## Working Class Votes For Us

What have been the results of this policy for workers themselves, this policy of standing by production by avoiding strikes, negotiating and settling them speedily. Has it meant that the interests of the workers had to be sacrificed for the interests of national production : Did it mean that all organisation was at an end? Did the workers themselves repudiate our practice or did they endorse it 1

Our opponents and enemies no doubt expected that we would collapse before the strike-wave, born as it was out of economic discontent, and stand repudiated by the workers.

What happened instead?

The number of workers in Trade Unions organised by us increased from 2,00,000 to 3,00,000 between Lenin Day 1943 and May Day 1943 alone.

The advance will be still more striking if we were to take the figures from August 1942.

The addition of 1,00,000 workers to our Trade Union membership is a signal endorsement by the ordinary worker of the policy pursued by the Party—the policy of standing by production and settling disputes without recourse to strikes.. How have we been able to register this increase in these worst days of strike-wave, when nothing but a strike seemed to be the way out.

Because by pursuing this correct policy we have been able to secure many advances and concessions for the workers—we have been able to secure some relief and thereby increase the- worker's faith in his organisation and in us as his defenders.

Comrades, many of us have under-estimated our victories in this direction. We have secured timely relief, sometimes substantial relief, and thereby avoided a final crack-up in the production front. Without securing such relief it would have been difficult to keep production going. By uniting the workers we did succeed in creating breaches in the stonewall of resistance of the bureaucracy and employers.

Our policy then has enabled us to defend the day to day interests of the workers and win important concessions, to save the Trade Union organisations from complete disintegration and ruin, which would have been their lot had they followed an anti-production policy, a wrong policy: our policy has enabled us to extend the base of the old Trade Unions and to build big mass Unions out of them (like those of the

S.I.R., M. & S.M. Rlys.); found new unions and increase the organisational strength of the workers.

We have increased the capacity of the worker to defend his interests; we have added new strength to his organisations; we have organised hitherto backward and unorganised workers all because we strove valiantly to save production from ruin and did not allow the workers to fall victims to economic and political provocation or to fifth columnist incitement.

### **Our Main Failure**

Comrades, the account of achievements as given above itself emphasises our main failure. All the while we have been busy warding off the attacks against production. All we can boast of is that we saved production from collapse and from stoppage. But considering the key role of production in defence, considering the fact that the danger of invasion is acute, we cannot remain satisfied with what we have achieved during the past nine months or so, but must positively sound the alarm.

For we have not yet been able to claim that we have gone beyond the defensive stage, that we have anywhere led the workers to seize the patriotic initiative in any industry or concern to organise production as their job. as their national duty. No, Comrades, we have not achieved any success in this direction and this must make us think furiously.

Production—its organisation and extension, is the basic and main political task of the Trade Unions today. It is by organising production, by developing workers' initiative to overcome obstacles created by employers and Government, by creating mass movement to increase production by all possible means that the Trade Unions participate in organising the national defence of our country. Every victory in production, every addition to industrial articles secured through workers' initiative, is a blow against the Japanese—for the freedom of our country—this ought to be the patriotic consciousness of every worker under Trade Union influence. Without this, our policy ceases to have any meaning.

Under our leadership the working class must be really seized with anger and indignation at the supreme chaos in production under the policy of Government and the employers; it must see in it a menace, a danger to our entire nation, a stab in the back of our people and must

consider its patriotic duty to intervene and take upon itself the responsibility of guiding production. It must be moved by the terrible hardships of our people owing to shortage of cloth, coal, etc., and must come forward as the real champion of our people against all these by assuring them that every worker would serve his country and his people to his maximum capacity.

This is workers' patriotism; this is producers' patriotism- taking pride in his daily job at the bench. This is carrying our policy to our class.

Mass initiative for production is thus, first and foremost, a political responsibility – part of the fight for national defence. It is a political task. The Trade Union movement is the instrument, the working class army is to discharge this great responsibility.

A special responsibility rests on us who are the biggest single force in the Trade Unions to inspire the entire class to come forward as the organiser of national production for national defence.

Our main failure comes here. True, we have roused the worker to stop sabotage against production but we have failed to move our-class, the workers, to develop a patriotic outlook and a different practice towards production. There is as yet no inspiring of the mass; no mass rallies and mass conferences for production; no individual efforts to lead the mass of the workers to be the best producers, much less workers' initiative to lead the people for better production for national defence.

The workers under our leadership refuse to disorganise production at the instigation of the fifth column; more and more they fight against the temptation of a strike as the way out of the unbearable economic conditions. Yet the vital connection of production with national defence and workers responsibility towards it is not properly understood by them.

### **III. THE POLITICAL ROOT OF OUR FAILURE**

From where does this failure spring? It comes from our political failure to move the working class to play its specific role in the sphere of national defence.

To understand the seriousness of this, we must remember that production is on the Trade Union front what national defence is on the political plane.

It amounts, therefore, to abandonment of the anti-fascist struggle, of



the struggle for national defence on the Trade Union front.

It amounts to giving up in practice the main political slogan of the Party and keeping the workers away from the greatest national and international war for liberation.

We have not yet succeeded in inspiring and moving the entire class into action for unity and defence of our country— that is a patent fact. The political resolution nails down a number of deviations which prevented us from mobilising the people for national unity and defence. These deviations perhaps operated with added force on the trade union front.

In any case even the best Trade Union leaders in the Party will admit that, in spite of our influence over the working, class, the increased strength of the Trade Unions, we have failed to impress the workers with the urgency of national defence; national unity for defence has not yet become their war-cry, enthusiastically to be raised and to be fought for, as the only way to the independence of the country and towards further progress.

Why is this so? Firstly, because of the very same Left-Nationalist deviation of which the political resolution speaks. They have prevented us from putting inspiringly the cause of our country's defence and rousing the workers to offer everything they possess to defend our land.

Obviously when exposure of bureaucracy dominated our political propaganda much could not be done to put positively the line of national unity and defence.

This side-tracked our attention so completely that in putting across national defence, our comrades often forgot even to mention that our homes and people in Chittagong were bombed; our homes were going up in smoke.

In other parts of the country there were practically no reactions to the Calcutta bombing, which was taken as a matter of course, but which should have really led to angry patriotic demonstrations against Japanese imperialism.

We failed to whip up anti-Japanese hatred, failed to whip up anti-fascist hatred, even though a bald account of the atrocities committed by the Axis Power would have roused the hatred of any honest man and warned him against what was coming if defence was not organised.

Naturally with all these we could not impress on the workers the seriousness of the situation at the front and the imminence of invasion.

These deviations reached their climax in our failure to glorify the patriotic act of the working class in keeping production running immediately after 9th August, in our failure to carry forward the patriotic achievements of the Calcutta Tramway Workers, who kept the services running under the hail of Jap bombs.

The workers themselves did not understand what they had achieved. The patriots were slandering the workers as mercenaries who had deserted the battle of freedom. The latter had stuck to their jobs under our leadership but were getting demoralised under the barrage of propaganda.

It was our job to tell the workers that they had done a big thing, had acted for national defence. This was missed because our comrades thought of national defence and sabotage in the abstract.

Similarly, the constant fight which the workers had to wage against strike-inciters, against gangsters, to keep production running, against owners' lock-out, was not given a political turn, the defence of production actively conducted by workers was not explained in terms of national defence; the concrete fight carried on against the fifth columnist was not made the starting point for a general mobilization or unity for national defence and production. The key role which the workers had to play in averting the crisis in production, which was deepening at an alarming pace as a result, of the policy of the owners and the bureaucracy, was not brought home to the workers.

.Because of this the entire experience of the period between August and now—a period in which the working class defended production against odds—failed to educate and prepare it for the main and primary task of building production through mass initiative.

The worker cannot be roused to play his part in production unless he is made to realise the grim peril which fascist aggression means to our country, unless his patriotism is roused to see that the light for the freedom and independence of the country now merges with the task of uniting the people to defend the motherland in alliance with the peoples of the Soviet Union, China, U. S. A., and Britain. He must be made to realise how production is the key to National Defence, how the crisis which is threatening production can blow up the very basis of national defence and that he, because he holds production in his hands, can avert this calamity and save the country. It is the consciousness of the

peril and the call of patriotism which alone would rouse the worker to increase production.

Consider his conditions of work which are hellish today. Consider his past experience which has only shown that every advance in his skill has been exploited by the employers; that nothing is to be secured from the employers without a fight; that Government is an alien Government which suppresses his nation, his people and his rights.

Th only guarantee is the burning patriotism and anti-Japanese hatred created by us, which makes him see in higher and higher production-work for freedom for his people-the guarantee of his liberation and that of his nation.

Our political failure to move him for national defence make national defence and unity the full-throated cry of thousands, has meant our failure to move him for production—his main job in the struggle for national defence, the main job of all Trade Unions.

This leaves the initiative in the hands of the bureaucracy and employers, accentuates the production crisis, endangers national defence and prevents us from taking any effective step against it.

### **Production—Wrongly Put**

Consequently, production, whenever it has been put, has been put as a technical or economic issue divorced from its vital and living connection with national defence or its connections with the needs of the army and the people.

And finding that there is not much response to this sort of appeal, comrades have either given up production as a bad job, contenting themselves with avoiding strikes and only paying lip-service to it.

Or making the worker gulp down our lifeless and abstract demand for [increased production, some put it together with a barrage of economic demands, with emphasis on the latter.

The appeal to patriotism is lost; the appeal based on unity and national defence is gone; all that is left is the word “production” which is equated to economic demands.

The way in which economic demands are put show that they are intended to take off the edge of our advocacy of increased production. Comrades are afraid that the workers might misunderstand us, take us for the bosses’ men, and think that the economic demands are our passports of honesty and integrity to assure the workers. This springs

only from a lack of faith in production policy, lack of faith developed by divorcing it from our main slogan of national defence.

What is the total effect of this propaganda produced on the worker? Is he a whit convinced that next day he must work in the factory as the most efficient worker! Nothing of the kind. He is more than ever convinced that he is concerned only with his wages and not with production.

Having failed to move our class politically, our comrades either end in paying only lip service to production without any attempt to increase it, or present it in a more vulgar economic form in which it carries no conviction.

This has been yet another hindrance which keeps the workers back from discharging their main political job as producers—producers for freedom and defence.

### **Economic Demands Become Conditions**

It is no wonder, therefore, Comrades, if some of us have slipped into the left nationalist position of conditional support to production. Gradually, step by step, economic demands are put forward as conditions of increasing production. Not that our comrades crudely formulate them as conditions. No, but when they put it to workers that production cannot increase unless worker's demands are conceded, in the bargain they fail to rouse political enthusiasm for production—the net result is that economic demands do operate as conditions.

Can anything be more serious? What would you say if any member of our Party were to say, “give us National Government and then we will defend our country”. You will say: you are laying down conditions to save your homeland; you are bargaining over the freedom and existence of our country; this is not patriotism; it is the same wrong policy of the national leadership, which landed our country in this crisis.

And yet on the field of production unconsciously we have slipped into this very policy. Economic demands are advanced in isolation from production. Consequently they appear to the workers as conditions of a drive for increased production. What we reject on the political plane, namely conditional participation in national defence, some of us seem to acquiesce in on the production front—a sharp reminder to us that we have strayed away from our basic line. It leaves the initiative completely in others' hands—the hands of the bureaucracy and

employers.

## Old Outlook persists

If we look at our propaganda and agitation, the role of economic demands as conceived by us, we will find that our comrades will have to change their outlook completely before they can become good organisers of production.

How do we agitate for economic demands to-day? What justifies these demands? What demands do we champion?

At each period we put forward such economic demands as enabled the worker to move forward politically along with the nation and enabled the nation itself to take the next step forward. For us the economic demands were an integral part of the struggle for national emancipation. That also meant that they must be such as to help both the workers and the nation in building national unity for the common cause.

We knew that the exploitation of the working class would not finally end unless capitalism was abolished and the means of production socialised. Still, neither in the period of imperialist war, nor before did we put forward these demands as those to be immediately realised. On the other hand, our demands included minimum living wage, eight hour day, etc.,—demands which corresponded to the stage of the national democratic revolution against imperialism.

This justified the workers' demands and made them a part of the national struggle. It was within this framework that we fought our immediate battles against exploitation.

Today everything has changed. Our nation's freedom depends on national defence. The very existence of the nation with all its workers is at stake. The road to national freedom lies through unity and national defence.

**We require national unity for defence.**

**We demand National Government for national defence.**

**We demand release of Congress leaders for anti-Japanese defence.**

Every slogan, every demand stands or falls by one test—whether it serves the needs of our defence or not, serves us to unite our people to defend our country or not.

*The immediate economic demands, then, stand or fall by this acid*

*test: Do they enable us to increase our national resistance? Transferred to the field of production, economic demands are today advocated and justified, in so far as they improve the efficiency of workers and enable them to give maximum production to the nation. The demand for better conditions, for fair wages, etc., has its justification in this.*

Comrades, when we said in our Party documents, “workers ought to get more wages to improve production”, it was not laying down a condition, but putting the immediate demands on a different plane—the plane of anti-Japanese defence. The significance of this, however, was not understood.

What does it mean to-day? We decidedly stand for improvement in labour conditions, for adequate compensation against high cost of living, for Trade Union recognition, etc., because this helps the nation forward and enables the worker to build national strength through increasing production.

At the same time, it means that this fact has to be consciously realised by the workers themselves. Their patriotism and our propaganda must teach them that production is the sacred trust given by the nation, and only by executing that trust in spite of all obstacles that they are able to appeal to the nation for improvement in labour conditions and legitimately demand better standards of pay, fair wages, etc., and that only thus do they become one with the nation.

Improvement of labour conditions for maximum efficiency *is* not an empty phrase with us. It means that in our agitation, propaganda, speeches, and leaflets, workers must be continually taught to give up the old outlook, inspired to look upon production as their patriotic duty and undertake that task as their duty to the country, and as their only weapon of securing their demands and doing away with the present hellish conditions.

This alone puts economic demands in proper relation to national defence and production—this alone enables us to organise production and at the same time bring about a radical improvement in labour conditions.

## **Our Agitation**

It cannot be said that we agitate for economic demands keeping to the forefront the needs of national defence and production. On the other hand, we agitate for them mostly in the old way. We regard them either

as a question between exploiting owners and exploited workers, or as one against a foreign government pursuing a policy of hostility to workers. The question of production itself, worked responsibility towards it, is not hammered; and economic demands are not put in as part of the production drive which he must carry on at all costs.

The opposition to economic demands by the owners or by the bureaucracy is, therefore, not realised as opposition to production and defence; on the other hand, it is realised only as denial of just demands which must be enforced through wrong and old type of propaganda.

Take the question of profits. How are these enormous profits attacked in making out a case for increased earnings ? Purely from the point of view of exploitation as if the workers and the employers were the only two parties; as if the entire nation including the employers and workers are not threatened with immediate slavery; as if the policy of united resistance had nothing to do with the industrial front.

Consistently with our political line, profits could be correctly criticised, attacked, from the standpoint of equality of sacrifice in this war for national defence. Fair wages could be justified and at one stroke workers could be made to realise that it was not a question between themselves and the employers but one between the nation and its enemy. The profiteering carried on by employers is thus exposed as anti-national selfishness in contrast to the patriotism of the workers.