

C.P.I (M L) Hails the Fighting Spirit of the Workers of the Garment Industry!

The recent series of agitations being conducted by the workers of the garment industry-majority of whom are women workers, revives the hope that the working-class can save the situation from the onslaught of the ruling classes viz the big capital on the workers and hard earned rights of the workers. These agitation reaffirm the fact that working class is capable of not only championing its own causes but also the causes and interests of the toiling people who are being oppressed and suppressed by the governments at the behest of the ruling-classes of exploitation.

The strike initiated by the knit wear and garment sector of Tamilnadu in Tirupur on April 4th demanding for the roll back of the amendment made to the EPF law restricting the freedom of the contributor workers to withdraw their own hard earned P.F. savings, has sparked the fighting spirit among the workers, to protect their rights.

This spark of fighting-spirit has ignited a wild fire with the garment sector of workers in Bengaluru, who went on a serious strike for two-days on April 18 and 19, making it unavoidable to the ruling clique at the center to withdraw and cancel the anti-worker amendments unilaterally made by them for the E.P.F laws.

Again, it is the workers of the Brandix Garment A.S.E.2 at Visakhapatnam, who have determinedly chosen the path of fighting by entering into a strike, thus opposing the ruthless exploitation of their labour power by the transnational capital in its bid to loot super-profits from April 16. Their undeterred resolve to not to fall prey to the machinations of the management and state government officials is highly laudable.

Now it is the women workers of garment industry, that have kick started the fighting spirit among the workers' movement in India, which went long-back in to despondency under the leadership of the traditional established central trade union leadership.

C.P.I (M-L) whole-heartedly expresses its revolutionary solidarity with the fighting workers of garment industry and hails their fighting spirit, which alone can save their interests. We also extend our support to the workers of BRANDIX Company at Achutapuram SEZ of Visakhapatnam.

22-4-2016

**Viswam
General Secretary**

Strike by Women workers of Brandix SEZ at Visakhapatnam braving Heniou police repression

In Andhrapradesh at Achutapuram near Visakhapatnam, a special economic zone was started by a Srilankan apparel firm BRANDIX India apparel city (BRANDIX), with 1,000 acres of land provided by the A.P.state government on 99 years of lease, just at a least nominal rate of Re 1/- per acre as the lease rent for one acre in 2006. The company promised to provide 60,000 jobs for women.

The company started its production in 2008, manufacturing ladies lingerie and T.shirts to international brand companies like UK based Quantum clothing, Ocean India, Seeds intimate Apparel, Paineer Elastics, Shore to Shore, Vardhaman Yarns and Threads LTD, International Trimmings and Labels, Rifist Ribbons and Bows(India) P LTD, SAS industries, Screenline printing etc.

Though the company promised to provide employment to 60,000 women, in practice it provided merely 19,000 jobs for women. But with an yearly turn over of Rs 15/- crores, it has been earning super profits by ruthlessly exploiting the labour power of the women workers.

From 2008 onwards it has been paying the lowest wages to the women workers @ Rs 4200/- per month. Even at times the NMREG wages are higher than the wages paid to these skilled women workers of

BRANDIX. The working conditions are far worse than of the conditions of the slaves of middle ages. The managers and supervisors treat these women workers worse than slaves always cursing them in foul language. They do not permit these women workers even to go to toilets and keep vigilance on them at the wash and toilet rooms. They are not allowed to go on leave for more than 6 days. Their work-load is very heavy, setting at unreachable high targets. Those women workers are forced to work in hellish conditions. All this is being done in the name of 'economic development' and 'women's' empowerment' etc. In the ruse of these attractive slogans, the labour power of women workers in this SEZ is allowed to be exploited by the transnational Brandix Company with the total support and blessings of the government and administration.

Several appeals by the women workers for their wage increase were never heeded. Their complaints against management's ill-treatment too were not taken for consideration. These women are not organized in to any union.

However their very deplorable working and living conditions made them to unite and organize in to agitational path.

On April 16 (2016), around 7,000 women workers of 2 units of Brandix company out of 10 units, suddenly went in to a spontaneous sit-in-strike in this BRANDIX-SEZ-city, demanding a minimum wage of Rs 10,000/- per month and better working conditions.

But the BRANDIX management and the governmental authorities chose to hood-wink the women workers by falsely promising that they would contact the Head office at Sri Lanka and resolve the demand by 30th April, and asking the workers to join to their duties. But the women refusing to fall in to the trick, said that they will not stop their agitation, and wait till the management concedes their just demands.

Then the authorities conniving with the Brandix management started its tactics of disinformation, coercion and brutal oppression the striking workers.

The authorities dispatched their officers in to the villages of the workers falsely propagating that, this strike will adversely affect the economic development of the area and that foreign capital will not come to the state etc.; and advising the women to join in to duties.

When the women workers have not wavered and staunchly continued their strike agitation peacefully, the police forces are drawn in to action. Police have arrested the leaders. Dragged the women workers brutally from their site of agitation and transported them to different police stations at Narsipatnam, Nakkapalle, Yalamanchili and Rambilli towns. They imposed restrictions on media representatives to not to picturise the brutal dragging of striking women workers. Even the police went to the uncivilized and brutal extent of tearing away the saris and jackets (blouses) of the agitating workers. They kicked and beaten the agitating women workers.

A particular trend of brutal and inhuman police oppression is developing against agitating women workers and is taking shape in A.P. under the rule of T.D.P. Chandrababunaidu, which is not only uncivilized and inhuman but is also akin to fascist type of police oppression. In the past during the agitation of Anganwadi workers-chalo Vijayawada agitation those protesting women workers were pricked and pierced with pins and sharp instruments by the police to disperse them from the agitation.

Now in this particular agitation of BRANDIX workers police have adopted the tactics of tearing away the blouses of agitating women and their sarees; attacking on the modesty of agitating women workers. If such uncivilized and brutal police methods are left unchecked, it will turnout to be a menace for the workers movement. These dangerous, fascist-type police attacks on agitating women workers have to be seriously condemned and thwarted with due resistance.

But braving all these police oppressions at the behest of the state government and the ruling classes, the women workers of BRANDIX Company are bravely continuing their strike agitation.

But after 20 days of the agitation the state labour minister shamelessly announces that the government will form a minimum wage committee within 2 or 3 days which will decide the minimum wages of BRANDIX SEZ, and that the management agreed to implement its decision. He shamelessly claims that selfish political forces are mis-leading the BRANDIX workers.

Such has been the apathy and irresponsible attitude of the A.P. state government, which has been in collusion with the BRANDIX management, towards the life and death issues and problems of the workers. This attitude reflects the class nature-anti working-class nature of the T.D.P. government and its callous behaviour with the agitating women workers.

CLASS-STRUGGLE, hails the agitating BRANDIX women workers for their rights and whole heartedly supports its strike!
