

The Marxist

Volume XXIV, No. 1
January-March 2008

ANDHRA PRADESH STATE CONFERENCE

Extracts from the Political-Organisational Report

STATE SCENARIO

Economic Situation: The overall economic situation of the State during the last three years has been fairly stable, with growth being experienced in the manufacturing and services sectors. Rainfall being satisfactory, the agrarian crisis did not aggravate further. However, the sustainability of the economic growth is questionable and may decline if the situation worsens for the overall Indian and the global economy and in case rainfall is not favourable.

Fast Growth of Private Corporates: The private corporate sector is growing rapidly, with some private players monopolizing the education and health sectors. Private corporate investment is making forays into the retail, agriculture, real estate and the construction sectors. Investments are also coming into the IT and Pharma sectors. NRIs are investing in the real estate sector. These changes are affecting urban life in significant ways. Wealth is getting concentrated in the urban areas, while disparities are intensifying. Wealth is also getting increasingly concentrated in the hands of the rich few. The number of new billionaires has grown sharply. The influence of money power in politics is also increasing with the rich persons using their financial power and black money to grab power. The competition for more power between the rich and powerful bourgeois politicians and their internal contradictions are also fuelling the trends of divisive and chauvinistic identity politics.

State Government's Policies: The Congress Government of Andhra Pradesh is also pursuing the policies of liberalization and privatization like the earlier Government of the Telugu Desam party. It is entering into agreements with the World Bank with harmful conditionalities like Structural Adjustment loans as well as other loans for Municipalities, Forests, Tanks, Water Resources and Cooperative Banks. Following the World Bank conditionalities, the State Government has finalised a time bound programme for reducing the Budget Deficit. It is also encouraging privatisation and introducing user charges for various services. There is also a proposal to increase Municipal Property Taxes. The burden of all these policies is falling on the people.

The State Government's budgets for the last three years have sought to mobilize resources by selling away government land, encouraging liquor

trade and increasing stamp and registration duties. Revenue growth is not satisfactory. Therefore, cuts are being imposed on the allocations for education, health and welfare of weaker sections. While huge funds are being spent on irrigation projects in the name of '*Jala Yagnam*', the results are not forthcoming. Funds are being misused due to corruption and malpractices. '*Jal Yagnam*' has turned into a source of illegitimate income for Congress party workers.

Immediately after coming to power, the Congress government had announced free power for agriculture. Subsequently, the scheme was diluted with various exemptions. Due to pressure from the mass movement, ration cards were distributed. Pension Distribution programme and a housing scheme in the name of Indiramma Ideal villages and wards were also taken up. In spite of serious flaws, these schemes have helped the people to some extent.

While the Government undertook a token land distribution programme, the approach was casual which exposes the class character of the Government. The Koneru Ranga Rao Committee was set up due to the pressure of the Left Parties to study the land problem. This Committee recommended some solutions to the land problem within the existing legal framework. A movement had to be launched because of the Government's refusal to implement those recommendations.

On the one hand the State Government started acquiring land at very cheap rates for various projects, which created discontent and led to increasing resistance from farmers. On the other hand Government is also allotting land at very cheap rates to rich people. Laws are also being amended to regularize the land illegally possessed by affluent and influential persons. The price of land in the cities and towns has soared because of the Government undertaking land auctions. As a consequence, homestead land in the cities and towns went out of the reach of the poor and the middle classes. *Because of this situation, the struggle for homestead land received a good response from the people.*

Education is increasingly being captured by the corporates. Grants to aided schools and colleges are being cut. In the name of promoting private-public partnership, the Government is abdicating its responsibility in education. The health services are also in a state of crisis. The Government hospitals are languishing due to lack of funds, medicines and staff. The funds allocated for the *Arogyashree* scheme is being diverted to private hospitals run by corporates. The law brought in the name of regulating private hospitals is in effect helping the corporate run hospitals by hitting the smaller private hospitals.

The Employment Guarantee Act is being implemented in all the districts. There is a good response for this among the agricultural labourers. However, the government is diverting funds meant for this scheme to other schemes and corruption and malpractices are rampant. The scheme is gradually turning into a source of income for Congress workers.

State of the Administration: Influential persons are looting public property and resources at will. Mines, land and public funds are being grabbed at will. Corruption has increased in schemes like *Jala Yagnam, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Community Forest Management projects, NREGA, Indiramma Housing, ULC regularization* and in postings. All this is revealed by the reports of the Vigilance, Lok Ayukta and the CAG. The Government is increasingly becoming autocratic and vindictive. The State Government arbitrarily issues and then withdraws orders, making a mockery of the administrative process. The ruling party often comes in the way of proper functioning of the State Assembly. It also tries to gag the press. It is conducting a malicious campaign against the Opposition. While the law and order situation has worsened, the Government has unleashed repression on people's movements. Violence by the land mafia and terrorist activities like bomb blasts are on the rise. Overall, people perceive the administration under the Congress Government as corrupt and inefficient, which nakedly serves the interests of the rich and the leaders of the ruling party.

PEOPLE'S SITUATION

Workers and Employees: The Government is desperately trying to ease the opposition among the employees by addressing some of their problems. Closures or selling out of public sector units is continuing. More than half of the Government employees are temporary. In the private sector also, the size of the unorganized sector is increasing. The number of self-employed people is increasing day-by-day. Large chunk of the employees and workers in the services sectors and IT face problems of job insecurity, non-implementation of labour laws, deteriorating working conditions and shrinking facilities.

Urban Population: The number of the urban poor and slums has increased because of migration. However, basic amenities have not improved in keeping with the increase in urban population. The problem of housing has become especially acute. Small retail traders are being hit because of big corporate entities entering into retail trade. Land grabbing and atrocities by the land mafia continue unabated. Dissatisfaction among the poor and middle class has increased due to increase in land price, corruption, price rise and deterioration in law and order situation. *Therefore there is increasing response to movements and struggles in the urban areas.*

Agricultural Labour: The number of agricultural labourers is increasing. Their condition is deteriorating and price rise is affecting them badly. Their condition continue to be miserable despite some relief measures like the employment guarantee scheme and pensions. Access to health and education is also a serious problem. Facilities like house sites, crematoriums and proper toilets are not available to agricultural labourers. The dalit agricultural labourers are the worst sufferers.

Farmers: Agriculture in the State continues to face stagnation. Mechanization has increased. The area under commercial crops is also on the rise. Price fluctuations are hitting the poor and middle peasantry. They are dependent on private moneylenders for loans. Farmers' suicides have continued during the last three years because of the agrarian crisis and the debt burden. The farmers are also facing problems like displacement, insecure tenancy, irregular power supply, dominance of big private players, lack of cheap institutional credit and inadequate minimum support price.

Artisans: The policies of liberalisation have endangered the traditional trades. Rearing of sheep and goat is being hit because of the vanishing pastures. Schemes like *Gopalamitra* have failed. The *Pashukranti* scheme has also attracted criticism. The Animal Husbandry policy announced by the Government is harmful to the farmers. The excise policy is destroying toddy tapping. Land grabbing in the coastal regions is hitting the fishermen. Weavers are dying due to starvation. The organized sector is invading the trades of barbers, washer men, potters, blacksmith, carpenters, goldsmiths and others. The nomadic tribes are being totally neglected.

Tribals: The tribals are the worst hit section. Poor health and drinking water facilities affect them badly. Tribals are facing problems because of eviction from forestlands, cheating in Fairs, malpractices in the ITDA and failure in the implementation of 1/70. They are being displaced in large numbers due to projects. The budgetary allocation for tribals is meagre and not proportional to their population. The Government's decision to allow private traders to purchase forest produce, which will facilitate the replacement of the *Girijan Cooperative Society*, is also against the interest of the tribals.

Dalits: The policies of the Government are also adversely affecting the dalits. The budget allocations are insufficient. Funds allocated for their welfare are also not being spent and being diverted to sectors which do not benefit the dalits. The Government is refusing to constitute a full-fledged nodal agency for this purpose. Neither is there any initiative by the Government to undertake effective steps to eradicate caste discrimination, nor any special plan of action for the development of dalit areas.

Students: Disparities are widening between the poor and rich in the sphere of education. The Government is only encouraging quality education for the rich. The poor are left with a deteriorating public education system, which is neglected by the Government. Scholar-ships are not being properly disbursed. Hostels are in bad shape. Children's education has become a burden for poor and middle class families.

Women: Women are bearing the brunt of the policies of liberalisation. Domestic violence and atrocities against women are on the rise. Women are also facing the evil consequences of increasing liquor consumption in society. Women working in anganwadis and the midday meal scheme, community health workers, teachers, domestic workers and self-employed women are facing serious problems. Rural women are also organizing and becoming conscious due to the Self-Help Groups (DWACRA). They are getting drawn into movements.

Youth: Employment growth is less than the growth in the workforce. Modern and decent employment opportunities are cornered by the richer sections, who have skills, educational qualifications and connections. The youth of the poor and weaker sections do not have these opportunities. The numbers in the ranks of the unorganised workforce in the urban areas are swelling and self-employment is on the rise. These activities do not provide for a decent standard of living. Consumerism and the values of the market have affected the youth, keeping them away from social responsibilities. *Multi-faceted activities are required to influence the youth in such a social context.*

Muslims: There is a growing discontent among the Muslim minorities. They feel discriminated and neglected by the Government. They are aspiring for reservations. The budget allocation for the welfare of the Muslims is meagre and a Special Sub-plan is required. The influence of fundamentalist forces is also increasing within the Muslims.

General Issues: Living standards of the people are deteriorating due to the all-round rise in prices. Due to the encouragement provided by the Government, the sale of liquor has increased manifold. Members of poor families are spending their hard earned money on liquor, which is causing conflicts and disturbances within families. Crime and violence is on the rise. The widening inequalities created by the policies of liberalisation and the consequent social disturbances and insecurities are affecting all walks of life. Consumerism, vulgar display of wealth, addictions, individualism, depoliticisation and domestic violence are rampant. There is a dominance of caste, region and religion based identity politics, which also aggravates animosities between various sections. The literary and cultural scene is dominated by reactionary and escapist ideas. The media is expanding fast in various forms and increasing its reach. Bulk of the media promotes a casteist, communal, parochial and at times, anti-communist outlook. Anti-communism within the media will intensify with the growing role and influence of our Party in the State and the intensification of our struggles. We have to be vigilant against the media onslaught. We should also not bear any unnecessary illusions about the character of mainstream media.

MOVEMENTS AND STRUGGLES

Activities: During the last three years, movements and struggles were conducted throughout the State in a relentless manner.

Padayatras for Comprehensive Development: We conducted marches demanding comprehensive development of the districts, from November 2005 to February 2006. In Khammam District it was conducted in 2003 itself. These marches were held in all the 22 Districts. In East Godavari and Visakhapatnam districts, special Girijan marches were conducted. These marches, which were led by the State leadership, helped the Party in studying the conditions in the different districts, identifying the specific problems of different places and increase our mass contact. It also helped in identifying the backward areas and concentrating on them. Along with the marches, Plans for comprehensive development were prepared and made available for public discussion. By formulating scientific proposals for comprehensive development and conducting struggles for the same, we could distinguish our Party from the other political forces. About 230 leaders participated in marches conducted in the districts. 26500 Kms were covered in the marches. 9217 villages and 834 mandals were visited. 15,55,222 people participated in 8599 meetings. We identified the issues in a way, which ensured good response from the people. Discipline and the capacity to wage struggles in the leaders and cadres increased in the course of undertaking these marches.

Land Struggle: *A significant struggle was conducted under the aegis of the Party for house sites and agricultural land in the State. People from villages, towns and municipalities rallied in a big way because of our championing this crucial class issue. The participation of the urban poor exceeded our own expectations. During the six month long movement, various forms of struggle like hunger strikes, rasta rokos, dharnas, demonstrations, indefinite hunger strikes and picketing at collectorates, mandal and revenue offices were conducted. All the Opposition parties expressed solidarity to our movement. At times the struggle assumed a militant character depending upon the response of the people. The Government used severe repression against the movement and finally, during the bandh, the police opened fire killing seven people in Mudigonda. The police firing became a big national as well as international issue.*

Because of the land struggle, the land question came on the political agenda. We achieved partial victories at some places. Across the State, 3,08,101.35 acres of cultivable land was occupied in 2416 centres. Huts were set up in 16148.05 acres of land for house sites in 1304 centres. 81853 people were arrested, cases were registered against 24464 people and 6738 were sent to jails. We conducted the second phase of struggle after the Mudigonda firing. The All India leadership extended full cooperation to the movement

through the picketing of A. P. Bhavan in New Delhi and sending leaders to the State to actively participate in the movement.

Other Struggles: Other important campaigns and movements carried out during this period include a comprehensive survey of mandals, cycle jathas and indefinite hunger strikes against caste discrimination, movement for ration cards, indefinite hunger strikes on municipal problems, welfare hostel movements, workers samara bheri, campaign week on Government policies, strike of unorganized labour, campaign on Indo-US nuclear deal, campaign march against naval exercises, march on toddy tappers' problems, struggles of the project-displaced and bandhs in tribal areas. At the district level also some important struggles and movements were conducted. Totapally, Peddagadda, Tarakaramasagar struggles in Vizianagaram district, Bauxite movement and Gangavaram struggles in Visakhapatnam, Satyaveedu SEZ movement in Chittore District, Polavaram and Dummagudem struggles in Khammam Districts, Slates labour strike and Beedi Packers strike in Prakasam District are noteworthy.

Experiences: We could build a good image for the Party through the movements and struggles, expand our influence across the State and enthuse our rank and file. Our Party is being recognized as a fighting force and we could make our presence felt even within the districts where we were weak. This has helped in the expansion of the Party and the mass organizations and increased our mass base. We could bring several people's problems on to the political agenda. We also succeeded in partially solving some of the problems by bringing pressure on the State Government.

Response from the People: Though apparently the economic situation in the State during this period was stable, people rallied in the movements in large numbers. Struggles against the policies of liberalization received a good response. The struggles, which received significant response from the people, were the struggles of the Project Displaced people of the Outer Ring Road and Gangavaram port, struggle for house sites, struggle against enhancement of property tax, struggle against Skull and Bones emblem on beedi packets and struggle for the implementation of the NREGA. It is important to identify such issues and conduct struggles.

Response from Women: The high participation of women in the movements and struggles conducted during this period, reaching 80% of the participants in some cases, is a very significant aspect. The women registered militant participation in the struggles and showed exemplary courage and confidence. Cadres showing initiative and ability came to the fore. Scores of such cadres are willing to work for the movement as whole timers. They have to be assigned work and groomed properly.

Need for Broad-based Struggles: The movement can be substantially strengthened by trying to mobilise all the people concerned with a problem. By conducting the movement in as broad based a manner as possible, confidence can be generated within the people. Other political forces get attracted to the movement if conducted in a broad-based manner and pressure can also be mounted on the Government. The struggle for land and house sites has amply demonstrated this. Efforts to allocate the required cadre and rallying the poor in the urban areas are yielding positive results. We could rally thousands of people and expand our presence to all the slums in the towns simultaneously. More people can be mobilised on specific issues if cadre is properly allocated, even in a temporary manner. However, it is not possible to consolidate our support unless cadre is allocated on a permanent basis.

Consistent and Sustained Programmes: Casual and intermittent programmes does not serve much purpose. Movements have to be conducted for a sufficiently long period of time in order to ensure continuous participation of the people. All types of agitational forms should be adopted in order to undertake long and sustained struggles. There has to be a skillful blend of intensive mass campaigns, bringing pressure on the administration, militant forms and ordinary forms of struggle. Only then can there be an impact on the people. Lasting faith of the people can only be earned if the movements are taken to their logical end. All the struggles during this period were conducted in this manner only, which left its imprint in the minds of the people.

Militancy: The Government does not respond to appeals and lobbying. Militant agitational forms should be adopted keeping in mind the readiness of the masses. Leaders and cadres should be at the forefront during militant actions. Conducting militant movements has been our main achievement during this period.

Using Parliamentary Forums: It is very important to reflect the voice of the movements and struggles and agitate in the parliamentary forums. The discussion and events taking place in these forums gets more publicity. During this period we utilized the Assembly forum effectively. By synchronizing our movements with Assembly sessions, we could bring pressure on the Government. We also tried to mobilize the support of the other parties in the Assembly. We could undertake similar activity at the Zilla Parishad and Municipality levels. However, at the mandal and village levels we have failed to use these platforms. People's representatives can play an important role as individuals during movements and struggles. They can help by participating in marches, tours, raising issues and resisting repressions. All the people's representatives are not uniformly utilizing their offices for the development of movements. The way the MP's office has been utilized in

Hyderabad old city is noteworthy. Proactive initiatives and thorough study of people's problems by the elected representatives needs to be improved further.

Links with the People: In earlier times, due to the weak links of the leadership and cadre of the Party and mass organizations with the people, there were problems with identifying the real needs of the people and issues on which they could respond, assessing their preparedness and feeling their pulse. We wanted to change this type of functioning by establishing close links with the people. Surveys, marches, night halts in villages, tours and village meetings conducted as part of movements and struggles helped to strengthen our links with the people. Our capacity to identify the genuine problems of the people improved by learning from the people instead of preaching them, listening to what they say and accepting memorandums from them. We could formulate demands after assessing people's minds and ensured their participation in chalking out the course of the movements. We have to ensure that the methods, which helped us in strengthening our links with the people, are made a regular part of our work.

Class Unity: Class struggles and social movements help in overcoming the divisive political forces and backward consciousness. Class and progressive social consciousness of the people get enhanced through movements like the land struggle and the struggle against caste discrimination.

Grassroots Level Organisational Network: We can consolidate people's power only by establishing closely-knit regional level organizational network. Regional level organizational setup is necessary to build up movements and struggles. Without such a network, it will not be possible to mobilize the people behind the Party. The State Centre has been emphasizing this point. In July 2007 a circular was issued explaining this aspect of organization building. But the district leadership did not give it due consideration and *'struggle committees' and 'movement committees' could not be formed in most slums and villages. Even where these committees were constituted, they failed to function effectively during movements. The neglect shown towards building grassroots level organisational network was a serious lapse in the movements and struggles conducted by us.*

Cadre Training: Movements and struggles have been very useful in training the cadre and increasing their self-confidence through direct experience of work. Movements have helped in establishing their links with the people, increasing militancy and the capacity to work independently. However, the cadres have learnt mainly through self-cultivation. *The district leadership has not shown the necessary interest in identifying weaker elements within the cadre and those lacking in self-confidence and grooming them by providing direct assistance.*

Weaknesses: Sufficient number of local struggles and movements has not taken place. Concentrated efforts were not made in the selected mandals and areas. Identification and training of new cadre was not given the necessary importance. There was negligence in constituting local level movement and struggle committees. Today, there are many leaders at the district level who lack the spirit and skill for leading struggles. All these weaknesses have to be overcome in the forthcoming period.

Attacks by the Government: With our growing resistance to their policies, the ruling classes have tried to suppress us with a vengeance. The Congress Party saw that the main opposition to their State Government was coming from our movements. It tried in every way to suppress these movements and isolate us. Severe repression was unleashed and an intensive and malicious propaganda launched against us. Casteist, communal and parochial forces also showed hostility towards our movements.

Repression: Severe repression was unleashed against the Party and the mass organizations during this period. 81853 people were arrested, 24464 were booked in cases and 6732 were detained. In the Mudigonda police firing 7 comrades were martyred. A total of 4515 people were injured. However, the leaders, cadres and the people did not relent and continued to struggle in a resolute manner. Repression will be the inevitable response to militant struggles. Unless our leaders and cadres learn to face repression (going to jail, facing lathis etc.) with confidence and determination, we cannot earn the confidence of the people. The lawyers' union played a very good role in extending legal assistance to the Party and conducting tours. The civil liberties movement also took a stand in support of our movements. However, there is no civil liberties group functioning under our aegis. This gap needs to be filled.

Malicious Campaign: Having understood that our Party would not get cowed down by repression, the ruling classes have launched a malicious propaganda campaign against us. They have resorted to lies, allegations and fabrications in order to isolate us from others. They have tried to undermine our prestige, create confusion within our cadre and supporters, create doubts over our integrity, generate mistrust and demoralize our ranks. A section of the media has been enthusiastically participating in this malicious campaign. Some correspondents have also written malicious articles posing as Leftists in order to damage us. Besides the ruling party, other parties have also targeted and criticized our Party at every opportunity. Especially, the BSP behaved as an agent of the ruling party. During movements and struggles the Government and the Congress representatives stooped to the level of mudslinging. They accused our Party of casteism, regionalism and being anti-

religion. They also branded us as opponents of development. Dragging West Bengal into the campaign, they accused us of adopting double standards.

An integral part of our movement was the task of facing this mischievous propaganda and exposing its hollowness by presenting proper information, logic and explanations. Instead of being defensive we decided to be on the offensive. Not getting into the trap of letting the debate divert to other issues, we remained focussed on people's problems and exposed the bogusness of those who are indulging in false propaganda in order to scuttle our movements. During this period the party and mass organization cadres have acquired some proficiency in these matters. Our intervention in the media through write-ups and participation in discussions on various TV channels has increased. But this intervention is not sufficient. The numbers participating in such activities are not enough. And taking on this adverse campaign only at the State level will not do. District and mandal level activists also have to be involved. *For this, comrades with necessary skills have to be groomed in scores at the district level. We could not conduct the workshop to improve the writing skill of our leaders at the State centre. Improving our skills in the ideological struggle should also be included as a subject while conducting classes for higher-level cadres.* Our elected representatives could use the parliamentary platforms as an effective instrument to counter the propaganda offensive unleashed by the ruling party. We have to increase our study and political sharpness in order to effectively counter the propaganda of the ruling classes.

Broad-based Support: Building broad-based support and unity are helpful in enhancing the trust of the people, pressurising the Government and facing repression. During this period, consistent efforts were made in conducting movements at the State level. We could foil the conspiracies by the Congress through forging broad based unity, ensuring people's participation and adopting proper tactics in conducting movements and struggles. We created a situation in which other organizations also responded favourably to peoples' issues. However, weaknesses persist on these aspects at the district level. At lower levels, only nominal efforts are made to broad base our movements. Achieving broad based unity and support at the regional level is very necessary in order to firmly root the movement within the people. The efforts of isolating us and damaging our image could also be countered by mobilizing broad based support. Mobilizing other Left parties during this period has been a problem. There is also a tendency within our leaders and cadres in some places to work alone.

FUTURE TASKS OF THE MOVEMENT

Movements and struggles have to be intensified. Preparations have to start from now.

Statewide movements have to be conducted among people of all sections and classes.

We have to blend independent activity with united actions. Broad-based and ground level unity has to be built.

Militancy has to increase and movements have to be conducted on a consistent basis.

Weaknesses in conducting movements at the district and local levels have to be overcome.

Grassroots level organizational networks have to be built and the movement has to be conducted under their supervision.

Anti-Party propaganda and separatist (or sectarian) ideas have to be countered ideologically.