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THE SECOND ALL INDIA LEATHER AND FOOTWEAR WORKERS' CONFERENCE HELD AT AGRA

ON 30TH. NOVEMBER AND 1ST. DECEMBER, 1957.

The Second All India Conference of Leather and Footwear workers was held at Agra on 30th. November and 1st. December, 1957 under the presidentship of Com. Shailendra Pal, one of the Vice-Presidents of the Federation that was formed on an ad-hoc basis at the 1st. All India Conference held at Kanpur in 1954 with a view to bring together Unions working at different centres on the basis of common demands and problems facing the Industry.

The Conference was attended by 44 delegates representing nearly 50,000 members of their respective union from West Bengal, Tamil Nad, Bihar and U.P. The biggest delegation at the Conference was from Batanagar representing the most organised sectors of the movement. Led by Com. Shailendra Pal and S. Mookhoti, the Delegation took keen interest in chalking out the policies and future programme of the Federation. From the South Com. Madhavan represented three well organised unions of Tannary workers and his contribution to the discussions coming direct from the workers' ranks was of great help in understanding the problems faced by the workers in small tanneries and especially by those whose lot is bound up with the progress of Scheduled Caste Workers.

The Conference was also attended on its second day by two members of the Lok Sabha viz. Comrades S.M. Banerjee and Mohd. Iliyas, who not only helped the Conference to understand the mind of the legislators and the Government but also enriched the Conference by their experience of unity and struggles.

30TH. NOVEMBER: DISCUSSION ON GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Com. Shiv Sharma, General Secretary of the Federation at the outset placed an oral report on the progress made since the last Conference and the efforts that were made to activate the Federation through establishing contacts and exchange of information through correspondence. Com. Sharma emphasised the need of adoption of the Draft Constitution which will help affiliation of the unions and building of the organisation at the Central and Regional levels. The delegates at the Conference criticised the indifference of the Central Organisation towards problem of building of the organisation and extending its influence among the workers. They further suggested that at the Conference proper organs of the Federation be elected and they should start functioning the organisation by authority vested in them in such a manner.

After this preliminary discussion on the initiative of Com. Sharma the delegates also discussed the situation in the Industry and gave brief reports from their centres. The discussions at the Conference revealed that this Industry which is essentially national is passing through a crisis and even here big monopolist units just for the sake of greater profits are ruining the Industry. This situation has resulted in increasing unemployment of the workers, greater exploitation and increase in the total volume of production of leather goods. In a country like ours where steps towards fast industrialisation are afoot and where population is big, there is a big scope of Industry in which reasonable profits to the employer and a fair wage to the worker in accordance with the capacity of the Industry can be achieved provided all resources, private and governmental, are mobilised and workers' cooperation is sought to that end.

Further discussion on the matter was left for finalisation when the Draft Charter of Demands was to be discussed.

FRATERNAL GREETINGS:

The inaugural session of the Conference was held on 30th. November. In the evening a meeting of workers and delegates was held at the Delegates' Camp under the presidentship of Com. Paul. Com. K.C. Gupta, Chairman, Reception Committee, extended welcome to the delegates and introduced them with the conditions of workers engaged by small manufacturers at Agra. The Conference among others was greeted by Comrades Kailash Sharma, President, Roadway's Workers Union, Abdul Hafiz of the Central Railway Workers' Union, K.P. Saxena of the

Electric Workers' Union and Man Singh of the Small Manufacturers' Association, Com. Mookhoti on behalf of the delegates thanked the workers and the Reception Committee for having organised the Conference at such a short notice and assured them all that the deliberations of the Conference will help them to solve their problems to some extent.

FIRST DECEMBER: DRAFT CONSTITUTION AND CHARTER OF DEMANDS.

In the morning the delegates took up the discussion on the Draft Constitution of the Federation. After a clause-wise discussion the Constitution was adopted unanimously. The Constitution now provides in its 'Aims and objects' Clause that the Federation shall organise the workers and employees engaged in various branches of Leather and Footwear Industry, and all establishments in productive, distributive and research sectors. Thus it widens and expands the base and scope of the activities of the Federation. The Constitution provides the workers of the Federation to unite a large number of unions on a non-party basis by offering to them maximum possible autonomy as well as a well coordinated and democratic Central body that will be a power to be reckoned with.

After the adoption of the Constitution the delegates then discussed the Draft Charter of Demands that was circulated to the Unions earlier and adopted the same unanimously.

In the evening an open rally of workers and citizens of Agra was held where the Charter of Demands was explained in detail by Com. Ram Asroy of the Kanpur Tannery & Leather Workers' Union. The rally was addressed among others by Comrades Shiv Sharma, General Secretary of the Federation, Mohd. Iliyas, M.P., S.M. Banerjee M.P. and Sunil Bhadra. The Rally was presided over by Com. Shailendra Paul.

After the Open Session the delegates again met for the Night Session and unanimously elected the following office-bearers and the members of the Executive Committee.

Com. Shailendra Paul	President.
Com. Vimal Mohrotra	Vice-President.
Com. Tejan Bose	Vice-President.
Com. (to be filled by a union from South)	Vice-President.
Com. (To be filled later)	Vice-President.
Com. Shiv Sharma	General Secretary.
Com. Madhavan	Secretary.
Com. O.B.S. Roy	Secretary.
Com. Keshav Gupta	Secretary.
Com. Mahesh Nigam	Treasurer.
Com. Sudhir Mookhoti	Member, Executive Committee.
Com. Arjun Arora	" " "
Com. B.P. Shukla	" " "
Com. Sunil Bhadra	" " "
Com. S.A. Thangrajan	" " "
Com. Bhimraj Kuril	" " "
Com. Ranen Lahiri	" " "
Com. Ajit Roy	" " "
Com. A. Rahman	" " "
Com. Ram Asroy	" " "
Com. Prasadi Lal	" " "

After the elections the Conference decided that the appeal of the Leather International to all workers in Leather Industry be circulated to all the Unions in Hindi, Urdu and English and the Unions be asked to publish the Appeal in their language and popularise the Third International Conference of Leather, Shoe, Fur and Leather Products workers, to be held in Berlin (East Germany) from 17th. May to 20th. May, 1958. The Conference directed the Executive Committee to elect delegates to the International Conference in its next meeting.

The Conference further decided to hold the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Federation at Kanpur in the month of March, 1958 to discuss and adopt the rest of the Draft-resolutions, appeal of the 4th. World Trade Union Conference to Young Workers and Trade Unions through out the world and

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First World Conference of Young Workers to be held at Prague (Czechoslovakia) from July 14 to July 20, 1958 and the demands of the working women adopted by the 4th. World Trade Union Congress. The Conference accepted the invitation of the Bata Union to hold next Conference at Batanagar (West Bengal).

The Conference was declared closed late in the night by the President Con. Paul who thanked all for the cooperation extended in the conduct of the Conference. He also thanked once again the Reception Committee that had helped the organisation of the Conference.

Mazdoor Sabha Building,
12/1, Gwaltoli,
KANPUR, U.P.

S. Sharma

(SHIV SHARMA)
GENERAL SECRETARY.

ALL INDIA LEATHER & FOOTWEAR WORKERS'
FEDERATION.

All India Leather & Footwear Worker's Federation.

12/1 Gwaltoli, Kanpur.

Executive Meeting - Sept. 3 & 4, 1959.

General Secretary's Report:-

The Executive Committee meeting of the All India Leather & Footwear Worker's Federation was held at Kanpur under the Presidentship of Com. K. C. Gupta on September 3, & 4, 1959. At the outset the General Secretary placed report of the work done since the last conference to this day which was supplemented and unanimously accepted by the Executive Committee.

Due to certain circumstances the Committee could not meet earlier as fixed for March 1959 in the last conference. The chief cause was that our comrades were busy in making preparations of and popularising the 3rd International Conference of the LTUI in different regions and non availability of the President.

The reports received from the regions- Southern, Eastern and Northern formed in the last conference, show the achievements of the Federation but the Federation could not develop in all the three regions to that extent as it ought to be on an all India basis. During this period under review as given below Com. C. K. Madhav, Secretary of the Federation has been submitting regular reports of his region while the other centres had been irregular.

1. Southern Region.

In this Region the Madhavaram Tannery Workers Union which had been a pivot played an important role in organising the tannery and leather workers and bringing together the different unions of the region. The report of the last conference was given wide publicity in the press of southern India by Com. C. K. Madhavan our Secretary. One union there conducted struggles for the 'Pongal' advance of Rs.25/- per head. The workers had to go on a 10 minutes stay-in-strike in all the tanneries which resulted in victory of the workers and an amount of Rs.12/- was given to the workmen as 'Pongal Advance' by an agreement between the employers and the workmen.

Com. Madhavan convened a meeting of the Union representatives

from all tanneries in Tamilnad on 21.11.1958 where it was decided to hold a conference. The conference was held at Dindigal on April 25 and 26, 1959 under the Presidentship of Com. C. K. Madhavan which was attended by over 50 delegates from different Unions. A Committee of 3 persons consisting of Com. S. D. Soosainathan, M.K. Vellayudhan and C. K. Madhavan as Convenor was formed to conduct and organise work in the region. Workers cooperatives have also been organised but no aid could be available due to apathy of Madras Government. A great achievement is the construction of Union Building at Dindigal at a cost of Rs.10000/-. Workers of Madhavaram Tannery took an active part in Panchyat Board elections and gained all the seats and Com. C. K. Madhavan has been elected as president of the Panchyat Board. The Union did not only struggle for economic demands but also advanced among workers politically. An industrial cooperative had also been formed at Trichur.

2. Eastern Region.

Bata Mazdoor Union has informed us after a prolonged negotiations an agreement for an increase of $7\frac{1}{2}$ in wages have been entered between the Bata Mazdoor Union and Bata Shoe Co. The Union has constructed its own building at Batanagar. Full report from the region is not available as the comrades from Bengal could not attend the meeting due to unavoidable circumstances.

3. Northern Region.

Bata Shoe Workers Union Faridabad after prolonged negotiations had to serve a strike notice on the management on November 20, 1958 which resulted in a compromise. Great achievement of Agra is the formation of a workmen cooperative which is owned and worked by them. It supplied the Russian and Czechoslovakian orders for shoes with a much less percentage of rejection in comparison to the private businessmen. The production bonus given by the Russian was enjoyed by the workmen in full which has been denied to the workmen in private owned concerns. Bonus has also been earned by the workmen in some factories. The charter of demands was also popularised through meetings and press.

The workers at Kanpur conducted struggles for wage increase, service gratuity and bonus etc. The workers got bonus in most of the tanneries in Jaipur while the struggle continues for other demands.

Organisationally the Federation could not develop to the extent it ought to be which was chiefly due to lack of funds at funds at the disposal of the Federation. Even then the General Secretary managed to tour Southern Region, Bengal and Delhi, studied the situation and rendered help to local organisations in strengthening themselves. The demands of Leather TUI were popularised through meetings, publicity etc. The Federation sent two delegates to attend the International Conference at Sofia (Bulgaria).

DECISIONS:

(1) The Executive reiterated the decision of the Conference to hold Regional Conferences by the end of 1959. The responsibility of holding the Regional Conferences is laid on the President, General Secretary, The Secretary Com. C.K. Madhavan in Eastern, Northern and Southern Regions respectively. It was also decided that efforts should be made to get the existing unions affiliated to the Federation and form unions where they do not exist.

(2) The Executive Committee formed a Committee consisting of the President, General Secretary, all the three Secretaries, Com A.C. Kanda and Mahesh Nigam to study the Five-Year Plans, their achievements and deficiencies and to give its suggestions for the development of Leather Industry and also for ameliorating the conditions of the workers in the Third Five Year Plan. The Committee is directed to place its report in the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

(3) The Executive Committee decided to raise Fighting Fund of ~~Rs. 5,000/-~~ Rs. 5,000/- in order to ~~xxxx~~ conduct struggles for the Charter of Demands on an India wide scale and strengthening the Federation and therefore appealed to all the affiliated unions to raise contribution towards towards this Fund.

(4) The Executive Committee decided to observe Demands Day February 21, 1959 throughout the country on ~~xxxxxx~~ and therefore called

upon the units of the Federation to observe the day by holding meetings and organising processions.

INDUSTRY.

This meeting of the executive committee of the All India Leather & Footwear Workers' Federation views with great alarm the deterioration in wages of the workers in the industry, their living and working conditions, the quality of work, elimination of small artisans, increase in working hours from 12 to 14 per day, increase of workload, creation of a reserve of temporary workers deprived of their DPA and disorganisation of the organised industry.


The Excise duty imposed by the Government on the factories having less than 50 workers, has been responsible to shift the work from the big factories to the contractors employing less than 20 workers, resulting in the lower wages of the workers and disorganisation of the industry. Though in fact these big contractors or employers employ upto 500 workers under the but under different roofs having less than 20 workers in order to evade the excise duty and the obligations of the Factories Acts and other Acts while the monopolists like Cooper Allen and Data have reaped higher profits due to this policy of the Government and also disorganising the industry as a whole. This policy has led to the worsening of the condition and increase in exploitation of the workers engaged in the cottage industry and most of the co-operatives because the big contractors or employers get huge orders for manufacturing of foot wears and leather goods in comparison to their declared strength of workers employed, and also take full benefit of the Government aids, loan etc. and other facilities given to small scale units while the workers are deprived of those benefits.

This meeting feels that a great crisis is facing the industry chiefly in south where 62 tanneries have been closed in Egilnad alone throwing about 10000 workers out of employment on account of the inter-state taxation, non-availability of Chemicals and hides coupled with the anti labour policy of the Government. This crisis has been aggravated at Kanpur, Agra, Delhi and other places due to nonavailability of Government orders thus throwing out of employment

thousands of workers.

This meeting is therefore of the opinion that in order to change the present policy of the Government and to ameliorate the condition of the workers engaged in the industry the workers should organise and conduct struggles on the basis of the following demands.

1. Exemption from the Excise Duty of all leather goods except those manufactured by the monopolists.
2. Exemption of all leather goods from Sales Tax, Gram Panchayat Tax and levies on the manual manufacturers.
3. Strict observance of 8 hours duty in the industry.
4. Government should help in the formation of workmen cooperatives in the industry by giving them preference, sales, contracts and grant of subsidies and loans.
5. Enactment of special legislation for the workmen engaged in small units of tannery and leather concerns.


(S. Sharma)
General Secretary.

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Rising Prices of Foodgrains.

This meeting of the Executive Committee of the All India Leather & Footwear Worker's Federation views with great concern the alarming increase in prices of foodgrains. The rise in prices as admitted by the Government is of unprecedented character. The price structure in the country especially in the matter of food and other necessities is in getting out of control, the continuity of which would be a disastrous breakdown of the economy of the country and the fulfilment of the plan and throw out of gear the living conditions of the toiling people.

This rise, in the opinion of the meeting, is due to the hoarders and speculative banking interest helped by the landlords in countryside who are engineering this crisis in order to defeat the proposals of land reforms and in proposal to check speculative interests in the food trade by State Trading in foodgrains.

This increase in prices is of such a nature that the working masses who earn at present some amount of D.A. will not be able to cover the rise in fullest extent. The rise in prices and fall in the value of the earning and real wages cannot be covered by more rise in wages. If working class is to be saved then a positive campaign should be conducted for reduction in prices and for cheap supply of necessities. Therefore this meeting calls upon the leather and footwear workers to rally all sections of the people to force the Government to take effective steps for seizure of stocks, dehoarding and for supplies through fair price shops at controlled prices.

This meeting looks with abhorrence the repression let loose by the Bengal Government in the shape of mass arrests, brutal lathi charges and shooting down the people who are conducting the movement for the fall in prices, for dehoarding etc. This meeting congratulates the people of Bengal for the brave fight they are putting up against the government for the fall in prices and pays homage to the martyrs who have sacrificed their lives for this cause and expresses sympathy with their families.

Indo China Border dispute.

This meeting of the Executive Committee of the All India Leather & Footwear Worker's Federation views with grave concern the propaganda by certain section regarding the India China border dispute and feels that this propaganda will lead to straining of friendly relations existing between the two countries which will be detrimental to the interests of Asia as a whole. The meeting further appeals to the Prime Minister of India and China to settle the border dispute peacefully by negotiations on the principles of "Panch Sheel".

Algeria.

This meeting of the Executive Committee of the All India Leather & Footwear Worker's Federation strongly condemns the recent intensification of french military aggression and punitive measures in Algeria with a view to suppress the liberation struggle of the Algerian people and to exterminate their fighting forces.

This meeting further condemns the French Government on torturing to death Brother Aissat ~~XXXXXXXX~~ Ideer, General Secretary of the Algerian Trade Union Federation and other trade union leaders while in custody. This meeting exhorts the UNO to make an enquiry into this matter and urges on the Government of India to recognise and help the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic.

This meeting salutes the heroic people of Algeria for the heroic liberation struggle and appeals to all the units of the Federation to organise a solidarity campaign in support of the Algerian Struggle for Independence.

BALLOT.

This meeting of the Executive Committee of the All India Leather & Footwear Worker's Federation urges on the Government of India to take ballot in order to ascertain which union commands the confidence of the majority of the workers as it is a surest and the only democratic form for determining the representative character of a union for the purposes of recognition. This meeting further exhorts the affiliated units to popularise the demand.

Honage to Martyrs.

This meeting of the Executive Committee of the All India Leather & Footwear Worker's Federation pays honage to the martyrs of tea plantation of Kerala; Port Trust of Madras and Janshedpur who had been victims of firing in the struggles of the working class.

Condolence.

This meeting of the Executive Committee of the All India Leather & ~~Workers~~ Footwear Workers Federation condoles on the sad demise of Com. Chakrari Chettiar, President of the MITUC, Com. De Mello, Port Trust Leader, Com. Son Nath Dave and the nine workers of chiniguri and pays honage to them and sympathises with the bereaved families.



ALL INDIA LEATHER & FOOTWEAR WORKER'S FEDERATION.

Affiliation Form.

To From the President/ General Secretary
The General Secretary,
All India Leather & Footwear Worker's Federation,
12/1 Gwaltoli,
Kunpur.

Dear Comrade,

The General Body/Executive Committee of my union desire me to request you to affiliate it to the A.I.L.F.W.F. The Union subscribe to abide by its Rules and Regulations. I give below the full particulars of my Union. (1) Copies of the Rules and Regulations, (2) the last annual report, (3) Audited Balance Sheet for the year 19 - 19 and (4) the names of the present office bearers of the Union are enclosed herewith.

Date..... 19 .

Yours faithfully,

President/General Secretary of
the Union.

Particulars of the Union.

1. Name..... Registration No.
2. Address.....
.....
3. Date of Foundation..... Registration.....
4. Office Bearers:-
 (a) President.....
 (b) General Secretary.....
 (c) Treasurer.....
5. Date of the last annual meeting
 and election of office bearer. 19 .
6. Rate of Membership fee Rs. n.P. per month/Per day year.
7. Method of Collection of Membership fee : Monthly-Quarterly-Yearly.
8. Total income of the last year ending 31st March 19 . Rs.
9. Total Expenditure of the last year ending 31st March 19 . Rs.
10. Number of paying membership on 31st March 19 .
11. Advance affiliation fee if sent any . Rs. n.P.

Receipt No.....

Date..... 19 .

Signature of the President/ Gen. Secy.

Each affiliated union shall be required to pay an annual affiliation fee of Rs.5/- for a membership of 200 or below and Rs.10/- for a membership between 200 and 500 and Rs.5/- for each additional 500 membership or major fraction thereof. The financial year of the Federation is from 1st April to 31st March .

CHARTER OF DEMANDS

This Second Conference of All India Leather And Footwear Workers Federation feels that the development of the Leather Industry as required in the 2nd. Five Year Plan can not be achieved until the conditions of leather workers-backbone of the industry- is improved and ameliorated. Nor our countrymen can be provided with standard and cheap leather goods.

This Conference views with great concern the prevailing working and living conditions of the workers employed in the Leather and Footwear industries. These conditions are unsatisfactory and do not conform to the declarations of the Government.

The wages are meagre and inadequate which do not enable the workers to make their both ends meet. Nor there is so far any comprehensive legislation governing their conditions of work and living. Moreover the applicability of the Minimum Wages Act has become farcical in state like Uttar Pradesh. The labour laws that have been enacted after the prolonged struggle of the working class to protect their rights are openly flouted and circumvented. The Factories Act is openly violated. This chaotic condition exists in the industry, even after the country has achieved independence and the 1st. Five Year Plan having been completed. Even passing of two years of the 2nd. Five Year Plan is not accompanied with any amelioration of the conditions of the workers.

This Conference, therefore, urges upon the Government and the employers to accede to the following minimum demands:

1. Formation of Wage Board for Leather Industry with an increase of 25% in wages till the finalisation and implementation of its recommendations.
2. Minimum Wage in Leather Industry should not be less than Rs.100/- per month.
3. Dearness Allowance should be given to all the workers in the Leather Industry in addition to 25% interim increase in wages at all places where it exists.
4. All the employees working in the factories and shops on a permanent nature, be made permanent after 60 days of work.
5. All the Labour Laws beneficial to the workers be made applicable to the workers, be strictly enforced and implemented as it is seen that most of the factories violate those acts.
6. Provident Fund Act be enforced in the Leather Industry.
7. There should be strict observance of 8-hour day and working hours be reduced to 40 hours a week to reduce unemployment.
8. Gratuity be paid to all the workers.
9. Technical education be imparted to the workers in factories by starting fortnightly or monthly refresher courses or the vocational classes during hours of duty.
10. The Government should subsidise workers' Cooperatives and give them cheap material for consumption.
11. Equal pay for equal work without any discrimination.
12. At least three months wages of gross earnings as bonus per year.
13. Effective measures to secure against T.B., Rheumatism, Asthma and skin diseases and that these should be declared as occupational diseases.
14. Improvement in Safety and Hygienic measures inside the factories.
15. Safeguarding Trade Union, Democratic and Civic rights.

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16. Stopping all increase in the workload and no speed up to extract more labour from the workers. No measure of rationalisation to be introduced without an agreement with the representative union.
17. The rent of the industrial houses for the workers should not be more than Rs.5/- per month.
18. All employees getting Rs.100/- or below per month to be exempted from paying the contribution to the Employees State Insurance Scheme.
19. All such taxes and duties which become a burden on the consumers and workers to be abolished.

This conference appeals to all the workers employed in Leather and Footwear Industry to strive for the above demands in a manner as they deem fit through their organised union.

