

Sri Lankan SEP condemns attack on WSWS supporters in India

Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka)
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) condemns the physical attack on four WSWS supporters in the town of Neyveli on May 16 in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, and their subsequent arrest by police.

The WSWS team was reporting on a protracted strike by 14,000 contract workers at the Indian-government owned Neyveli Lignite Corporation (NLC). The NLC employees have been on strike since April 21 to oppose their oppressive conditions and have been subjected to repeated mass arrests by police acting at the instigation of the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) state government.

Many workers, who were engaged in a sit-in protest, took copies of the Tamil version of the WSWS article “India: Striking NLC contract workers must expand struggle—industrially and politically” and began distributing it themselves. The leaflet enraged AIADMK union officials and their supporters who confronted the WSWS team and began to punch them in the face.

The police arrived and took no action against the assailants, but detained the WSWS supporters who were taken to the nearby Thermal police station and interrogated for three hours. The four—Arun Kumar, Sasi Kumar, Moses Rajkumar and Saravanan—were photographed, had their names and addresses recorded and their identification documents photocopied. The police searched their bags, confiscated copies of the Tamil language magazine *WSWS Review* and WSWS articles, and erased interviews from a flash drive recorder.

The police were obviously hostile to the presence of

the WSWS reporting team in Neyveli and claimed that its members had no right to distribute leaflets to NLC workers. During the interrogation, the AIADMK thugs responsible for the attack came to the police station and pointed out the “offending” passages of the WSWS article to the police.

The police were eventually forced to acknowledge that the WSWS supporters had broken no law and released them, even claiming that they had only been detained for their own safety. But the police refused to accept a formal complaint against the AIADMK officials and “advised” the WSWS team to leave town on the same day.

The police, however, provided details of the WSWS team to the right-wing Tamil-language newspaper, *Dinamalar*, which published a scurrilous article about the “shocking information” that police inspector Suntharavadivel had learned about “mysterious invaders.” The article falsely claimed that “foreign currency and passports were confiscated” and implied that visits to Sri Lanka and Britain and a money transfer receipt were evidence of a foreign conspiracy.

The most sinister aspect of the *Dinamalar* article was that it published the names and address of all four WSWS supporters, opening them up to further attack. Despite the fact that the police had to release the team without charge, the newspaper added: “The police are confused about the motives of the four belonging to the World Social Web Site. What is their motive and whose supporters are they?”

The “motive”, however, of the WSWS and its supporters is clear from the article that was being

distributed to NLC workers. The WSWs supports the striking contract workers in their difficult struggle for equal pay with permanent employees and the “regularisation” of their employment, against the combined attack of management, the police, courts and AIADMK state government.

The AIADMK is a Tamil bourgeois party that is notorious for its anti-democratic methods against its bourgeois rivals as well as against the working class. In power in 2003, AIADMK leader Jayaram Jayalalithaa sacked nearly 200,000 striking government workers en masse, arrested thousands and hired strike-breakers to replace them. The AIADMK’s action set the stage for a deepening offensive against public sector workers, when the Supreme Court ruled later in 2003 that they had no constitutional right to strike.

The WSWs article particularly focussed on exposing the treacherous role of the two main Stalinist parties—the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India Marxist (CPM). Their unions refused to call out permanent NLC workers in support of the striking contract workers and told the strikers to appeal to the national and state governments to intervene in the dispute—as if these governments were not already involved in supporting NLC management.

The WSWs article concluded by calling on the NLC workers to “break politically and organisationally from the unions and left parties and make their struggle the spearhead of an offensive of the entire working class against contract labour and poverty wages.” It explained that what was necessary was a political fight for a workers’ and peasants’ government on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program.

The reaction of the AIADMK officials, the police and the *Dinamalar* newspaper to the WSWs reporting team underlines the extreme sensitivity in Indian ruling circles to the emergence of working class struggles, especially if workers begin to take up the revolutionary perspective advocated by the WSWs.

Amid the deepening economic crisis in Europe and internationally, the Indian economy is slowing. Indian governments at the national and state levels and

corporations confront growing resistance from workers to the restructuring and austerity measures that are being imposed.

Workers should draw the necessary political lesson from last week’s attack on the WSWs reporting team: governments, employers, the media and police will not hesitate to collude and use the same vicious methods against the working class in the coming period.

The SEP demands that the Neyveli police return the confiscated items to the WSWs supporters and that *Dinamalar* publicly retract its slanders. We call on workers to defend the democratic rights of the *World Socialist Web Site* and its supporters to campaign politically against the deepening assault on jobs and living standards.



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