

India: Workers defend WSWs supporters against attack by union leaders

Our correspondents
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A team of WSWs supporters was threatened physically by Stalinist union leaders while they were speaking to striking Tamil Nadu bus workers in Chennai on Thursday about the political issues raised by their strike. They had distributed hundreds of copies of two WSWs articles in Tamil about the bus strike.

Workers were keen to read the WSWs coverage and many commented enthusiastically that “these are good articles.” When asked who wrote the articles, the campaigners explained that the WSWs was published by the International Committee of Fourth International (ICFI). The workers wanted to know more about this “good political party.”

As the discussion was developing, CITU union leaders rushed onto the scene, and, flashing the WSWs printout, shouted: “What is this? What is this?” CITU is the Centre of Indian Trade Unions that is affiliated to the Stalinist Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPM.

The CITU bureaucrats were specifically angered by the following passage: “However, the transport unions have refused to call other workers out in support of the strikers, even after the government’s threats. Instead, the CPM-led unions are staging limited protests. The CPM, the Communist Party of India, and their unions are thoroughly integrated into the Indian political establishment. Far from defending the interests of workers, these Stalinist parties and their unions are seeking to contain and suppress any independent action, as they prepare to betray the strike.”

The officials were screaming “How could you say that ‘they to prepare betray the strike?’” A WSWs supporter, Moses Rajkumar, challenged them, saying “Is there anything wrong in this article?” Unable to answer the question, one union bureaucrat tried to physically attack Rajkumar. Blocking the blow, he

appealed to the workers, declaring “if there is anything wrong in the article you can attack me.”

The workers quickly came to the defence of the WSWs team, telling the thuggish union bureaucrats to stop. If you have disagreements with any issues in the article, they said, you should write it down in your own newspapers.

This physical attack on WSWs supporters clearly demonstrates the fear of the trade union bureaucracy of any independent working class movement developing against the capitalist system. As they were preparing to sell out the bus strike, the unions were terrified of any exposure of their treacherous role.

The willingness of Tamil Nadu bus workers to defend the WSWs supporters is a reflection of growing sympathy for the socialist and internationalist perspective of the WSWs and deep hostility towards the union bureaucracy. During the strike, many workers expressed their anger not only towards the state government, but also the trade unions that do not defend their rights, but the company bosses and the capitalist system.

Several workers spoke to the WSWs.

Srinivasan, a technical worker, said: “I have been working for 18 years. Most of the unions betrayed our previous struggles. But this time if the unions also betray, most of the workers will split with the unions.

“Most workers believe the communist unions will fight, but every time the CITU trade union betrays. Workers realise that parties like the CPM and CPI [Communist Party of India] and their unions are not for workers. I hate the trade unions. In particular, we transport workers have had bitter experiences. None of our demands has been fulfilled by the government for several years.

“I agree with your world party program. I disagree

with the CPM and CPI program. I have confidence in Marxist ideology. I have been reading Marx's own literature. I do not believe in the Indian communist parties, including the Maoists. Only now have I heard that Trotsky was the co-leader of the October Revolution with Lenin. I like your web site and I want to know more about Trotsky.”

Another worker said: “All of the trade unions, including the communist unions, are not for the workers. The transport strike will definitely be betrayed by the unions. I was previously a member of the communist party, but this party every time forges alliances with [Tamil Nadu] regional parties and centrally with Congress.

“There are issues like poverty and social inequality in India but they do not pay attention to them. I agree with your comments. I became disturbed with the CPM because 14 peasants were killed [by police and thugs unleashed by the CPM-led state government] in Nandigram [in West Bengal]. Since then I split with the CPM. The CPM will never fight for revolution in India.

“I have heard about Trotsky. The only solution is to unite workers internationally. I agree with your international party and your goal of world socialist revolution. This goal is a very difficult one but I wish all success to the Trotskyist movement. I will read your web site.”



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