

**Communist Candidates For Bengal Labour Seats**

**WORKERS' OWN SONS, VETERANS AND FIGHTERS OF THE RED FLAG**

THE Communist Party is putting up three workers, two veteran founders of the labour movement in India and two rising trade unionists, for the labour seats in Bengal in the coming elections.

**Chatur Ali**

**Former Tram Worker**

● CHATUR ALI—is contesting the Barrackpore labour seat. He was born in a working-class family and up to 1943 was a tramway worker in the Nona-pukar tram workshop (Calcutta). He joined the Tramway Workers' Union in 1938 when it was still in its early stages and was one of the pioneers who built it up.

There was an order externing him from Calcutta through the greater part of 1942, because of his fearless agitation against the Government and the employers.

He gave up his job as a tramway worker in 1943 and became a whole-time worker of the Communist Party.

He is a member of the General Council of the All-India Trade Union Congress and Vice-President of the Calcutta Tramway Workers' Union.

**Mohammed Ismail**

**Son of a Working-Class Family**

● MOHAMMED ISMAIL — is contesting the Hooghly labour seat. He too comes from a working-class family and his relatives are still working as millhands in Cawnpore. He joined the labour movement in 1932. He built up the Calcutta Tramway Workers' Union from the start till the stage was reached in which it had all tram workers as its members.

Ismail also organised the hiri workers of Calcutta; the Bus Workers' Union, the Motor Transport Workers' Union and the Rickshaw Mazdoor Union.

In 1944, he was elected to a labour seat in the Calcutta Corporation with an overwhelming majority over his opponent who was backed by the Muslim League leader, Suhrawardy.

He was externed from Calcutta in 1940 during the war, and arrested in the same year



CHATUR ALI

under the Defence of India Rules. He was released in 1942.

A full life-sketch of Ismail's appeared in the People's Age, No. 36, dated March 3.

The following list gives an idea of the wide scope of his activities as a labour leader.

He is President of the Calcutta Tramway Workers' Union, the Gun and Shell Workers' Union, the Bengal Pottery Workers' Union, the Bus Workers' Union and the Motor Transport Workers' Union. He is also a member of the General Council of the All-India Trade Union Congress and of the Working Committee of the Bengal Provincial Trade Union Congress.

**Ratanlal Brahman**

**Gurkha 'Robinhood'**

● RATANLAL BRAHMAN—is contesting the Darjeeling Tea Garden labour seat. He was born in a poor Gurkha family and went through incredible hardships in his childhood. At one time he worked as a domestic servant in the houses of the rich. He worked also in the tea gardens as a labourer.

He was among the first Gurkhas to answer the call of patriotism in the Non-Co-operation Movement, after hearing Gandhiji speak. He later set up an organisation for the improvement of the condition of the Gurkhas. He organised bands to fight the rich oppressors of Gurkha toilers. He was falsely implicated in more than 20 cases—the bureaucrats called them 'dacoities.' For sometime he worked as a motor driver in Darjeeling. From there he came into the Communist Party.

**Jyoti Basu**

**Rly. Workers' Leader**

● JYOTI BASU—is contesting the Railway labour seat for the B. & A. Railway. He worked in the Indian Student movement in England from 1937-9, became a Barrister and joined the Communist Party.

Back in India in 1939, he started work in the B. & A. Rail-

way Workers' Union, then called the E. B. Railway Workers' Union. In 1942, he became the General Secretary of the Union and built up a solid membership of 15,000.

He is a member of the Trade Union Congress General Council and of the Working Committee of the Bengal Provincial Trade Union Congress.

**Indrajit Gupta**

**Hardworking T. U. Organiser**

● INDRAJIT GUPTA—is contesting the Asansol Coal labour seat. He too worked in the Indian Student movement in England in 1938-40, joined the Communist Party and worked underground in India from 1941 to the end of 1942. He then began work among jute, tram, railway and engineering workers, studying their conditions, learning the ABC of trade unionism. By 1945, he had made his mark as a trade union leader and was one of the younger leaders of the Calcutta tram strike in September 1945.

He is President of the Calcutta Port Trust Workers' Union, Vice-President of the B. & A. Railway Workers' Union and the Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation Mazdoor Union and a member of the Working Committee of the Bengal Trade Union Congress and of the General Council of the All-India Trade Union Congress.



BANKIM MUKHERJEE

**Bankim Mukherjee**

**25 Years in Freedom Struggle**

● BANKIM MUKHERJEE—is contesting the Howrah District labour seat. He left college and joined the 1920 Non-Co-operation Movement. He went to jail in 1921-2 and became one of the foremost leaders of the left-wing of the Bengal Congress.

In 1926, Bankim emerged as a labour leader and led the famous six months' long strike of the Bauria-Chengall Jute workers in 1927-8. In 1928, he led the Asansol Railway workers' strike. He was jailed again in 1930 for seditious speeches during the Civil Disobedience Movement. He was also tried in connection with the Calcutta carters' strike in 1930. He was released a year and a half after the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, but was rounded up again in 1934 under the Press Act.

He is one of the founders of the All-India Kisan Sabha too, of which he is now General Secretary.

In 1937, he was elected to the Bengal Legislative Assembly from the Asansol Coal Labour Constituency.

From 1926 to 1939, he was a member of the All-India Congress Committee.

He is President of the Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union, the Calcutta Electric Supply Workers' Union, the Corporation Mazdoor Union, the B. & A. Railway Workers' Union and the Bengal Coal Workers' Union.

He has been a member of the Working Committee of the All-India Trade Union Congress since 1943.

**Somnath Lahiri**

**Editor, Workers' Only Bengali Daily**

● SOMNATH LAHIRI — is standing for the Calcutta and Suburbs labour seat. A member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, he founded the E. B. Railway Workers' Union (now known as the Bengal and Assam Railway Workers' Union) in 1930. He has also worked among jute workers for 15 years.

Together with Mohammed Ismail, Chaturali and other workers, he was one of the main builders of the Calcutta Tramway Workers' Union, which is today admitted on all hands to be the best trade union in Bengal. He is at present Vice-President of the Union.

Lahiri left college while studying for his M.Sc degree in 1930 and joined the Congress movement. But he was irresistibly drawn to the Socialist ideology as he became dissatisfied with the Congress indifference to labour. He plunged into the labour movement and helped to build up many trade unions.

His very first conviction, too, was for his part in the labour movement—for bringing out a handbill giving a call to fight Government repression against workers. In 1933, he was convicted three times, but got off by the middle of 1934 and picked up the threads again—building up trade unions and units of the Communist Party.

There was a Police-hunt on for him and all other leading Communists at the time and he had to work underground, living among workers and keeping his identity secret. In 1936, he was arrested once again from a working-class chawl in Bombay. He was taken all the way to the Punjab and kept in the notorious Lahore Fort.

After his release, he became a leader of the Congress in Bengal as well as of Bengal labour. He was a member of the Executive Committee of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee in 1938 and 1939. In 1938-9 he was a member of the All-India Congress Committee from Bengal.

Towards the beginning of 1940, the Government singled out the Communists in Bengal as a target of attack, when Congress and Forward Bloc leaders were perfectly free. Lahiri and other Communist leaders were externed from Calcutta and the indus-



SOMNATH LAHIRI

trial belt around. He defied the order and was jailed.

Immediately on his release, he went underground. When the Government came out with a fresh warrant against him, they could not find him. For two years, Lahiri lived underground leading the illegal Communist organisation in Bengal. The Police made frantic searches but could not lay their hands on him.

When the ban was lifted, he soon got a vote of confidence from the Calcutta working-class, which no other labour leader before him had ever received. In 1943, he stood for the Calcutta Corporation labour seat and got ten thousand votes against his opponent's two thousand.

Despite his illness, in 1945 he was one of the chief leaders of the tramway workers' strike. He also led the recent Corporation workers' strike to success. The workers refused to go back to work when a Congress labour leader 'settled' the strike without any of the workers' demands having been conceded. The workers, under Lahiri's leadership, held out till they got an immediate wage-increase of Rs. 3 per head for all.

Lahiri is also a well-known journalist and is the editor of the only workers' own daily in Bengal—Swadhinata.

**Latest Pamphlet**

**FOR THE FINAL BID FOR POWER!**  
**Freedom Programme Of The Communists**

by **P. C. Joshi**  
Rs. 1-5

The text of the Election Manifesto of the Party is given as an appendix. A book every Indian must read and get others to read.

Please write to Sales Dept.,  
**PEOPLE'S PUBLISHING HOUSE,**  
Raj Bhuvan, Sandhurst Road,  
BOMBAY 4.

**PEOPLE'S AGE**

ORGAN OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA

Consulting Editor: G. ADHIKARI  
Managing Editor: D. S. Hatangdi.

Subscription Rate (Indian):  
Yearly Rs. 8/-; Half-Yearly Rs. 4/8; Quarterly Rs. 2/8.

Subscription Rate (Foreign):  
Yearly Rs. 12, Half-Yearly Rs. 6.  
Telegrams: Peoplesage.

All cheques, Money-Orders, Postal Orders, Demand Drafts, etc. to be made out in the name of KANTILAL J. SHAH.

Printed by Daulatram Shivshankar Hatangdi at the New Age Printing Press, 190B, Khetwadi Main Road, Bombay 4, and published by him at People's Age Office, 190B, R. K. Building, Khetwadi Main Road, Bombay 4.

# FOR PLANNED RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT

## Communist Programme

(Continued from centre pages). is no serious plan for improving the Third-Class coaches. All their schemes amount to changing the paint and re-writing the indications and other marks on the coaches, e.g., the Roman inscription "III" on the Third Class carriages is being written in the Arabic inscription "3"!

### Preference For European Company

The catering arrangements for Third Class passengers are miserable as compared with those for European and Upper Class passengers. Not only this; the Railway Board, run as a preserve of the British profiteers, is guilty of gross discrimination in-favour of European concerns. Here is a notorious example.

Messrs. Spencer and Co. are entrusted with the responsibility of catering for Upper Class passengers. But Indian Refreshment Rooms are run departmentally by the Railway Administration. The rent charged from the Spencers is only a nominal sum of one rupee per year. But everyone of the Indian Refreshment Rooms has to pay rent at the high rate of Rs. 25,000 per year!

Why is this favoritism shown to Messrs. Spencer & Co.? Is it because they cater to the needs of European passengers? Or is it because the Administration wants to make a gift of its earnings from passengers to this European-owned company?

There are other tea stalls and platform-vendors. These people serve the poorest section of passengers. Together these vendors have to pay nearly Rs. 7,000 per mensem on an average, as licence fees. Owing to corruption and this exorbitant licence fee the vendors are not able to sell their articles to passengers at market rates. Thus it will be seen that the poorest section of the travelling public is also taxed for getting its meagre needs, tea, betel-leaves, beedies, etc.

As far as other travelling amenities for Third Class passengers are concerned—waiting-rooms, sufficiently big ticket counters, lavatories at stations, etc.—the wretched conditions offered by the present Railway Administration are well-known to every Indian.

That nothing but the greed for profit motivates the present Railway Administration is also shown by the primitive technical backwardness in which the Railway system is kept. As a result, the present speed of passenger trains is very low. Express trains are able to maintain a speed of only 30 miles an hour whereas branch line trains hardly run at a speed of 15 miles an hour.

The low speed deters the quick movement of essential foodstuffs and has an adverse effect on the development of agriculture. Unless the speed of Indian Railways is improved, it will be impossible to make passenger travel attractive and to bring essential foodstuffs like milk and fruits, from distant villages to towns quickly.

All these facts are enough to show how the present Railway Administration is run and in whose interests.

### Raw Deal For Railway Workers

Not only has the travelling public suffered under the predatory rule of the British-dominated Railway Board; Railway workers too are ground down by it and forced to live in conditions of starvation and insecurity.

The Royal Commission on Labour (1929) had pointed out

that over 4,47,000 workers in India out of over seven lakhs got less than Rs. 20 per month then. The Railway Board till today has taken no step to improve this shocking state of affairs. During the last six years of war, the Board's income has gone up by one hundred and seventeen crore rupees, and yet they have not granted any wage-increase to their workers during the last 16 years.

All this follows from the fact that the Indian Railways today are run not in the interests of the Indian people, but for the profits of British Big Business. The Railway Board is only their instrument.

### Instrument Of Imperialist Exploitation

India being a colonial country, the policy of the Railways has been to perpetuate the economic and political domination of the British Imperialists over India and to use the Railways as a supplier of cheap raw material to British industry and for carrying their finished products to the different parts of India.

In pursuance of this same policy, the rate policy and facilities offered to industrialists have been deliberately designed to strangle the growth of Indian industry and agriculture and favour British business.

### Gross Discrimination Against Indians

Here are some instances of discrimination on the South Indian Railway alone.

● Messrs. Parry & Co. have today three sugar factories in Nellikuppam, Pugalur, and Samalkot. The factory at Pugalur was recently purchased from an Indian owner. As long as the Pugalur factory was in the hands of the Indian, the Railway Authorities consistently denied him facilities to transport raw sugar-cane and manufactured sugar both in the matter of concession in rates and assignment of wagons, whereas the Nellikuppam factory had been given all facilities for the mere asking from the beginning.

As soon as the Pugalur factory was taken over by Parry's White bosses, all freight concessions and wagon facilities were extended to the Pugalur factory. About 300 to 400 wagons were placed at the disposal of Parry & Co., during the whole of the sugar-cane season, a privilege never conferred upon any Indian concern.

Even in rates there is a mysterious concession. The average rate charged for a maund of sugar-cane for a distance of 45 miles is As. 2/11 while the concession rate allowed for Parry & Co. alone, for the same distance, for the same quantity, is 11 pies. For every maund there is a concession of 2 annas and for every wagon there is a concession of nearly Rs. 15.

With the help of these unlimited transport facilities Messrs. Parry & Co. have been able to lay their hands on the distant villages around Nellikuppam and all these cane growers are at their mercy for fixing the price of sugar-cane.

● Groundnut is one of the important raw materials exported from India through British agencies like the Volkart Brothers, the Ralli Brothers, etc., from almost all important groundnut inland centres. Very liberal concession rates are offered to important sea-port stations like Madras Beach and Cochin Harbour Terminal to enable cheap export.

In Mettur there is a firm of Indian Manufacturers (the Mettur Chemicals). They get their requirements of groundnut from Pollachi, etc. No concession rates are offered to them. The charges for them are higher than those offered for moving to ports.

● The same is the case with tea. India produces perhaps the best tea. All high qualities are exported. Indians get only the dust. Tea being a poor man's beverage one would expect it should be charged at a low rate for inland movement. From all inland stations tea is carried at a concession rate to Cochin Harbour Terminal. But, for the same distance for inland transport, the rates are higher by at least Rs. 5 per ton! We can multiply instances of this kind.

Both in the matter of rates and services European companies are shown preference in the interest of British industries.

To meet the needs of nearly 40 crores of people Indian Railways have a mileage of only 41,000. The total number of wagons in India is less than two lakhs. In Britain, with a population of four and a half crores, and an area smaller than that of the Madras Presidency, the total Railway mileage is 20,000 and the total number of wagons, 12 lakhs.

The working expenses of the Indian Railways are perhaps the lowest in the whole world. It is because the monthly wages of nearly 75 per cent of the Railwaymen range between Rs. 12 and 25. The number of Railwaymen on the South Indian Railway has now increased to 48,000 but there are hardly 8,000 quarters for them.

In the matter of privileges, European officers are the most favoured. For the bulk of Railwaymen, service conditions are very poor and wages meagre.

There is an enormous need to develop Indian Railways and this cannot be done unless locomotives are manufactured in our country. If proper arrangements are made to expand Indian Railway workshops, steel and iron industries in India, locomotives and rolling stock needed for our country could be made here, and thereby lakhs of educated youths and workers could be provided with jobs.

But the plans of the Railway Board are calculated to maintain scarcity of wagons and dearth of locomotives on the present level, if not on a lower one, so that India may have to depend on Britain even when there is some transfer of power. This is the secret behind the post-war retrenchment drive of the Railway Bosses.

At present, the Railways are administered centrally and the War Transport Member is the virtual dictator of the Railways. The Railway Board, which is the administrative head consisting of European bureaucrats, is responsible only to the Viceroy through the War Transport Member. All that the Legislative Assembly can do is, to have debates on the Railway Budget.

This autocratic and Imperialist hold on the Railways must be ended if we want an orderly development not only of the Railways but also of other industries, agriculture and carry out rural reconstruction.

Only if the present Imperialist regime is ended and a People's Government both at the Centre and in the Provinces takes its place, can the Indian Railways be rescued from the grip of British monopolists and administered in the interests of our own people.

### Communist Programme For Rly. Development

For a planned development of the Railways the immediate requirements are:

\*The Railways should be brought under the control of a National Government at the Centre and Peoples' Ministries in the Provinces.

\*Development of Railway workshops to undertake the manufacture of locomotives and all parts needed for the Indian Railways so that India can be self-sufficient in locomotives and rolling stock.

\*Abolition of the Second Class and conversion of all Third Class coaches with all the facilities of the Second Class without increase in fare.

\*Construction of new Railway lines to suit the needs of the people.

\*Proper co-ordination of road, Railway and canal transport by bringing the entire bus service under State control. Bus transport and road construction should be planned in such a way as to bring distant villages closer to towns. This will facilitate the development of bus transport without competition which will supplement and feed the Railways to the benefit of all.

\*A rational rate policy should be introduced forthwith, which will stimulate traffic, help agricultural and industrial development and also bring Railway travel within the reach of common people.

## PEOPLE'S PAMPHLETS

### Forward Bloc And Its Allies Vs. Communists

(Twelve Annas)

By Arun Bose and Khoka Rai

Simple, factual and well-documented account of the activities of the Communists and the Forward Bloc in the last three years, and who serves their people better.



### Chittagong Armoury Raiders

(One Rupee)

By Kalpana Dutt

Personal reminiscences of one of the participants about one of the most stirring chapters in India's freedom struggle.



### Bengal's Forgotten Warriors

(One Rupee Four Annas)

By Niranjan Sen

The story written by one who was himself a leader of the Bengal terrorist movement—and of the agitation for the release of these—some of India's best sons.



### Ghadar Heroes

(Eight Annas)

By Ranadhir Singh

Forgotten story of the Punjabi revolutionaries of 1914-18, based on an interview with the eighty-year old Baba SOHAN SINGH BHAKNA, oldest living Ghadar leader, still fighting in the cause of India's freedom.



### Death Pits In Our Land

(Four Annas)

By S. A. Dange

A revealing picture of the way in which 200,000 Indian miners live and work and how the problem of the miners is being mishandled by the bureaucracy and the White owners.



### Indonesia's War Of Independence

(Ten Annas)

Simple factual description of Indonesia's forty-year old battle against Dutch rule and why it will be successful.



### Over The Ashes

(Eight Annas)

By Maung Thein Pe

Brilliantly written drama of Burmese resistance.



### British Workers In Action [1800—1945]

(One Rupee Four Annas)

By John Stammers

Factual and rousing description of Britain's workers battling against our common enemy, British Imperialism, and a plea for Indo-British unity in the struggle for British Socialism and Indian Freedom.

Please write to Sales Dept.

## People's Publishing House,

RAJ BHUVAN, SANDHURST ROAD, BOMBAY 4.

Railway workers have already begun to realise that without a huge transformation of the Railways their lot cannot be improved nor that of the people.

All trade unions, peasant organisations, political parties, students, lawyers, merchants and all sections of the people should unite and work for this transformation and planned development of the Railways, and for the proper construction and co-ordination of road transport in order not only to prevent the Railways from being used for political oppression of our people, but to make them the means for fighting poverty and building prosperity for the down-trodden

millions of our countrymen. ● THE COMMUNIST PARTY BELIEVES AND WORKS FOR THIS TRANSFORMATION AS PART OF THE FIGHT FOR ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL FREEDOM OF OUR COUNTRY.

● THE CALL SHOULD GO TO EVERY NOOK AND CORNER OF OUR COUNTRY THAT EVERY INCH OF RAILWAY LINE AND EVERY POUND OF RAILWAY MATERIAL SHOULD BE FOR THE PEOPLE OF INDIA.

Let us raise the banner: Indian Railways for the Indian people and not for British profit!