



ALL INDIA BANK EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION

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TO ALL UNIONS AND MEMBERS:

Dear Comrades,

World Federation of Trade Unions - WFTU Statement on Working Women's Day

8 March 1857 – 8 March 2022: 165 years later

165 years ago, when the women workers in the New York textile mills, on March 8, 1857, went on strike and demonstrated for "ten-hour work, bright and sanitary workrooms, wages equal to those of male textile workers and tailors", they certainly did not imagine that in 2022 all these demands would still be demanded.

165 years ago, they certainly did not imagine that in 2022, with such advances in science and technology, in the conditions of the so-called 4th Industrial Revolution, women's work would lead to flexible work hours, with split schedule and irregular working hours, underemployment, employment even during maternity leave thanks to teleworking and the development of computing.

165 years ago, striking workers could not have imagined that underage girls and boys would still be victims of sexual harassment, with decision-makers and politicians "shuddering" in horror at the revelations of the "me too" movement, while often being themselves involved in such scandals.

165 years ago, these workers who fought hard against the police forces for a better life for themselves and their children, could not have imagined that in 2022 a pandemic would "expose" this socio-economic system called capitalism worldwide, since the commercialization of health left all public health systems without supplies, without personnel, without ICUs, without equipment, resulting in millions of people around the world dying from a disease that, based on the progress of medicine, could have been treated.

And certainly 165 years ago, no one would have imagined that in 2022, people would start to fear the light instead of the dark, since the cost of electricity is now determined on the stock exchange and no popular house can afford the huge increase in its price.

165 years ago also, New York weavers could not have imagined that in the 21st century, after two bloody world wars that preceded and cost the lives of millions of people and destroyed half the planet, the imperialists of the earth would once again forge the borders of countries to control their resources, ravaging the peoples of every place they invade, leaving behind dead, wounded, refugees and untold misery.

The women workers of 1857 may not have imagined all this, but they knew when they went on strike that they were up against cruel employers, supported by the political system, whose aim was to exploit their labour power to the full.

Perhaps these workers were not very clear in their minds what the cause of their inequality was, but they had the grit to stand up and demand the obvious.

It is this grit that we honour today, this courage that these women had in not allowing their social slavery to become a habit.

165 years later, we remember and honour their struggle and their sacrifice and continue where they left off. The World Trade Union Federation and the world class movement are well aware of the root cause of women's inequality, of the double oppression they suffer both because of their gender and because of their class, of the rotten values that affect the attitudes and consciousness of women and men.

It is capitalism, a socio-economic system based on the exploitation of labour power for the profit of the monopolies and capitalists, not for the welfare of the many.

165 years later, we have both experience and knowledge. We are fed up with promises, with theories and rhetoric, with politicians and trade unionists presenting us a reversed reality to convince us that there is no alternative, that this system only exists and we have to improve it but we cannot change it.

We are tired of hearing about individual responsibility, about the inequality of people as something natural, about the fact that it is normal to have rich and poor, about the fact that the poor must depend on the charity of the rich. In short, as Eduardo Galeano used to say, they try to convince us that we live in a world "upside down", with our feet up and our head down.

165 years later, we say enough is enough!!!! March 8 is another anniversary in the anthology of the global labour movement, reminding us that there is another way to live.

We know that after the October Revolution, when the new socialist society was being built, the emancipation of women and their equal participation

in social, productive and cultural activity were among the basic tasks of the Soviet state.

For a short but decisive period in human history we have lived and enjoyed what it means to transfer the functions of the individual domestic household to society, we have lived and enjoyed the protection of motherhood, the rise of women's professional and social training.

But as the World Trade Union Federation and global class trade union movement, we have never pitted men against women, nor have we ever been fooled into thinking that our biological differentiation is to blame for the inequality and oppression of women. Mao Tse-tung said that "women hold half of heaven on their shoulders and must conquer it".

But the other half is held by men and we, the world class movement, want the whole sky to be ours, without exploitation, without discrimination, without poverty and suffering. We want all people to live in dignity, to develop 100% of their potential and skills, to live freely, whatever their gender, whatever their color, whatever their religion.

The greatest honor for the women workers who rose up on March 8, 1857 is to continue their struggle for equal treatment of women in a society that is equal for all. And we are committed to this.

Our upcoming 18th Congress, the Congress of the World Trade Union Federation, which is a high point of the world labor movement, will find us even more ready, more determined and more demanding, not only for the emancipation of women but of the entire working class, all over the planet. With clear positions, with a bright vision, with a fighting spirit like those of the workers, who did not bend under police violence or the outcry of the established order.

Honor and glory to the striking New York workers of 1857.

The struggle continues until the final victory!

With greetings

Yours comradely,



**C.H. VENKATACHALAM
GENERAL SECRETARY**