

15 FEB 2001

Secretariat March in Thiruvananthapuram against DPEP

Thousands of men and women, mostly parents and teachers marched to the Kerala Secretariat at Trivandrum under the banner of Janakeeya Prathirodha Samithi (JPS-People's Resistance Committee) on February 1, 2001 demanding complete withdrawal of the disastrous District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), a World Bank sponsored programme now implemented with great zeal all over the country' by all ruling parties including the BJP, the Congress(I) and the CPI(M).

The march was led by Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, eminent jurist and fighter for Human Rights and also the President of JPS, a people's forum lighting against all social injustices. Comrade V. Venugopal, State Secretariat member, SUCI is the General Secretary of this Forum. Along with Justice Iyer in the front row of the protest march were Dr. N.A. Karim, educationist and former Pro-VC of Kerala University, Pavanan, writer and leader of Rationalist movement and a host of leading intellectuals, writers, leaders of social and cultural movements, trade unionists and educationists. Thousands of people from all the 14 districts of the state followed them under the banner of their respective districts.

The new vulgarised DPEP syllabus has practically done away with primary education in Kerala in the past 5 years. People are simmering in discontent but no political force in Kerala either in ruling or in opposition front came up to raise people's voice. Rather all major parties, the CPI(M), the Congress(I) and the BJP supported the DPEP. The CPI(M)-led LDF created obstacles in the course of the movement. But the people's anguish and anger ultimately crystallised into this massive second Secretariat march on 1st February. A previous Secretariat march had also been organised by the JPS two years back on the same demands on 18th May 1999.

In front of the Secretariat Justice Iyer

addressed the huge gathering of the demonstrators. Justice Iyer said: a sinister conspiracy has been hatched by the ruling class of our country with the imperialist countries to keep the poor and down-trodden people in India in eternal darkness. DPEP provides no education. The imperialists want only slaves of market to suit the needs of globalised imperialist production. It is to create a politically dumb generation that a system of distorted education is being provided through DPEP. Peculiarly, the DPEP is meant only for the poor, the rich can have standard education upon payment of huge sums of money in the private institutions. DPEP is a ploy to privatise education. The people must fight this design of the ruling class.

Dr. N. A. Karim said : The fight against DPEP presents an important warfront in the fight against globalisation which is an all-out attack by the

globalised capital. Kerala people cannot afford to lose their battle for education which has been so assiduously built up over years.

Dr. V. Venugopal declared that if the government is not prepared to heed to the sanest voices of the state, JPS will intensify the movement wherein all parents and teachers in deep pains at the fate of their children, will mobilise themselves and force upon the political patrons to backtrack their steps.

The movement created a sensation in that such a movement of such a magnitude was led by no big party but by a People's Forum and in that, too, renowned and respected leaders of the society, with integrity and of high esteem took to the streets to impress upon the rulers.

People are getting prepared for still higher forms of movement ultimately to thwart the DPEP.

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