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AIFRTE Hails Struggle Against Closure of Schools in Andhra Pradesh

AIFRTE salutes APSEC for its success in making the Government of Andhra Pradesh retreat from its earlier move to

- close down around 4,800 Government Primary Schools affecting around seventy thousands of children,
- reduce around 8,000 primary schools to single teacher schools and effecting the education being provided to around 1,20,000 students there in the schools, and
- close down Upper Primary Sections in 4,400 Schools and deny education in classes 6th, 7th and 8th to about 1,45,000 children.

APSEC recent campaign for two months on concrete issues helped greatly the mobilization of public opinion and built up the momentum for an opposition to the government's proposals and moves to close down government schools. Other teacher and student organizations who are not members of APSEC were also encouraged to take up the campaign.

From 11th to 15th May 2016, APSEC conducted round table conferences in almost all districts and held Dharnas at District Collector's offices in all 13 districts on 16th May. Member organisations of APSEC - [APTF (1938), DTF, PDSU, AISF and PDSU] - mobilized teachers and students for the Dharnas. The student organisations independently and collectively also conducted campaigns during this period, courting arrest and being slapped with false charges. The agitations were in news for the last two months.

In a meeting with the education Minister, other teacher organisations joined member teacher organisations of APSEC [APTF (1938) and DTF] in raising strong objection to the way proposals were prepared and conclusions arrived at in the so-called rationalization of schools. Due to the pressure created by agitations conducted by APSEC and the opposition expressed by teacher organizations, the minister declared that government would not proceed with the proposals before looking into the objections raised by them.

The APSEC delegation was invited by Principal Secretary and Commissioner of School Education in response to their notice of direct action. APSEC delegation presented the whole range of problems with the government proposals.

APSEC also proposed positive measures as immediate development of government schools. It demanded

- student support measures for 100% enrollment and 100% retention of the children in the age group of 3 to 18 years,
- Pupil-teacher ratio of 20:1 in primary schools and
- Closing of private schools which violate rules and regulations in force in the state.

APSEC, in its memorandum, also demanded implementation of Allahabad High Court judgment mandating that all those who benefited from the state treasury in any way (through salaries, grants, sanctioned projects etc.) should admit their children to government schools. If implemented in Andhra Pradesh it would strengthen the government school system and ensure social justice.

AIFRTE sees in this struggle a model to be emulated by the democratic forces across the country to make governments reverse policies that encourage privatization of even primary education by allowing government schools to deteriorate. In fact central and state governments are constitutionally obliged to provide free and compulsory quality education to all children.

AIFRTE also sees the Allahabad High Court judgment as an important answer to the rapid deterioration of government schools. If, as APSEC has demanded, this is extended to Andhra Pradesh and indeed to all states across the country, a major step will have been taken towards establishing a national system of free and compulsory education with people's participation.

AIFRTE Presidium

शिक्षा नहीं कोई कारोबार, है यह जनता का अधिकार

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