1. In Mindon township of Magwe Division, (since 1996), though the digging of irrigation canals was done by contract, because of shortage of funds, the people of the area were forced to dig 200-500 pits per village at the rate of Kyats 70 per pit. Not having the expertise themselves, they had to hire others at the rate of Kyats 200. We have received this information.

2. The township authorities continued with this forced labour practice in 1997. The rain washed away the banks that were built in 1996 and 1997 and the work did not reach completion even into 1998. Because the Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council was scheduled to inspect the works sometime during the year, they were instructed to complete sowing the summer paddy crop by the month of April. A labour force of approximately 2000 people from 100 villages with 100 pairs of cows were forced to reinforce the embankments, pump water with water pumps, plough the fields and transplant seedlings which had to be fetched from Aunglan and Pwintbhyu townships.

3. Houses by the roads which was on the scheduled route of the Chairman of the SPDC had to be either white-washed or coated with earth oil and weeds and wild plants had to be cleared. Fines were imposed on villages where such instructions were not followed out as per schedule. This is contained in the reports that have come to us.

4. It cost the cultivators Kyats 3500/- per acre for the water pumped into their fields in preparation for the visit of the Chairman of the SPDC but his visit was cancelled and since that time water supply was cut. The farmers had to arrange for their own water and reap their own crops for which the authorities took no responsibility. This has caused great hardship to the farmers who have had to sell their buffaloes, cows and other properties to survive. In addition, there was not much success with the crops cultivated through these means resulting in even greater loss.

5. In Mindon township, a winter crop (1998-1999) of split peas for the army had to be sold at the rate of 3 baskets per acre at a very low price of Kyats 150/- per basket. This had to be fulfilled without regard of crop failures due to pests and other causes.

6. We denounce in the strongest terms this imposition of forced labour, unjust demands for cultivation of paddy in the summer, and forced sale of crops that is happening to the cultivators in Mindon township. We urge the appropriate authorities to take measures to relieve the sufferings and hardships of the farmers.
Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

26 January 1999