1. On the site where the road from Meiktila leads to Kyaukpadaung is a billboard with the words -"Mandalay Division, Meiktila Township, Thaphanchaung-Yeway Development Road (31 miles 1 furlong and 18 feet wide). Kyats sixty two lakhs (6.2 million) of cost donated by Brigadier General Kyi Win, Director of Armour and Artillery Corps, and 71st Armour Battalion No: 1,4,5 and 8. Constructed by warrant officers, sergeants, corporals, soldiers and civilians."

2. According to the information that has come to us the true story is that commencing from the month of September 1996 residents from about one hundred villagers that lie to the east and west of the said road were forced to dig up rocks and stones from wherever they could be found and convey them to the road construction site. No military personnel participated, no implements were supplied, and no payment was made. The villagers laboured like animals with their own hands, their own crowbars, and their own knives.

3. In addition, they had to pay soldiers Kyats 50/- per heap to guard the stones until such time as the authorities issued a receipt indicating that the job was completed and satisfactory. No asphalt was ever laid on the road. It is a road constructed by the villagers with rocks and stones and was completed in October of 1998.

4. The road construction is being extended from Yeway to Mahlaing town this year and the villagers are experiencing severe problems. Residents from villages that lie to the north of the Meiktila-Kyaukpadaung road are required to find and dig one and a half units (one unit = a hundred cubic ft. of rock) per household and place the rocks at designated spots on the road construction site. This operation takes about 15 to 20 days which prevents the cultivators from attending to the cultivation of their crops.

5. With their own tools, the men dig the rocks and the women carry these rocks in baskets on their heads trudging through rough and steep grounds to their own fields where they are stacked till such time as motor vehicles can be hired at their own cost to be transported to the designated spots on the road site.

6. It has been revealed that elderly men and women (even widows), no matter how poor are not exempted from this task. The minimum cost to those who are totally incapable of giving labour is Kyats 3,000/- calculated at Kyats 1500/- per unit and transport charges.
7. The road is still unfinished and it is our understanding that residents in villages up to Monedaing on the eastern side of the road and Nebekone on the western side are still forced to labour on the road. The villagers are terrified that they will be conscripted again because the construction is not completed.

8. We deplore this forced labour and the absence of compassion for these peasants and cultivators who are experiencing such economic and social hardships.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

Rangoon
22 June 1999