STATEMENT 95 (7/99) (translation)

1. Our information is that the authorities are demanding forced labour from the villages for the construction of the weir in the vicinity of the road that circles Myo-thit quarters, in the industrial zone of Mounywa township, Sagaing division.

2. The said villages are Aungtha, Thet-kai-chin, Lei-zin, Ywa-htaung, Sa-kyin, Kyaun-pu, Ywa-tone, Htanaung-win, Boo-taung, Ye-kan-su, Zee-kyun, Tha-byei-zu-pin, Kaing-taw, Tai-tha, Palin, Taung-gya, Taung-ma-daw, Kyaunk-khwet-taw and others in Mounywa township.

3. Every ten house is allotted the task of digging pits measuring 66' 9" x 15' and 5' deep. The ground is hard and very difficult to dig. The cost of substitute labour is Kyats 800 to Kyats 1000/-. Some of the villagers are aware of this difficulty but cannot afford to pay for substitute labour. Some with suckling babies have no option but to take their infants with them to the work site. Most of them have no provisions to fall back on while doing forced labour and have to subsist on rice porridge while others are hardly able to have one meal a day.

4. Though this forced labour commenced on the 6 June 1999, some have not completed the assigned task even by the 30th June. Our information is that before the last Thingyan. These same villages were forced to give labour for the weir to divert water from the Chindwin river.

5. We urge that an immediate halt be made to this unjust practice of exploiting the poor who haven't sufficient food, clothing or accommodation and forcing them to give their labour without payment. We denounce these illegal and inequitable measures.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

Rangoon
12 July 1999.
13 July 1999.