Statement 176 (12/99) (translation)

1. For the purchase and for obtaining the entire paddy crop in the De-pai-yin township, the Secretary of the SPDC (Shwebo district, Sagaing Division) issued oral instructions for the closure of all rice mills operating in the region on 14 November 1999. Our information is that all the mills even those operating in the small villages had to close down immediately.

2. The cost of one basket of paddy had dropped from Kyats 2400 to 2000 because of the large supply which delighted the people but when the mills had to suspend operations the price of one pyi soared to Kyats 120/-

3. On the 20 November, 1990 the township and village authorities said that the mills could re-open on payment of Kyats 5000 to 7000 depending on the size of the mills. Though all the money had been collected by the 25th November, permission to mill has not been given to date.

4. Also, since the 19th November, a Security outpost has been installed outside the telephone office in Saing-pyin village where payment is demanded from all big and small vehicles transporting rice. Right through from Monywa, Butalin, De-pai-yin, Ye-U, Kan-ba-loo, road blocks are set up and money is demanded in a variety of ways.

5. Though "open market" is the declared policy, the farmers are aggrieved because they are compelled to sell their paddy at fixed prices. Currently the rate is 15 baskets per acre. For less productive regions it is 12 baskets per acre. The selling price of one basket is 350 kyats while outside the price is double. In addition there is a compulsory quota of one basket per acre each for the township SPDC, USDA and the bureaucrats of trade and agriculture. Wet grain is given as another excuse for demanding extra quantities. Because of the dishonest practices of the officials who weigh and count, the poor and simple farmer has to take along 25 baskets extra for every 100 baskets.

6. The cultivators and farmers are suffering so much because of the use of force by the dishonest authorities. We request that the matter be inquired into and the suffering of the farmers be alleviated. We seriously denounce these illegal and unjust activities.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

Rangoon
21 December 1999.