Chapter Two

THE SETTING

Towards understanding the phenomenon of industrial protests in a proper perspective, it is desirable to pay attention to the physical background. One does not here necessarily subscribe to the principles of social-ecology to say that physical environment has a direct bearing upon certain conditions which in turn influence the behaviour of the individuals (See Samachar, 1977). Nonetheless, physical setting provides a backdrop which would greatly facilitate a systematic understanding of a social phenomenon like industrial protests. In the present study the geographical features, population characteristics, industry and trade union aspects have been brought under discussion.
Concerning the name of the district there is no authentic record as to how the district took the name. One of the popular theories is that, a kind of paddy "Baid Dhan", which is grown in the district; the other to a Kolarian tribe "Dhan" which was inhabiting this area. "Baid" has perhaps been taken from the Urdu word "Abad" meaning occupied. Dhanbad may mean the place occupied by "Dhan" a Kolarian tribe or populated by "Dhan" (Paddy) in general. This area was first known as "Dhanbaid". It is believed, Mr. Luby, I.C.S. wrote officially and was permitted to drop 'i' from "baid". Till 24th October, 1956, Dhanbad was a sub-division of the Manbhum district in Bengal. With the merger of Manbhum in Bihar, Dhanbad sub-division was raised to the status of a district.

As at present Dhanbad district lies between 23° - 25' and 24° - 4"N latitudes and 86° and 86° - 50'E longitudes in the eastern part of Chhotanagpur division of Bihar. It covers an area of 28885.26 Kms. The district is bound on the north and west by Girdih and Santhal Pargana districts of Bihar, on the south and east by Purulia and Bardwan districts respectively of West Bengal.

Geographical features

Topography

The southern half of the district is undulating and rather dull and has conspicuous features. The northern portion of the district is however, characterised by greater variations in relief.
The ranges of ridges sent out by the Parasnath hills in the southern, central eastern part are filled up by a series of uplands and intervening hollows with isolated bare ridges of varying elevation in between them. Average elevation of Dhanbad is 118-236 metres, above the Main Sea Level (MSL). The area below 118 metres, in the south-east portion of the district and along the course of the river Damodar. The main coal bearing area north to the grand cord of eastern railway, falls in the range of 117 to 237 metres elevation. Under the last category of 237 metres and above fall in the hilly areas of Topchanchi and Tundi, beside the hills and hillocks scattered here and there in the region.

The Parasnath ranges from the north-western boundary and extends upto Tundi on the northern most area of the district. The hill is a good contributor to rainfall in the district besides being helpful in storage of water in Topchanchi lake situated at the foot of the hill. The other ranges in the district are of Dhangi, running from Pradhankanta to Govindpur between GCIC & GTR. Its highest peak is 386 metres high. Besides, these, hillocks of different altitude are scattered over whole of the district. These have been a rich source for road construction material. As a consequence a number of small scale industries relating to stone and stone-quarrying have sprung up. From geological point of view the region is occupied by the great coal basin of Jharia with intervening area of crystalline rocks. It seems possible that the sedimentary rocks of dykes and sill of ultra basic igneous rocks giving mica-period-tiles, biolite,
dolesite etc., to the district. Fire clay, suitable for manufacturing fire bricks are found in Dhangi hills. Building stones, stealite, soap stones, china-clay, graphite, are also found in the district.

Following the natural slope of the district most of the rivers have an easterly course. Barakar is the northern most river. Flowing to east it runs about 77 kms. in this district and joins Damodar near Chirkunda, the last P.S. of the district on the east. Another river Khudia originates in extreme west of the district between the Parasannah and Tundi hilly ranges and acts as the important tributary to the Barakar river. The Damodar river, called the Ganges of Chhotanagpur and once upon a time called 'sorrow of Bengal' is the most important river. Its course, through the district, is about due east and skirts more than hundred kilometres of the district. Katari, one of the tributaries of the Damodar, takes its rise in the foot hills below Parasannah and cuts across through the coal field area on the western and southern corner of the district and joins the Damodar near Bhujudih. Ijri is another minor river starting from the middle of the village Ansanba and meets Gobai river near Bojudih. Maithon dam on the river Barkar and Sanchet dam on the Damodar are two important magnificent works of the Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC), in the district. Besides, the Damodar has helped the installation of Sindri fertilizer factory, Sudamdih coal washery in this district and Durgaha coal washery. Just beyond the south-western border of Dhanbad is Girdih district.
Strictly speaking southern Dhanbad is the colliery area with industrial towns and northern Dhanbad is the area of hills and scattered villages. The southern area, which in fact has been the focus of the study. Landscape of the southern portion is undulating, monotonous, has scars of subsidence and smoky. Picturesque north has varying landscapes in different months by virtue of hills, forests, agricultural lands and typical Indian villages.

Climate

Dhanbad has generally dry climate, but characterised by extremities of weather. It receives rains through south-west monsoons during the months of June to September, but the wettest part is in July. Winter sets in by the third week of October, reaches peak during December and January, and mercury falls as low as 8.3°C. The advent of summer is also rather early. Leaving a very brief period of spring, summer is felt right from the 4th week of February. It is very dry during summer and the humidity is very low and the mercury touching as high as 45.5°C. Winds are generally light to moderate, which record a slight rise in the summer. During this period of the year hot breeze and dusty storms sweep the land. Considering the climatic conditions of the district an average worker cannot be said to be at ease. The quantum of average rainfall is approximately 1306 mms., or more. Looking to the nature of the soil in the district the rainfall can well be said to be below adequate, for drinking purposes in general and for agricultural needs in particular.
Agriculture and irrigation

The district has 85,430 hectares of arable land. But the soil in this district is relatively infertile laterite of no great depth having a general tendency towards continued deterioration, the process being continued till the underlying heavier gravel is exposed. According to the texture of the soil,

Table 2.1
Type of crops, area, and production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crops</th>
<th>Area sown (Acres)</th>
<th>Area irrigated (Acres)</th>
<th>Produce in mills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paddy</td>
<td>1,87,539</td>
<td>1734</td>
<td>1697896 (as rice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>12795</td>
<td>24.33</td>
<td>55998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>1083</td>
<td>104696</td>
<td>10830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groundnut</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gram</td>
<td>243.58</td>
<td>26.52</td>
<td>1225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marva</td>
<td>4427.11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>26562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other cereals</td>
<td>4705.51</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>32935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar cane</td>
<td>456.05</td>
<td>243.14</td>
<td>38982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potato</td>
<td>327.45</td>
<td>263.96</td>
<td>19620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>361391</td>
<td>718.86</td>
<td>25298</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the soils of this district may be classified broadly in four classes. Stony and gravelly, sandy soils and clayey soils. Out of the total arable land only 3 per cent of it has a regular facility for irrigation. For irrigation purposes there have
been two big dams namely Panchet and Maithon. A number of medium irrigation schemes have been taken up and executed from time to time. During the 3 Plans Rs. 1,550,031.38 have been spent to ensure irrigation to nearly 4000 hectares of land. The topography of the district and the economic resources of the population underline the need for minor irrigation schemes, which are cheaper and of more local importance. As a matter of fact, the minor irrigation schemes have sustained the agricultural economy of the district. A variety of crops are being grown in the district, but Paddy remains the major crop (88%). Other crops are maize, wheat, ground-nut, gram and the like are cultivated but in relatively smaller area. Lesser yield therefore (see Table 2.1). Looking to the pressure on agrarian economy, whether the land is able to support or not?

Population

According to the Census of 1971, the district has a population of 14,66,156 against the total population of the state 5,63,87,296 (1:33). Looking to the area of the district in comparison to the state, the district is thickly populated (density 3830 per Km.). Seventy five per cent of the population is in the rural areas. The schedule caste and schedule tribe population comes about 27% of the total population. For every 44 females there are 56 males in the district, against the state ratio of 49:51 (Directory and Year book, 1972).

The population of the Dhanbad district presents a cosmopolitan picture, because of proliferating industries. But the local inhabitants constitute a major portion of it (71%). The most
question, however, remains whether the district has the requisite potential to provide gainful employment to all able-bodied persons?

**Education**

The literacy percentage of the district is high in the State, as against 19.79 state average. The percentage of literate males is 40% and that of females 11% as against the State average of 31% and 8%. There are 825 lower primary schools, 258 upper primary schools, 182 middle schools, 62 high schools, 10 Arts colleges, 4 technical institutes, 1 medical college, 2 training schools and 2 research stations in the district. Fifty percent of these schools, colleges and technical institutions are in the urban area (Dhanbad district plan, 1975).

**Occupation**

Despite rapid industrialisation of the district agriculture still remains the most important occupation for the majority of the population, and even a sizeable percentage of non-agriculturists have something or the other to do with agriculture (43%). The occupational break up of the populace shows that:

**Table 2.2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Cultivators</td>
<td>40.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Agricultural labourers</td>
<td>4.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Industrial labourers</td>
<td>29.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Household industry</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Manufacturing</td>
<td>6.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Construction</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Trade &amp; commerce</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Transport &amp; communication</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Others</td>
<td>9.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The magnitude of the industrial labour-force is the second highest in the district. The division of employment in various categories shows that there is considerable unemployment in the district.

Table 2.3

Showing the position in respect of employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Employed against</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Skilled workers</td>
<td>766623</td>
<td>154381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Unskilled workers</td>
<td>100740</td>
<td>231571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Educated persons</td>
<td>37103</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Agricultural labourers</td>
<td>185584</td>
<td>315777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Others</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: District Plan, 1974)

Industries and Trade Unionism

Industries

Nevertheless, Dhanbad is often regarded as an industrial district, coal-mining being the dominant amongst all. The Jharia-Katras coal belt in the district produces more than 50% of the total coal output in the country. Among coal based industries Sindri fertilizer factory is the biggest in the district. Likewise the installation of super phosphate factory at Sindri, cement factory at Sindri, Bharat steel factory (BSF) at Marafari have added new dimensions to the industrial character of the district. Several allied industries have also sprung up.
While Bokaro and Sindri factories are under the heavy industries' group, the Lead factory at Tandoo, the hydel power stations at Maithon and Panchet, coal washery at Sudamdih, engineering works and fire bricks, and a host of other industries come under the medium industries group.

Besides these notable industries there are coke plants in the coal field area. Naphthlene and coal-tar industries are also within the coal mining belt; fire bricks manufacturing industries in various parts of the district, stone crushing industry at Govindpur, Nirsa and Topchanchi, in all there are about 450 factories. This apart, there are a variety of engineering works, small scale industries in a sizeable number, whose products are directly sold or are supplied to a particular industry.

**Trade Unionism**

In Dhanbad, labour movement in mining industry first organised by late Swami Viswanand about the year 1919. He did much to make the industrial workers conscious of their role and rights. Later on the freedom movement, among others, led by M.K. Gandhi, gave an impetus to the labour movement in the coal fields. In 1920 following the formation of AITUC, a union came into existence under the presidency of Indu Bhushan Sen. Labour conferences were quite unknown at that time. The mine owners smelt trouble in the wake of the organisation of 2nd Annual Session of AITUC, in Jharia field, in 1921. Conceding to the invitation of Swami Vishwanand, Mr. Joseph Baptista, Bar-at-law, Bombay, presided over the sessions. Four delegates
including P.C. Bose of Dhanbad participated in the sessions which was attended by not less than 60 thousand miners and the entire coal industry remained closed for 4 days. Some of the mine owners got so panicky that they cabled the Viceroy asking him not to allow the conference to be held within 200 miles of Bengal and Bihar coal fields. The Viceroy did not, of course, accede to this request of the mine owners but battalions of infantry and cavalry were deployed to protect the life and property of the mine owners and their superior staff. It has, however, to be mentioned that here was at least one colliery owner, Seth Ramjash Aggarwal who rose to the occasion and allowed this conference to be held in his colliery compound and bore the cost of the conference. Emboldened by his example, several other colliery owners came to the conference as distinguished guests. The conference was addressed by many public leaders including Diwan Chamanlal, Dipnarain Singh and others and created such an atmosphere in the coal fields that mine owners declared a substantial wage increase immediately after the conclusion of the conference.

The condition of labour in the coal industry was extremely miserable those days. The labourers were recruited and paid through the raising contractors. The contractors would deduct wages as they liked. The management had little contact with them. There was no provision for housing, water supply, medical and sanitary arrangements, etc. Their income was extremely meagre and they continuously suffered from hunger and disease. There was no labour legislation worth the name to protect the interests of
the labourers. The policy of the government was to get as much coal as possible at the cheapest possible rate for the loco and other industries. Most of the coal mining today, such as contract system (abolished), unscientific mining, premature collapse and the underground fire etc. are substantially due to the short-sighted policy of the then government. Labour unions also could not function properly for the joint opposition of the employers and the government. Conditions, however, improved slightly after the trade union Act was passed in 1926. Meanwhile some minor Acts were also passed to provide water-supply, housing and sanitation etc.

In 1928, the Ninth Session of AITUC was held in Jharia without any opposition from any quarter. This was to be presided by Mr. C.F. Andrews but owing to his absence, Md. Daud of seamen's union presided. The conference was well attended. The CPI wanted to capture the office of AITUC in this session and set up a candidate for the election as president. But Jawaharlal Nehru, whose name was put up by the congress, was elected as president. Nehru, Chamanlal, Giri and a number of prominent leaders attended this session and some delegates from abroad were also there.

The Indian colliery employee's association had continued its activities and remained as a sort of representative of labour in the coal-field, till the year 1928, when different labour associations were formed to safeguard the interests of Tata collieries labour. In 1932 there was a break in the Indian colliery employees association, and another union, a rival union, namely, the Indian Miners' association was formed with Shri K.N. Bhattacharya as president.
None of these unions were registered, but the Indian colliery employees association was registered as "Indian colliery labour union", in 1932. This in short remains more or less a reformist movement till the year 1936-37, when the congress ministries were formed in many of the provinces in India as well as Bihar. A point to be noted is that when in 1931 a Royal Commission was instituted to look into the conditions of the coal labour. This was represented by Shri K.N. Gupta and Shri Sheo Kali Bose. Some youngmen like Muktdhari Singh and others after getting their training in Ahmedabad came to Jharia coal-field and started organising labour. The first attempt in organising a general union of coal workers was made in 1939, when Chhotanagpur association was formed. It had a very large membership and some of the biggest strikes in the coal-field like the 3 labour strikes of Kustore collieries involving about 60000 workers and lasting each more than 3 months were launched. Then came the World War II and with the rise in prices of commodities the 1st demand for D.A. was made, and as a result of negotiations between the employees and employers a 10% increase in the wages as D.A. was made. It was at this time that the Bihar labour enquiry committee was appointed under the leadership of Dr. Rajendra Prasad. The members of the committee visited coal-field took evidence and for the first time attempts were made to go deep into the living and working conditions of the coal-miners.

As the war progressed most of the labour leaders were put in jail and labour movement came to a standstill for the time being. Due to war coal-mine-owners made enormous profits. But wages and
amenities for the labourers were not appreciably increased, leading to discontentment. But owing to various ordinances and stiff measures nothing tangible could be done and, of course, the number of labour agitations remained almost negligible. Even Communist leaders tried to organise in the name of war efforts. The followers of M.N. Roy formed a branch of Indian federation of labour (Redical democratic party) and for sometime they were the only people seen moving about and working among the workers. But they could not fully succeed in leaving a lasting impression on the workers.

The Kutore worker's union, the first militant labour movement was started in the year 1939, when the first successful strike of about 60000 workers began on the question of reinstatement of a few workers, but resulted in other important gains to the workers. Another strike in 1941 lasted over 100 days. Regular union was started there which properly functioned till the war came. Its activities revived in 1946-47.

Then ended the war and the Congress ministries were formed in most of the provinces. Coal-workers also had their grievances all through the war felt very much agitated. They had their own government. The fact of Independence instilled a new faith in them. During the period (1946-47) the Congress, Socialist party members took up organisation of workers and a series of strikes over length and breadth of the coal-field began. Employers were taken aback at the mass movement. Concessions were granted to workers and unions after unions came into existence. Government also stepped-in and appointed the 1st "Conciliation Board" in 1947. For sometime
the formation of union after union continued, but the need for one centrally organised labour union was felt and the Koela Mazdoor Panchayat was formed in 1949 to organise coal workers. But unfortunately among coal workers themselves rival trade unionism was growing and with the formation of INTUC (1947-48) the rivalry became all the more apparent and INTUC people began to organise the labour. As a result, Indian National Coal Mine Workers' Federation was formed in 1949. Subsequently, Bihar colliery mazdoor sangh was formed to organise coal-workers, and was registered in early 1961.

However, there was noticed a tendency on the part of labour leaders of organising rival trade unions in the same industry. Majority of the worker unions were strunged to political parties. These are Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS), All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), United Trade Union Congress (UTUC), Centre for Industrial Trade Unions (CITU) and the like. Sometime back Jansangh had its own labour wing Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS). The independents like Hindustan Khan Mazdoor Sangh etc., have also been there. Around 1972 the rivalry between these unions reached such a peak that the special Branch of the police in its annual reports from 1967 onwards recorded "The inter and intra union rivalries are the main causes of labour unrest and the trend is going to continue" (1972). "A number of unions have grown both in the coal-fields and in other industries. The character of leadership of some of these organisations due to a variety of reasons, has taken a political shade in their important activities. Group rivalries,
and vested interests of particular parties and their leaders are now more in prominence. Generally speaking, the coal-field has been the hot-bed of troubles in the recent years due to political pressure and a plethora of strikes, was the the outcome of their activities in majority of the cases. These strikes were in some cases followed by violence, intimidation, picketing, assaults and other subversive activities. It is an established fact that the trade union movement cannot make satisfactory progress if exploitation of labour is generally resorted to by the rival groups of unions. Exploitation of labour by labour leaders having vested interests is a problem although this has been deprecated by a number of leaders. Due to this and other factors the workers organisations are gradually becoming weakened and consequently their bargaining power is likely to be diminished, considerably. The worker in Bihar has yet to realise that he is a partner of the joint venture and should choose his leaders wisely" (Roy Chaudhary, 1964).

The Sampled Industries

A fifteen minutes walk along the railway from Jharia station takes one to this colliery or Lodna station. The landscape around is scarred by vast stretches of sunken earth caused by subterranean fire. The fire at quite a few places has managed to come to the surface. And many burning coal-mines throw up flames often in rows resembling festoons of Diwali, particularly on a dark night. On the either side of the direct road leading to the colliery is seen studded with shanties covered by coal dust. The coal ash from the hearths or coal burnt to
remove the organic material is found spilled in the vicinity of shanties. The atmosphere around the colliery is laden with coal dust, since a row of cokeries and a coal washery has been there. Water pumped out of mines, due to leaks in the pipes, at times makes bizarre fountains amidst the road. The water, thus leaked, flows along the regular drains or right in the middle of the road, forming tiny pools. Heavy motor vehicles passing by splash the water out and enlarge the pool on the dirt road. Along these leaking springs are seen menfolk washing and bathing.

On an average day, many miners would be found, in the mining area ambling around. They may be seen with pick-axe and shovel, at the way side kiosks, often gossipping, sipping tea, smoking, chewing pan or khaini (a mixture of tobacco and lime). By their dress, dialect and accent, it is not difficult to make out that most of them are 'sons of the soil' i.e. Biharis. An average worker resides in a kutcha house. His artefacts include a home-made-wooden-cot, duree, aluminium and earthen utensils, one or two trunkfuls of clothes, a coal heater, a pick-axe, shovel, helmet and a lathi. Quite a few of them also own a transistor (portable radio). Among the wall hangings include the framed pictures of Hanuman, Kali, and Shiva. He may also maintain a buffalo or two for milk.

Mining operations continue round the clock. An average worker adjusts his sleep and food habits to duty shifts. The worker in shorts and helmet, pick-axe and shovel dangling from his shoulders reaches the pit-head. He is issued an electric head light. He takes a lift to go down the shaft. Having joined his
group, he heads for his work place, as planned. The mine though has the facility of electric lighting, it is usually dark and rather dim-lit. As a safety measure, the ceiling of the tunnel is sprayed with lime. Mining zone is a surfeit of din: clinking of tools, hustle of leading, occasional coughs, trundling of tubs on rail and at times shot-firing to collapse the coal seams. Despite ventilation, within minutes the worker starts sweating profusely, because of tension, manual labour, and the high temperature (10° to 15°F higher than normal). The experience provides the worker a knack to locate a point in the seams which when assaluted yields, quickly. Along mining, as cave formation extends, the safety operations like, pillaring commence. Apart from this, there are a host of safety measures that are necessary. Devices to detect inflammable and poisonous gasses, fire extinguishers, stand by water pumps, first aid posts and the like. Authorities of D.G.M.S. (Directorate General of Mines Safety) inspect the mines often, they can order the closure of a mine, if the safety measures are not appropriate. After nationalisation of coal-mines, the safety of the mines been reported to be neglected (see Editorial, 1975).

The operations in the coal-mine are not that simple or safe as the preceding account is likely to convey. In the words of Raghavan, "hazardous is too mild a term to describe the life of a coal miner. Accidents occur owing to coal dust explosion, gas explosion, roof caving in, ceiling collapse, area sub-siding, even as in a case or two water from nearby reservoir rushes in. Workers sweat continuously and profusely resulting into salt deficiency."
As a result of tough manual work and heat exhaustion the miner out is half-dead (1974). On top of it, coal industry breeds, in its workers occupational diseases, because of continuous coal-dust inhaling.

The worker after completing his shift of duty takes the lift-up. Having returned the head light, rushes for bath to wash off dust and grime. Usually the next point of call for an average worker is the country liquor-shop; and these are quite a few in the area. This possibly helps him to lessen the weight of the tensions accumulated down the shaft. There are many miners who, disregarding the rules, fortify themselves with liquor before stepping on the down lift. Usually this is followed by food and sleep — back at home.

On off days, he may wash, wear clean clothes, take rather elaborate food and may go for a movie, along with fellow workers. Or else, he may sit with others for a game of cards, possibly with stakes. On pay days the colliery-campus hums with added activity: small shops cater to the needs of workers. Right on the office gate union-muscle men wait to collect chanda, and Pathans (Afghani money lender) watch the passage of their customers. The worker gossip centres around, among other things, trade union affairs, wages, arrears, work-hazards, inter and intra union squabbles, the need to propitiate trade union leaders, forced donations and so forth. On many issues workers' opinion still favours private management. Nothing halts miners' gossip as much as the sight of a muscleman or an informer of management (see also Phadnis, 1974).
Usually a worker is also a member of trade union. Unions affiliating to CMS (INTUC), KIMP (HMS), and INMOSSA (IND) have been there. (The last being the union of mine workers only i.e. Mining Sardars and Shot Firers Association). In the sampled colliery mazdoor sangh (CMS) is the most powerful union and enjoys the support of a large number of workers. KIMP and other unions are not that strong, nevertheless are rival unions to CMS. Most of the CMS leaders are in the good books of the management. Some among them are so influential that even officers look towards them, specially when matters like annual character reports, transfers and so forth come up for consideration.

A worker who has connections with strong-arm-men boasts of 'no union membership', but weak ones avoid trouble by taking the tickets of more than one union. Despite interneicine rivalry, there is a peculiar understanding not physically to harm the top trade union leaders. Even if, planned murders occur it is mostly of those in the second or third line of the trade union hierarchy in the sampled colliery. The CMS leaders boast that communists cannot infiltrate here in the colliery. Nevertheless, rival unions of CMS avail the services of muscleman from communist unions.

The electrical industry, as compared with coal-mines, is located away from urban areas. Although situated in Bihar the key positions in this factory are managed by persons from Punjab. The factory is situated among hilly terrains, by a small river. At a short distance there is Dhanbad–Calcutta railway. A walk of
about half an hour along the road which bifurcates from Nirsa
town takes one to a small village Karanpura. Having passed
houses of different sizes, thatched or tiled, one would see the
factory building and quarters. The place is calm except for the
sounds of the machinery. This is a corporate industry, which
now-a-days produces high voltage gears, fuses and other elec-
tronic appliances. The labour force consists of about 250 workers.
Managerial, clerical and some middle level workers have to them-
selves staff quarters. Many of the workers, mainly lower level,
live in nearby hamlets.

The factory siren alerts the workers at 6-30 A.M., and the
factory functions from 7 in the morning till 6 in the evening,
with breaks in between, for lunch and tea. Most of the workers
come in time. But those late comers have an understanding with
the time keepers. Once inside the factory, the workers move to
their places. As compared to coal mines, which has already been
dealt with; and; and firebricks industry which will follow
subsequently, this electrical industry involves much skill.
Engraving, forging, dying, wiring and so forth are the core
operations. Then there are those machine duplicating jobs. It
is in the smithy division that much physical labour is involved.
Doubtless, the role of supervisors is of great importance in all
these operations. The top man in this factory constantly supervises
the work. This, workers feel is one of the reasons for higher
production. Although workers do not hesitate to show their
aversion towards the management people, they also respect them,
because of their working capacity. Once-in-a-while accidents do
occur, but fewer, and owing to mainly human factor. Skilled workers do not only command respect among the fellow workers but also enjoy a measure of managerial confidence. The workers rush out at lunch break. Make their way to canteen, which provides subsidised lunch. The canteen is housed in a dilapidated building, hardly befitting for a canteen. In the left position of the building, there is a water tap which provides water for washing and drinking purposes. There is a bare hall wherein workers squat for lunch in circles, as it is not properly furnished. Batch after batch of workers squat and eat at the same place, which, at times, may not be hygienic. Workers often feel unhappy with the food served. The contractor, they feel serves stale and sub-standard meals. Leaving their empty plates on the floor, they wash and drink water from the running tap and return towards factory. Some of them may stop over for a pan or bidi from the shanty shop, enroute, mostly on credit basis. Then they move back to work with siren whistle. In the evening the workers while leaving the factory premises are searched by the security guards for raw materials, semi-finished or finished goods. Although this practice has always been there, it still irritates many workers. Those workers having houses nearby sit together around the tea shop and gossip. Mostly, the skilled workers and supervisory staff do not participate in this.

There are two unions in this factory: one affiliated to INTUC (Karamchari Sangh) the other to HMS (Karamchari Panchayat). At times leaders of CITU, which is otherwise dominant union in the area, also visit the premises. The union affiliating to INTUC is
recognised by the company. It is reported that earlier the union affiliated to HMS was recognised by the company. Following a serious dispute between the leaders of the said union (HMS) and the management the former was derecognised. It may be added that either of the unions is nowhere near their counter parts in coal mining industry, in so far as their influence over the workers is concerned. The reasons for this are not far to seek. The employment in the company rather fluctuates with the order-book. The fluctuations in the union membership, dominant management, illiterate workers and certain other factors have made the union leaders, almost symbolic. The union leaders are also employees of the company. They work, may not be on a strenuous jobs. Workers often express their opinion, by calling the present recognised union as 'company union'.

One of the firebricks industry, under study is situated near the village Mugma, by Dhanbad-Calcutta railway. The labour force is relatively small drawn mostly from the surrounding villages. This factory is also cut-off from the urban-centres. The factory functions from 6-30 A.M. to 6-30 P.M. The work-force of the factory mainly consists of tribals who are predominantly younger as well as illiterate. Most of them work on daily wages. The skilled workers handle core-operations. Even otherwise, the manufacture of fire-bricks involves neither hard work nor much technical skill. On an average day one would find a row of workers shifting the bricks and arranging them in lots. Grinding the silicates to proper mesh, mixing hordants, preparing paste, block making and lastly burning the bricks are the usual operations.
involved. A major portion of work-force works in the open. Looking to the nature of the work very few accidents occur. Neither canteen nor housing facilities are available to workers.

The management is relatively strict. Nevertheless, a slight laxity on the part of supervisor or momentary absence of supervisor seldom fails to slaken the workers. Compared to coal-mining industry and electrical industry the workers here receive lower wages. The employment capacity fluctuates according to the order-book, here also.

There are two unions active in this factory - one affiliated to a faction of INTUC, the other to the CITU (Fire-bricks and pottery workers' union and the Krantikari Mazdoor Sangh, respectively). The former is recognised by the company. The leaders of both the unions, compared to other two industries, are less educated. Although union leaders are employees of the company, the INTUC union leaders are better placed. In the past there were clashes between the two unions with no sign of abatement for recognition. When INTUC broke into factions, there were a series of clashes in the fire-bricks industries, in the area. The leaders belonging to the new faction were so influential that almost every owner of fire-bricks, in the area recognised their affiliates. Taking advantage of this rift the CITU leaders also started mobilization. Although their activities were vigorous, their main thrust was towards the coal-mines. Nevertheless, their activities in these industries also were alarming to the INTUC.
The next sampled factory is again a fire-bricks. It is situated in the outskirts of Jharia town near the railway station. It is the smallest unit among the industries studied. The work-force consists mainly of tribals. It is a privately managed company and is strict. The owner, a Gujarati, sits in a high window from dawn to dusk and keeps constant vigil. This industry also functions for 12 hours with lunch and tea breaks in between. The workers reside in the self constructed shanties in the vicinity of the factory. They are provided with few facilities worth noticing. They draw a wage of a much below the recommended minimum.

At the time of field-work there was no officially recognised union in the company. This is stated to be an upshot of communist led strike in 1972. Nevertheless, the workers claim that they have faith in Lal-Jhanda and are members of that union. This is the setting from which the worker respondents for the present study have come from.

As the foregoing account reflects, the district of Dhanbad has two distinct geographical features - northern part is picturesque and hilly and southern part is undulating scarry and smoky owing to the industries. Although, a large segment of population is engaged in agriculture, a large number of factors do not appear to facilitate this occupation. They are extreme climate, scanty rains, deteriorating soil conditions and the like. Literacy-wise, the district is at the top in the State. At the same time, there is a considerable unemployment in the district. This would
be attributed to the influx of the outsiders and the seasonal nature of the agriculture. Industries have been a part of the economic life of the district since long. So has been the case with the labour movement. The unions in the initial stages were resisted. It is the peculiar socio-political climate that gave impetus to the trade unionism. As at present, there are found functioning in Dhanbad a large number of trade unions of different and even divergent ideologica...listings. It is hardly surprising that inter and intra union squabbles have almost become order of the day. At times many trade union leaders have been reported as having few scruples to exploit workers for their vested interests. The cumulative tension generated by these adverse influences may have something to do with the worker protests.