An immediate outcome of the General Strike of 1938 was an enquiry into the coir industry of the State. After the strike, the administration invoked the provisions of the Travancore Trade Disputes Act for the settlement of disputes between the Alleppy Coir Factory owners and workers. In 1938 a Board of Conciliation was constituted with the representatives of both the labour and the capitalists. The recommendations of the Board resulted into some of labour legislations and welfare measures. Yet the State policy on labour failed to convince the labour force and the workers continued to organize in order to achieve their rights under the shadow of political parties. Therefore while contending with the State policy on labour, Dewan C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer continued his attempt to isolate labour from politics.

Board of Conciliation

With the introduction of the Trade Disputes Act from 25 October 1938, the State Government felt it effective and appropriate to appoint a judicial enquiry into the coir industry and the labour problems. Soon the Government constituted a Board of Conciliation as contemplated in Section 3(b)
of the Regulation V of the Trade Disputes Act,\textsuperscript{1} with K. George, the land revenue and income tax commissioner, under section 6 (2) of the Regulation as Chairman. The five member Board of Conciliation consisted of two representatives each of the labour and the capital as members.\textsuperscript{2} The appointment of the Board was duly notified in the Government Gazette dated 28 November 1938. The Board included the following members:\textsuperscript{3}

1. N.G.Haydon, nominated by the Travancore Chamber of Commerce,

2. N.Sankara Mannar, nominated by the Alleppy Chamber of Commerce,

3. P.N.Krishna Pillai, nominated by the Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union, and

4. V.K.Atchutan, nominated by the Travancore Coir Factory Workers' Union.

This enquiry was also in response to the memorandum presented by the Labour Association to the District Magistrate of Quilon in connection with the enquiry conducted by him.\textsuperscript{4}

The Board aimed to inquire into the labour condition prevailing in the factories at Alleppy with particular reference to standardisation of wages, the question of payment in kind,

\textsuperscript{1} Proceedings of the Maharajah of Travancore, 1 May 1939, D.Dis.1075/1939/Industries.

\textsuperscript{2} Haydon, Report of Interview with the Dewan of Travancore, 20 October 1938, R.Dis.2787/1938/CS.

\textsuperscript{3} First Annual Report, Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union, op.cit., D.Dis.413/1939/CS.

and imposing the requisite restrictions on the establishment of factories with a view to avoid insubstantial concerns with no capital springing up and prejudicially affecting both employers and labourers. The Board was asked to submit a report to the Government with suitable recommendations for the removal of the grievances of labourers, on the lines indicated in section 7 of the Trade Disputes Regulation as expeditiously as possible.  

When the Board had its preliminary sitting on 3 December 1938 at Alleppy, the members of both labour and capital interests agreed that the present enquiry should not be limited to the coir-mats and matting factories in Alleppy but that it should cover the whole of the Coir mats and matting industry and also rehanking and baling of coir yarn in the whole of Travancore. Accordingly it was resolved that the terms of reference to the Board should be modified. However the Chairman of the Board recommended that 'the Board will enquire into the labour conditions prevailing in the whole of the coir mats and matting industry in Travancore including rehanking and baling of coir yarn. Therefore it was resolved that the Board may accordingly be referred to as 'the Board of Conciliation of labour disputes in the Coir-Mats and Matting Industry'.

5. The Division Peishkar, Trivandrum, C.No.767/15, 1 July 1943, D.Dis.2293/1946/Devpt.

6. George, K., Chairman, Board of Conciliation, C.No.9811, 6 December 1938, letter to Chief Secretary to Government of Travancore, D.Dis.368/1939/Devpt.

7. Ibid.
The appointment of a court of enquiry on the labour problems raised the hopes and aspirations of the workers and they expected a wide package of welfare measures. The Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union submitted a memorandum of the labour sufferings before the enquiry committee. However the Board could convince the political parties that the State Congress contented the appointment of the Board of Conciliation in consequence of the General Strike, as a 'Victory for the popular cause'. It is significant that at the deliberations of the Board, the question of bonus was never raised by the Travancore Coir Workers' Union. The problem of standardisation of wages became the primary submission before the Board. But when the Board resumed its sitting on 19 April 1939 under Chairman K. George, E. L. Pollard, Chairman of the Travancore Chamber of Commerce and Manager of William Goodacre and Sons Limited, argued that at the present stage the coir industry could not bear any increase in wages to workers. He advised the labour unions not to participate in political agitations, provided such participation in no way affected the interests of labour and capital.

The disappointed workers became more aggressive. They were active in opening new branches of unions in many places.

and organising themselves for agitation.\textsuperscript{11} Subsequently two
labourers, Chacko and Ummini who gave evidence before the Trade
Disputes Enquiry Committee were allegedly assaulted by the police.
In return, a procession of about 300 labourers led by R. Sugathan
arrived at Kidangamparambu maidan in Alleppy on 26 May 1939 and
a protest meeting was held under P.N. Krishna Pillai.\textsuperscript{12} The
labour leaders condemned the assault on labourers as an example
of repression of the labour movement by the Government and
capitalists and declared a hartal on the same day. Now the
administration had sarcastically remarked that it was primarily
with a view to exhort the labour enquiry committee and to make them
recommend maximum concessions in favour of the labourers.\textsuperscript{13}

Amidst the attempts of the administration to suppress
the labour force, the labourers continued their struggle and
presented their problems before the Board. The labour had
threatened to strike work till the capitalists yielded and
promised to pay wages in cash.\textsuperscript{14} However in an attempt to
maintain the coir industry, the leading newspapers in the State
suggested for the non-official majority in the Board of Concilia-
tion.\textsuperscript{15} Meanwhile an executive committee meeting of the All

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} Travancore Police Daily Bulletin, Vol.I, 26 May 1939.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 26 May 1939.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Inspector General of Police, Alleppy, May 1939, Report
submitted to District Magistrate, Quilon, D.Dis.238/1939/CS.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Travancore Police Daily Bulletin, Vol.1, No.156, 1 August
1939, D.Dis.844/1945/CS.
\item \textsuperscript{15} The Deepika, 15 September 1939, Press Cutting, D.Dis.414/
1939/CS.
\end{itemize}
Kerala Labour Organisation at Cochin on 12 July 1939 protested against the prohibition by the Travancore Government of the shouting of labour slogans and the carrying of red flags bearing labour emblems. The meeting resolved to observe '26 July' as a day of protest against the attitude of the Travancore Government.

The Board of Conciliation submitted their report in August 1939. In fact the Report became an important document for the administration to proceed further with their policy on labour welfare. It was the response to the organising power of the workers.

The Report of the Board of Conciliation of labour disputes in the Coir-Mats and Matting Industry, generally known as the "George Committee Report", disclosed a complete picture of the state of coir industry and the condition of workers. It became an outstanding record of labour grievances in Travancore prevailing then. The report exposed the problems of the working people and exhorted the workers to the benefits of organised labour. Old ideas were constantly challenged, and this intellectual ferment reached the highly literate labourers and left them ready to accept radical explanations of their difficulties.

In their report of August 1939, the Board analysed primarily the condition of wages for factory labour and conse-

16. The Hindu, 7 July 1939, p.3.

17. Speech by P.N.Krishna Pillai, Annual celebration of Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union, 1 October 1939, D.Dis.413/1939/CS.
quently of the bonus scheme.\textsuperscript{18} As a result the George Committee had identified that too many factories and too much labour in the coir industry had resulted in tremendous competition, wage reduction and unemployment.\textsuperscript{19} The Committee felt that one of the basic reasons for friction and strife in the industry was the absence of personal contact between employers and employees. In due course of its deliberations, the labour representatives had brought to the notice of the Board of Conciliation that in most industries supervision and control by the management were practically non-existent. They complained that the payment of wage was made through the contractors who were paid lumpsums. Generally the contractors paid a portion of the wages to the workers and retained the rest for themselves.\textsuperscript{20} Therefore the Board was of the opinion that under this system, there was no certainty that the workers actually received any wage. They had noted that the general wage-rates have been reduced by twenty to forty per cent during the period between 1925 and 1939. Thus the George Committee had readily agreed that unscrupulous owners could have further reduced the wage actually paid to the workers.

\begin{quote}
18. Inspector General of Police, Trivandrum, No.724, 8 July 1948, letter to Chief Secretary to Government of Travancore, D.Dis.346/1948/CS.
\end{quote}
A good number of the manufacturers were not sufficiently accommodating or conciliatory in the matter of recognising the rightful claims of the workers.\textsuperscript{21} The Travancore police have also confirmed beyond doubt that varying wages were paid in various factories for the same kind of work.\textsuperscript{22} Hence the committee found that in 1939 a worker with fulltime work of twenty six days per month could earn a minimum of rupees twelve to a maximum of rupees forty per month. And to the surprise a survey in 1938 of the earnings of the factory workers in 1409 families showed that actual earnings of the factory worker was not more than an average of rupees seven per month.\textsuperscript{23} Therefore, it was fully appreciated by all members of the Board of Conciliation that earnings of the worker and not piece-work rates were the important factor for labour discontentment. The George Committee have recorded that there were about 361 factories in Travancore area employing approximately 30,000 workers in 1939.\textsuperscript{24} After making a detailed study on the coir industry and labour grievances, the Board of Conciliation have recorded their observations with suggestions and recommendations for future measures on labour welfare and efficient working of the factories.

The major recommendation of the George Committee was on the question of standardisation of wage. In Travancore there

\textsuperscript{21} Director of Industries, Alleppy, 21 December 1940, letter to Chief Secretary to Government of Travancore, D.Dis.326/1945/CS.

\textsuperscript{22} Inspector General of Police, Alleppy, Report, 24 December 1940, D.Dis.326/1945/CS.

\textsuperscript{23} Bhaskaran Unnithan, K., \textit{op.cit.}, p.290.

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Ibid.}, p.282.
were a large number of coir factories outside Alleppy almost all of which were small units. They were in an unorganised condition. In the race for senseless reduction of price, the organised industries protected labour. But the large orders placed on factories outside the organisation resulted in the exploitation of labour. 25 From 1927 there had been a large influx of shippers and manufacturers or non-shippers into the coir trade. The number of shippers was considerably in excess of the ability of the industry to support them. However, the labourer was given enough to keep him alive and his account was seldom completely settled, and very often the poor labourer did not know what was due to him. These irregularities were rampant in certain factories before the General Strike in 1938. The strike brought about some improvement in regard to the payment of wages. 26 The committee recommended against any kind of exaction or exploitation on labour like Moopu kasu, Dharmavu and free labour to the contractors. The Board viewed the recovery of Moopu kasu and Dharmavu as unjust deduction from wages and that the practice should be given up completely. In the Payment of Wages Act, the Board proposed to declare all compulsory deductions from wages as illegal. 27

26. Ibid.
The superfluous labour supply had become detrimental to the well-being of labour. The pool of surplus labour had increased. The George Committee also reported a floating population at all times in the Alleppy Municipal area. The committee recommended that all the labourers who were in the industry already should be required to hold licenses issued on a nominal fee. Further the report suggested that no unlicensed worker should be allowed to work in the factories and no more licenses should be issued for the next five years from 1939, unless there was a demand for increased labour from a duly constituted organisation of the factory owner. This would check, the Report added, to a great extent the draft of labour into the industry and prevent unemployed and underemployed labour becoming an embarrassment to other labourers, employers and the State.

The Report had remarked the irregularities in the system of employment of labour through the contractors and viewed that under this system there was no guarantee for proper wages to the workers. Still the Board of Conciliation could not arrive at a unanimous conclusion on the standardisation of wage for workers. While pointing out the result of previous enquiries on the 'so exploited and low paid' labourers, the committee recommended the substituting of direct employment of labour for contract labour wherever practicable.

28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
Throughout the mats and matting industry, except in the case of a small percentage of daily paid workers in some factories, wages were paid on a piece-work basis. Therefore the labour memorandum submitted to the Board of Conciliation has suggested that wages should be fixed on a time-basis, instead of the piece-work basis. The memorandum also considered the piece-work labour as detrimental to sound labour conditions. Consequently the Report recommended for an alternative for the piece-work basis wage system, by laying down a minimum wage based on earnings.30 The Board of Conciliation made it clear that the minimum wage meant 'the minimum earnings that a normal worker would make in a unit of time'. The Board had also recommended the statutory establishment of wage-boards based on the British Trade Acts of 1909 and 1918.31

The Board of Conciliation had recommended ways and means for the development of the coir industry also. They reported that the coir industry was in a serious crisis because of unhealthy competitions and recommended measures to control unwarranted competition and thus to enable the industry to earn reasonable profits.32

The Committee found out that various abuses in the payment of wages to the workmen such as payment in kind instead


31. Ibid.

of cash existed in the factories and unanimously recommended that legislation on the line of the Payment of Wages Act in British India should be introduced in Travancore also. The recommendations of the Board of Conciliation led to many labour laws.

The appointment of the Board of Conciliation and the subsequent report on labour problems indicate the State response for the challenge of the growing movement of workers in Travancore. It was for the first time that the administration responded to the labour demand by giving proper representation in the State-sponsored Board of Conciliation. While exposing the labour grievances, the Board had asserted in what manner and to what extent labour interests could be advanced. The Report, became the guideline for the administration to carry on labour welfare measure in future and raised the hope and aspiration of the labourers.

Labour Welfare Measures

The George Committee and its recommendations proved well. The warning which the General Strike of the workers gave to the capital was so effective that the employers remarked it as 'untoward happenings'. The report of the Committee when received


by them, was seriously considered. Dewan C.P.Ramaswamy Aiyer promised that steps would be taken as early as possible to enact measures to further advance the cause of the labour. In January 1940 the Dewan called a meeting of representatives of the industry at Bhakti Vilas in Trivandrum to discuss the report. At the discussion, the Dewan stressed the urgency and the imperative need of a Coir Manufacturers’ Association. The Government constituted a Board of Industries in 1940 under the Travancore State Aid Industries Act. The labour leaders considered the move of the Government as a tendency for compromise and cooperation.

In continuation of the discussions at Bhakti Vilas, the Quilon Factory Workers’ Union had resolved that a deputation should wait on the Dewan to represent grievances of the workers. The members of the deputation were P.N.Krishna Pillai, K.C. Govindan, K.Nanoo, K.Parameswaran Pillai, M.Kunju Pillai and C.G.Kesavan. The Dewan met the members on 20 December 1939.

37. Letter from the Secretary, Quilon Factory Workers’ Union, November 1939, D.Dis.455/1939/CS.
38. Ibid., 20 December 1939, D.Dis.455/1939/CS.
The labour leaders presented before the Dewan about the labour cases pending in Alleppy, the license of Thozhilali paper and demand for Dearness Allowance as the immediate demands of the workers. On the basis of the discussions with the owners and delegations from the workers, the Travancore Government moved towards the new labour welfare measures.

The Travancore Workmen's Compensation Act, on the model of the British Indian Act, was passed on 13 March 1939. Accordingly compensation was payable by the employers in case of injury caused by accident arising out of and in the course of employment. But the Act applied only to persons earning up to rupees three hundred per month and the scope of the Act was limited. The Labour Commissioner was entrusted with the administration of the Act. The Travancore Workmen's Compensation Act had an immediate effect among the employers. Most of the factories started to pay correct compensation to the injured workers on the basis of the wages they were receiving.

The Government also enacted the Travancore Payment of Wages Act in 1941, on the lines of the British Indian Act. The Act was intended to regulate the payment of wages to employees.


41. Commissioner for Workmen's Compensation, Travancore, 11 June 1940, letter to Chief Secretary to Government of Travancore, R.Dis.2638/1941/Devpt.
whose average wages for a month were less than rupees two hundred. Besides fixing the wage period, it regulated fines and other deductions made in the wages. The Act was concerned only with making provisions in respect of rights and obligations which would have existed apart from the Act. However the provisions of the Travancore Payment of Wages Act XX of 1941 applied only to factories coming under the Factories Act. There were some variations between the Payment of Wages Act passed by Government of India in 1936 and the Travancore Payment of Wages Act. The scope of the Travancore Act was much wider and covered persons employed in mines also. When in most of the Indian States, Factory Inspectors were responsible for the Payment of Wages Act, in Travancore the Labour Commissioner had administered the provisions of the Act. Indeed the Travancore Payment of Wages Act was a great relief to the workers from the practice of payment of wages in kind and the compulsory deductions by the contractors.

In Alleppy most of the factories were functioning on false records. The wage books had no relation with the attendance books in most of the factories and this made the work of the Labour Commissioner painstaking. Significantly

43. Director of Industries, op.cit., D.Dis.2308/1945/Devpt.
44. The Indian Labour Year Book 1947-1948, op.cit., p.56.
45. Director of Industries, 27 March 1941, Report to the Chief Secretary to Government of Travancore, D.Dis.471/1945/CS.
the Mats and Matting Manufacturers Association, which had over twenty five factories as its members, had divided on payment of wages on the principle of what they considered as a reasonable daily earning of an average skilled adult worker. They had fixed a minimum earning of eight annas per day as the reasonable amount. 46

the

T.V. Thomas, labour leader condemned the attitude of employers and stated that the case of women and children was left out and that the term 'normal adult male workers' was being interpreted by each factory in its own way. The Alleppy Labour Union demanded full settlement of the wages for the work done after fixing the wages by Wages Investigation Board. 47 The president of the Union was not prepared to agree with the entries in the factory books as true. In return the employers held on to the wage-rates they had already fixed. But the labourers were discontented with the vacilating wage-policy of the employers in Alleppy and the result was that the situation became aggressive. While both the capital and the labour were not prepared to yield, threats of stay-in-strikes, picketing, satyagraha and lockouts were planned. 48 Now the Dewan promised to the Labour Union that he was asking to Labour Commissioner to go to Alleppy and

46. Ibid.


take timely steps concerning disputes between the labourers and factory owners in respect of wages. He asked the labourers to accept the present wages given to them only as an advance. 49

In the meantime, in order to maintain proper control over the striking labourers, the Coir Workers Union had organised a Strike Committee consisting of eighteen members under leadership of P. Gonzago and a volunteer corps consisting of twenty five members under P.O. Spencer. 50 On 7 March 1941 the Wage Investigation Board had its meeting to deal with the disputes between the labourers and factory owners. But the Labour Union President did not agree with the Board's interpretation of the average earning of a normal adult skilled worker. When manufacturers fixed the minimum wage at eight annas, the labour union wanted a flat rate of ten annas. 51 But the owners could not concede this. Thus when the Wage Investigation Board also became helpless, the relation between the manufacturers and the labour union have reached a deadlock.

Now the Travancore Police had advised the Labour Commissioner to reach Alleppy and tackle the problems. 52 On 21 March 1941 the Labour Commissioner arrived in Alleppy and

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50. Ibid., 31 March 1941, D.Dis.975/1945/CS.
52. Ibid.
immediately began to investigate the problems between the labour and the capital. It was insisted that there would be no demonstration, picketing or strike of anykind before the enquiries were completed. The Labour Commissioner submitted his recommendations on 28 March 1941 to the Wage Investigation Board. He suggested two alternatives to the piece-rate system and the daily earnings system. In an emergency meeting on 28 April 1941 at Alleppy under T.V. Thomas, the Managing Committee of the Coir Factory Workers' Union refused to accept the suggestion of the Labour Commissioner to argue in favour of the present wage regardless of the wages of the previous work. The labour force threatened the administration that if a definite decision was not reached within ten days regarding the wages, they would continue their fight vigorously. Moreover the Union had formed a new programme of action which brought under its purview all the labourers from Alleppy to Aroor. Now the Travancore Government guaranteed a twelve and a half percentage dearness allowance and a uniform wage rate was accepted.

The Labour Unions now forced the Government to introduce the Maternity Benefit Act and the Minimum Wages Act. In 1942 when the Maternity Benefit Bill came before the State

53. Labour Commissioner, op. cit., 27 March 1941, D.Dis.471/1945/CS.


55. Ibid., 4 May 1941, D.Dis.977/1945/CS.

Assembly, T.V. Thomas represented the cause of coir workers. Consequently the legislation on Maternity Benefit had been enacted in the State in 1943. Under the provisions of the Act, every women worker in a non-seasonal factory shall be entitled to the payment of maternity benefit at the rate of fourteen chackrams a day for the actual days of her absence during the period immediately preceding her confinement and for the four weeks immediately following her confinement. The Act, however, did not apply to seasonal factories. It is significant to note that the maximum period for which a woman was entitled to this benefit in the Madras Province was seven weeks whereas it was eight weeks in Travancore.

Meanwhile the labour force demanded the fixation of minimum wages in various industries. The George Enquiry Committee had also recommended the desirability of a wage-fixing machinery constituted on a statutory basis. But the Government, after carefully considering the recommendations and labour representations, had resolved that proper machinery for fixing wages on a statutory basis should be constituted. Accordingly the Travancore Trade Boards Bill was introduced in the State Legislature. The Travancore Trade Boards Bill was drawn up mainly


59. Ibid., p.40.

60. Ibid., p.40.

on the model of the British Trade Boards Acts of 1909 and 1918. In fact Travancore was the first State in India to introduce such an advanced measure in the interest of labour.62 The main feature of the Bill was that it provided for the establishment and constitution of Trade Boards for those trades to which the Bill applied and the introduction of minimum rates of wages for workers engaged in such trades. Accordingly Trade Boards were to be constituted by the Government with five members nominated by them, two of whom to represent employers and two to represent the workers in their trades concerned. The Chairman of the Board was to be an officer of the Government. The Board had power to fix minimum rates of wages for workers both on time-work basis and piece-work basis.63 When a Board was dissolved the functions and duties of the Board were to be carried on by such authority as Government might appoint. After making a scheme of organisation and function of the Board, the Bill was committed to a Select Committee to consider the vital question as to whether wages of agricultural workers should also be brought within the ambit of the Bill.64

64. However the Minimum Wages Bill was introduced in the Travancore Legislative only in 1948. (The Indian Labour Year Book 1947-1948, p.57.)
Simultaneously the administration of labour laws have also come to the serious attention of the Government. At first it was decided to divide the state into three labour divisions with their headquarters at Trivandrum, Quilon and Kottayam. But since there were only fewer labour organisations in South Travancore compared to north and middle Travancore, the administration later changed its decision to divide the whole state into two labour divisions instead of three. The headquarters of the Southern Labour Division extending between the taluks of Thovala and Shencottah was at Quilon. The Northern Labour Division, with its headquarters at Muvattupuzha, included the area between the taluks of Pathanamthitta and Parur. Each of these labour divisions was placed under an Inspector of Factories. The coordination of the working of several labour laws were entrusted to the labour commissioner. In fact Inspector of Factories in Travancore was also the Labour Commissioner. He was entrusted with powers to function as the liaison officer between labour and Government or capital in matters of controversy.

As an additional welfare measure a number of large industrial establishments in Trivandrum, Quilon, Alleppy and

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66. Director of Industries, 18 May 1940, letter to Chief Secretary to the Government of Travancore, R.Dis.1752/1940/Devpt.

Always had voluntarily opened canteens for the benefit of their factory workers. In these factories canteens were under the direct supervision and management of the factory authorities. All the initial expenses in opening the canteens have in most cases been met by the factory owners themselves. Out of the total of 5,600 workers employed in all these factories together, about 4,750 workers were taking cooked-food from the canteens. 68

In fact even when the report of the George Committee was on its implementation, employers began to make trouble to the workers. The promises given to the workers by the Government and the employers had gone unattended. The Alleppy Chamber of Commerce had turned down the labour demands unsympathetically. 69 The administration also turned their attention from labour welfare measures to the war efforts. Consequently about 12,000 coir factory workers were thrown out of employment throughout the State. 70 Inspite of repeated complaints from the labour union, the administration did not take any action to promote the condition of workers. 71 In fact the formal labour legislations could not convince the labour. Therefore under the command of leftist leaders, the working people became more aggressive. But the Dewan warned the labour force that they could not always dictate the capital and the Government. 72

68. Ibid., 1945, D.Dis.1245/1946/Devpt.
69. Letter from Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union, Alleppy, 21 March 1940, D.Dis.516/1940/CS.
70. Krishna Pillai, P.N., Speech at annual celebration, Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union, 1 December 1939, D.Dis.413/1939/CS.
71. Letter from Inspector General of Police, Trivandrum, 8 July 1948, D.Dis.346/1948/CS.
Attempts at Isolation of Labour

The labour force was always a major challenge for the administration of Dewan C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer. The Dewan while supporting the organised movement of workers as part of development of industrial relations, was against the wedlock of labour with politics. Consequently the Dewan amidst convincing the labour unions, tried to separate the labourers from political agitations. The fact was that since March 1939 the working class in Travancore grew in alacrity and turned more aggressive under the guidance of the radicals.\textsuperscript{73} By 1940 most of the labour unions in the State turned out to be under the control of the Communist Party. Taking advantage of the discontent among the workers, the political parties concentrated their attention on organising the workers to achieve their political goals. The political leaders by their revolutionary speeches incited the working class into a state of war with the capitalists particularly at Alleppy.\textsuperscript{74} Indeed for the first time the State administration faced an organised movement of the workers.

In order to divert the attention of political parties on the working class, Dewan C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer encouraged many communal organisations loyal to the Government and created difficulties to the proper working of the political parties. He induced some of the labour leaders to deprive the labour. In

\textsuperscript{73} Inspector of Police, Alleppy, 25 May 1939, Report to District Magistrate, Quilon, D.Dis.295/1939/CS.

\textsuperscript{74} Inspector General of Police, 19 January 1941, Copy of report submitted to Chief Secretary to Government of Travancore, D.Dis.740/1944/CS.
fact P.S. Muhammad, a stooge of C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer and a former leader of coir workers, organised a Government-sponsored union by name 'Alleppy Labour Union'. It is to be recalled that when the Travancore Government introduced the four important labour bills in the legislature, P.S. Muhammad had asserted that these bills had already created hopes in the mind of the labourers and that they have better prospects before them. The Government also constituted a 'Rajabhakta Sangham' to give propaganda against the State Congress and to advocate the cause of the administration. In its attempt to weaken the influence of the State Congress, the administration pursued the policy of encouraging these rival organisations. When more members have joined the radical section of the State Congress, the Government arrested the labour leaders. In retaliation the workers held processions, protest meetings and hartals, all with political tones. Meanwhile the Dewan announced that his Government had come to the conclusion that in all concerns a system of participation of labour in their net profit should be introduced.

Inspite of the Dewan's warnings, most of the Travancore Youth League leaders like N. Sreekantan Nair, T.K. Varghese Vaidyan,

76. Ibid., p.141.
77. Thanupillai, A., 7 August 1938, letter to Chief Secretary to Government of Travancore, D.Dis.128/1938/CS.
78. District Magistrate, Quilon, May 1939, letter to Chief Secretary to Government of Travancore, D.Dis.295/1939/CS.
Ponnara G. Sreedhar, C.K. Velayudhan, R. Sugathan and others concentrated upon the labourers of Alleppy and exhorted them for political struggles. Socialist leaders of Malabar visited Travancore and associated themselves with the labour activities. Irritated with the political influence on workers' organisations, C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer proclaimed that "the associations and affiliations of the Communist organisation, the funds which were collected for that organisation, the men who are intermingled with that organisation and who have clandestinely given many kinds of help to it, they were not only those who were immature or misled but people who ought to know better".

In fact the Dewan was reluctant to receive any representation from the labour unions except on labour questions. The administration described the political demands of the workers as "controversial and intemperate in character". To illustrate, the Third All Kerala Labour Conference was to be held at Kanjikuzhy in Sherthalai on 19 February 1939 with Suresh Chandra Banerjee presiding. Soon the Government issued an order prohibiting under section 127 Cr.P.C., the holding of the Labour Conference.

79. Travancore Police Daily Report, 6 November 1938, D.Dis.981/1945/CS.


82. Chief Secretary, Government of Travancore, 11 October 1940, letter to General Secretary, Muhamma Coir Factory Union, D.Dis.257/1940/CS.
Conference at KanjikuzhY and the entry of Suresh Chandra Banerjee into Kottayam district for two months from 7 February 1939. Later when it was decided to invite P. Narayanan Nair, President of Malabar Karshaka Sangham, instead of Suresh Chandra Banerjee to preside over the conference, immediately the State had withdrawn all prohibitory orders. However the working committee of the conference invited the Congress Socialist leader Moid Moulavi to inaugurate the labour conference. In an another instance, the Managing Committee of the Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union, in March 1940, had resolved to depute P.N.Krishna Pillai, R.Sugathan and P.K.Padmanabhan to wait on the Dewan in order to present the immediate demands of the workers. But pointing out the political affiliations of the Union President P.N.Krishna Pillai, the Dewan refused any interview with the deputation of the Labour Union.

However with the arrest of K.C.George on 8 April 1940, the administration had realized that there existed a Communist cell in the State consolidating all the labourers. A bundle of communist papers with the arrested leader brought to light the existence of a communist organisation in Travancore. Considering

83. District Magistrate, Kottayam, C.No.142, 7 February 1939, letter to Chief Secretary to Government of Travancore, D.Dis.198/1938/CS.
84. Ibid., 11 February 1939, D.Dis.198/1938/CS.
85. Chief Secretary, Government of Travancore, 22 April 1940, letter to P.N.Krishna Pillai, Alleppy, D.Dis.516/1945/CS.
86. Inspector General of Police, 10 April 1940, report to Chief Secretary to Government of Travancore, D.Dis.463/1945/CS.
this as a conspiracy against the Government, Dewan C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer had warned the invasion of Communistic and Socialistic doctrines without any idea of tranquility to create civil disturbance in the State. And he alerted the police to have a close watch on labour centres and labour agitators.

In December 1941, the President of the labour conference at Sherthalai, N. Janardhanan Nair, proclaimed that labour movement could not be any longer diversified from politics and exhorted the State Congress to intensify its campaign for responsible government. The Quilon Workers Union also passed resolutions promising support to any political organisation in the state which stood for responsible government. These resolutions forced C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer to issue a warning on the dangers of mixing up political issues with problems arising out of the relations between capital and labour. He issued orders under the Defence of Travancore Act restraining N. Sreekantan Nair, K.P. Janardhanan Nair and T.V. Thomas from participating in any meeting. At the same time he insisted that it was the duty of the capital to make the labour contended and happy and to preserve utmost amicable

89. Press Communique issued by C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, 27 February 1942, D. Dis. 469/1944/CS.
relationship with capital. The attempts of the Dewan to isolate the labour as a separate force had only provoked the labour unions to consolidate under an all Travancore Trade Union Congress.

90. Travancore Information and Listener, Vol. IV, No. 8, March-April 1944, p. 36.