CHAPTER VII

ALL TRAVANCORE TRADE UNION CONGRESS

As a new step towards the growth of trade unionism, the sporadic labour unions in the State had united to form a central organisation. Guided by the trade union leaders, the labour in Travancore organised the All Travancore Trade Union Federation in 1939. Soon the administration reacted and the Dewan exhorted the employers to organise for a counter move against the growing power of the labour and to promote industrial relations. Consequently the employers have also organised. When the associations of both workers and owners decided to settle disputes by conciliation, the Industrial Relations Committee in Travancore had to do much to promote welfare measures and to achieve a peaceful settlement of labour problems. However the labour, conscious of the need for a state level organisation, constituted the Travancore Trade Union Congress in 1942 which decided the destiny of the working class movement in the state for the following decades.

All Travancore Trade Union Federation (1939)

The General Strike of 1938 in Alleppy had revealed a lesson to the working people of the State and now they began to follow the socialist leadership. There was an attempt in
Travancore among labour leaders to establish an organised force of workers. They have described the attitude of administration for compromise as an outcome of labour organisation. But the labour leaders cautioned that the sympathy of Government towards labourers was to create split among the workers and their organisations. In fact the idea of organisation was fast growing among the trade unions in the state.

There was growing class consciousness among the workers which excited them to coordinate the activities of various trade unions in the state. Moreover by 1935 the Congress Socialist Party became a definite platform for the struggle of workers for democracy. From isolated attempts of organising the workers, the socialist leadership had already developed an idea to coordinate all labour unions in the state. P. Krishnapillai, a socialist leader from Malabar, was practically the brain behind this new step of coordination. In May 1935 the first All Kerala Workers' Conference at Calicut gave shape to this method of achieving workers' solidarity. In fact this conference resulted in a widespread awakening among the workers of Travancore. Now they have prepared not merely for an economic struggle but to achieve their political demands.

The Second All Kerala Workers' Conference at Trichur, held on 25 April 1937, was another step in the process of coordinating various trade unions in the state. Significantly in between these two labour conferences, sixteen trade unions had been organised from Trivandrum to Cannanore. The Trichur conference took effective steps to affiliate the different trade unions in the state with a central organisation. In the meantime the conference had resolved to provide proper representation to the local units of all Kerala labour conferences. No wonder there were repercussions of these labour conferences in Travancore.

The Provincial Committee of the All India Trade Union Congress in Travancore had also made attempts to coordinate the scattered labour organisations in the state. In a mass meeting of the AITUC at Quilon, attended by nearly 20,000 people, president Suresh Chandra Banerjee, while exhorting unionism among workers, had insisted on the importance of good relationship between the Trade Union Congress and the Indian National Congress. The All India Trade Union Congress also acknowledged the need of unity among the labour unions in the state. Meanwhile the Malabar Congress Socialist Party wing was considering the unity among labour unions in Travancore as their primary concern.

4. Prakasam, R., op.cit., p.76.
5. Malayala Rajyam, 1 November 1939, Newspaper Abstract, D.Dis. 317/1945/CS.
6. The Resident for Madras States, 14 December 1939, letter to Dewan of Travancore, D.Dis. 507/1940/CS.
The Alleppy Labour Conference in February 1939 influenced the workers of Travancore to become aware of political developments from outside their own immediate world. The labour conference expressed deep concern over the political developments in the international sphere. Moreover the Alleppy Conference had resolved to constitute the Kerala State Trade Union Council. As a prelude to the preparations for this council, it constituted a committee with N.C. Sekhar as convener and R. Sugathan, P. Krishnapillai, K. K. Warrior, P. N. Krishna Pillai, P. Gangadharan and A. K. Gopalan as members.\(^7\) The Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union got primary membership at the conference, for R. Sugathan was the General Secretary of the Union and P. Krishnapillai the President.

On the other side, the radical labour leaders had been considering the need of constituting a coordinating body representing all the labour unions in the state. On 18 June 1939 the All Travancore Trade Union Conference was held at the Alleppy Coir Factory Workers Union office with P. N. Krishna Pillai in the chair.\(^8\) This conference was represented by Quilon Factory Workers' Union, Chavora Mineral Workers Union, Chungam Kannitta Thozhilali Union, Steam Motor Boat Association, Muhamma Coir Factory Workers Union and Arur Coir Factory Workers Union. As

\(^7\) Balaram, N. E., *op. cit.*, p. 105.

\(^8\) Prakasam, R., *op. cit.*, p. 106.
an outcome of the conference, an All Travancore Labour Union Committee was constituted to lead the movement for the unity of trade unions in Travancore.\textsuperscript{9} The All Travancore Trade Union Conference passed resolutions for the implementation of factory acts, recognition of unions and the recognition of rights to strike and processions. The conference protested against the ban orders of Travancore Government.

Meanwhile preparations to form a central organisation of labour unions in the state became more possible. On 5 July 1939 the representatives of different trade unions in Travancore met at the office of Quilon Factory Workers Union.\textsuperscript{10} The meeting resolved to form an organisation called the All Travancore Trade Union Federation with the primary object of giving instructions to the trade unions and of promoting unity among the workers of Travancore. The Federation gave affiliation to all the labour organisations in Travancore. The meeting discussed and adopted the draft rules of the Federation and resolved to hold a labour conference at Alleppy in August 1939 with representatives of different unions to decide the details of registration and election of office bearers.\textsuperscript{11} The All Travancore Trade Union Federation took the cause of the integration of various trade

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., p.107.
\textsuperscript{10} The Hindu, 6 July 1939, p.3.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p.3.
unions in the state as a unique example in India. In fact, the employer manipulations, communal antagonism and Governmental repressions could not disintegrate the trade union solidarity in Travancore.

Integration of Unions

Since the formation of the All Travancore Trade Union Federation, the isolated labour organisations in the state were gradually integrated. Meanwhile badly affected by the economic crisis of the post-Second World War period and the general rise in the cost of living, the labourers now demanded an increase in wage and dearness allowance. By 1940-1942 most of the labour unions in Travancore come under the control of the Communist Party. Communist labour leaders published pamphlets which printed the grievances of labourers and exhorted them to wake up from lethargy, to get organised and achieve equality and to agitate for getting their grievances redressed even at the risk of their lives.

The Travancore administration under Dewan C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer soon banned labour slogans and red flags bearing labour


13. Inspector General of Police, 13 April 1940, report submitted to the Chief Secretary to Government of Travancore, D.Dis.1923/1944/CS.
emblems. On 12 July 1939 the Executive Committee meeting of the All Kerala Labour Organisation held at Cochin under P. Gandharan resolved to establish a strong central labour organisation in Travancore with two members each from the labour Unions.\footnote{14} In the meantime the annual conference of the Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union held on 1 October 1939, resolved to amalgamate the coir workers union with the All Travancore Trade Union Federation.\footnote{15}

In order to assist the work of integration of trade unions in Travancore, the socialists of Malabar sent a deputation of leaders trained in organisational work of the labour and kisan movements.\footnote{16} Encouraged by the new radical leadership, the labour associations were active in integrating sporadic unions in the state. Thus the ban and prohibitions of Dewan C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer against the union of politics with labour could not disintegrate the united movement of workers in Travancore. On 10 March 1940 the All Kerala Labour Conference was held at Trichur where about sixty delegates from various parts of Kerala were present. The President of the Conference, Raman Kutty Nair hoisted the red flag and urged the workers to unite and to work for the establishment of a socialist system in India and in other parts of the world.\footnote{17} Expressing pro-Russian

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15. Sub-Inspector of Police, Alleppy, 2 October 1939, report to the Inspector General of Police, Trivandrum, D,Dis.413/1939/CS.
16. The Resident for Madras States, op.cit., D,Dis.504/1940/CS.
17. Secret letter to the Dewan of Travancore, DCO No.83, 24 March 1940, D,Dis.500/1940/CS.
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sentiments, he condemned the Travancore Government for their repressive policies. A very significant contribution of the conference was that it formed a labour committee for the purpose of coordinating and guiding the labour movements in Travancore, Cochin and British Malabar. The organised labour now demanded the proper administration of labour laws to avoid distress and discontent among the labourers. Noticing the developing power of the labour, the Travancore Government soon prepared to face them by repressive measures and by counter organisation of employers maintaining it as to promote a peaceful industrial relations in Travancore. Thus the immediate reaction to the coordination of trade unions was the formation of coir manufacturers' association in the State.

Reaction of the Manufacturers

In retaliation to the labour threat, the employers were preparing for counter moves by petitions to the Government and protests. But efforts to form a manufacturers' association did not materialise till the owners totally faced the common calamity of World War. The Second World War completely paralysed the coir manufacturing industry due to the absence of shipping facilities to the European countries. Amidst the threat

18. The Resident for Madras States, op.cit., D.Dis.504/1940/CS.
of the factory workers being thrown out of employment, the prices of foodstuffs and other essential commodities rose high. Consequently poverty and starvation became rampant among the labourers. The employment in coir factories of Travancore was comparatively small, approximately 25,000 workers. But spread over the whole coast of Travancore and along the shores of the backwater were three lakh families whose main source of subsistence was one or other of the process in the preparations of coir products. Their efforts to represent industrial conditions through the Alleppy and Travancore Chambers of Commerce had no fruitful response. In fact when the labour became united, the manufacturers felt the need for an employers' association.

It was during this time Dewan C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer created the actual momentum. In January 1940 he summoned a meeting of representatives of coir industry at Bhaktivilas in Trivandrum to discuss the report of the Board of Conciliation. In this meeting, represented by both workers and owners, C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer stressed the urgency and the imperative need of a coir manufacturers association. Consequently the European manufacturer-shippers and Indian counterparts formed a joint 'Travancore Coir Mats and Matting Manufacturers Association' on 30 June 1940. In fact the coir manufacturers association was an immediate outcome of the advise given by C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer.

22. Ibid., p.438.  
Aiyer who continued to guide and foster the growth of the Association.

The coir manufacturers in Travancore who till then organised under two different chambers of commerce came together to form a joint association. This joint association of owners put an end to the suicidal competition and price war between the established European shippers, who once monopolised the European markets and the upcoming Indian entrepreneurs.24 The coir manufacturers, thus, gradually withdrew from direct management of the production and increasingly confined themselves to the field of trade. They retrenched their workers, closed down the large scale factories and transformed themselves from manufacture-shippers into merchant shippers. However the Mats and Matting Manufacturers' Association constituted a London Committee in July 1940 which, by continuous representation to the Ministry of Supply and Shipping, managed to secure import licenses in the United Kingdom.25 Dewan C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer was personally interested to see the growth of the Manufacturers' Association to develop the coir industry and to convince the factory owners. On 9 July 1940 he visited Alleppy and discussed with the members of the Association about the grave situation of labour disputes.26

The Dewan made attempts with the Government of India to develop the coir industry in the state. At his initiative, G. Parameswaran Pillai, Chief Secretary to the Government of Travancore and E. L. Pollard, President of the Travancore Coir Mats and Matting Manufacturers Association visited Delhi as representatives of the Government of Travancore to secure for the coir industry the best consideration possible at the hands of the Government of India. The Dewan's persuasive endeavours with the Government of India induced the latter to accept coir mattings and other coir products for war purposes in the place of other textiles. Moreover the Manufacturers Association brought several representatives of the Government of India to Alleppy and had shown the pitiable plight of the starving labourers. They placed before the representatives various items that the industry could supply and convinced them of the extreme necessity of recognition of the coir industry and relief measures for the aggressive labour.

The Manufacturers Association was to tackle several labour questions from the beginning. In July 1940 figures of unemployment in the coir industry were the highest on record.

27. Ibid., p. 438.
The welfare measures of the Government and the capitalists could provide them only very little relief. Some industries which were themselves badly hit by the War were not in a position to engage their usual labourers. On the contrary certain industries like the textile, paper and engineering were casting in more profits than they were accustomed to during the period immediately preceding the declaration of war. These industries could afford to pay higher wages and dearness allowance. Moreover among the workers themselves, there was no unanimity of feeling in regard to increments in wages or dearness allowance. Some of the workers were even prepared to work for reduced wages so as to avoid total starvation.

The Travancore Government was scared of an immediate unrest of the coir workers who formed the major portion of the working population. The practice of collective bargaining was still new to the industry and that the labour indulged in press propaganda and threats of strike. In response to the mounting unrest among workers, the employers now began to yield to their immediate demands. The Travancore Chamber of Commerce gave lead to the movement for the grant of dearness allowance. Now the Mats and Matting Manufacturers' Association also resolved to pay dearness allowance to the coir factory workers in view of the increased cost of foodstuffs. They had

31. Administrative Report, Department of Industries, 1941, op.cit.
paid dearness allowance to the workers from 5 May 1941 at the rate of one anna to those whose earning did not exceed rupees five in anyone week and with its non-applicability to overtime rates. The Punalur Paper Mills, the A.D. Cotton Mills, the Travancore Sugars and Chemicals and some of the mineral companies in the state had also paid similar allowance to their workers.\(^{33}\)

Some other organisations were also formed considering the welfare of owners in Travancore. In 1940 the Travancore Coir Dealers' Association was registered at Alleppy representing the interests of the coir products and coir dealers in the State.\(^{34}\) This Association made repeated representations to the Government of India demanding adequate representation for them in the Coir Board. As another step to coordinate the employers' organisations, an informal conference was held at Cochin Dewan's house on 25 June 1942 with the approval of the Government of Travancore. The Alleppy Mats and Matting Manufacturers' Association represented Travancore at the conference. This conference had resolved to constitute a 'Malabar Coast Association' to deal with the trade of coir products. For the purpose, the conference constituted a body consisting of Travancore Mats and Matting Manufacturers' Association of Alleppy, Cochin Coir Manufacturers' Association of Palluruthy, Cochin Chamber of Commerce, Indian

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33. Administration Report, Department of Industries, 1941, op.cit.


35. The Hindu, 29 June 1942, p.6.
Chamber of Commerce of Mattancherry, Calicut Chamber of Commerce, Malabar Chamber of Commerce and a representative each of the Government of Travancore, Cochin and Madras. This central organisation of manufacturers had guided the growth of the coir manufacturers association of Alleppy in its attempts to promote the industry.

Again the Coir Trade Committee was formed on 16 December 1943 to arrange the manufacture and supply of coir goods in Travancore. The Coir Trade Committee consisting of representatives of the coir trade interests in Travancore and Cochin had its office at Alleppy with the Dewan of Travancore as Chairman, E.L.Pollard as the Vice-Chairman and K.C.Karunakaran, the Convener. However concerned over the raising labour unrest in the state, the Manufacturers' Association on 7 July 1944 resolved to give an additional dearness allowance of two annas in the rupee with effect from 1 August 1944. Some other isolated attempts of organisation were also made by employers of Travancore. The Cashewnut Manufacturers of Travancore organised themselves into an association called the South India Cashewnut Manufacturers' Association in September 1943. A meeting of

the planters of Quilon district in January 1944, decided to form the Punalur Planters' Association for the purpose of promoting and fostering the interests of the planters of Quilon district. The Planters' Association aimed to be the representative of the interests of the owners of tea, rubber, cardamom and coffee estates in Quilon district. It had decided to protect owners in legislative matters affecting planting industries and to act as arbitrator in the settlement of disputes arising among its members. However the administration now determined to bring the workers and owners together to settle labour disputes of conciliation.

Industrial Relations Board

Realising the importance of amicable settlement of labour disputes, both the manufacturers' association and the workers' union evolved a plan for the voluntary settlement of disputes by discussion and agreement rather than by strikes and lockouts or reference to Government under the Trade Disputes Act. The result was a conciliation machinery as an outstanding instance in the history of industrial relations in Travancore. In the absence of a conciliation machinery, the Commissioner of Labour and the Inspector of Police were deputed by Government.


to bring about a settlement of disputes. This preliminary method of discussion drew closer together the Travancore Coir Factory Workers' Union and the Travancore Coir Mats and Matting Manufacturers' Association. At a meeting of the representatives of the Coir Workers' Union and the Manufacturers' Association on 18 June 1941, the members unanimously agreed to set up the 'Industrial Relations Committee'. Accordingly Industrial Committees were set up at Alleppy and Sherthalai. These committees gave equal representation to the workers and owners.

The Industrial Relations Committee had dealt with questions involving general principles and not those relating to individual managements, otherwise the pressure upon the committee would have been too heavy. Soon after the formation of the Industrial Relations Committee the President of Coir Workers' Union was advised to arrange for the election of representatives of the Union to the Committee. In fact the Industrial Relations Committees in Travancore, introducing collective bargaining in industrial relations, was a unique institution in the whole of India. The Committee had been functioning for the settlement of disputes entirely on a voluntary basis.

43. Extracts from the Minutes of Meeting of the representatives of Coir Workers Union and Manufacturers' Association, 18 June 1941, D.Dis.2293/1946/Devpt.
44. It is to be remembered that ever since the General Strike of 1938, the Travancore Coir Factory Workers' Union had set up factory committees for industrial peace. (Travancore Information and Listener, Vol.VII, No.1, September 1946, p.39.)
disputes related to wage-rates and bonus, besides conditions of work, had come up before the Industrial Relations Committee, which settled it by mutual discussions. However the Industrial Relations Committee, as a grievance machinery was not intended to supplement the Union bargaining activities. 46

As part of their consolidation programme the representatives of both the workers and the owners favoured the establishment of a new conciliation machinery on a statutory basis, instead of voluntary settlements. They have pointed out the absence of an Industrial Disputes Act in Travancore. Moreover the Manufacturers' Association pointed out the weakness of the voluntary conciliation method and that its decisions were not binding on factories which were not members of the association. 47 As a result of this, many labour disputes were settled without any reference to the Industrial Relations Committee. This created uncertainty of the Voluntary Machinery of Conciliation. Further, the decisions of the Committee were not effective in some cases. Thus there was a wide demand for a central conciliation machinery by law, the All Travancore Industrial Relations Board.

The labour leaders of Alleppey suggested the formation of Industrial Relations Committees for each industry or for


industries together. Accordingly the Industrial Relations Board was to be composed of representatives of employers and labour elected by each of the Industrial Relations Committees. They have also recommended that for the above purpose the State of Travancore should be divided into convenient industrial areas like Alwaye, Alleppy, Sherthalai, Quilon, Punalur, Nagercoil or some other convenient centre in South Travancore. It should be noted that during 1942-1943 there were thirty nine registered unions in the State. On 29 April 1943 a conference was held at Alleppy in connection with the formation of an All Travancore Industrial Relations Board. Dewan C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyer participated in the opening ceremony of the conference. The main aim of the conference was the establishment of Industrial Relations Committees for various industries or group of industries in several centres of the state. The conference had resolved to form an All Travancore Industrial Relations Board, which should function as the central organisation to coordinate the general policy of industrial relations in Travancore. Accordingly as

48. A Short memorandum on the formation of All Travancore Industrial Relations Board, Alleppy, 29 March 1943, D.Dis.2293/1946/Devpt.


per the resolution passed by T.V. Thomas in the Alleppy Labour Conference, an All Travancore Industrial Relations Board was constituted. 52 Thus conciliatory machinery for labour disputes had come into being in the state.

Since the establishment of the All Travancore Industrial Relations Board with equal representation for both the owners and the workers, almost all labour disputes had been settled by the Board without creating any major industrial unrest. The Dewan, convinced of the proceedings of the Board, congratulated the functioning of the Board on statutory lines. 53 The remarkable effect of the Industrial Relations Board in Travancore was that the labour secured far higher standards than those obtaining in the same industry was also able to maintain steady and unbroken output in the production of war materials. The Government of Travancore was aware that the settlement of disputes was only a measure and not the final solution of the labour problem which had many phases and penetrated into the structure of the industry. 54 This ideological and institutional coordination of trade unions resulted at last, the formation of a state level trade union congress as the central agency.

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53. In fact the Industrial Disputes Act was employed for setting disputes in the industries at Alleppy only from 1948 onwards. (Report, Committee on Coir Industry, op.cit., D.Dis.20146/1955/Devpt.)

From Federation to Congress

The work of the Trade Union Federation had resulted in the necessity of a new central organisation to coordinate the different trade unions in the state. Moreover in Alleppy all local labour unions were awaiting to fall in with the programme of action to be decided on by the Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union. This facilitated the work of trade union leaders in their attempt to coordinate the sporadic trade unions in the state.

At a labour conference held in Quilon on 12 October 1941 and attended by representatives of various labour organisations in the state, under the presidentship of P.N.Krishna Pillai, the decision to form an All Travancore Trade Union Congress was taken. The conference had authorised a committee to carry on necessary steps for the formation of the Trade Union Congress. The committee consisted of T.V.Thomas, K.P.Janardhanan Nair, P.N.Krishna Pillai, K.A.Muhammed and P.O.Spencer. The conference had also resolved to observe 24 October as "All Travancore Labourers Day". Soon the committee had started preparation...

55. Travancore Police Secret Bulletin, 6 May 1941, D.Dis.977/1945/CS.

56. Ibid., Part I, 13 October 1941, D.Dis.1145/1945/CS.

57. 24 October or Thulam 8 of every year was celebrated as also Labour Repression Day, in memory of those labourers who were victims of the alleged lathi charges and firing during the Alleppy labour riots in 1938. (Travancore Police Daily Bulletin, No.233, 17 October 1939, D.Dis.850/1945/CS.)
for a central labour organisation. Meanwhile the third anniversary meeting of the Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union was scheduled to be held on 25 January 1942. And it was also proposed to conduct the inaugural meeting of the Travancore Trade Union Congress in the same meeting. 58

At the anniversary meeting of the Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union at Alleppy, the All Travancore Trade Union Congress was inaugurated on 26 January 1942. 59 P.N. Krishna Pillai was the president of the inaugural function. Nearly two hundred representatives of various trade unions were present at the function. In fact the All Travancore Trade Union Congress was an organisation to bring together all trade unions in Travancore. However, this central organisation of all trade unions in the state was not registered under the Travancore Trade Union Act. 60

In the meeting president P.N. Krishna Pillai had asserted that such an organisation was to realise the kingdom of the agriculturists and workers. 61 The Trade Union Congress elected its


59. The original members of the Trade Union Congress were:

60. Confidential Report of Chief Secretary, Government of Travancore, 30 June 1948, D.Dis.404/1948/CS.)

office bearers with T.V. Thomas as President, P.N. Krishna Pillai and C.K. Karunakara Panicker as Vice-Presidents, N. Sreekantan Nair, P.G. Padmanabhan and C.G. Sadasivan as General Secretaries, and K.P. Janardhanan Nair as Treasurer. Besides the work of coordinating various labour unions in the State, the All Travancore Trade Union Congress had also strived for the progress of workers by establishing connections with the other labour organisations of the world. 62

The Trade Union Congress had its first meeting at Alleppy on 8 March 1942 with T.V. Thomas in the chair. In the course of its deliberations, the Congress had settled many labour disputes amicably through the Industrial Relations Committees. In the absence of such settlements the Trade Union Congress rendered all assistance to the workers to seek redress of their grievances. T.V. Thomas succeeded in constituting an Industrial Relations Committee at Alwaye, coordinating all labour organisations in the area. 63 By this time according to the decision of the Working Committee meeting at Calicut, the All Kerala Trade Union Congress conducted a class at Alleppy to coach the trade union delegates of Travancore and Cochin about the working of the trade unions. Trade Union representatives


from Quilon, Sherthalai, Muhamma and Alleppy attended the study classes. As the result of the work of N. Sreekantan Nair, T. V. Thomas and R. Sugathan, many new trade unions began to emerge coordinating with the central organisation. By 1942-1943 the number of trade unions in the State went upto thirty nine. The fact was that about eighty trade unions in Travancore were affiliated to the All Travancore Trade Union Congress. As a successive step of solidarity, the first anniversary meeting of the Travancore Trade Union Congress on November 1943 at Alleppy was attended by about 1500 persons including 204 delegates representing eighteen trade unions in Travancore. In consultation with the Manufacturers Association and the Industrial Relations Board, President T. V. Thomas was successful in getting bonus to the workers.

The labour force in Travancore under the guidance of the Trade Union Congress chalked out joint programmes of action. By the time in order to strengthen their organisation, the Communist Party had nominated many labour leaders for propaganda work at Alleppy. They were to work at particular places under instruction from the district committee of the Travancore Communist Party. There were eighteen labour unions in Alleppy

64. Inspector General of Police, 4 December 1942, Secret Bulletin to Chief Secretary to Government of Travancore, D. Dis. 1154/1945/CS.


67. Ibid., 1 June 1943, D. Dis. 861/1945/CS.
consisting of 40,000 labourers and meetings under the auspices of one union or the other were being held on all days. The Travancore administration felt this as to create an impression on the strength and solidarity of the labour unions. Indeed the All Travancore/Union Congress provided a platform for all left wing trade unions in the state. Organised under a militant leadership, the labourers worked out their programmes on communist lines. Almost all the labourers in Alleppy were Communist sympathisers. The All Travancore Trade Union Congress, influenced by the radical leadership, had taken up the cause of factory workers and agricultural labourers and also made attempts to modify the franchise system of Ezhava community. The administration on the other hand deprecated the aim of the Trade Union Congress and warned that it would be very difficult for employers to negotiate with the political demands of the workers totally unconnected with the industry. The pro-Government press also warned of the political leadership of the Trade Union Congress as unnecessary and asked the administration not to allow the trade unions in the State to work under the control of political leaders. As an illustration, the newspaper Bharathi in an article 'Labour Movement' advised the Government to appoint a full time

68. District Superintendent of Police, Quilon, 18 December 1945, letter to District Magistrate, Quilon, D.Dis.2547/1946/Devpt.


70. Press Communique, 27 January 1942, Government of Travancore, D.Dis.1105/1944/CS.
Labour Commissioner and an Advisory Committee to control the trade union activities in the state. On these grounds the Government banned the participation of political leaders in public meetings.

The formation of the Trade Union Congress was an inspiration for the agricultural workers too in the State. With the growth of trade unionism among the factory labourers, the agricultural labourers felt the necessity of a coordinating organisation. The agricultural labourers who were hitherto quite contented with their lot had begun to express signs of unrest. Meanwhile the Travancore Police had cautioned the administration that these agricultural labourers were organising themselves to form a united body with the demands for higher wages. In fact the labour leaders of Alleppy were moving among the agricultural workers inducing them to make a united demand for getting uniform wages. On 24 January 1942, a meeting of the leading landlords of Kuttanad and labour leaders was held at Alleppy with the District Magistrate of Quilon presiding. In the meeting T.V.Thomas, T.K.Varghese Vaidyan and P.N.Krishna Pillai represented the labour. The labour and the

71. The Bharathi, 3 February 1945, Newspaper abstract, D.Dis.291/1945/CS.
73. Ibid.; 18 December 1942, D.Dis.1154/1945/CS.
capital had come to an agreement of this meeting. But not too later, the agriculturists had refused to pay the wages decided at this joint meeting. By the end of 1942 the Communist leaders were active in organising the discontented agricultural labourers throughout the state. The work of establishing agricultural workers unions was entrusted to C.S. Gopala Pillai, a Communist leader. By consolidating the factory workers and agricultural labourers and by coordinating the different trade unions in the state, the Communist Party had established their control over the working class in Travancore.

74. The landlords unanimously agreed to give for planting paddy seedlings, nine chuckrams per male, six chuckrams per female and five chuckrams for boys between age of twelve and eighteen years. (Ibid., Part I, 26 January 1942, D.Dis.846/1945/CS.)