CONCLUSION

Consolidation of the industrial and agricultural workers into a class-conscious movement in Travancore was the result of an awakening among the working people. Throughout the period of analysis, the labour force was a major challenge to the employers and the administration, in the fight for economic equality. Infact the working class, through their organised trade unions, responded to every phase of social reforms in the state. From the very beginning of the twentieth century, the unorganised and discredited labourers in the fields and factories felt the need of their organisation. Thus successfully sublimating the deep rooted caste and communal antagonism, the coir factory workers set an example to the beginning for a movement of workers in Travancore, with the inspiration of an independent class to fight against the capital. Assuming wide proportions in due course, the Travancore Labour Association had commenced a new era of economic equality in the erstwhile state of Travancore. No wonder the labour population who had been fighting with the capitalists for personal rights and pecuniary benefits have, from the 1920's, started to demand for labour legislations.

Even without registration in lines of a trade union, the organisation of coir workers had excited the workers of all other organised industries as well as the radicalised agricultural
labourers of Kuttanad. Soon the idea of labour organisation received wide currency. Inspired by the social reform movements and the consequent change in the class relations, the working population of the state had dared to question landlordism and the bad predicament in factories. The result was that there was more of trade unions. In the beginning, leadership to the labour force was mainly from the social reformers and the elite workers. However with the emergence of the congress socialists, the workers of the state fell under the new political leadership. Thereafter working class in Travancore was politicised. Especially from 1934, the workers in Travancore organised as a separate class of an anti-imperialist united front. A significant change in the history of working class movement in Travancore was the growth of Labour Unions into registered trade unions, mainly from 1938. The solidarity struggle of the labour class under the influence of the emerging leadership of congress socialists had achieved to gain the first labour legislation in the state, the Travancore Trade Unions Act of 1937, which recognised the organisation of workers.

From 1938 the workers identified themselves as a political force, urging the administration for a labour welfare policy. In fact the General Strike of 1938 was a lesson to the labour class. Realising the vacillating leadership of the State Congress and the Youth Leaguers, the labourers had determined
to proceed with the strike and slowly subjected to the radical leadership of the Travancore Communists. However, the administration of C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer was not silent. By proceedings and warnings, the Dewan was very particular to keep away the labour force from politics. Yet the awakened labour force had advanced to new steps of solidarity with the influence of radicalists. The most striking development of this period was the integration of many scattered unions into a central organisation. This is the unique feature in the growth of working class movement in Travancore.

The most important period in the history of working class movement was between 1939 and 1945. During this period of Second World War, the Travancore Communists have consolidated the working people and could establish their ascendancy on the labour. However, the vigil of the administration and the patrol of the police could not detach the labourers from the radicals. As an evidence for their ideological unity, the All Travancore Trade Union Congress came into being in 1942, affiliating the scattered Labour Unions in the state. Thereafter the labour resolutions had wider perspectives perceiving the welfare of total labour force in the state, instead of previous perusal of individual unions. The employers made periodical attempts to retard the growth of solidarity and militancy of the Travancore Working Class. However a new phase of development in the worker-owner relationship was achieved by the formation of the Industrial Relations Board. From Factory Committees to the Industrial Relations
Committee and finally to the Industrial Relations Board the growing movement of workers led to attempts at an amicable relation between the labour and the capital. Indeed the Travancore Communist Party could claim a real role in the achievement of workers' class solidarity. It was radical leadership who prepared the working class for a revolt in pursuit of a democratic workers' government in Travancore. As a result there was growth of Communist power in the state. Actually the Communist ascendancy had helped the growth of solidarity and militancy with the Travancore working class. Interestingly the administration had spotted out many labour leaders as Communists, only because they worked against the whim of the State. And these conclusions many times led the Dewan to favour the growth of employers organisations in Travancore as a parallel move for the threat posed by the labour force for many decades. But the reluctant Dewan was finally to opt for labour welfare measures.

The movement of workers in Travancore had the influence of outside leadership at every stage of its growth. Volunteer jathas and labour leaders from neighbouring states had always inspired the workers in Travancore. The fact was that even the public and the philanthropists reacted to the death sentence imposed on the Punnapra-Vayalar prisoners. However the workers felt the Vaccilation of political leadership for the
second time, in 1941 when the attitude of the Communist Party underwent an unexpected change resolving to participate in the Second World War. Yet the labour unions in Travancore resolved to participate in the war from 1941, identifying with the Communist Party on issues related to international matters. Soon the war became a peoples war. Again in accordance with the general policy adopted by the Communist Party, the trade unions in Travancore dissociated with the Quit India Movement, forgetting the patriotic spirit behind it. Though this decision had created divisions among labour leaders, it explained the strong influence of Communists on the labour population. In fact the economic crisis created by the Second World War had done much to lead the labour population in lines with the radical communists. By the end of the war, the Communist leadership had assumed direct control over the vast majority of workers in Travancore.

The last but crucial phase of the struggle of the working class for a democratic government was in 1946, when it culminated into a violent confrontation. What was conspicuous in the struggle was the class concept. Inculcating the ideology of class, Communist leaders had prepared the labourers for an open revolt against Capitalism. The State, however, faced the aggressive labour force with repressive measures. But this had helped only to foster the militance and stamina of the working class in reaction. In fact the Punnapra-Vayalar revolt had proved the working class as an independent power. In the history of labour movement in Travancore, the workers for the first time
boldly confronted the administrative machinery. By 1946 the economic demands of the labour force had developed into a claim for political rights. The end of Dewan rule and the establishment of a responsible government in Travancore became the primary demands of the working class, which they finally achieved.

In Travancore the caste organisations have paved the way for class organisations and this class-consciousness influenced the character of labour unions. Consequently the ideology of unionism had promoted the welfare associations into trade unions. The fact was that the labour legislations in Travancore have been far advanced than that of British India. The working class had adopted various methods in their process of growth into a powerful movement. Mainly from 1938, labour strikes were systematically organised through strike committees and volunteer corps. Moreover violence was rare before 1946, when the labour force had for the first time openly confronted with the Travancore police force. Further the working class movement was not fully related to the contemporary national movement. In fact the struggle of working class was mainly aimed at the achievement of a democratic government in the state. Moreover the concentration of workers on the conception of class had exhorted them to stress on their solidarity campaign than the struggle for national freedom. Yet it can not be denied that the workers lacked political awareness. In fact most of the labour leaders were members of one or other political
parties and the labour resolutions, mainly after 1935, have included the contemporary political demands. No doubt the working people of the state have always reacted to the political changes in the country.

However the change of government in Travancore had vital effects on the labour movement. In their attempt to assert law and order, the new government had begun to conciliate with the labour force. Consequently the administration considered the organisation of the labour as part of industrial productivity. Thus in labour organisation, legislation and recognition, Travancore set an example to Indian working class.