CHAPTER-II
HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

The History of the Trade-Union Movement everywhere is a History of Blood, Tears and Toils.
— Harry A Mills & Royal E. Montgomery

2.1. Introduction:

The origin of the working class can be traced back to feudal society of the 14\(^{th}\) and 15\(^{th}\) century, when the shoots of the capitalist mode of production appeared on the European continent. Before the 16\(^{th}\) century hired labourers made up only the small part of the population. Hired labour did not become predominant until the primary accumulation of capital took hold at the end of the 15\(^{th}\) and beginning of the 16\(^{th}\) century, first in England and later in the other countries. The primary accumulation of capital was made possible by the peasants forced dispossession of land and the formation of free labour force for employment in developing capitalist manufactories. A manufactory proletariat was formed from among the delanded peasantry and artisans. However, the manufactory workers by and large were not yet proletarians in the exact sense of the word, since they still owned certain instruments of production and were in a more are less patriarchal relationship with their employer. At this stage social development “the labourers still form an incoherent mass scattered over the whole country, and broken up by their mutual competition”\(^1\).

The Trade-Union movements are major components of the modern industrial relation system. Trade-Unions exist in all parts of the world, but their characteristics and functions vary from country to country. Trade union is a

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\(^1\) Karl Marx and Fredric Angel, Manifesto of the Communist Party, in Karl Marx and Fredric Angels collected works Vol. 6, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1976, P. 492.
continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives. The trade unionism is an outcome of the large-scale factory/industry system. It is based on labour philosophy “United We Stand, Divided We Fall”\textsuperscript{2}.

The Industrial Revolution in Great Britain and later on in other countries brought about a sudden and drastic change in the economic sphere. These changes were so sudden and quick that it was very difficult to bring about a complete social, economic and political adjustment. These vast economic changes have considerably influenced and are constantly influencing the social and institutional pattern of our society. Labour problems have become important because of industrial mal-adjustment. Efforts to overcome these mal-adjustments have been made by the State through labour legislations and by organized labour through collective bargaining. Failure to bring about an effective and satisfactory adjustment is bound to cause revolutions. Large scale production and a minute division of labour made production a collective process. In such system the interests of the masters and workmen appeared divergent. The old industrial system was based on custom and traditions.\textsuperscript{3}

The factory system of production completely tore these old relationships without replacing them by new ones. It subordinated the workers while at the same time the powers of the masters were considerably increased. The factory system created considerable amount of confusion and suffering. Large number of workers were hurled together and they had to work under most awful conditions. The new economic order was a challenge. The workers sought to

\textsuperscript{3} Mathur and Mathur, The Trade Union Movement in India, pp. 1-2.
meet the challenge through the formation of associations known as Trade Unions to defend their living and working conditions.\textsuperscript{4}

As a matter of fact, modern Trade Unionism is essentially an outcome of the factory system of production and the capitalistic order of society. In a modern factory, a large number of employees work together. They have their common problems of low wages, excessive hours of work, housing problems, etc. They have an opportunity to discuss these problems and if possible to find a common solution. The impersonal relationship between employer and employees in the modern factory, the increasing profits of the employers coupled with the low wages and poor standard of living of the workers create a class consciousness amongst them and prompt the workers to organize and take group action.\textsuperscript{5}

Industrial Revolution has brought about changes everywhere and given rise to new social problems. The institutional arrangements of the old industrial order have been displayed with those relating to the factory system depending on huge capital investment, natural resources and manpower. The new scientific inventions process and machines, which are employed in factories have changed the entire course of production having far reaching social, economic and political efforts on the life of the community.

The theory of free contract, based on free play of human will, did not take into account the social or economic justice for economically weaker sections of society. The social and political challenges of the impact of industrial capitalism were regarded as natural phenomena arising out of expanding economy. Laissez

\textsuperscript{4} Mathur and Mathur – Trade Union Movement in India, Alhabad Chaitanya Publication House, 1962, pp. 1-2.

\textsuperscript{5} Mathur and Mathur, LOC, p. 12.
Faire principles offered a very welcome pretext for doing nothing where nobody knew what to do. Modern Trade Unionism as a positive ideal of combining workers collectively for sub-serving their common needs, aspirations, interests and security with their collective strength is, therefore, the direct outcome of both the capitalist and the factory system.\(^6\)

The rise of Trade Unions was not easy and smooth in the beginning. The early organizers had to face considerable difficulties. The rise of factory system was associated with what is known as freedom of contract between man and man. The Combination Acts in Great Britain and the Sherman Act in U.S.A. were passed to prevent association of workers and condemn them as criminal conspiracy. Large number of prosecutions was the price that had to be paid by the early Trade Unionists.

**2.2. Trade Union in United Kingdom:**

The British Trade unions are products of the Industrial Revolution. Before that, industries were carried on in the homes of the workers who rarely met. Hence there was no opportunity for the formationof any kind of Union.

The medieval craft guilds were mostly local, while the modern trade unions are organised on a much larger scale. The Guilds also did some religious and philanthropic work, which is not performed by modern trade unions. The Guilds were combination of people in the same occupation, while trade unions can embrace people from different occupations also. Besides, the Craft guilds never lost sight of the public interest and the interest of the craft to which they belonged. The modern trade unions generally look to the interest of belonged. The modern trade unions generally look to the interest of workers alone.

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\(^6\) S.N. Dhyani, Trade Union and the Right of Strike, p. 7.
Sometimes, they do not care much about public interest or the interest of the industry to which they belong.

Before the Industrial Revolution of the 1780’s there were many signs of tension and contradictions in the society. The growth of population, the enclosure movement in the villages, the increase in home and foreign trade, and the emergence of ‘radical ideas in politics proceeded the development of steam engine. According to G.D.H. Cole, the steam engine was the principal factor in accelerating urban concentration and generalising the labour force. It also inspired both the optimistic panegyrics of man’s conquest of nature and the critical analysis of the contradictions and conflicts of the new society, John Wade\(^7\) opined that the physical order of communities has been rapidly inverted and in lieu of agricultural substitutes. The development of factory industry often broke the bond of attachment and with it there was increasing pressure to secure union among the workers themselves. The demand was not only for union among the workers themselves. The demand was not only for union at the factory level or the local level, but for general union. According to Cobbett the system had been destroyed classes would be ranged against each other. Working men combined to effect a rise, in wages. The masters combined against them. One side complained of the other, but neither knew the cause of the turmoil went on. The different trades combine and called their combination a General Union.\(^8\)

The same consequences followed on the growth of industrial cities, where the masses segregated and left to their own devices. While describing the picture

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of Manchester in the 1840s Flederick Enqels wrote that the isolation of the individual was everywhere the fundamental principle, but this disintegration was accompanied by the carving out classes. The cities saw the rise of the workers and the carving out of classes into opposing social groups. The stormiest political decade in the early nineteenth century English history, which began with the financial crisis of 1836 and the economic crisis of 1837, was the decade when class terms were most generally used and ‘middle classes’ and ‘working classes’ alike did not hesitate to relate politics directly to class antagonisms. Patrick Colquhuon attempted to divide industrial society into a productive class whose labour increased the national income and diminishing class, which produced no new property. In the words of Robert Owen there will be a union of the government, isocracy and non-producers on the one part and the industrious classes, the body of the people generally, on the other part; and the two most formidable powers for good or evil are thus forming.9

The same conception influenced radical politics. Thomas Attwood tried to unite middle and working classes in a single Political union and also believed that industrial classes should secure political power. The declaration of the Union drawn up on this occasion claimed that the House of Commons was having over representation of aristocratical interests.10

Adam Smith often showed considerable sympathy in his writings for the workman. According to him, many workmen could not subsist a week, few could subsist a month, and scarce any a year without employment. He was impressed by the limitations of effectiveness of political action on the part of the

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9 V.D. Mahajan, History of Modern Europe, S. Chand & Company, New Delhi, p. 794.
labourer. The combined effect of the French and Industrial revolutions was to
direct attention not the powerlessness of the labourer but to the potential power
of the working classes. His vision was that each man is the best judge of his
own economic affairs.\textsuperscript{11}

As early as in 1826, Wheeler’s Manchester Chronicle (A magazine)
claimed that the purpose of parliamentary reform was to secure to the labourer
the fruits of his own labour and to every British subject a full participation in all
the privileges and advantages of British citizens. John Doherty and his
supporters, continued to argue that universal suffrage means power given to
every man to project his own labour from being devoured by others. The same
views were being canvassed in the London Rotunda in 1831 and 1832 and were
often expressed in the pages of the Poor Man’s Guardia an during the agitation
of the Reform Bill, the National Union, of the Working Classes, founded in
1831, identified political oppression and social injustice.\textsuperscript{12}

Bronterre O’Brien described that a spirit of combination had grown among
the working classes, the object being the establishment for the productive classes
a complete domination over the fruits of their own industry. The term ‘labour
interest’ figured prominently in political discussion at alt levels.

The leaders of the London Working Men’s Association had clearly stated
in addresses to working men in American Belgium and Poland that there were
common interests among the productive millions in the parts of the world and
that it was our ignorance of society and of government - our prejudices, our
disunion and distrust which was one of the biggest obstacles to the dissolution of
the unholy compact of despotism.

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The development of the modern industry from the 18th Century created the conditions in which trade unions became necessary. The factory system gave rise to new class of wage earners who were entirely dependent upon their wages for their livelihood. There was exploitation of the workers who were exposed to great hardships and injustices. The early trade unions or combinations, were the natural result of this exploitation.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{2.2.1. Combination Laws:}

There were already some Acts of Parliament providing for the rise of wages by the justices of Peace. When the State assumed its responsibility of regulating labour condition then the combination of workers to raise wages or to interfere in any other manner with labour conditions was prohibited by law. Similar prohibitions also existed for the employers. After the Industrial Revolution, when there was rapid expansion of industries, the State regulation completely passed into the background and the wages and conditions were left to be fixed by employers. There was exploitation of labour, but the combination were still regarded as criminal and were punishable under the law of conspiracy.\textsuperscript{14}

The acceptance of the Wages Fund Theory implied that the wages were paid out of a fixed fund, and therefore, if a group of workers, through trade unions got higher wages in one industry, the workers in other industries would receive less. Besides, the French Revolution had its echo in England also. It was feared that trade unions would become revolutionary in character. Hence the Parliament became hostile to the unions and several Acts were passed making combinations illegal. This was followed by more drastic measures in the form of

\textsuperscript{13} V.D. Mahajan, History of Modern Europe, S. Chand and Company Ltd., New Delhi, p. 796.
\textsuperscript{14} V.G. Goswami, Labour and Industrial Law, Central law Agency, p. 190.
combination laws of 1799 and 1800 which penalised all associations in restraint of trade and made trade unions criminal bodies.\textsuperscript{15}

The result was that secret societies of workers were formed, and the names of members were kept a close secret. When the unions could not approach the employers for peaceful settlement the result was strikes and violence and smashing of machinery, since machinery was regarded as the cause of suffering and misery. During this period some friendly Societies existed registered under the Friendly Societies Act of 1972. These Friendly Societies did some useful work in helping the workers in times of sickness or unemployment. However, these societies were not the legal combinations of the workers which were prohibited by law.

\textbf{2.2.2. Trade Union Growth in U.K.}

For a long period the workers could not get the repeal of the Combination Laws. Technically combinations of employers were also forbidden and very little action was taken to enforce this prohibition, the penalties against the workmen were rigid.

Francis Place a master tailor with the help of radical leaders like Joseph Hume, was successful in getting an Act passed in 1824, which permitted combinations among the workers for bargaining with the employers on questions relating to wages and hours of work. The Act of 1824 declared the trade unions to be lawful bodies and strikes were legalised immediately after the repeal of the combination laws there were many strikes. The Act of 1825 was passed to prevent the epidemic of strikes. The Act recognised trade union,

strikes and other acts of force were made illegal.\textsuperscript{16} Workers could be prosecuted under the common law for any combination, the purpose of which was not restricted to bargaining about hours of work and rates of wages. With the passage of this Act, the formative period in the history of trade unions was over.\textsuperscript{17}

After 1824, trade unions were no longer organised in secret and the number of unions and members quickly increased. A period of experiment in trade unionism followed, efforts were however, made to combine small local trade unions into large organizations in 1834. Robert Owen founded the Grand National Consolidated Trade union with a membership of more than half a million. But this Grand National failed to satisfy the expectations of its members. It collapsed and for some years the workers lost faith in the efficacy of trade union action and turned their attention to the political activities and supported the Chartist Movement.\textsuperscript{18}

The Reforms Act of 1832 had enfranchised the middle classes, but not the wage earners. The charist movement appeared as a reaction against the Reforms Act, but it failed to secure any immediate and tangible benefits. The workers disheartened for the time with revolutionary methods on the one hand and political actions on the other turned their activities to less ambitious and more cautious and opportunist policy.\textsuperscript{19}

New unions were “established on side the traditional sphere of influence - organisations of gas stockers, dockers, agricultural labourers and other lower paid workers. Even white collar workers were affected: the National Union of

\textsuperscript{16} Sydney and Beolin Web, The History of Trade Unionism, pp. 155.
\textsuperscript{17} P.R.N. Sinha, Indubal Shekar, Industrial Relation Trade Union’s and labour Legislation, Dorkli Kingly, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{18} Sydney and Beatric Web, The History of Trade Unionism, Kelly, New York, 1965, p. 113.
Elementary Teachers was set up in 1870. According to G.D.H. Cole, in the boom of the early 1870s the Trade Union movement was on the point of assuming the character - which it took on more definitely in the 1880s with the foundation of the Miners Federation, the revolt of the dock workers and the match girls and the creation of a host of new unions. But for the Great Depression British Labour would not have waited until 1889 asserting itself as a movement. The Webbs certainly regarded this period as barren and concluded that the trials of 1879 proved that the Trade Union Movement was at last beyond all danger of destruction or collapse and that the Trade Union Organisation had become a permanent element in our social structure.

2.2.3. Socialism and New Unionism:

According to D.H. Cole, 1889 was the year in which British labour asserted itself as a movement of the whole labour class The Webbs wrote that the whole Trade Union world permeated with Collectivist ideas. This revolution in opinion is the chief event of Trade Union history at the close of the Ninetieth Century. According of Hobs, ideologically and politically the union expansions after 1889 marked a sharp turn to the left, the creation of a new cadre of leaders and policy makers inspired by socialism.\(^20\)

In the years 1889-91 total trade union membership doubled. A socialist revival took place in the 1880’s and the members of the Social Democratic Federation had made the most of the heavy unemployment of 1884-87 in their efforts to win working class support. The year 1889 is remembered for its new organisations - the New Unions. Socialists were active in these unions. Tom Man of the Socialist Democratic Federation became president of the Docker’s

\(^{20}\) P.R.N. Sinha, Indubalu Shaker, Industrial Revolution, Trade Union and Labour Legislation, Dorking Kindersly, Delhi, p. 42, 43.
Union. Will Thome was leader of the Gas workers, and General Labourers’ Union. The ‘New Unions’ dispensed with friendly benefits altogether and concentrated on the possession of funds for use in strikes and lock-outs.21

Impact survival was the basic problem for the new organisations. The critical factor was employer recognition. The Dockers’ Union lost nearly all its membership among the dockers of London and Hull but survived largely because of its foothold in the tinplate industry of South Wales. The National Amalgamation Union of Labour obtained a secure foothold among the labourers in the ship yards of the North East, since it enjoyed employer recognition. By 1900 the new unions accounted for less than one-tenth of all trade unions.

There was as large proportion of carpenters, masons, engineers and cotton operatives a viewed Socialists as is to be found amongst the gas workers, dockers, chemical workers and general labourers. Within the established unions younger men were particularly attracted to socialism. Socialism became a potential programme of modernisation for trade unions.22

Two examples could be cited for this development. First, the 1890s witnessed considerable technical change in industries. The Marxian argument that “mechanisation reduced the skilled to the ranks of the unskilled” carried conviction. Second, the socialist theory of capitalist concentration also appeared relevant when the employer’s organisations were inflicting some severe defeats of the unions, as in the Hull Dock Strike of 1893 and the Great Engineering

21 Ibid, p. 43.
Lock-out of 1897. British unionists were well aware of the American experience where the trust system developed rapidly.\textsuperscript{23}

According to Clegg, the socialists has increased their influence by organising aggressive industrial movement to resist technical and organisational change. At the end of the century, the unions were at last drawn into a political alliance with the socialist societies, and so the Labour Party was born.

\textbf{2.2.4. Taff Vale Railway Company Case:}

The trade union movement in England suffered two severe blows. In 1900 a strike occurred in Taff Vale Railway Company. The company brought an action for damages against the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, The Union thought that it was amply protected by the Acts of 1871 and 1875. But the court ordered the union to pay heavy damages to the company. The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants paid the Taff Vale Railway Company 23009 in settlement of damages and costs. This incident created an impression that the trade unions’ funds were being wasted in legal cases and damages after every strike.

The unions were now in an extremely dangerous position. Not only this legal decision opened the way to an increasing use of the ‘free labour’ weapon but the skilled unionists were as vulnerable to actions by the employers in the courts as were their unskilled bortheren. According to Saville the series of adverse decisions against the unions in the courts from the mid-nineties down to 1901 - the year of the Taff Vale decision - formed part and parcel of a general reaction against trade unionism.\textsuperscript{24}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, p. 26, 27.  
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid, p. 43.}
The period after 1889 was one of counter-attack against the working class. The decisions of the courts echoed the hostility of the employers and the prejudice of the politicians towards trade unions. In classic Marxist fashion the employers, the judiciary and the State were seen as reacting vigorously to the pretentions of the organised workers.

A Bill was brought before the Trade Union Congress Parliamentary Committee in 1903, which contained a clause ruling out actions for damage against a union except in cases where members had acted without union authority. In 1906 however, relief was of forded by the Trade Disputes Act, which prohibited the courts to entertain action against trade unions and legalised peaceful picketing. The Act was a source of great relief to the Trade Union Movement.25

2.2.5. Osborne Case:

The next blow to trade unionism arose in connection with its political activity. It was customary for the trade unions to get contributions for their member for the support of the Labour Party. This right was contested in 1908 by Mr. W. Osborne, a member of the Amalgamated society of Railway Servants. He objected to his union enforcing a political levy in order to support a party. His viewpoint was ultimately upheld by the courts. The Webbs saw in this judgement another example of the prejudice of the governing class against both the industrial and political organisations of labour. It is clear that Osborne was no more a tool of the governing class. According to Clegg, support to Osborne came from within the unions as well as from without and the judgement as much in favour of old fashioned ruling class and its allied agents.

25 PRN Sinha, Indubal, S.P. Shekhar, Industrial Relations Trade-Union’s and Labour Legislation, Dorling Kindersly (India) South Asia, 4th Edition, Delhi, p. 44.
The labour movement had to wait until 1913 when the issue was resolved by parliament. Under the provisions of the Trade Union Act any union wishing to engage in political activity had to secure a majority in favour of such action in a ballot of the membership. Political funds were to be kept separate from other funds. Any individual could refuse to contribute to the political fund was not to be penalised in any way.\textsuperscript{26}

2.2.6. Unemployment in the 1930s

By 1939 a total of 1.9 million workers were affected in industries like shipbuilding, steel, coal mining shipping and textiles. J.M.Keynes, the liberal economist, suggested that the government should spend in order to stimulate new industries. Detailed schemes were suggested for road-building, electrification, housing, and national parks. Labour’s solution was explained in pamphlet, called ‘The Theory and Practice of Socialism’(1936) written by John Strachey. Under State control-production could be limited to need and unemployment could be eliminated.

MacDonald’s Ministry, Besides, the Trade Union’s started concentrating more on a constructive Policy in place of some what propaganda slogan’s of the past.\textsuperscript{27}

The Trade Union grew in strength so did the number of disputes among officials about demarcation of their respective areas of requirements.\textsuperscript{28}

The National Government passed the Unemployment Act (1934) based on the “means test” to asses unemployment. The Special Areas Act (1936) was enacted to encourage employers. From 1636 onward, the rearmanent programme

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid, p. 44
\textsuperscript{27} Allen Flanders, Trade Union’s Hutchinson University Library, New York, (1957), p. 22.
helped in the creation of extra job. By the end of 1937 total unemployment had fallen to 1.4 million.\textsuperscript{29}

\textbf{2.2.7. The Beveridae Report of 1942}

The War Cabinet appointed a committee under Sir William Beveridge to investigate the problem of social insurance. His report claimed that the great evils to be overcome were want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness. In spite of the widespread demand from all Trade Unions in England, only one of its recommendation was introduced before the end of the War - payment of child allowance at the rate of five shillings a week for each child after the first. But it was left to the Labour Government of 1945-51 to introduce a Welfare State.

For the First Time, the Labour Party gained a massive victory and the cabinet of Clement Attlee adopted scheme of nationalisation and Welfare State. The Beveridge Report had provided plenty of ideas about what a Welfare State should aim for the elimination of want disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness. But even before the Beveridge Report, the Labour Party Conference of 1942 came out with a commitment of comprehensive social security scheme, family allowances and a National Health Service. The three important legislations passed during this period were (a) National Insurance Act (1946) and (b) The National Insurance Industrial Injuries Act (1946).

Under the National Insurance Act the scheme being compulsory; in return for a weekly contribution from workers, employers and government. The individual was entitled to sickness and unemployment benefit, old age pensions for women at 60 and men at 65 (26 shillings a week) and for married couple (42 shillings a week) widows and orphans’ pensions and maternity and death grants.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid, p. 120.
Under the National Insurance Industrial Injuries Act the scheme became compulsory for both workers and employers and were required to make weekly contributions to a fund which would provide compensation to injured workers and pensions for those who were disabled.\textsuperscript{30}

A new Trade Disputes Act was passed in 1906 in which the political levy became legal and it was up to individuals to ‘contract out’ if they did not wish to make a financial contribution to the Labour Party.\textsuperscript{31}

The next 13 years saw the Conservative Government. Between 1951 and 1963 wages rose on an average by 72% while prices rose only 4%. There was an increase in housing facilities. There were some important extensions of the Welfare State during this period. The Mental Health Act of 1959 laid down that mental illness was to be regarded not differently from physical illness.\textsuperscript{32}

2.2.8. Trade Unions in U.K. Upto 1970’s:

In 1944 it was agreed that government should undertake to manage the economy in order to defend against renewed depression and to “create a” high and rising standard “of living. The trade union movement through the Trade Union Congress (TNC) was drawn by government into the centre of national economic decision making. They new scarcity of labour could expect to win progressive wage increase. At the same time this leverage ensured union influence with government, which worried that unrestricted wage increase might endanger the cost - competitiveness of British Exports.\textsuperscript{33}

But a review of British economic history since 1945 reveals that government has failed to enlist trade union cooperation. The issue of wage

\textsuperscript{30} Lord William Berveridge, Report on Social Insurance and Allied Serious, George Allen and Unwin, London (1992), Part-V, p. 120.
\textsuperscript{31} P.R.N. Indubal, Shaker, Industrial Relation, Trade Union and Labour Rights Darling Kingsley, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid, p. 132.
\textsuperscript{33} T.V.C. Britain’s Union’s – TVC Affiliated Union, 12 April, 2002, p. 1.
restraint has been the most contentious. Conflict raged on many occasions as government repeatedly demanded cooperation on this issue. The decline of the British economy into a series of crises made these demands more urgent and the argument between unions and government more bitter.\footnote{P.N.R. Singh, Indubala, P. Shaker, Industrial Relation Trade Union and Labour Legislation, p. 47.}

The government’s four attempts to attain union co-operation for wage restraint between 1945 and 1968, only one was successful, that of 1948. The other three (in 1956, 1961 and 1964-67) ended in failure with government choosing alternative policies.

Trade Union opposition to wage restraint or incomes policy was mooted in the fundamental objection that such an approach unfairly interfered with the rights of working people to bargain freely for the terms of their employment. For example, wherever a Conservative Government tried for wage restraint, which happened twice in 1956 and again in 1961, the unions felt a strong hostility toward the conservatives. In fact TUC leaders gained prestige with their membership by their intransigence toward Tory Governments.\footnote{P.N.R. Singh, Indubala, P. Shekar, Industrial Relation, Trade Union and Labour Legislation, p. 48.}

The union relationship with a Labour Government was quite different. The Trade BBS Congress and the Labour Party comprised the industrial and political sides of the Labour Movement. Thus it was not surprising that the Attlee Government in 1948 provided the only Sample of union co-operation for wage restraint. The same situation arose in 1964 and 1965. When the Wilson Government successfully pressurized the TUC General Council to it operate in another period of wage restraint. But this time the TUC leaders operated from a weakening position of authority. Shop steward and their rank and file were against wage restraint. There were a large number of wild cat or unofficial
strikes political leaders believed that militant unionists were intent on extending their aggression from the economic sector to the political system itself.

The counter attack against trade union power began in 1968 by means of a formal change in the rules of the collectivist relationship. The Wilson Government and then the Health Government hoped to wrest the advantage from the Trade Union Congress. The Wilson Government tried to legislate restraints on militant behaviour which would be sufficient to restore the authority of union leaders. The Government expected that these leaders in turn would be suspected to the pressure for co-operation.

The Tony Government of Edward Health started from a completely different view. The Tories accepted that they suffered an inherent disadvantage in any collectivist interaction with the trade union congress. Hence they sought to develop a frame work of law as well as an economic policy which would put that relationship on automatic pilot. The law, and economic policy simultaneously would operate without need of and active advice, co-operation or acquiescence from the trade union congress.

Both approaches fallen miserably between 1968 and 1974. Their common weakness was that they were suspected to union negative power, albeit veto power, which they were designed to reduce or end. The power flowed from the government’s commitment to manage the economy to provide economic security and well-being rather than from the institutional arrangements and rules which the political leadership attacked. Political leaders seemed to have understood this problem because they believed that the political process in Britain continued to demand their fidelity to its terms and especially to full employment. The outcome of the attack and of the ferocious struggles between
the unions and government thus clearly reconfirmed union power and even carried it to new heights.36

The first signs of much more potent challenge appeared while the Wilson Government was already reconfirming union strength by legislating a series of TUC sponsored policies. Very high unemployment together with hyperinflation proved to be a far more effective counter attacking weapon against union power. They worked to undermine orthodox Keynesian views and by 1975 caused the Labour Government quietly to abandon involuntarily many of the 1944 commitments, including full employment. Gradually in the years after 1975, the basis for union strength slipped away as the Labour Government began reluctantly to administer a more monetarist approach to economic management.37

This development exposed an important weakness of TUC’s that its power is limited and overwhelming negative, It was a fact that the TUC wielded enormous negative influence during the era of full employment consistently failed to convince both the Labour and conservative governments to adopt alternative policies which it favoured. This weakness had not been crucial so long as government faithfully maintained its commitment to the 1944 agreement. It became crucial, however, beginning in 1975, when the Labour Government gradually abandoned these commitments. The TUC found itself with only limited strength to use in responding to its constituents demands that it convinced the government to adopt remedial polices for soaring inflation and the rapid decline in the standard of living.38

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The Conservative leadership suffered much in their effort to contain union strength between 1970 and 1974. The miners strike was a real tragedy for the government. The government could have come to terms with the TUC and saved its incomes policy. It failed to appreciate the TUC’s overriding interest in settling the issue. At the sometime, the course of the miners’ dispute and the whole period of Governments’ conversion to collectivist politics in mid-1973 were also a bitter experience for the union government ‘Faced with the miners dispute the TUC could not overcome the government’s mistrust and suspicion. Though union wounds were saved by Labour’s return to office, the spectacle of the TUC’s inactivity during the miners’ strike was felt by the union leaders themselves. The TUC learned that the deterioration in the appeal of Keynesian wisdom compelled them to defend their interests by winning influence and access to government policy making.39

Labour Party’s return to office in 1974 was a welcome surprise for trade unionists. All through the miners’ dispute TUC leaders were worried that a Tory victory would prolong the miners strike and the government would resume its abandoned efforts to restrict union influence generally. Labour’s victory changed the scenario. The miners’ strike was settled quickly and the country returned to full time work. The TUC looked forward to the commitment of the Labour Government to serve the positive interests of trade unionism. These circumstances ‘helped well for collective politics. The TUC held the upper hand at the beginning by virtue of its consecutive victories against the Government.40

Balancing this union advantage, though, TUC leaders worried that they needed to cooperate with Labour while avoiding conflict in order to develop positive influence on economic policy-making. The TUC held a far more realistic view about economic management in 1974 than it had held in 1969. The council had accepted that it could only protect union interests by enjoying continued influential access to the economic decision-making and administrative process. Its members believed that the TUC could no longer expect that governments of either party would follow some preconceived policy which would inevitably protect economic well-being.41

Both of these balancing considerations worked during the entire term of the Labour Government. Trade Unionism enjoyed the fullest positive influence before recession very high inflation and unemployment, turned the advantage over to the political side of the Labour movement. By mid 1975 the Wilson Government could insist and win the first effective voluntary wage restraint in nearly three decades from a badly frightened union movement. With the British economy in severe crisis the Labour Government, for at least three years there after took its turn in producing effective collectivist politics by the strength of its control over economic management. The Government skilfully rekindled the unions stake in the labour alliance by loyalty implementing the policies worked out by the Liaison committee.

2.2.9. Present Position

After this period, the trade union movement in England continued gaining strength and has carried on a number activities. In nearly all industries and occupations, some workers, and in some industries nearly all workers, are

41 P.N.R. Indubala, Shekar, Industrial Relations, Trade Union and Labour Legislation, p. 54.
organised into trade unions. The achievements of the British trade unions for the uplift and welfare of the working classes have been outstanding, for they have been responsible for greatly improving the conditions of workers and for promoting labour and social welfare work. The Trade Union Congress has set up a standing Workmen’s compensation and Factories Committee. In many industries, it is customary for the union to deal with the question of discipline, by a joint committee representing the employers and the unions.\(^4^2\)

Besides, the unions also provide the members with various benefits in cash which vary from union to union, e.g. they provide cash payment in the event of sickness, accident or death, funeral benefits may be paid on the death of a member’s are also included. Some unions also pay unemployment and retirement benefits. Many unions are also approved societies for administration of benefits under the National Health Insurance Act.\(^4^3\)

Other welfare activities include legal aid to members in case of accidents or any other legal proceedings, grants and scholarships for education run Workers Education Association and Labour Colleges, special courses on problems of unions etc. The unions are now regularly consulted by the Government on economic social and even defence questions. In the international field the movement seeks to secure the establishment of satisfactory international standards of labour conditions through the I.L.O.\(^4^4\)

In Britain, Lady Margret Thatcher destroyed trade unions twenty years back under the Employment Act 1980, 1982 and 1988 restriction to strike unfair practice of labour etc. But now it is slowly resurrecting, coming up and growing

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\(^4^4\) Ibid, p. 2-3.
steadily, stabilising their membership with renewed confidence. In 1979, for example, the unions had over 13 million members. Now there are just over 6 million. About 1,00,000 members have been added to this figure.45

Before Margret Thatcher years, the unions were the strongest and most powerful institutions. Actually, the union members could bring the country to a halt by calling a general strike. The anti-union legislation brought in by the Thatcher government combined with a sharp decline in the traditional heavy industries such as coal, steel and ship building which provided the bulk of union membership have sharply reduced trade union influence, it was in Britain when the trade union movement was born in the last century, but today, it has the weakest unions among all the European Countries. However, trade union movement in Britain are adopting with growing success to the new patterns of work in persuading employers to adopt family and friendly polices to help part-time workers.46

The Tony Blair government has brought about a few legislations which have helped workers and the unions. They include

1) The introduction of national minimum wage;

2) Compulsory union recognition in work places where majority of workers want it; and

3) Four weeks compulsory paid holiday a year.

It also extends several rights to workers and the unions.

45 P.N.R. Indubala, Shekar, Industrial Relations, Trade Union and Labour Legislation, p. 55.
2.3. History of Trade Union Movement in America:

The roots American country’s trade unions extend deep into the early history of America. Several of the Pilgrims arriving at Plymouth Rock in 1620 were working craftsmen. Captain John Smith, who led the ill-fated settlement in 1607 on Virginia’s James River, pleaded with his sponsors in London to send him more craftsmen and working people.

Primitive unions, or guilds, of carpenters and cordwainers, cabinet makers and cobbler made their appearance, often temporary, in various cities along the Atlantic seaboard of colonial America. Workers played a significant role in the struggle for independence; carpenters disguised as Mohawk Indians were the “host” group at the Boston Tea Party in 1773. The Continental Congress met in Carpenters Hall in Philadelphia, and there the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776. In “pursuit of happiness” through shorter hours and higher pay, printers were the first to go on strike, in New York in 1794; cabinet makers struck in 1796; carpenters in Philadelphia in 1797; cordwainers in 1799. In the early years of the 19th century, recorded efforts by unions to improve the workers’ conditions, through either negotiation or strike action, became more frequent.47

The invention of the steam engine and the growing use of water power to operate machinery were developing a trend toward a factory system not much different from that in England which produced misery and slums for decades. Starting in the 1830s and accelerating rapidly during the Civil War, the factory system accounted for an ever-growing share of American production. It also produced great wealth for a few, grinding poverty for many.48

With workers recognizing the power of their employers, the number of local union organizations increased steadily during the mid-19th century. In a number of cities, unions in various trades joined together in citywide federations. The Nation Labour Union, (actually a federation- an organization of local unions) formed in 1866. The NLU eventually persuaded Congress to pass an eight hour day for Federal workers. Never very strong, it was a casualty of the sweeping economic depression of 1873.49

A Well-Knit Association grow’s zealously gurding the Interest of the crafts members. “The craft member’s organization may give the most stable relationship; it may give the best service insecuring desirable jobs; it is most likely to provide needed training through apparentiship and control the supply of labour. The Knights of Labour captured the public imagination. Formed in 1869 by Uriah Stephens and expanded rapidly under the leadership of Terrance Powdery, the Knights were an all-embracing organization committed to a cooperative society.50

Membership was open to all workers, whether they be skilled or unskilled, black or white, male or female. The Knights achieved a membership of nearly 750,000 during the next few years, but the skilled and unskilled workers who had joined the Knights in hope of improvement in their hours and wages found themselves fragmented by the rift between skilled and unskilled workers. Skilled workers tired of labour activity on the part of unskilled workers who were easily replaced. The Knights, an effective labour force, declined after the Haymarket Square riots. In the riot members of the Knights of Labour,

where accused of throwing a bomb which killed police officers. The Knights, already fragmented, where faced with enormous negative publicity, and eventually disbanded.

The American Federation of Labour was founded by Samuel Gompers in 1886. Gompers, born in 1850, came as a boy with his parents to America from the Jewish slums of London; he entered the cigar-making trade and received much of his education as a “reader” (a worker who read books, newspaper stories, poetry and magazine articles to fellow employees to help break the monotony of their work in the shop) and became a leader of his local union and of the national Cigar Makers Union.

A statement by the founders of the AFL expressed their belief in the need for more effective union organization. “The various trades have been affected by the introduction of machinery, the subdivision of labour, the use of women’s and children’s labour and the lack of an apprentice system-so that the skilled trades were rapidly sinking to the level of pauper labour,” the AFL declared. “To protect the skilled labour of America from being reduced to beggary and to sustain the standard of American workmanship and skill, the trades unions of America have been established.” Thus the AFL was a federation that organized only unions of skilled workers. 51

The Pullman Strike in 1894, at the Pullman plant near Chicago, the American Railroad Union (not affiliated with the AFL and led by Eugene V. Debs, a leading American socialist) struck the company’s manufacturing plant and called for a boycott of the handling of Pullman’s sleeping and parlor cars on the nation’s railroads. Within a week, 125,000 railroad workers were engaged in a

51 Ibid, 2.
sympathy protest strike. The government swore in 3,400 special deputies; later, at the request of the railroad association, President Cleveland moved in federal troops to break the strike—despite a plea by Gov. Aitgeld of Illinois that their presence was unnecessary. Finally a sweeping federal court injunction forced an end to the sympathy strike, and many railroad workers were blacklisted. The Pullman strikers were essentially starved into submissive defeat.  

The strike illustrated the increasing tendency of the government to offer moral support and military force to break strikes. The injunction, issued usually and almost automatically by compliant judges on the request of government officials or corporations, became a prime legal weapon against union organizing and action.  

A better method of federal intervention occurred during a 1902 strike of anthracite coal miners, under the banner of the United Mine Workers. More than 100,000 miners in northeastern Pennsylvania called a strike on May 12, and kept the mines closed all that summer. When the mine owners refused a UMW proposal for arbitration, President Theodore Roosevelt intervened on Oct. 3, and on Oct. 16 appointed a commission of mediation and arbitration. Five days later the miners returned to their jobs, and five months later the Presidential Commission awarded them a 10 percent wage increase and shorter work days— but not the formal union recognition they had sought.

In 1911 a fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Co. on New York’s lower east side. About 150 employees almost all of them young women—perished when the fire swept through the upper floors of the loft building in which they worked. Many burned to death; others jumped and died. Why so large a casualty list? The safety exits on the burning floors had been securely locked, allegedly

52 Ibid, p. 2.
to prevent “loss of goods.” New York and the country were aroused by the tragedy. A state factory investigation committee headed by Frances Perkins (she was to become Franklin Roosevelt’s secretary of labour in 1933, the first woman cabinet member in history) paved the way for many long needed reforms in industrial safety and fire prevention measures.\footnote{Ibid, p. 3.}

Another of the historic industrial conflicts prior to World War I occurred in 1912 in the textile mills of Lawrence, Mass. It was led not by an AFL union but by the radical Industrial Workers of the World or the Wobhlics, as they were generally known -an organization in frequent verbal and physical conflict with the AFL and its affiliates. The strike in Lawrence started when the mill owners, responding to a state legislature action reducing the work week from 54 to 52, coldly and without prior notice cut the pay rates by a 31/2 percent. The move produced predictable results: a strike of 50,000 textile workers; arrests; fiery statements by the leaders; police and militia attacks on peaceful meetings; and broad public support for the strikers. Some 400 children of strikers were “adopted” by sympathizers. When women strikers and their children were attacked at the railroad station by the police after authorities had decided no more youngsters could leave town, an enraged public protest finally forced the mill owners not only to restore the pay cuts but to increase the workers’ wages to more realistic levels.\footnote{Ibid, p. 3.}

Congress, at the urging of the AFL, created a separate U.S. Department of Labour with a legislative mandate to protect and extend the rights of wage earners. A Children’s Bureau, with a major concern to protect the victims of job exploitation, was created. The LaFollette Seaman’s Act required urgently
needed improvements in the working conditions on ships of the U.S. merchant marine. Of crucial importance, the Clayton Act of 1914 made explicit the legal concept that “the labour of a human being is not a commodity or article of commerce” and hence not subject to the Sherman Act provisions which had been the legal basis for injunctions against union organization. Clayton gave legalized strikes and boycotts and peaceful picketing, and dramatically limited the use of injunctions in labour disputes. Little wonder that AFL President Gompers hailed the Clayton Act as a “magna carta”.56

The “Roaring Twenties,” nostalgically depicted in some movies and musical comedies as an era of unbounded prosperity and champagne-induced gaiety, fell a good deal short of those marks for most American working people. Throughout the decade, unemployment rose, quietly, almost anonymously. It was a time of considerable hardship for many of the unemployed, long before the days of unemployment insurance or supplementary benefits.57

The post world war I depression brought wages down sharply and caused major erosion of union membership—a loss of about a million members in the years from 1920 to 1923. The difficulties were multiplied by the decision of the National Association of Manufacturers and other antiunion “open shop” groups to wipe out or seriously diminish the status of American, can unions. The fear of “Bolsheviks,” often hysterical, that was nurtured by the Russian communist revolution was used gleefully by the antiunion forces. As early as 1913, President John Kirby of the NAM had decided the trade union movement was “an un-American, illegal and infamous conspiracy.” As the Senate Civil Liberties Committee, headed by Sen. Robert LaFollette Jr., reported years later,

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56 Ibid, p. 3.
57 Ibid, p. 3.
such demands as “union recognition, shorter hours, higher wages, regulation of child labour and the hours and wages of women and children in industry” came to be seen—under the influence of the NAM-sponsored ‘American Plan’—as aspects of the alleged communist revolution from which the anti-labour employers wanted to save the nation. Strikebreaking, blacklisting and vigilanteeism became, for a time, acceptable aspects of this new and spurious brand of patriotism. The “yellow dog contract,” which workers had to sign in order to get a job, bound them never to join a union; at the same time, the corporations promoted employee representation plans or company unions—pale and generally useless imitations of the real thing.58

In November 1935, John L. Lewis announced the creation of the CIO, the Committee for Industrial Organization, composed of about a dozen leaders of AFL unions, to carry on the effort for industrial unionism. Industrial Unions are unions that organize an entire industry regardless of skill. In short they where unions of unskilled workers. Lewis, bora in Iowa in 1880 of Welsh immigrant parents, went to work in the coal mines and became president of the Mine Workers in 1920. An orator of remarkable virtuosity, Lewis voiced increasingly bitter attacks on his colleagues on the AFL Executive Council; his words helped speed the break. In 1936, the various CIO unions were expelled from the Federation. In 1938 the CIO held its first constitutional convention and became the Congress of Industrial Organizations.59

In any event, the CIO began a remarkably successful series of organizing campaigns, and over the next few years, brought industrial unionism to large sectors of basic American industry. At the same time the unions remaining in the

58 Ibid, p. 4.
59 Ibid, p. 4.
AFL registered even more substantial gains in membership. During World War II, the AFL and CIO, while preserving areas of disagreement, began to find more substantial bases for working together on problems affecting all workers. In time, many of the old antagonisms had died out and the old issues had been resolved. The stage was set for merger of the two labour groups. They were reunited into the AFL-CIO at a convention in New York opening on Dec. 5, 1955.  

The AFL-CIO merger and its accompanying agreements brought about the virtual elimination of jurisdictional disputes between unions that had plagued the labour movement and alienated public sympathy in earlier years. The unions placed a new priority on organizing workers in areas, industries and plants where no effective system of labour representation yet existed. In many cases, it meant crossing the barriers of old thinking and tired methods to reach the employees of companies which for years had resisted unions.

2.4. The Trade Union Movement in Russia:

The year’s not important,  
The Place scarcely matter’s  
Where seven good peasant’s  
Once met on a high-road,  
From-province “Hard-Battered”  
From “District” “Most Wretched”  
From “Dstitute” parish  
From neighbourning hamlets  
“Patched”, Barefoot and “Shabby”  
“Bleak”, “Burn-out” and “Hungry”  
From “Harvestless” also  
They met and disputed  
of who can, in Russia  
Be happy and free?  
“Who can happy and free in Russia”—NEKRASSOV

With the growth of the spontaneous economic struggle, the widely scattered circles of revolutionary Marxists became more and more acutely

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60 Ibid, p. 4.  
61 Ibid, p. 4.  
confronted, at the end of the nineties, with the question of what their attitude towards this spontaneous struggle must be and how a plan and a conscious purpose were to be infused into it. The early attempts to create a party, an organized whole, out of the scattered Social Democratic Marxian groups, the first attempts to weld together the various Marxists scattered throughout Russia who were fighting the old populist groups, culminated in the First Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party, which took place at Minsk, in 1898. This congress laid the foundation for the party out of which later grew the Russian Communist Party. These initial attempts to gather the scattered groups of Social Democrats on a national, All-Russian scale, to get them together on the basis of a definite program, to draw concrete conclusions from the work that had been carried on by the separate circles; these attempts met with a series of difficulties which constituted the basis for the future developments within the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, the formation of various tendencies within it and the crystallization of that tendency which became known under the name of Bolshevism.63

It was only after the Russian Social Democratic Party had been formally created that there began to develop and take shape within its womb various tendencies, which ultimately constituted themselves into an opportunist wing of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, on the one hand, and a revolutionary wing on the other.

The labor movement of that period, when a political and economic movement was gradually evolving out of it, we must turn to his main work of that time, written at the end of 1901, and at the beginning of 1902, the book entitled “What Is to be Done?” In the early part of the twentieth century we had within the Social Democratic Party two basic tendencies: One, the economists, and another which could be briefly called the politicals. The economists of that time put forward the following conception: In the process of the economic

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struggle the labor movement produces a class conscious vanguard whose task consists of always keeping pace with the spontaneously developing mass economic movement and marching gradually and slowly onward with this movement, that is, limiting the labor movement to the tasks which the new spontaneous movement of the masses puts before it. On the other hand, the tendency of the politicals who had as their chief nucleus the “Group for the Liberation of Labor,” together with the new, the second generation of Russian Social Democrats, and later the newspaper “Iskra” (The Spark) which was directed by Plekhanov, Lenin, Martov, Deutch, Vera Zasulich and Potresov (the association of these names sounds rather strange today), waged a determined, restlessness struggle against the economists, against the degradation of the revolutionary struggle to its spontaneous aspect, to use Lenin’s expression. In the polemic with the economists, in the fight against the degradation of the struggle, in the attempts to define the role and tasks of the few Social Democratic groups which represented class conscious nuclei, there was formed and welded together that tendency which gave rise to the Bolshevist Party.

What on the whole, were the tremendous strikes, the strikes of the latter part of the nineties and the beginning of the 20th century which shook autocracy to its very foundation? They began by riots, by spontaneous actions which were gradually adjusted to the every day demands of the workers, involving an ever-increasing number of workers. Thus the spontaneous movement of the working masses was developing into a struggle against the employers and later against the autocracy. All these spontaneous actions dovetailed with the political line which was being ‘developed both within the working masses and in those organizations of the revolutionary intelligencia who were working side by side, and gradually lining up and welding themselves together with this spontaneous movement. Lenin, in fighting the economists, came out sharply against the idea of trade unionism as preached by them. Trade unionism was a movement limited by the frame-work of today, a movement that does not step beyond the every
day needs of the workers, a craft movement, a narrow sectional trade movement 
that does not pursue any general class political objectives. This determined 
opposition to pure and simple trade unionism, to the overestimation of 
spontaneity, to the underestimation of conscious revolutionary action, runs right 
through the entire pamphlet “What Is to be Done?” which was written during 
the period of intense struggle between the economists and the revolutionary 
section of the social democracy of that time.

The dawn of the Russian labor movement, when he first took a stand on 
this question he assumed, as you see, different position. Later, as the labor 
movement grew, as the tremendous strike wave of 1904, coupled with the 
Russo-Japanese war as the mass movement of 1905, when all of Russia was in 
the throes of a revolutionary conflagration, which culminated in the first 
revolution, and when this rapid development of the revolutionary process 
brought its changes into the labor movement itself, brought a rapid 
intensification of revolutionary conflicts, the party was compelled to assume a 
new position on the trade union question.

For the evolution of the opinions of the R. S. D. L. P. in general, and of 
its Bolshevist section in particular, trade union questions, the resolutions of the 
Stockholm and London congresses are extremely characteristic and significant. 
At the Stockholm Party Congress the Mensheviks had a majority and 
consequently the formulation which the congress gave to the attitude of the party 
towards the trade unions bears the earmarks of Menshevist ideology. Point four 
of the resolution of the Stockholm congress states that “the economic struggle 
will bring about a permanent betterment of the condition of the working masses 
and a crystallization of a genuine class organization only if it is properly co-
ordinated with the political struggle of the proletariat.” Thus it is a question of 
merely co-ordinating the struggle. The congress also urged on the other hand, 
that “the party should support the workers in their tendency to organize in trade 
unions and do everything possible towards the formation of neutral trade
unions.”“ The very formulation of this point forced us to think, for we Bolsheviks do not speak of neutral unions. We speak of unaffiliated unions, and between unaffiliated and neutral there is a difference.

In opposition to this resolution which was favored by a majority of the congress, that is, by the Mensheviks, the Bolshevist faction moved its own resolution on the trade union question which was drawn up, of course, with the active participation of Lenin. The resolution of the Bolshevist faction puts the question of partisanship on quite a different basis. “The congress believes,”“ the resolution states, “that the party should make every effort to educate the union workers, in the spirit of a clear understanding of the class struggle and of the socialist tasks of the trade unions, in order by its activity to gain actual control over the unions, and that ultimately these unions might, under certain conditions, directly affiliate to the party, without, of course, expelling their non-party members.” You see that this formulation contains a strong, clearly Bolshevist deflection though it does not yet exhibit the clear cut, firm Bolshevist line of the future which was evolved as a result of greater experience in the revolutionary trade union movement.

How is the expression “the unions might affiliate to the party” to be understood? It means organizational connections between the unions and the party, which, however, will secure the labor movement against opportunism only if the party is sufficiently powerful to direct the unions. We have countries where the unions are not only affiliated to the party, but where they have themselves created the party. In Norway, as you know, the party committee and the Trade Union Council are elected at one and the same meeting. We thus see that the Bolshevist resolution at the Stockholm congress contains a definite, sharp revolutionary, obviously anti-Menshevik approach to the question; yet this formulation is not sufficiently clear cut for the Bolshevist outlook. It did not develop in a day. It was not created at once, but grew gradually and crystallized with the growth of the labor movement itself.
Between the Stockholm congress, which was held in 1900, and the London congress, a year of organization and practical activities transpired. In Russia the struggle between the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks was waged all along the front, including also the trade union front, so that the London congress, as expressed in the resolution on the trade union question, marked a further step forward in respect of making a clearer formulation of the relations between the party and the unions and of the crystallization of the attitude of the party towards the very intricate question of the place and role of the trade unions in the general class struggle of the proletariat. At the London congress the question of the relations between the party and the unions was treated in a very short resolution which ends as follows: “The congress reminds the party organizations and the Social Democrats working in the trade unions that one of the fundamental tasks of the social democratic activities within the union is: To promote trade union recognition of the spiritual leadership of the Social Democratic Party and the establishment of organizational connections with them, and where the local conditions make it possible, to put this decision into effect.”

We thus have a formulation which recognizes the spiritual leadership of the party and calls for organizational connections between it and the unions, though not for organizational unity; these two terms are far from being identical in their meaning. Organizational connections at that period were understood to mean mutual representation. The party had its delegate in the Trade Union Council, or as it was then called in the Central Bureau of Trade Unions, but the question of whether this bureau as an organization ought to have a representative on the party committee was repeatedly discussed but remained unsettled. The Bolshevik position on this question was quite clear: Representatives from the trade unions should be persuaded to engage in party work, the party itself should participate in the work of the Trade Union Bureau, but no representative of this Central Bureau should be invited to the party committee. You see how with the
growth of the Russian labor movement the struggle within the Social Democratic Party was sharpening, and two tendencies were taking shape, developing two distinct lines on every question, including also the trade union question’] The first line, calling for parallel action by the party and the trade unions, ultimately culminated in the ideology of the independence and neutrality of the trade unions; the second line, calling for close co-operation, a close line-up and the spiritual leadership of the party over the unions, culminated in that form of the trade union movement which we now have here in Soviet Russia.

“Trade Union Neutrality,” published illegally in 1908 (“The Proletarian,”“ February 19, 1908). Here the question of trade union neutrality is raised with particular acuteness and we find some of those formulates with which we meet in the post-revolutionary work of Lenin. In this article Lenin wrote: “The class interests of the bourgeoisie inevitably produce a tendency to limit the unions to small narrow activities on the basis of the existing system, to remove them from any association with socialism, and the neutrality theory is the ideological garb of these bourgeois tendencies. . . . During the early development of the political and trade union movement in Europe there was ground for advocating the neutrality of the unions as a means to expand the original basis of the proletarian struggle during the era of its relative undevelopment and the absence of any systematic pressure against the unions on the part of the bourgeoisie. At the present time there is no place for trade union neutrality from the point of view of the international social democracy.”

Taking the Russian labor movement between 1908 and 1914 we find here first a period of reaction which lasted approximately up to the beginning of 1912 and then a brief period embracing the years 1912-13-14, which were years of an industrial expansion and of a revival of the labor movement. During this revival of the Russian labor movement in 1912-13-14 the Bolshevik attitude towards the trade unions assumed perfectly definite and clear cut forms. The struggle against the Mensheviks was centered at that time on the question of the extent to which
the legal conditions should be utilized, the strengthening of the illegal party and the supremacy or spiritual leadership over the legal trade unions by the illegal party. In every field of labor activity and particularly in the trade union field, Lenin strenuously fought for spiritual control by the illegal party organization. I shall not dwell at length upon that period, but shall pass over to the more recent period in the Russian labor movement and to the theoretical and practical questions which were connected with its development, and the role which Lenin played in the formulation of the Communist viewpoint on the trade union movement.

You know that beginning with February, 1917, Russia has experienced a stormy development of trade unionism. Russia, which entered the revolution with but a few unions had three and a half months later, by the time of the Third trade union conference one and one-half million organized workers. At this conference (June 20-28, 1917) there was a collision between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. This time, in a new situation, under the conditions of the unfolding revolution, the old conflict flared up again with renewed vigor. The conference was dominated by Mensheviks and Social Revolutionists. Consequently the trade union tasks as formulated by it bear a definite stamp of Menshevism.

During the period of revolution, the period of the rapid development of events, of the development of conflicts, at the time when the third trade union conference was in session, Lenin wrote two articles on the trade union question focussing his attention upon the organization of the agricultural workers. On the surface there appears to be no connection between the trade union conference and Lenin’s articles on the creation of an Agricultural Workers’ Union, but if we read this article carefully, if we view it from the angle of the unfolding struggle of that period and of the role which the peasant masses were to play in our revolution, it will become clear why, at the end of June, when events were following fast upon each other, Lenin raised the question of the organization of a
Farm Workers’ Union. Lenin wrote: “The basic role of the party, the first commandment of every trade union movement should be: ‘Do not rely upon the state,’ rely only upon the power of your class. The state is an organization of the class in power. Do not rely upon promises, rely upon the power of union and upon the consciousness of your class.” And he continues further on, “The Farm Workers’ Union must therefore at once raise as its task not merely the improvement of the conditions of the workers, but particularly the protection of their interests as a class during the, coming great agrarian transformation.”

We see that at the time the conference was in session hastily summing up the first results of the industrial organization among city workers Lenin pointed to the necessity of rallying the farm workers to the struggle, for he saw that they were to play a serious part in the approaching peasant revolution. Thus every time Lenin took up trade union questions he viewed the movement not as something separate and isolated from the general political situation; he approached the trade unions as an organized section of the working class movement and later, especially during the great discussion on the trade union movement and in a number of articles and speeches prior to this discussion, he clearly ascribed to the trade unions a role and position of a part of the complex mechanism of the social struggle. He never separated the trade union movement from the political movement but always selected in the trade union movement itself those factors, those aspects which were of outstanding importance in the general class struggle of the proletariat at the particular period.

The end of June, 1917. and particularly the period following after the failure of the July action, saw an overwhelming growth and revolutionization of the trade unions, which were rapidly captured by the Bolsheviks, though in the central trade union federation we were still in the minority. By October, we had a tremendous majority throughout the unions, though in some unions, chiefly of non-manual workers, the Mensheviks were still quite strong.
The role of the trade unions is the October revolution and the part played in it by the unions. Lenin always considered the trade unions as working class organizations destined to play an immense role in the overthrow of the old system and in the creation of a new one. At the forefront of Lenin’s interest was the formation and consolidation of the party, and in approaching the unions he viewed them from the angle of party leadership and of the achievements of the tasks raised by the party. During the October revolution itself there was no break between the party and the trade unions, which took an active part in the direct struggle in conjunction with the shop committees. The October revolution brought to the fore the question of the further destinies of the trade unions and here as in the pre-October period, the points of view formulated in our party on the trade union question are of exceptional interest. These views were completely linked up with the question of the rate at which our revolution and the revolutionary movement in western Europe were going to develop. Directly after the October revolution the party gave rise to a tendency which believed that the unions had outlived their time, since their existence due to the capitalist relations and, therefore, with organizational machinery of the socialized industry should be based primarily upon the trade unions. They should gradually rid themselves of the craft narrowness and be transformed into mighty industrial unions embracing the majority and gradually all the workers of the particular industry. Being already, by the laws of the Soviet Republic and by fixed tradition, participants in all the local and central industrial managing bodies, the trade unions should come to the actual concentration within their hands of the entire management of the entire public economy as a single economic whole.”

This formulation, drawn up by Lenin, represents theoretically a perfectly correct approach to the question of the role of the trade unions in the proletarian revolution. It was subjected to a running fire of criticism, chiefly on the part of Comrade Rasanov, who contended that the statement “the unions should come to the concentration within their hands of the entire industry” was a clearly a
reflection of Syndicalism. “This contains an inconsistent and non-Marxian thought” Comrade Rasanov protested. On the other hand this formula gave a definition of the trade union tasks which went contrary to the line of the party majority. This formula was made the foundation of the platform of the “labor opposition” who contended that the Russian trade unions were ready for the immediate operation of this particular part of the program. Comrade Razanov’s position on this question always appeared to me erroneous for his estimation of this part of our program represents a static rather than dynamic approach, whereas the program considers the concentration of the management of industry in the hands of the trade unions only as a result of an historical process which the trade unions will go through gradually.

If we ask ourselves which organizations will finally manage industry, how the relations between the various organizations will develop objectively with the development of the revolution, from which organizations the industrial managements will ultimately evolve, we must reply that the answers to these questions depend upon a great number of factors: upon the relative strength of the proletariat in the country, upon the relationship between agriculture and the city industries, upon the rate of revolutionary development in Western Europe, upon the degree of the organization of the proletariat, etc. The trade unions will ultimately prove to be the basis of the organization which will concentrate in its hands production as a whole.

The mistake of the “labor opposition” consisted not in its general contention, but in its belief that right at that time, that is, in 1920, the trade unions were capable of assuming the responsibility for putting into effect that particular clause of the program. The labor opposition did not take into consideration the state of our industry, the overwhelming domination of agriculture and small industry, the slow development of the revolution, the, approaching NEP, which was already making itself felt, in the discussion on the trade unions in 1920.
The problem of the governmentalization of the trade unions was thus raised by the October revolution and we are the only country in the world where this question has become a subject of discussion. To the extent that the workers of other countries have considered the theoretical questions of economic reconstruction on the morrow of the revolution answers to these questions can be found both in the syndicalist and in the reformist literature, but in the plane in which it has been considered here, the questions have never before been treated.

In order to get a clear idea of how Lenin and the party as a whole, view the questions of the trade union movement and structure, we must touch upon several events of the post October period of our revolution. I have already stated that the question of the governmentalization of the trade unions aroused a great controversy within the party itself. The sharpness of the discussion was due to an over-estimation of the rate of development both of our own and the West European revolution. Very characteristic in this connection was Comrade Lenin’s speech at the second trade union congress in 1919: “The trade unions,” “after the political coup which transferred the power into their hands have to play a particularly important part, have to become in a sense the chief political organs for all the old conceptions of politics have been overthrown and upset.”

“The governmentalization of the trade unions is inevitable, their fusion with the state power is inevitable, the transfer into their hands of the entire development of large scale production is inevitable.” If we take into consideration the clause of the program which I have cited and the foregoing formulation, it will become clear that they co-incide in every detail.”

Lenin sharply and repeatedly stressed the inevitability of the governmentalization of the trade unions. But it was primarily a political dialectician. He approached every question not from an abstract point of view, but from a concrete angle, and consequently in treating this question of governmentalization he approached it primarily from the point of view of the concrete practical struggle which the trade unions will have to carry out in the work of
industrial reconstruction. He says in one of his speeches: “There are still many steps to be taken before we can say; the trade unions of the toilers have completely merged with the state machinery. This will take place when the organs by which one class exercises violence over another will be completely in the hands of the workers.” You see that the question of the governmentalization of the trade unions is linked up with a number of other questions, with the question of the rate of the revolution, the question of the creation of a genuine proletarian state machinery, etc.

The governmentalization of the trade unions was a long process of practical activity, of direct work in the organization of the national economy. He thought of the transformation of the unions into organs of state power as of a process which begins by participation in the government of the country and ends in the building up of new organs exclusively under the control of the trade unions. But why must the trade unions, in Lenin’s opinion, come to control the national economy? “Because,” Lenin replies, “the trade unions are mass organizations and the revolution is primarily the creation of the masses itself.” Lenin formulates this idea in the following words: “The trade unions become the principle builders of the new society because the builders of this society can be only the great masses, just as the builders of society during serfdom were made up of hundreds, just as the state under capitalism was built up by thousands and tens of thousands, just so can the present socialist revolution be accomplished only with the direct and active participation of tens of millions in the governing of the state.”

The question of the governmentalization of the trade unions was a question of the activity of the masses themselves. As the tens of millions of people are drawn into the struggle the machinery of production will fall under the control of the trade unions. The sooner the masses are set into motion, the sooner the thousands and millions of workers are drawn into active political work, into active reconstruction, the sooner will we come to the materialization
of this clause of our program on the governmentalization of the trade unions. Lenin never forgot the fundamental rule of Hegel’s dialectics. “Truth is concrete.” He takes Russia of today, our peasant Russia and confronts the millions of laboring masses with the problem of capturing the entire machinery by which the industrial life of the country is run. In the same speech delivered at the second trade union congress he asks the fundamental question: What concrete practical problems stand before the trade unions and what course must they follow? And he replies: “Their task (of the trade unions) is to move these millions and tens of millions of toilers from simple activities to higher forms of activities, never growing weary in moving them to the most difficult tasks, and thus to train greater and greater masses for the government of the country, to merge with the struggle of the proletariat which took up the dictatorship and holds it in face of the entire world, rallying in every country detachment after detachment of industrial workers and socialists who only yesterday still took orders from the social traitors and the social defendists, but who now line up more and more closely around the banner of Communism and of the Communist International.”

Here he addresses not the delegates of the congress, not the hundreds of Communists assembled there, he sees before him the tens of millions of people who are destined to accomplish a tremendous job and he lays down before the congress the following political line: “Get more and more toilers into this work.”

During the discussion of 1920 there were two central issues at stake. The first was the question of the trade unions with the organs of state power, and the second was the question of whether the trade unions should engage in the protection of the workers’ interests. It was along these two lines that the division into platforms took place; the platform of “the ten,” Trotsky’s platform, the compromise platform, etc. In reading now what Lenin said and wrote during the discussion, one gets to see that Lenin was already aware of the approaching new turn implied in the discussion, that sharp turn in policy which the party was
compelled to make at the beginning of 1921. For Lenin the discussion itself was a sign that some new elements had matured and began to make themselves felt in the economic and political fabric of the country, elements that were soon to take shape and come out into the open.

On the question of the unions with the state organs, Lenin said: “As regards this, it will be best to say nothing and see how it appears in practice.” Why did Lenin approach so carefully, Why did Lenin who directly after the October revolution, during the first trade union congress, advocated the speedy governmentalization of the unions, approach the same question with such caution as at the beginning of 1920? Because he had already anticipated the approaching new turn which did not depend upon the good or bad will of the party, but upon the relationship of forced within our peasant country. For the rate of identification or integration of the welding together of the trade unions and the state, depended upon the building up of our national economy, upon the capture of agricultural industry by us, and, upon the development of the revolution in Western Europe that we were moving towards the new economic policy.

Then the second question: Can the trade unions, under the dictatorship of the proletariat, engage in the protection of the interests of the workers? The Mensheviks attempted during the early days of the revolution to build a special platform on this question. The “independent” Menshevist trade union movement was based upon the idea that after the October revolution the working class must be independent of the state, must put up demands to the proletarian state, organize strikes, etc. The trade unions should protect the interests of their membership, leaving the business of state to others, such on the whole was, roughly speaking, the Menshevist point of view.

Thus the very formula of the protection by the unions of the interests of their members, under the dictatorship of the proletariat appeared to some comrades as a purely Menshevist formula. Many of them said: “To divide the
unions and the state is to develop a force which may run against the proletariat dictatorships, it means to warp in a sense the entire Communist line in the trade union field.” To this Lenin replied: “Our country has a peasant majority. We have, of course, a proletarian dictatorship, but with bureaucratic distortions. And the struggle against bureaucratic distortions can be conducted along two lines: Through the state apparatus and through direct pressure on the part of the workers themselves, whose trade unions protect the interests of their members and thereby combat bureaucracy.”

Some time after the new economic policy was adopted the Central Committee of the party published a theses on the trade unions which provided for the possibility of strikes. How did this happen? If we approach the discussion on the trade unions in the same way as Lenin approached it, we will see that the new course in the trade union movement was a reflection of the general process and the general change. We will see that both the discussion and the future changes of our tactics reflected the new relationship offerees, the slacking up of the development of the revolution in Western Europe, the growth of the petty bourgeois peasant sentiment and its pressure upon the city, and the number of economic and political phenomena which accompanied the introduction of the N.E.P.

If we turn to the decisions of our party and trade union congresses we will see how this necessity for retreating was reflected in their resolutions, and found its expression in the general policy of the trade unions. The question of the govern mentalization of the trade unions gradually receded to the background, being deferred to some future, the questions of direct protection of the workers’ interests carne to the fore (N. E. P. came), the trade unions became confronted with a new series of problems, problems that Lenin had clearly and vividly expounded in numerous speeches and articles.

The formation of a revolutionary trade union movement on a world scale. What was the most important issue in the trade union field after the war? You
know that together with the revolution by the social democracy, a tendency developed in the labor centers of many countries to do away with the trade unions altogether. Moreover, the German Communist Party at its Heidelberg congress took a stand in favor of the revolutionary workers, splitting the reformist unions and setting up new unions. We had quite a distinct current in our own Communist movement sharply hostile towards the old unions. “We cannot be in one organization with traitors, they will betray us, we must create new unions” - the representatives of this tendency insisted.

These few quotations will suffice to show how Lenin solved that most difficult question, the question of our tactics in the trade union movement. He advised: “Do not be nervous, a Communist must have strong wires in the place of nerves. Of course, the entire reformist officialdom must be driven out of the trade unions, but they should not be given the pleasure of our voluntary withdrawal. We must remain in the reactionary unions, work there, conquer the masses, drive out the leaders and turn the unions into organs of the revolution.” This little book of Lenin’s has played a tremendous part in the struggle against the left phraseology, which, as you know, Lenin hated.

It is also necessary to touch upon Lenin’s estimation of the establishment of the Red International of Labor Unions. I remember that when in 1920 it fell to me, together with the representative from Italy, France and countries, to begin laying the foundation of the R.I.L.U. here in Moscow. I had some serious differences with D’Arragona who considered himself a left. We debated with him for several days. I proposed one basis for the creation of an international trade union center, while he proposed another.

Then Serratti suggested a compromise which was not, however, sufficiently clear. With this formula of Serratti I went to Lenin. Lenin read it and said: “Yes, indeed, there is something unclear here, but that is not important. You create the center, and clarity will come of itself.” Lenin attached particular importance to clarity of thought, of course, but when he saw that even a little
step forward could be made by making some concession on the question of a formula, he always agreed and always proved to be right.

When the first trade union congress was called, Lenin addressed a letter to it in which he wrote: “It is difficult to find words in which to express the entire significance of the international congress of trade unions. The conversion of the trade union members to the ideas of Communism is moving irresistibly onward everywhere in every country, throughout the world. It is moving irregularly, incorrectly, unsteadily, overcoming thousands of obstacles, but it is still moving irresistibly onward. The International Congress of Trade Unions will accelerate this motion, Communism will win in the trade unions.” Such were Lenin’s greetings to the first constituent congress of the Red International of labor unions.

In conclusion, I shall touch upon the prospects of the trade union movement as they were understood by Lenin. If we follow up, step by step, all the resolutions on trade union questions adopted by our party congresses, all of Lenin’s articles and speeches on the trade union question, we shall get quite a definite line. It would not be true to say that Lenin and the party had the same opinion on trade union questions twenty-five years ago as today. In this respect, Comrade Guerin’s was wrong when he wrote in the preface to his book, “Lenin and the Trade Union Movement” that Lenin’s point of view expressed in remained the same to the very end. This is untrue. The mind of the party has done some tremendous thinking during this stormy period. This path can be traced back also on the question of the role of the party. Take up and compare Lenin’s formulation of that role of the Communist Party in the proletarian revolution given in that book with the formulation of the same question made, with his participation, by the Second Congress of the Communist International and you will then become aware of the path traversed by the party. “The Communist Party is a part of the working class. To be precise, it is its most advanced, most class conscious and most revolutionary part. The Communist
Party is created by a selection of the best, most intelligent, most self-sacrificing, most far-sighted workers. The Communist Party has no interest other than those of the working class. The Communist Party differs from the entire mass of the workers in that it views the historical path of the working class in its entirety and endeavors, at the various stages of this path, to defend the interests not of individual groups, not of individual trades, but of the working class as a whole. The Communist Party is that politically organized lever with the aid of which the most advanced section of the working class guides along the true path the entire mass of the proletariat and semi-proletariat.”

What then are the prospects of the development of, the party and the trade unions? Insofar as we are entering an epoch when the classes will disappear, we are moving towards a time when the state organs in all of their variations, and the party as the organ of the class struggle, will disappear. Will the party exist after Communism has been fully developed? “No, in the future the party will disappear. Of course, it is still a long way off. and our Russian Communist Party will still exist a number of years in its present form, but with the ultimate consolidation of Communism, it will disappear as a party.

What will happen to the trade unions? The trade unions will develop: out in our program. They will come to a point when the entire industries; in their hands and when the organs of state, the party, etc., disappear, the be transformed into new organizations, the names of which we do not know, direct and manage industry, etc., Thus we have the following situation: At a rical moment the party will disappear; the separate sections of the party machinery with the organs of state power and with the organs of industrial management which by merge with the trade unions. All this will bring about at a certain historical a new formation, a new organ of industrial management that will be unlike the party, soviet the trade unions taken separately. Lenin said in one of his speeches: “That time is far most probably only our grandchildren will live to
see it; today we are confronted with concrete problems of tremendous importance and we must solve them.”

His conclusions will be extremely brief. Lenin ushered in something new not only into the Russian, but into the international labor movement as well. For the trade unions were a part of a mechanism. In one of his speeches he set forth in the following vivid manner: “The engine is the party, its cogs grip the cogs of the trade union wheel and bring them into motion, the trade unions in turn set into motion the greater masses.” Lenin viewed and valued the trade unions as a school for the education of the masses, for throwing the masses into action. The trade unions were of value only if they were imbued with the Communist spirit. He wrote in one of his articles: “That the unions are made up of workers is not enough. They represent an organization of their class only if they pursue a class line, a class policy.” To saturate the unions with a Communist ideology, to make them into a machine for the prosecution of the Communist line, to subordinate them to the influence of the Communist Party, to control them, to draw into the revolutionary movement, thru them, tens of millions of toilers, to educate the masses - this was Lenin’s aim throughout his policy. Lenin was an outstanding political thinker. He knew how to maneuver with millions, how to direct millions into the struggle, he correctly estimated the role and the tasks of the trade unions and was instrumental in making the Russian trade union movement play an exceptional role in the shaping of the trade union movement of all countries, a role similar to that played by the Russian Communist Party in the Communist International, the role of a leading, inspiring, driving force. In this field as in every other field Lenin’s influence was quite exceptional, demanding a thorn and long study for many years.  

2.5. Trade Union Development in India:

Early Years:

The Indian Trade Union movement is less than 14 decade old since it may traced from 1860.65 When compared to the trade union of Great Britain and USA, the Indian trade unions have a shorter history. It has been stated earlier that the trade Union movement is a result of the modern capitalist industrial development. It is the delayed start and the slow growth of modern capitalist industrial enterprises in India that accounted for the delay in the emergence of the Indian trade Union movement. It was in 1851 that the first cotton mill was set up in Calcutta. In order to compare the Indian situation with that of Great Britain, it should be remembered that it was around 1850 that the New Model Unions were emerging in Great Britain. When the trade union movement was stabilizing itself in Great Britain, the first modern factory was being set up in India. Naturally, the trade Union movement in India took another fifty years to acquire any formal shape. Even after the first modern factory was established, the industrial growth of India proceeded at a snail’s pace. However, irrespective of the number of factories and workers existing in India during the second half of the nineteenth century, the working and living conditions presented a pathetic picture. Inevitably, the industrial workers, especially in the cotton textile industry, protected against these inhuman working and living conditions by going on strikes. “There is a record of strike in 1877 at the Empress Mills at Nagpur over wage rates. Between 1882 and 1890, twenty five strikes were recorded in the Bombay and Madras Presidencies.66 These strikes took place spontaneously, though there were no formal organizations of workers.

The establishment of Bombay Mill Hands Association, under the Presidentship of N.M. Lokhande in 1890, is often referred to as the starting point of the Indian labour movement. The purpose of this Association was primarily ‘to invite the attention of the Government and the public to the many grievances of the textile workers of Bombay, and to agitate for the revision of the factories Act of 1881.\textsuperscript{67} The Association also published a journal called ‘Dinbandhu’. However, the Bombay Mill Hands’ Association was in no sense, a trade union, for it had no membership, no fund, no rules and it did not organize any real sort of working class struggle against the employers. Lokhande was a philanthropic promoter of labour legislation and workers’ welfare not a pioneer of labour organization or labour struggle.\textsuperscript{68}

Owing to the utter poverty and illiteracy of the workers and the lack of facilities, no formal trade unions could grow prior to 1918. Nevertheless, the workers came to develop common sentiments and when driven to despair, resorted to strikes without much planning and organization, and in many cases unmindful of the consequences too. There were frequent strikes in industrial centers all over the country. In 1908, there was a mass strike lasting for six days in Bombay against Bal Gangadhar Tilak being sentenced to six years’ imprisonment for leading Swadeshi and Boycott movements and spreading movement against partition of Bengal.

“Despite almost universal testimony before commissions between 1880 and 1908 to the effect that there was no actual unions, many stated that labourers in an industrial mill were often able to act in unions and that as a group, they

\textsuperscript{67} V.B. Karnik – Indian Trade Unions – A Survey, Allied Publisher Ltd., Bombay, 1960, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{68} R. Palme Dutt, Op. Cit., p. 375.
were very independent.\textsuperscript{69} The establishment of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants in India and Burma in 1897 also did not herald the arrival of the Indian trade union movement for the Society consisted mostly of European and Anglo-Indian railwaymen and was primarily concerned with friendly benefits. The \textit{Kamgar Hitabardhak Sabha} of 1909 was also a philanthropic organization for welfare work amongst the industrial workers of Bombay and had very little concern about trade union work like improving wages and working conditions.\textsuperscript{70}

Meanwhile, the rising prices and appalling working as well as living conditions made the workers discontented. Their growing awareness of the exploitation by employers and the growing spirit of nationalism also added to their seething restlessness. Thus, by the eve of the First World War, the stage was set for the emergence of a trade union movement in India. Only a catalyst was required to spark in off.

\textbf{2.5.1. The First World War Period:}

The First World War proved to be such a catalyst. Although war boosted the Indian Industrial growth, it also led to a sharp rise in prices and cost of living as well as to a wage lag. The struggle for national independence also became intense during thus period and the socialist revolution of Russia sent out waves of revolutionary ideas all over the world. The revolutionary ideas emanating from the first socialist revolution of the world found a sympathetic chord in the heart of the Indian working class also. Ideologically and politically, conditions

\textsuperscript{69} D.H. Buchanan, The Development of Capitalist Enterprise in India, Mantalas, Bombay, 1966, p. 25.
\textsuperscript{70} http://www.indian+zone.com/24/trade-union-movement indi a.htm, p. 2 27-02-2010.
were ripe for the emergence of a high degree of working class military expressing itself in strikes and ultimately in the formation of trade unions.\textsuperscript{71}

The economic and political aftermath of the First World War, the Martial Law, the Rowlett Act, the Jallian wala Bagh incident resulting in the ruthless massacre of hundreds of unarmed citizens, and the general suppression of all forms of political expressions brought to the workers a sense of political maturity. Economically insecure and politically mature, supported by a band of selfless political workers, philanthropes and others, the Indian workers launched upon a series of strikes – beginning in 1918 and continuing till 1920. Practically every month from the end of 1918 to the first half of the 1920s saw strikes occurring all over the country. The first six months of 1920 alone recorded more than two hundred strikes. It was against this backdrop of economic struggle against rising cost of living, ruthless exploitation and suppression, as well as political agitation against the foreign rule that the Indian trade union movement was born. The establishment of ILO in 1919 and the formation of the AITUC in 1920 gave shape to the movement. Most of the trade unions, which were primarily strike committees in the beginning, took a formal organizational shape and started functioning on a regular basis spearheaded by the Madras Labour Union under the leadership of \textbf{B.P. Wadia}.\textsuperscript{72} The Madras Labour Union was formed in 1918. The same year saw the establishment of a number of unions in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. By 1920, trade unions had been organized in almost all important industries such as railways, docks, textiles, engineering and coal mining. The Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association was also established in 1920 under the leadership of Anusuya Ben Sarabhai and

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\textsuperscript{71} P.R.N. Sinha, Indubala Shekar, Industrial Relation Trade Union and Labour Legislation, p. 61.  \\
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Shanker Lal Banker. Thus when the AITUC was formed in 1920, it had 64 trade unions affiliated to it with a total membership of 1,40,854.73

2.5.2. Formation of the AITUC:

The first year of the period under review (1920-1919) saw the establishment of the All India Trade Union Congress. The formation of the AITUC was the direct result of the establishment of ILO in 1919. The purpose behind the establishment of the AITUC was to secure a nominating body for representing Indian labour at the International Labour Conference. The constitution of ILO required that labour representatives to the Conference be nominated by the government concerned in consultation with the most representative central labour organization in the country. The formation of a central labour federation at such an early stage in the history of the Indian labour movement can be explained mainly in terms of the requirements of the constitution of ILO.

Normally, there comes a time in the history of the labour movement of a country when the formation of a central labour federation becomes necessary to give expression to the sentiments of labour’s solidarity as well as to provide mature leadership and guidance to the individual trade unions that may be functioning in different industries and localities. That was how the British Trade Union Congress was born or the American Federation of Labour was set up. Individual trade unions operating in different contexts themselves felt the need of establishing such a central federation. In India the process seems to have been reversed to certain extent. The central federation came first, followed by the emergence of individual trade unions in different industries.74

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73 http://www.google.books.co.in trade union movement, India accessed on 27-02-2010, p. 1.
74 P.R.N. Sinha, Indubala Shekar, Industrial Relation Trade Union Labour laws, p. 61.
Apart from being a body responsible for recommending the name of the Indian labour representative to the Conference, the AITUC provided a forum for united work by leaders and unions of different industries and regions. The first President of the AITUC was *Lala Lajpat Rai* – a veteran leader of the national movement. The All India Trade Union Congress of the day was primarily characterized by the outlook of the middle class leadership inculcating principles of moral and social improvement of the workers and interested primarily in labour legislation and welfare provisions. When it came in conflict with the militant leadership of the communist based upon class struggle, it led to a split in the AITUC at its Nagpur Session of 1929.75

2.5.3. **Enactment of the Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926.**

It was during this period that the Indian trade unions secured the first legal protection in the shape of the Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926. Students of the early history of trade unionism in Great Britain and USA are aware of the legal handicaps which the early trade Unions had to face under the common law. Court injunctions against strikes and prosecution of trade unionists under the doctrines of criminal conspiracy, restraint of trade and breach of contract were common. The sueing of B.P. Wadia, the president of the Madras Labour Union, by the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills in the High Court of Madras in 1920 and the grant of an injunction against the strikes opened the eyes of the trade unions leaders in India to the dangerous potentialities of the common law as regards trade union activities. It was realized that the Indian employers would leave no stone unturned to make use of the common law to stifle the nascent Indian labour movement if no legal protection were secured at the earliest. Owing to

the valiant efforts of N.M. Joshi and his associates and the need for facilitating the nomination of workers’ representatives to ILO, the Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926 was passed, which provided protection against criminal liability under section 120(B) of the Indian Penal Code to the officers and members of Indian trade unions registered under the Act. The Act also provided security against cases of civil damages arising out of trade dispute. This enactment, with all its limitations which subsequently became manifest, did give a major and urgently needed protection to the Indian trade unions and thus gave a fillip to the growth of the trade union movement in the country.\textsuperscript{76}

2.5.4. Growth of the Left Wing Influence on the Indian Trade Union Movement:

The early leadership of the Indian trade union movement consisted primarily of moderates and philanthropes who were unaware of the concept of class struggle and the need of establishing a new economic order based on socialist principles, and the revolutionary role of the industrial working class. These leaders were primarily interested in obtaining legal and constitutional protection for workers and trade unions and securing improvements in their working and living conditions within the existing framework. They were very much akin to the leadership of the Indian National Congress with interest in ‘home rule’ and ‘constitutional reforms.’ The revolutionary waves generated by the Russian Revolution took sometime in reaching the Indian shores. Under the influence of secretly obtained communist literature, a number of workers led by S.A. Dange in Bombay and Muzaffar Ahmad in Calcutta started taking interest in trade union work. The starting of

\textsuperscript{76} Gazette of India, 1925, Pvt., p. 8.
the publication of the English weekly called ‘Socialist’ by Dange in 1923 in Bombay and a Bengali weekly titled ‘Janavani’ by Muzaffar Ahmed in Calcutta heralded the birth of a communist movement in India.\(^{77}\)

They were determined workers, earnest and enthusiastic, they worked day and night. They had no interest in life except their work in trade unions and the Communist Party. They organized a number of new unions, they revived some old unions, they captured some others from older, moderate leaders. In 1926 and 1927 they organized a number of strikes, some of which were successful. There was a rise in the number of unions as well. There was more activity amongst workers; more meetings, processions and demonstrations were organized then during the preceding period. A new spirit of militancy also became evident.\(^{78}\)

The Communist leaders organized the textile workers of Bombay and established the famous Girini Kamgar Union. They also unionized the jute workers of Calcutta who were being subjected to ruthless exploitation by European and Indian employers. In 1928, they organized a big general strike of textile workers at Bombay lasting from April to October. The strike ended in October when the Government of Bombay appointed the Fawcett Committee to look into the standardisation scheme against which the strike was mainly directed. The success of this strike attracted more workers to the Girini Kamgar Union and its membership recorded a phenomenal increase. The communist influence spread to many other industries such as railways and docks. Similarly, in Calcutta, the service rendered by a band of zealous workers under the influence of communist ideology brought thousands of workers under the trade

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union fold. They staged a successful strike at the Lillua Workshop of Eastern India Railway. More and more unions came under the control and influence of the communist workers. For the first time in the history of the Indian labour movement, workers showed a degree of political maturity and organizational strength when they joined the boycott of the Simon Commission in close cooperation with other nationalist forces in the country. The All India Workers and Peasants’ Party formed in 1928 worked as a united centre for these progressive forces. The first of May in 1927 was for the first time celebrated at Bombay as ‘Labour Day’ — “the symbol of the opening of a new era of the Indian labour movement as a conscious part of the international labour movement”. 79

In spite of severe repressions let loose by the Government of India culminating in the Kanpur and Meerut trials, which picked the cream of communist workers working in the trade union field, the seeds sown by their sacrifices continued to grow. By 1927, the majority of Indian trade unions were inspired by and came to believe in their leadership. 80

2.5.5. Tenth Session of the AITUC and the Split:

It was under the shadow of the growing clash of ideologies and policies between the militant communist wing and the reformist trade union leadership that the tenth session of the AITUC was held at Nagpur in December 1929. The Conference adopted a number of resolutions deciding to boycott the Royal Commission on Labour and denouncing the Asiatic Labour Conference and the Round Table Conference. The session also decided to affiliate itself to the League against imperialism and to the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat. All

79 Ibid, p. 68.
these decisions were against the policies pursued by the moderate leadership of the AITUC. It was too much for this leadership to swallow the growing militant and progressive character of the Indian labour movement which is evident from the adoption of these resolutions. Failing to have its way and refusing to abide by the verdict of the majority at the session, the moderate group walked out of the Congress with 30 unions having a membership of 95,639, which by the end of the next year, swindled to 50,000. The dissidents formed a new federation called the Indian Trade Unions Federation. However, the session continued its work and elected Subhas Chandra Bose as its President and S.V. Deshpande as its General Secretary.

The left-wing leadership which came to control the AITUC consisted of diverse elements and lacked coherence. As a result, a further split took place in 1931 when the communist section separated itself from the main body to form the Red Trade Union Congress. This split took place mainly on the question of ‘Independent Political role of the working class’, a view-point held by the communist leadership.

These splits had serious adverse effects on the strength of the Indian trade union movement which suffered crisis after crises in its very early years. The AITUC, before it could complete even twelve years of existence, suffered two major splits dividing and weakening the Indian Trade union movement. These splits can be said to be the beginning of a series of crises which have been tormenting the Indian trade union movement as is evident from its subsequent history. However, due to the economic and political problems faced by the working class, and further aggravated by the great depression of 1929, they were

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compelled to continue with the policy of concerted struggle and strikes despite the splits of 1929 and 1931.82

The Indian trade union movement during 1930-39 may be studied under the following main heads which give an idea of the facts that conditioned its growth during this period.83

1. The Great Depression and its effects on trade union activities;
2. Reunification of trade union movement, and
3. Formation of Congress ministries under the Govt. of India Act, 1935.

2.5.6. Growth of Trade Unions:

The trend in the growth of number of trade unions and their membership that started with the dawn of Independence in 1947 continued unabated during the period 1950 onwards.84

Information relating to employers’ organizations registered under the Trade Unions Act, 1926, it can still be taken to reflect the progress of the Indian trade union movement during the period under review because the number of employers’ organizations is negligible as compared to that of workers’ organizations.85

The number of registered trade unions has increased more than fifteen times between 1950-51 and 1997. This significant increase in the number of trade unions largely took place from 1957-58 onwards. From 1988, the number of trade unions on register has exceeded 50 thousand every year. However, the percentage of trade unions submitting returns has never been satisfactory. Between 1951 and 1972 nearly half and between 1973 and 1981 nearly two-

83 National Federation of AITUC.
84 http://www.indiazone.com 24 trade-union-movement in India.htm access on 27-02-2010.
85 Ibid.
thirds of the unions on register did no submit returns under the Trade Unions Act, 1926. During 1992-1997, more than 70 percent of registered trade unions did no submit returns. It is on account of the failure of a large number of trade unions to submit returns in violation of the statutory requirement of the Trade Unions Act, 1926, that a real and up-to-date picture of trade union membership in the country is rarely available. As returns required to be submitted under the Trade Unions Act, 1926 are the only available source of information regarding trade union membership, their finances and other relevant data, it is necessary to amend the Act suitably, so that the registered trade unions are effectively obligated to submit returns regularly and correctly.86

2.5.7. Growth of Trade Union Federations:

A notable development of trade union movement in India since 1951 has been the formation and growth of federations of trade unions, particularly industrial federations. Such federations came to be set up for a number of industries/employments, for example, mines, iron & steel, cotton textiles, plantations, railways, defence establishments, engineering, cement, sugar chemicals, banking, insurance, posts and telegraphs, ports and docks, road transport, air transport, newspapers, teaching, electricity and government services. Some of these federations have been set up at the central level, while others have been established at the State level. Even in the same industry/employment, parallel federations have come to operate. Many of these federations have been set up at the central level, while others have been established at the state level. Even in the same industry/employment, parallel federations have come to operate. Many of these federations are affiliated to a

86 http://www.indianezone.com/24/trade_union_movement_india.htm, access dtd. 27-02-2010.
central trade union such as INTUC, AITUC, BMS, CITU and so on. Many of them prefer to remain unaffiliated and function independently. Some of the factors that have given an impetus to the formation of trade union federations have been; realization of the need for united action at higher levels, increasing centralization of decision-making concerning labour matters, formation of Central Wage Boards, establishment of joint bodies at the national and industry levels, establishment of employers’ organizations at higher levels, and realization by trade union leadership of the ineffectiveness of disjointed action. Some of more active industrial federations of trade unions in the country include: Indian National Textile Workers’ Federation, Indian National Mine Workers’ Federation, Indian National Dock Workers’ Federation, All India Bank Employees’ Federation, and National Federation of Indian Railwaymen.\(^{87}\)

Despite a phenomenal growth of trade union federations at the central and State levels, a real picture about them is not available, owing mainly to the non-submission of returns required under the Trade Unions Act, 1926. The available figures about these federations are during 1951-1997, the number of federations submitting returns has varied between only 6 (1994) and 86 (1984). These represent only a small proportion of the total number of registered federations. For example, in 1972, out of 131 registered federations of workers’ unions only 47 submitted returns. In 1974, out of 178 registered federations of workers’ unions only 77 submitted returns. These figures do not cover federations of employers; unions registered under the Trade Unions Act., 1926. The position of submission of returns has deteriorated considerably during the course of time.\(^{88}\)

\(^{87}\) [http://www.indianezone.com/24/trade_union_movement_india.htm](http://www.indianezone.com/24/trade_union_movement_india.htm), access dtd. 27-02-2010.

\(^{88}\) Govt. of India, Minister of Labour, Trade Union’s in India (1974), p. 10.
Inspite of the inavailability of figures relating to the exact number of trade union federations, the number of unions affiliated to them and their membership, it has been in the day-to-day experience that these federations have come to occupy a notable place in the industrial relations of the country. In practice, the trade union federations affiliated to the central federations of trade unions function under the control and dominance of the central federations to which they are affiliated. There have also been examples of changes of allegiance to the central federations.\(^8^9\)

**2.5.8. Central Federations of Trade Unions:**

As explained in the preceding Chapter, by the end of 1949, there were four central federations of trade unions in the country, namely, AITUC, INTUC, HMS and UTUC. The AITUC was under the dominance of the Communists; the INTUC was under the influence of the Indian National Congress; the HMS was controlled by the socialists and the UTUC operated under the influence of the radicals. After the adoption of the Indian Constitution in 1950, the role of political parties became all the more important for contesting elections and forming government at the Centre and in the States. Not only new political parties came to be formed, but also existing political parties witnessed splits for one reason or the other. The political parties tried their best to keep as many trade unions and workers as possible, under their influence and control. These developments had their repercussions on the trade union movement also. In addition to the four existing central federations of trade unions, that is AITUC, INTUC, HMS and UTUC, new central federations came to be established and elements of split also started penetrating in the central federations.

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\(^8^9\) P.R.N. Sinha, Indubala Shekar, Industrial Relation Trade Union Labour laws, p. 95.
In 1955, Bharatiya Jan Sangh established the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) which subsequently came under the influence and domination of the Bharatiya Janata Party. A split in the Community Party of India led to a split in the AITUC. The two parties namely, the Community Party of India and the newly formed the Communist Party Marxists (CPM), inspite of their political split, endeavoured to work together on the platform of the AITUC for a few years. However, in 1970, the unions under the influence of the CPM succeeded from the AITUC and formed a central federation of their own, known as the Centre of Indian Trade Union – CITU. The split in the Indian National Congress in 1969 also caused a split in the INTUC. In 1972, the trade unions under the influence of Morarji desai, Nijalingappa and Kamraj seceded from the INTUC and established a central federation called National Organization of Labour (NLO). Sometimes later, a group in the UTUC formed United Trade Union Congress – Lenin Sarani (UTUC-LS). Later, two other central federations of trade unions, namely National Front of Indian Trade Unions (NFITU) and Trade Union Coordination Centre (TUCC) also came to be set up. Thus presently, ten central federations of trade unions, namely, AITUC, INTUC, HMS, UTUC, BMS, CITU, NLO, UTUC-LS, NFITU and TUCC are in operation in the country.  

The number of trade unions affiliated to the earlier four central federations, that is INTUC, AITUC, HMS and UTUC and their membership from 1949 to 1968 figures relating to all the ten central federations have been given in Table-2.1.

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90 Govt. of India, Ministry of Labour, Various issues of Labour year Book and Indian Labour Statistics.
That the figures of both the number of affiliated trade unions and their membership in respect of all the central federations, particularly, HMS and UTUC, have fluctuated during the course of years under study. However, none of the central federations could increase the number of affiliated unions or their membership during the period 1953-1962. On the contrary, the period 1953-1962 witnessed a decline in both the number of affiliated trade unions and their membership as compared to the figures of the proceeding period 1949-1952. Only in 1966, the INTUC and the HMS could add a significant number in the membership. In particular, the position of the HMS, in terms of both the number of affiliated unions and their membership, considerably deteriorated from 1953 onwards. In 1962, the HMS had less than half the number of affiliated trade unions and members, when compared to the figures of 1952. The maximum decline took place in 1957, when its membership went down to less than one-fourth the figures of 1952. In 1962, the membership of the unions affiliated to the UTUC was less than one-third of the membership recorded in 1952. The maximum loss incurred by the AITUC was in the year 1953 when it lost more than 5 lakhs members and 400 affiliated trade unions over the corresponding figures of 1952. However, from 1955 onwards, the AITUC continued to maintain its position.
Table-2.1

Number of Trade Unions Affiliated to Central Federations of Trade Unions and their membership (1980, 1989)\textsuperscript{91}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of central federation</th>
<th>No. of affiliated unions</th>
<th>Membership (000s)</th>
<th>Membership (000s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. INTUC</td>
<td>1,604</td>
<td>2,236</td>
<td>2,692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. CITU</td>
<td>1,474</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>1,776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. BMS</td>
<td>1,333</td>
<td>1,211</td>
<td>3,117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. AITUC</td>
<td>1,080</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. HMS</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>763</td>
<td>1,481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. NLO</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. UTUC</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. UTUC-LS</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. NFITU</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. TUCC</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6,526</td>
<td>5,997</td>
<td>12,331</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.6. Conclusion:

In the present I am afore said unique Trade Unions history project, to make an attempt to highlight certain interesting financing from their effort of the documenting narrated histories. Many of these trade unionists have several decades of rich experience in the organization, the details of the which not yet received much attention from main streams researchers. It is hearting to that the research has been successful in lucidly and briefly explained the relevance and utility of the historiography reconstructing the lost world’s of the working class movement.

In the Great Britain in the eighteen the centuries a numbers of status forbidden to workers in the Combination Act of 1799 to 1800, its un-lawful in deed, criminal conspiracy against the public interest. National Association for

\textsuperscript{91} Chief Labour Commissioner Central “Report on CTVO’s Member’s Ship Verification as enrolled on Aug. 26, 1994, p. 9.
the protection of labour, formed under John Doherty’s in 1831 and Robert Owen—owns, influence predominated in the field of labour market.

The American Trade Union’s are able the more easily to behave in this way because there has been an never a labour government. The American Federation of labour (AFL) was founded by Samuel Gamers in 1886. He made effective organization in America. In Nov. 1935, John L. Lewis – announced that creation of the committee for industrial organization (CIO) its began remarkable successful in organizing the Trade Union in America.

The Trade Union Movement in Russia is very great importance in economic and industrial life of the Soviet Union leaders Karl Marx Engles Staten and protect the working classes from exploiters they form their class of Soviet society. The Trade Union movement is less than 14 decade Indian trade movements have a shortest history. The establishment of the Bombay Mill – Hands Association under the leadership of Dr. M. Lokande, in 1890, the straight point of the Labour Movement History in India.

The formation of the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) in 1920 gave shape to the Trade Union Movement in India. B. P. Wadia, The Madras Labour Union formed in 1891 and Veteran leader of national movement Lala Lajatpat Rao was the president of (AITUC). Later on, S. A. Dange, Muzaffar Ahmed, N. M. Joshi – created a awareness among the working class in India.