CHAPTER - IV.
The History of Trade Unionism in Ahmedabad.
The History of the T.L.A.

The beginning of the pre-existence spade work of the T.L.A. could be traced to 14th March 1914, when Miss Ansooyaben Sarabhai, the sister of the prominent Millowner of Ahmedabad, Mr. Ambalal Sarabhai, started a small school for workers' children in the Amrapura Chawl opposite to the Jubilee Mill. On her return to India Miss Sarabhai who had spent two years in contact with the Fabian Socialists in England, originally wanted to do social work amongst women of the middle class. But finding that on account of social rigidities, obdurate traditions, very low status of women and their virtual refusal to co-operate with her, it was very difficult if not impossible to do social work amongst ladies of the middle class, she decided to educate workers' children.

In 1916 when Gandhiji visited her school he was satisfied to see its working and said ".... My regard for Ansooyaben's work has increased. Arrangements made for children are praiseworthy. Making the children prepare a garden in a locality like this and greater attention to their health and cleanliness are likely to yield still better results".*

Three years' devoted educational work amongst children brought Miss Sarabhai and workers into close touch with each other. When she came to know that

* Shantilal Desai "An outline of the History of the T.L.A. (Gujarati)"
illegally mills were working for more than twelve hours and children were made to work for the full day in different mills under different names, she drew the attention of the Inspector of Factories to these phenomena.

In 1916 in connection with the work of the Home Rule League Movement, Miss Sarabhai came in contact with Mr. Shankerlal Banker. Mr. Banker was then working as the Secretary of the League in Bombay. He suggested to Miss Sarabhai to widen the sphere of her activities. Thereupon with Miss Sarabhai, Mr. Banker, Mr. Krishnalal Desai and Mr. Kalidas Zaveri, - the latter two being lawyers in Ahmedabad - as members, "The Majoor Mitra Mandal" (A society friendly to workers) came to be established. Functions of the Majoor Mitra Mandal consisted besides imparting education to workers' children, of giving medical facilities to workers, disseminating knowledge of thrift, saving and co-operation amongst workers' families and removing grievances of workers in connection with pay and related matters.

In the Amrapura School working in the morning and afternoon shifts, the number of teachers was five and the average attendance of children continued to be one hundred. The attendance of workers in its night shift verged round sixty.

The work of the Majoor Mitra Mandal (M.M.M.) was essentially constructive. It may therefore be examined a little more closely. The M.M.M. was, disseminating information on laws of hygiene and sanitation, teaching workers benefits and techniques of keeping homes, bodies
and clothes clean, getting roads between chawls, latrines and waste water-pi's cleansed with the help and co-operation of the owners of chawls and health inspectors, distributing medicines like quinine, magnesium and so on free of charge to the needy workers and referring comparatively serious patients to the free services of Dr. Pitamberdas and Dr. Motibai. In those days rates of interest charged to workers, most of whom were drowned in debt, varied from 30 percent to 300 percent. The M.M.M. therefore formed a co-operative credit society of twelve residents of the Amrapura chawl to extricate them from the burden of debt.

**Warpers' Strike.**

In the year 1916 a serious plague enveloped the City of Ahmedabad and many workers left the city for their villages. To induce them not to emigrate, millowners granted to them seventyfive percent bonus in wages. Warpers were exempted from it. Moreover wages in most of the departments of mills except that of warpers had gone up. Warpers' wages had been steady for long. They therefore demanded the bonus wages. As their demand was turned down, with the help of the M.M.M. they formed their union and struck work. Miss Sarabhai lead their strike. Within twenty days of the strike except seven out of more than forty mills all other mills agreed to grant them a twentyfive per cent wage increase. Ultimately a twenty per cent general wage increase was given to them and therefore the strike was withdrawn. During this strike warpers had received an assistance of 500 rupees.* To break this strike, agents had imported

warpers from Bombay. But strikers had successfully persuaded them not to snatch their bread by resuming their work and to return to Bombay. This strike had commenced on 4th December 1917 and ever since then on that day, workers of Ahmedabad celebrate the Labour Day. It is also interesting to note that during the strike an enraged worker had beaten the Secretary of the M.O.A. with a stick. When Gandhiji came to know about it he advised Miss Sarabhai to fine the recalcitrant worker ten rupees and carry on her struggles on strictly non-violent lines. For workers of Ahmedabad Gandhiji's advice to Miss Sarabhai on the incident was a sort of initiation into the technique of non-violent struggles.

Weavers' Strike of 1918:

Weavers in Ahmedabad Mills, most of whom belonged to the Muslim community, were inspired considerably by the success of warpers. And therefore, when millowners stopped giving the bonus wages after the cessation of the plague, they implored them (owners) to continue its payment. They pleaded that the cost of living had gone up and it was difficult to subsist on original wages not inclusive of the bonus wages. On their part agents of mills were not prepared to concede to more than twenty percent wage increase; and weavers were determined not to accept it and try their strength against millowners if it was necessary to do so. Authorities in charge of the administration, law and order were apprehending that once the strike commenced, law and order would be thrown out of the window and the peaceful atmosphere in the city would be replaced by orgy and
incendiaryism. At the requests of the Collector of Ahmedabad, Mr. Ambalal Sarabhai on behalf of the agents and Miss Sarabhai on behalf of workers, Gandhiji agreed to conciliate the dispute. Having gone into the facts of the dispute and all its implications, Gandhiji prevailed upon the leaders of the disputing parties to accept the appointment of a board of arbitration and its award as binding. Workers did not correctly understand implications of arbitration and agents had accepted it against their wishes. Therefore pending the award of arbitration as soon as some workers struck work, agents seized the opportunity of cancelling the arbitration. Thereafter Gandhiji studied the question of the demand of the wage increase in the light of increased cost of living and the capacity of the industry to pay. Weavers desired a fifty percent increase in wages. But according to his tenet that the demand should always be just and minimum, Gandhiji exhorted weavers to demand only thirty five percent increase in wages and they took a vow to accept nothing less than that, come what may. As the strike commenced, agents declared a lock-out. Workers remained completely non-violent and so against their instinct to be miscreants during the strike. During the day they would stay at home or work somewhere and in the evening they would flock in thousands to a tree named 'Amar Bawalia' in the Sabarmati River bed. They would listen to Gandhiji and collect leaflets issued in the name of Miss Sarabhai but written by Gandhiji. As the strike was about to enter the third week, the morale of
workers started diminishing rapidly, on the ground that a non-violent non-cooperator must suffer and sacrifice to the utmost and stand absolutely on his own to convince the opposite party of his sincerity to his cause, Gandhiji had rejected outside financial assistance to keep up the strike. It was very difficult to find alternative occupations for as many as ten thousand weavers. But Gandhiji did find out an occupation for all of them. He asked workers to carry sand from the bed of the River Sabarmati to the nearby sight of the 'Harijan Ashram', then under construction. Neither his associates nor workers had any idea of Gandhiji's sincerity of purpose. Workers were under the impression that the task of carrying containers of sand was nominally assigned to them to compensate them for the loss of wages. Therefore most of them did as little work as was possible. On his part the Mahatma had got maintained a complete account of the number of containers of sand transported by each worker and decided to compensate strikers strictly according to the number of containers of sand transported by each striker. All workers who had done their job casually got negligible wages and began not only to lose their faith in Gandhiji but even started abusing him. Morale of strikers already low on account of the prolongation of the strike therefore ebbed still further. Just at that opportune moment employers lifted up the lock-out. Picketing at mill gates was alien to Mahatma's philosophy. And but for his matchless inner strength and devotion to God, in those circumstances,
the strike would have collapsed like a house of cards.

An incident happened which turned the course of events completely. One day when Miss Sarabhai and Mr. Banker approached residents in the Jugaldas Chawl, demoralised as they had been, they started saying thus: "You all and Gandhiji move in cars and eat sumptuous food! How can you know pangs of starvation we are suffering from? Attending the meetings of Gandhiji does not keep the wolf away from the door." When these remarks were conveyed to Gandhiji he was touched to the quick by the agony and torture workers on strike were undergoing. True to himself, he did not have the slightest indignation for those who had passed the above-quoted remarks against him. And in the next day's meeting of workers which was shifted from evening to morning to persuade workers not to be enticed by the cessation of the lock-out, Gandhiji "saw a thousand dejected faces with disappointment writ thereon instead of five to then thousand who used to assemble daily (and) beaming with self-determination." And with lightening speed he decided and declared it that pending the satisfactory settlement of the dispute he would fast and not use any transport vehicle. The declaration of Gandhiji's decision to fast boosted up workers' morale beyond all imagination. They again pledged themselves to their earlier vow not to attend mills till the 35% wage increase was achieved and began to transport in thousands the sand of the Sabarmati gratuitously in order to help their colleagues financially worse off. Ultimately even millowners led by Mr. Sarabhai, whose wife was attached
to Gandhiji like "blood-sister" melted on seeing Gandhiji fasting and agreed to the appointment of Dr. A. B. Dhruva's binding arbitration. In all his struggles Gandhiji had been keen on not allowing hatred to take the place of love between contesting parties. During the struggle, which Gandhiji's Secretary Desai characterised as the Righteous Struggle, at Gandhiji's insistence Mr. Sarabhai used to lunch with him and Miss Sarabhai used to serve food to both of them.* An agreement was arrived at between workers and millowners that pending Dr. Dhruva's award, in order to respect the sentiments of workers they should be paid additional 35% wages on the first day; in order to respect employers' sentiments, on the second day they should be paid 20% additional wages; and in order to respect the sentiments of workers and owners both, from the third day onwards, workers should be paid 27½% (mid-way between 20% and 35%) additional wages. Gandhiji used to believe that in a righteous struggle - the struggle dominated by love between contestants - no one party wins or loses but both of them win. From the way in which this struggle was carried out it would not be hasty to conclude that in all respects it was a righteous struggle. It is also interesting to note that the "righteous struggle" was carried out at the nominal cost of rupee eight hundred only as far as workers were concerned.

Workers' and Millowners' Cases:

In a statement on behalf of workers submitted for

*Revealed in an interview by Mr. Banker.
the consideration of Dr. Dhruva, Mr. Banker maintained that
with a corresponding increase in the cost of living, a fifty
per cent increase in wages would leave workers' already
miserably low standard of living intact. If an improvement
in it were to be permitted, a permanent wage increase in
excess of 50% would be necessary. "In the alternative the
mills should arrange for well-ventilated houses, night-schools,
reading rooms, dispensaries, clubs and such other activities",
p pointed out Mr. Banker.

Mr. Banker contended that even in days before the
bonus of 75% to wages was granted, the weaver's average
monthly wage of Rs.22 was short of the basic expenditure of
his family of four members by Rs.2 and annas 12. (The
expenditure of Rs.24-12-0 - Revenue Expenditure of Rs.20-4-0+
monthly average capital expenditure of Rs.4-8-0). And further
this basic expenditure was exclusive of heavy interest
charges on debt, medical expenses, marriage and death
expenses, gaps in workers' earnings due to incapacity,
unemployment etc. and so on. He further argued that on
account of the rise in the cost of living, the expenditures
of the families of workers of four and six persons had
respectively gone up to Rs.32 and Rs.47. "To meet this
expenditure", he concluded, "workers should obtain at
least a minimum increase of 50 per cent and a maximum of
100 per cent on July wages."

On the capacity of the industry to pay, this is
what Mr. Banker stated. In July, on a pound of cloth, mills
had a profit of 3 annas (Price of cloth Rs.1.5.0 - cost per pound Rs.1-2-0). And considering the average yield of cloth per loom in pounds to be ten, the profit for two looms was Rs.3-12-0. Excluding from this 50 % to 70 % bonus of six annas per day on a monthly wage of Rs.22, owners were left with a clean profit of Rs.3-6-0. At the time of the submission of his statement, pointed out Mr. Banker, the profit exclusive of the bonus, had gone up to Rs.10/-. Hence there was no question of the inability of the industry to pay. And further, contended Mr. Banker, with the change in the system of charging the commission from 3 pies per pound to 3½ percent on sales, agency commissions had gone up by four times.

Explaining the reason for the demand for 35 % increase in wages, Mr. Banker pointed out that in the revoked arbitration it was agreed to that weavers' wages when augmented should not exceed their level in Bombay. And on an enquiry it was learnt that weavers' wages in Bombay ranged from Rs.30 (36 % on Rs.22) to Rs.42 (90 % on Rs.22) per month. According to his theory that a just demand is always the minimum, Gandhiji had demanded a 35 % increase in wages.

**Millowners' Case.**

In the statement on behalf of the millowners at the outset it was pointed out thus: - "Mr. Banker assumes that mills are run for the love of humanity and as a matter of philanthropy; that their aim is to raise the condition of the workers to the same level as that of the employers.... In reality mills are run with no other motive than to make
profits and, therefore, employment, labour and conditions of employment are determined purely on the basis of supply and demand and from the point of view of their efficiency. This is as it should be. Mr. Banker's approach is impossible, unsuitable, visionary and utopian. "These words are important for understanding the tremendous change in the philosophy and practices of industrial relations that have taken place since they were put into black and white. Things have not remained as they should have according to the conception of the M.O.A. in 1918.

The statement of the M.C.A. tried to meet Mr. Banker's presentation point by point and broadly its contents were these. Firstly, increase in the managing agency commission due to the change in the method of its computation was negligible and not relevant to the dispute. Welfare facilities referred to by Mr. Banker, were not available even to the rich and middle classes and the question of their inclusion in the disputes was unjust and unreal. If however, the Government or the Municipality organised amenities referred to by Mr. Banker, millowners were gladly prepared to contribute their share to them. Thirdly the plague bonus was meant to continue only during the plague and to insist on its continuation as the dearness allowance was improper. Fourthly, regarding weavers' higher wages in Bombay it was pointed out that the cost of living was higher in Bombay and weavers in Bombay were more efficient than their confreres in Ahmedabad.
produced finer cloth and were less mobile. Fifthly Mr. Banker's estimates of the expenditures of the weavers' families were inflated. And lastly regarding Mr. Banker's contention that workers had to toil beyond their capacity it was pointed out thus: "You will find workers loitering about and wasting their time in the smoking room..... as well as mill compound. It is our opinion that if they concentrated on their work they would earn much more than they do now. It is desirable that this habit of idling be stopped. We have often tried to check this evil, but failed. Workers will earn much more and their condition will improve by their attending more carefully to their work, than by statements made by their friends or by the sympathy shown to them".

The AWARD.

The M.O.A. was not able to collect and present to the arbitration the data on the dispute required by him. Therefore on the basis not of "really just solution" but "practical justice" he awarded a 35 % wage increase from the date on which arbitration agreement was arrived at*.

Activities of the M.M.M. between 1917 and 1920.

A brief review of the activities of the M.M.M. till it was transformed into the T.L.A. in 1920 may now be had.

Answering notices for deducting wages of workers going on strike without previous intimation, the collection of the accumulated wages through courts, distributing medicines for infectious diseases to 800 to 1000 workers daily at their residences, opening two more schools for

*From the Annual Reports of the M.M.M.
children and ten night schools for workers, arranging lectures on sanitation to workers by educated members of their own community and health exhibition for children of the working class, drawing the attention of the Factory Inspector to the confinement of ladies in mills for twelve instead of eleven hours and persuading parents not to allow their children to be overstrained by working in mills for the whole day in different names, were broadly speaking some of the activities of the M.M.M.*

The ESTABLISHMENT of the T.L.A.

A series of strikes took place in the mills of Bombay in 1920. As workers were not properly organised, it was difficult for millowners of Bombay to negotiate with them and bring strikes to an end. Rumours were going round the corner that the Ahmedabad mill workman was also highly dissatisfied and was planning to go on strike. Members of the M.M.M. strongly challenged the validity of these rumours. That created some confidence of millowners in their bonafides. Bearing this responsible behaviour of the members of the M.M.M. in mind, Mr. Ambalal Sarabhai, the President of the M.O.A., suggested to its members to agree to the establishment of the craft-wise organisations of workers in mills of Ahmedabad so as to make it easier to negotiate with them and also to agree to refer disputes not solved by negotiations between workers' organisations and the M.O.A., to a board of arbitration. To test the validity and the practicability of his ideas, Mr. Sarabhai negotiated with an informal union

*From the Annual Reports of the M.M.M.
of warpers on their demand for a wage increase and agreed to grant to them 62½% increase in wages. Induced by the success of warpers, folders also formed their union, negotiated with Mr. Sarabhai for a wage increase through it and succeeded in getting the same wage increase as that of warpers. After selecting their members for the board of arbitration the M.O.A. requested members of the M.M.M. to establish craft-wise unions of workers in mills of Ahmedabad. And duly seven or eight unions of workers were established in the cotton mills of Ahmedabad. The T.L.A. is a confederation of craft-wise federations of unions of workers in Ahmedabad mills. But in theory and the practice of it, it is an institution in which the confederation, the federations and the craft-wise unions of workers in mills have merged as inseparable entities. Formally it was established on 25-2-1920.

A section of millowners had an apprehension that Mr. Sarabhai was unduly charitable to workers. They may have imagined that, they may be so due to the influence of his sister over him. A move was therefore being made to replace Mr. Sarabhai for the presidency of the M.O.A. by Mr. Mangaldas Parekh. Mr. Sarabhai was due to leave for England on a long visit and when he learnt of the desire of the millowners to replace him by Mr. Parekh, he made way for him himself by resigning the presidency of the M.O.A. Sometime therefore in 1920 or 1921, Mr. Mangaldas Parekh became the president of the M.O.A. Mr. Parekh agreed to negotiate with the T.L.A. on demands of workers. But he did not like the
ides of the appointment of a separate board of arbitration and assured Gandhiji of his desire to settle problems of labour in consultation with him.

Strike in the Throstle Department.

Workers in the Throstle Department were dissatisfied with very inadequate payments made to them and wanted to strike work along with weavers in 1918. But they were not advised by the M.K.M. not to do so and wait for a suitable time to struggle for an increase in wages. So they also formed their union which demanded the wage increase and certain improvements in working conditions. As the M.O.A. preferred to sleep over their demand for a month, they referred their demands to Gandhiji's advice. Gandhiji besought the M.O.A. either to accept their demands or refer them to arbitration. A group of agents of twelve mills led by Mr. Sarabhai thereupon referred the demands of throstle workers to the arbitration of Mr. Chatfield, the Collector of Ahmedabad, with the condition that if a wage increase was sanctioned the parity of throstle workers wages in Ahmedabad with those in Bombay should be maintained. As no settlement could be arrived at with Mr. Mangaldas Parekh, the president of the M.O.A., a strike in throstle departments of all mills of Ahmedabad except those twelve which had referred the dispute to the arbitration of Mr. Chatfield, took place. Without undermining qualities of Mr. Sarabhai's head and heart, it may be pointed out that an immediate agreement on his and his friendly agents' part to refer the dispute to arbitration might have been motivated by
the idea of scoring in the public estimate over Mr. Mangaldas
Parekh. Not long after the commencement of the strike in most
of the mills of Ahmedabad Mr. Parekh also agreed to refer the
dispute to arbitration and therefore the strike came to an
end.

In his award Mr. Chatfield recommended a 35% wage
increase for workers in the frame department, 25% increase
for weavers and some increase for winders. He recommended that
every week doffers should be paid Rs. 9-4-0 + Rs. 0-4-0 as wages
and bonus respectively. To doffers minding double spindles he
wanted to get 1½ times additional wages. Mr. Chatfield
recommended that weft piecers should get eight annas more
than warp piecers and specified the following wage-structure
for them. Piecers minding less than 340 spindles, monthly
wages of Rs. 12-12-0; Piecers minding spindles between 340 and
380, monthly wages Rs. 13; Piecers minding more than 380
spindles, monthly wages of Rs. 13-4-0. Mr. Chatfield also wanted
piecers to get a weekly bonus of annas eight provided they
were not absent for more than a day in a week. Mr. Chatfield
also recommended a reduction in the number of working hours
in mills from 12 to 10 provided workers and 75% of mills
agreed to it. But he specified that in case the arrangement
for the reduction in working hours broke down for some reason,
Ipso facto working hours would be increased to 12 and labour
should neither strike against it nor demand compensation for
an addition in working hours.

Mr. Chatfield's award created a great dissatisfaction
amongst workers for whom it was meant. And the award for mills
led by Mr. Parekh was delayed for long. Workers in the thrustle
departments of all mills of Ahmedabad therefore took a
recourse to strike. In vain organisers of the T.L.A. persuaded
workers of the mills led by Mr. Sarabhai to resume work and
not to violate the sanctity of the arbitration award. Finding
workers to be intransigent they resigned from their unions.
When Gandhiji came to know of all this, he rushed down to
Ahmedabad and explained to workers the code of conduct in
arbitration. Workers understood their mistake, apologised to
him for their unseemly conduct and withdrew the strike.
Immediately thereafter negotiations on thrustle workers' 
demands took place between Gandhiji and Mr. Parekh. Since they
could not come to an agreement a strike took place in all
mills other than those to which Mr. Chatfield's award applied.
Twelve days after the commencement of this strike, Mr. Parekh
and Gandhiji came to terms with each other and accepted Mr.
Chatfield's award mutatis mutandis. These strikes entrenched
voluntary arbitration as the only way of settling unsolved
disputes in the individual relations system of Ahmedabad.
They also disciplined workers and agents in maintaining and
upholding the sanctity of awards however unfavourable they
might look, like.
Gandhiji teaches workers further - his principles of
non-violent, no-cooperation in trade unionism:

As has been examined earlier, years of War and the
post war period were years of unprecedented prosperity for
mills. For the same reason mills did not like any interruption
in the production and were prepared to pay a handsome price
for avoiding it if it came up. Workers of the thrustle
department caught up the secret of mills' eagerness to continue production without brakes and pending the termination of the year and drawing out of balance sheets and profits, started demanding the bonus more than once in a year. And willy-nilly mills paid it. When Gandhiji came to know about the system of workers getting bonus more than once in a year he advised agents to discourage it. But one of the agents conveyed it to Gandhiji through Mr. Banker and Mr. Kastoorbhai Lalbhai that dissuading workers from demanding bonus more than once in a year was his (Gandhi's) responsibility and he was not prepared for interruption in production. Gandhiji took the agent's quip in the correct constructive perspective and explained to workers that demanding money from agents under duress amounted to dishonesty and unless they stopped their practice he, Miss Sarabhai and others would be required to withdraw their cooperation to them and quit their unions as well. Gandhiji's persuasion mixed with a threat had the expected effect and gradually all workers abided by his advice and stopped the practice of demanding bonus often in a year.

How balanced in his treatment to workers and agents and steadfast to the truth the Mahatma was, is revealed by another incident cited below. In 1921 a very popular political leader Maulana Mojmedally visited Ahmedabad. Overwhelmed by the welcome given to him and emotions created by his presence, workers abstained from attending mills for some days. When Gandhiji came to know about it he asked workers to apologise
to agents for their improper behaviour of not attending mills and compensate them by gratuitous extra work by the same number of hours for which they had remained absent. And he made workers abide by his advice.

The table below reproduced from the Labour Gazette of 1921 gives a considerably clear idea of the progress made by the T.L.A. in 1921.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Trade Union Department wise.</th>
<th>Date of formation</th>
<th>No. of members</th>
<th>Income From mem.</th>
<th>Inter ests</th>
<th>Other source estt.</th>
<th>Expenditure Salaries -ing rary.</th>
<th>Print Lib.</th>
<th>Sundry Expenses</th>
<th>Funds at the end of the Yr. 1920</th>
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<td>4,000</td>
<td>15,281</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1,249</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>12,784</td>
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<td>Wvg.</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>32,243</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>329</td>
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<td>Folding</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>1,289</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>Sizing</td>
<td>March 1920</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>2,125</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winding</td>
<td>June 1920</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1,619</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blow, Card Frame Deptts. Aug. 1920</td>
<td>3,900</td>
<td>7,729</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>123</td>
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<td>60,278</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2,569</td>
<td>1,710</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>1,096</td>
<td>54,797</td>
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Awards of Arbitration:

Years 1920-'23 witnessed the passing of a series of awards of arbitration. All these awards are printed in the "History of Wage Adjustment Vol.IV" published by the T.L.A.

In their award of 29-10-1921 on the demand for bonus, arbitrators, Gandhi and Mr. Mangal das Parekh recommended the payment of bonus progressively related to income slabs for workers and clerks. The maximum bonus recommended was Rs. 3/- per month for persons drawing wages above Rs. 36 per month; the minimum of it was Re. 1 per month for persons drawing wages between Rs. 10 and Rs. 18 per month. An important feature of the award was that it recommended the payment of the bonus for the full year to persons present for more than nine months.

The following clauses of the award are interesting:

"We must point out frankly that workers wages have been increased only recently. Hence their demand for bonus is unjust and improper. And it is our opinion that mills which gave the bonus without the consent of the M.O.A. have erred. .... We hope that from now onwards workers would not indulge in the impropriety of deciding holidays for themselves."

The award of the arbitration board of 17-1-1921 regarding dining sheds, drinking water, latrines etc. is reproduced below:

"The arbitration board has received from workers a number of complaints and therefore it has a reason to believe that in about forty mills dining sheds have still not been
efected; in some mills proper arrangements for drinking water have not been made; in some mills latrines are very dirty and some of them are without roofs. All these arrangements should have been made before the thirty first date of last December. For mills where these arrangements have not been made the board expresses its regrets but it expects that before 31st March they would be made and no cause of complaint would exist in that respect thereafter. The Board also feels that if by 31st March these arrangements would not be made, it might create discontent and unrest amongst workers and therefore it strongly recommends that mills must make these arrangements without any delay.

"Female workers absent at the time of the distribution of the bonus on account of maternity and who presented themselves for work subsequently should be paid the bonus.

"The Board was sorry to know that workers remained absent without leave and mills were put to loss as a result of it. The Board feels sorry for the behaviour of workers and it also feels that such a behaviour is likely to come in the way of the establishment of peaceful industrial relations and affection between workers and employers. It therefore expects that on working days workers would not remain absent without leave.

"Relievers in the New Maneckchowk and the Maneckchowk Mills have demanded the bonus. If they are private relievers of these mills whether their work is related to the number of spindles or not, they should be paid the bonus.

"Having gone through the letter of the Madhubhai
Mill the Board decides that wages accumulated during the strike of workers of the Frame Department should be paid to them."

In their award of 8-8-1921, the Board pointed out that workers' grievances regarding the use of yarn and cotton of low quality should be redressed and sizing should not exceed 50%. As regards the continuation of workers' complaints regarding water, latrines etc., the Board requested the T.L.A. to draw the attention of the M.O.A. to them and to hand over the names of defaulting mills to the Board if they do not make arrangements to solve workers' complaints. In their award of 29-6-1921 on latrines, drinking water etc. the Board toughly expressed its verdict thus:

"If inspite of repeated warnings, mills are not prepared to give to their workers amenities essential for existence, the M.O.A. should boycott them. If that is not done and the T.L.A. decides to take steps it likes, the Board will not consider it (the TLA) responsible for them."

In their award of 24th July 1921, the Board said thus: "On account of the rise in prices of foodgrains and rents of houses, workers of the thristle department have demanded an increase of fifteen per cent in wages. Rather than increase wages it is better not to allow prices to go up. Mills should therefore make arrangements to sell wheat and Bajri, main items in the diet of workmen to workers from the first of September of this year.

"Mills should acquire chawls in which workers presently
reside and start constructing new ones immediately in order that workers might not experience hardships on account of the increase in house rents. It was not possible for mills to implement this award. And therefore in modification of it, on 1-9-'21 the Board consisting of Mr. Parekh and Miss Sarabhai vice Gandhiji, awarded a wage increase of Rs. 1-4-0 per 'hapta' to ring piecers and doffers.

The Bonus Dispute in the year 1921:-

As we have already seen in the year 1920 the maximum bonus awarded by the arbitration board to the workman was Rs. 36 per year. In the year 1921 the T.L.A. demanded the bonus of one and a half month's wages and wanted the ceiling on it to be removed. In his differing award with Mr. Parekh, Gandhiji supported the demands of the T.L.A. as reasonable ones and said: "An increase in the ratio of bonus to profit is not only beneficial to the worker but also in the interest of the safety of the big textile mill industry of India... Deliberating over the condition of the Ahmedabad worker, I feel that the safety of the textile industry lies in satisfying him--- since the installation of the arbitration machinery in Ahmedabad, workers there have done their duty very well....."

Mr. Parekh wanted the bonus to be paid at the same rates as for the year 1920.

The two arbitrators having failed to come to an agreement, the dispute should in due and natural course have been submitted to the umpire for his final and binding decision. And late Mr. Madanmohan Malaviya who was taking
a keen interest in the dispute would have been a worthy Umpire. But Mr. Parekh was not agreeable to referring the dispute to an umpire. He was keen on seeking an agreement with Gandhiji. He is even reported to have said to Gandhiji when he proposed Mr. Malaviya’s name for Umpireship: "How van that Brahmin, however pious, conciliate the two of us who are Banias: The best way is for us to sit together, discuss and find out between us an agreed course."* At last Mr. Parekh agreed to the mediation but not the umpireship of Mr. Malaviya.

In principle Mr. Malaviya conceded to it that when handsome profits are earned, workers should be rewarded well by way of the payment of bonus. He fixed a ceiling on bonus at Rs. 75 for workers with wages above Rs. 75 per month. For workers drawing less than 75 rupees per month, he recommended the payment of bonus equal to one month’s average salary plus Rs. 7-8-0. For members of the Union as well as non-members who went on strike pending negotiations for the settlement of the bonus dispute, the award gave the option of compensating mills by extra work. If they failed to do so, the award permitted mills to make suitable deductions from the quantum of bonus payable to them.

For the year 1922, the arbitration board consisting of Mr. Parekh and Mr. Dhruva unanimously recommended the payment of bonus, at the rate of a month’s salary with a ceiling of rupees fifty five.

A clause in that award read thus: "A person who is

*Revealed in an interview by an associate of Gandhiji.
absent for fifteen days or more in any month, shall lose his bonus for the whole month but this rule of fifteen days shall not apply to December 1921. Under this clause an operative who had been absent for fifteen days or more was liable to lose the bonus for the entire month. But if an operative had been absent for a number of days, were these days of absence to be reckoned against him in calculating the period qualifying for the bonus?

Differences arose between the T.L.A. and M.O.A. on this question. The M.O.A. held that days of absence in several months should be totalled up, reduced to months and counted against the worker, fifteen days being allowed as a matter of grace. On the other hand the T.L.A. held that the absence for less than fifteen days in any particular month should be condoned and the whole month should be reckoned as a full working month in calculating the period qualifying for bonus.

In his classic award of 2nd July 1923, the Umpire F.X. De'Souza, the District and Sessions Judge of Ahmedabad upheld the view of the T.L.A.

The Non-Cooperation Movement of 1921:

Under the guidance of the T.L.A. workers of the Ahmedabad textile industry participated very actively in the non-violent, non-cooperation movement launched by Gandhiji in 1921. Gandhiji wanted his followers to be constructive even during the non-cooperation movement. He therefore wanted that all members of the T.L.A. should take a vow of teetotally.

*The Session of the Indian National Congress was held in Ahmedabad in the month of December 1921.*
The T.L.A. could not implement his desire immediately. But during the non-co-operation movement of 1921, it actively propagated amongst workers against drinking and in course of time it also resolved that representatives of workers attached to it must refrain from drinking.

In 1922, Mr. Banker was in the jail for taking a leading part in the non-co-operation movement. In his absence the work of the T.L.A. was greatly handicapped. And therefore Mr. Kalidas Zaveri, one of the founder members of the M.M.M. gave up practice as a lawyer and devoted himself to the T.L.A. for the full time. Sometime in 1922, Mr. Gulzarilal Nanda, a research student in the Allahabad University who had given up research during the non-co-operation movement and Mr. Khandubhai Desai a pet student of Prof. P.A. Wadia in the Wilson College who too had given up studies for the same reason as Mr. Nanda had, joined the T.L.A. as full time paid officials; of course on meagre salaries. Under the guidance of Mr. Banker and Miss Sarabhai by their selfless, energetic, intelligent and tireless work often projecting into mid-nights they developed the T.L.A. from a small institution into a powerful one and spread the Gandhian Labour Movement all over India through the agency of the I.N.T.U.C. Apart from Gandhiji's dominating personality the factor which contributed to the staggering success of the T.L.A. was the harmonious blending of Mr. Nanda's scholarly genius and Khandubhai's intelligent, practical and tough perspective.

Activities of the T.L.A. in 1923-24:-

In 1923, the T.L.A. conducted the one and the only
general strike against mills of Ahmedabad. Details relating to this strike are given in the chapter on industrial relations. The strike failed badly and the T.L.A. suffered a heavy setback as a result of it. In 1924, Mr. Nanda and Mr. Desai moved extensively on cycles into labour localities to persuade workers to join the T.L.A. During the year they conducted 130 meetings of workers in mill premises. 743 complaints of workers were recorded in the T.L.A. in 1924. 30% of them related to dismissals, victimisation, fines, unjust penalties and so on; 20% to bad treatment, bribe-taking, improper rules and the obstruction to unionisation; 15% to bad working conditions; 15% to modes of payment, wages etc; 14% to hours of work, holidays and 6% to bad and insufficient raw materials and stoppages resulting therefrom.

During the year 1923-1924 eighteen minor strikes took place in mills of Ahmedabad; three of them took place in mills with unions of the T.L.A. 50% of these strikes were related to the refusal to reinstate the jobber, 25% to rates of wages in weaving department, 15% to bad raw materials and 10% to ill-treatment. Most of these strikes took place due to the absence of a suitable machinery for settling disputes quickly. The T.L.A. had suggested to the M.O.A. to appoint a small joint committee to redress workers unsettled grievances periodically. But it was not accepted.

For the first time in 1924, an untouchable worker nominated by the T.L.A. was elected to the Ahmedabad Municipality on behalf of the Congress Party. After an extensive survey the T.L.A. represented to the Ahmedabad
Municipality to provide in the working class areas 93 public water-taps, 180 latrines, 54 urinals and 95 lights. A careful consideration was given to the representation of the T.L.A. and 50 taps, 6 latrines, 11 urinals and 77 lights were provided in the working class areas. During the year 1924, the T.L.A. started the new activity of recording workers' complaints regarding Municipal facilities and solving them by negotiations with Municipal authorities.

The T.L.A. maintained a hospital with twenty beds and a female and maternity ward. It also ran two dispensaries. In all 176 patients took indoor treatment and more than 5,000 workers took the advantage of the free outdoor facilities and medicines. The total medical expense incurred by the Union during the year 1924 amounted to Rs.12,907/-. In those days when market rates of interest charged to workers varied from 30% to 300% the T.L.A. advanced loans of Rs.10,668/- at rates of interest ranging between 6% to 9%. The T.L.A. conducted eleven night and nine day schools and spent in all Rs.22,254 for the education of workers and their children. For the purpose of spreading education amongst working classes it received Rs.15,000/- by way of the interest on the M.O.A's donation of three lakhs of rupees to the Tilak Swarajya Fund and Rs.720/- from the Agent of the Mill B. In 1924 it also started a reading room for workers and began to publish its weekly newspaper named the "Majoor Sandesh" and began to distribute it.
freely amongst workers.

In those days workers in general and their representatives in particular were often victimised for carrying on trade union activities. Twenty one victimised representatives and five workers received the victimisation benefits of three months' and one month's wages respectively from the T.L.A.

The workmen's Compensation Act came into operation in 1924. The T.L.A. published the summary of the Act in Gujarati and began to present claims on behalf of workers or their relatives. In all sixty one such claims were entrusted to the Union during the year. Of them thirty seven were settled in favour of workers, two were compromised, nine failed and thirteen remained pending. A large part of the compensation sanctioned was to be awarded to minors or widows who were likely to spend it out quickly. Arrangements were therefore made to deposit the compensation in the T.L.A. and distribute it to claimants in instalments according to their needs. A sum of rupees 14,529 was thus deposited with the T.L.A. and of that Rs.4,955 were distributed to claimants. With such a bright record of work in 1924 no wonder in the year 1925 the membership of the T.L.A. stood at 16,000*.

In the year 1928, the M.O.A. resolved that mills were entitled not to permit the T.L.A. to collect subscriptions on their premises. The T.L.A. therefore advised workers not to accept their wages if mills came in the way of the collection of their subscriptions. Ultimately the dispute

* All these facts relating to the progress and achievements of the T.L.A. are taken from its Annual Report for the year 1924.
was referred to the Arbitration Board of Gandhiji and Mr. Parekh. The board expressed the opinion that the then prevalent system of collection of subscriptions in the premises of mills was not conducive to the maintenance of order in mills. But it asked agents to be sympathetic to the growth of workers' organisation and deduct subscriptions at rates prescribed by the T.L.A. from the wages of workers desirous of becoming members of the T.L.A. and hand over the amount so deducted to the T.L.A.

The Wage Dispute of 1929.

Some time in 1928 or 1929 the T.L.A. approached the M.O.A. with the proposal that during the period 1923-1927 the financial position of the Cotton textile mill industry of Ahmedabad had improved so much that it should annul the cut in wages of workers effected in the year 1923. The M.O.A. did not agree to the said proposal of the T.L.A. and therefore the dispute which arose out of it was referred to the Board of Arbitration consisting of Gandhiji and Mr. Mangaldas Parekh. The Board studied figures relating to the temporal changes in the financial position of the cotton textile mill industry of Ahmedabad into all relevant details, came to the conclusion that the financial structure of the industry had not improved so substantially between 1923 and 1927 - for which year the latest balance sheets were then available - as to warrant the restoration of the wage-structure prevalent before the general strike of 1923 took place and opined that the T.L.A.'s proposal could not be entertained in
view of the fact that it had failed to prove its case.

The ratios of net profit to investors' money in the cotton textile mill industry of Ahmedabad were 4.98 in 1923, 7.22 in 1925, 6.90 in 1927, 5.96 in 1928 and 10.04 in 1929. Between the years 1923 and 1928, as the above data reveal, there was no substantial change for the better in the condition of the cotton textile mill industry of Ahmedabad. The same cannot however be said as regards the year 1929 in which the industry fared very well; comparatively viewing the situation. But for quite some time after an year would be over and balance sheets would be published the financial position of the industry during it cannot be assessed precisely. And therefore the comparison of the financial position of the industry in 1923 could be made only with that in the year 1927 for which latest balance sheets were available then. It may be stated without any prejudice to the facts of the dispute concerned that it would not have been even proper to make adjustments in wages on the basis of the data relating to the one year of 1929. From all this, it seems, the Arbitration Board was not unjustified in refusing to the entertain the proposal of the T.L.A.

Members and organisers of the T.L.A. were shaken by the decision of the Board of Arbitration. They therefore sought Gandhiji's advice regarding their desire to bring about an improvement in the wages of workers in mills of Ahmedabad. Gandhiji is reported to have told them that no doubt they had failed to prove that an appreciable change
for the better in the financial condition of the mill industry of Ahmedabad had taken place. But he is reported to have advised them that they could pray to the Board of Arbitration to restore the wage structure of 1922, on the ground that the workers' earnings were considerably short of the expenditure of their families. It may be mentioned that in 1926 in the cotton textile mill industry of Ahmedabad the ratio of the actual wage of workers to the living wage was 51.9%.

In accordance with the tip received from Gandhiji the T.L.A. again approached the Board of Arbitration for the restoration of the wage structure of 1922 and the annulment of the wage cut effected in 1923. The raison d'être of their new proposal was that, whereas the Ahmedabad worker's average monthly wage was Rs. 33-7-6, the expenditure of his family was Rs. 49-13-6 per month.

As the arbitrator Gandhiji did not accept and correctly so, the plea of the M.O.A. that mills of Ahmedabad were working in losses. He subscribed to the case of the T.L.A. presented in a different clothing entirely. Mr. Mangaldas Parekh did not agree with him and therefore the dispute was referred to the Umpire K.M. Zaveri, a Judge of the Small Cause Court for the final and binding award.

In his award, at the outset, Shri Zaveri traced the history of the dispute of 1923 in an impartial way and then pointed out: "The abandonment by the Union of the contention that all the mills had done extraordinarily well between 1923 and 1927 and the consequential finding by the arbitrators

*Dr. V.R. Trivedi : ibid : P.179
to that effect, should not in my opinion debar the Union from obtaining a fair and equitable relief if the state of industry shows improvement though the same may not be unusual or extraordinary. Broadly speaking I do find that there has been an improvement in the state of the industry..... Taking all these factors into consideration I am unable to hold that the state of industry would not warrant a small increase in wages of the workers..... I think on a consideration of all circumstances....... out of a cut of 15½ %, 8 percent should be restored to spinners and 5 % to weavers.

"I know that the continuation of the cut would mean a saving of about 35 lacs to the millowners, and that the increase I award would take away a large amount from that sum. But as against that is to be considered that the amounts for payment of dividends and sums to be transferred to the Reserve Fund are discretionary items and can be adjusted or distributed suitably so that enhancement may not press heavily on one or the other of them."

The Satyagraha Movement of 1930:

Sometime before the Satyagraha movement of the year 1930 began, late Mr.Ambalal Trivedi, late Mr.Somnath Dave Mr.S.R.Vasawada, presently the General Secretary of the I?N.T.U.C. and a Secretary of the T.L.A., Mr.N.H.Shaikh a Secretary of the T.L.A. and Mr.M.P.Vyas, the Labour Minister in the State of Gujarat, and Mr.A.S.Pandya joined as officials in the T.L.A. Like Mr.Nanda and Mr.Dessai all these
officials rendered efficient and valuable service to workers of Ahmedabad. Some of them have helped in spreading the Gandhian labour movement all over India through the agency of the I.N.T.U.C.

During the earlier stages of the Satyagraha movement the T.L.A. undertook the activities of creating political consciousness among workers, spreading sentiments for boycotting foreign-made goods, distributing hand-spun hand-woven cloth (khadi) and intensively educating workers into temperance. For carrying out all these activities volunteers were recruited, housed in the three different camps and given special training. Some of these volunteers were sent to villages for doing constructive work; some of them were engaged in transporting and selling unexcised salt; one hundred and sixty of them were sent to 'Dharasana' to join the Salt Satyagraha and about sixty six volunteers were doing the work of picketing the sale of foreign cloth and liquor.

According to the Annual Report of the T.L.A. for the year 1930, "If there be any single thing which must be acknowledged as the dominant activity of the Association during the year 1930, it is uncompromising struggle for stamping out liquor from working class homes." That was done through meetings in mills and working class localities, the distribution of bulletins and leaflets, an intensive street to street propaganda by singing parties and processions and administering pledges of teetotally to individuals in house to house visits. For the same purpose representatives of workers to the T.L.A. were charged with the duty of making
workers observe their pledge not to drink, obtain information regarding those who drink at liquor shop and persuade them to refrain from doing so." The same Annual Report points out that as result of these efforts the consumption of liquor went down from 241 gallons per day to less than 50 gallons. Of course officials and representatives of the T.L.A. had to suffer considerably in achieving these results. Licensees of liquor had set up a multiplicity of selling branches through the agency of numerous freshly engaged servants who approached workers in their localities and houses, in licensees' bungalows, other buildings, petty restaurants, latrines, urinals and even brothels. These licensees and their agents threatened volunteers and officials of the T.L.A. with revolvers and often assaulted them. The Secretary of the T.L.A. was also once assaulted and injured.

**The Dispute for the Reduction of Wages, 1933:**

On grounds that whereas in other textile centres wages had been reduced and work-loads had been increased, they (wages) were very high in the textile industry of Ahmedabad and in contrast to the prosperous year of 1932 in first nine months of the year 1933 the textile industry of Ahmedabad had made sizable losses, on 14th September 1933, the M.O.A. proposed to the T.L.A. a 25% general wage reduction for the workers of the textile mill industry of Ahmedabad. As the T.L.A. did not agree to the proposal of the M.O.A. the dispute was referred to the voluntary Conciliation Board consisting of Mr. Chimanlal Parekh and

*From the History of Wage Adjustment Vol. III published by the T.L.A.*
and Mr. Banker. The said Conciliation Board had come into existence in 1930 as a result of an agreement between the T.L.A. and the M.O.A.

One 2nd October 1933, the T.L.A. demanded from the M.O.A. audited trial balance sheets for first nine months of the same year with the below-mentioned specifications.

a) Quantities, kinds and values of the opening and closing stock of cotton, cloth and yarn; quantities and values of stores and fuel and cotton purchased; waste, yarn with counts and cloth purchased.
b) Manufacturing costs of different items and differentiation of wages and salaries.
c) Age of machinery in different departments with its cost price; average rate of interest paid on deposits; average daily production per spindle and loom; number of employees; wage-bill; department wise rates of absenteeism for 1927, 1932 and 1933; the rate and quantum of agents' commission and percentage of share-capital held by agents.

Mr. Chamanlal Parekh, the brother of Mr. Mangaldas Parekh who had passed away when the dispute arose, was so much annoyed by this demand of the T.L.A. for information that he immediately refused to conciliate the dispute and resigned the membership of the Conciliation Board. In his letter dated 2-10-'33 to Mr. Parekh, Mr. Nanda, the Secretary of the T.L.A. wrote thus: "In preparing the list, I have with the best of motives, kept in view the requirements for understanding and presenting our case in all its bearings. If anything is
shown to be irrelevant or unnecessary, I would withdraw the request in respect of that readily. If you give me an opportunity, I will explain the purpose in including the various items in the list. I hope I will get an early opportunity of doing so." Mr. Parekh had earlier written to Mr. Nanda that he was asking for private, confidential and irrelevant information with a view to put mills in an awkward position.

The T.L.A. had submitted a separate note to explain why it had asked for the specific information listed above. The gist of it is this: "The balance sheets as they emerge from the hands of agents and the directors do not provide a necessarily true criterion of the condition of industry. One reason why balance sheets are not brought out till the middle of the year following that to which they relate, is that the conditions of the current year are given considerable weight in the preparation of balance sheets.... The stock of cotton ranges frequently between Rs. 1½ to 2 lakhs in the average mill. A difference of two pies per lb. in the valuation of cotton may raise or lower the gross profit by fifteen to twenty thousand rupees..... If the opening stock has been overvalued and the closing stock is undervalued to that extent, the profit would be lowered by twice that amount i.e. 6% to 8% on the paid up capital.... Similar reasoning applies to the valuation of stores and fuel..... In case of the stocks of cloth and yarn the scope for error is very much increased owing to a larger amount in question ..... Expenditure on repairs and spare parts has been particularised since..... it is in some cases put in the Depreciation
Account and in others shown as manufacturing cost.... Twenty thousand rupees or so may easily be misrecorded thus making a difference of 4 per cent in return on paid up capital."

"The age of machinery has an important bearing on the question of the proper depreciation charge. It happens that very old machinery which has been instrumental in creating a full depreciation fund stands on the balance sheet at its original value..... It would be manifestly absurd to charge depreciation on the original value of the entire block."

After the breakdown of the conciliation machinery the dispute was referred to the Board of Arbitration consisting of Gandhiji and Mr. Chimanlal Parekh.

What a sizable tension the dispute had created between agents and T.L.A. is well illustrated by the events following the death of Mr. Vithalbhai Patel. Hearing of Mr. Vithalbhai's death, Mr. Ambalal Trivedi of the T.L.A. requested Mr. Chimanlal Parekh to close mills in Ahmedabad for a day. He did not agree to it. So Mr. Trivedi requested him to stop mills for two hours. The M.O.A. did not concede to and therefore the T.L.A. persuaded workers not to leave mills but to continue their work. All workers in Mr. Chimanlal Parekh's mills except weavers of the 'Patidar' community from which Vithalbhai hailed abided by the T.L.A.'s advice and continued working though bazaars had closed immediately following the receipt of the news of Vithalbhai's death. Mr. Parekh construed that Patidar weavers in his mills had
abandoned work on the instigation of the T.L.A. and therefore for the conceived victimisation of its president's mills, the M.O.A. resolved not to permit its member mills to collect subscriptions for the T.L.A. Ultimately this sub-dispute was placed before Gandhiji for consideration. The T.L.A. contended before him that its efforts in persuading workers to continue to work when their emotions rode the crest of reason deserved appreciation rather than an attribution of malafides and the adoption of an attitude of vindictiveness by the M.O.A. On Gandhiji's advice, it seems, the M.O.A. dropped the idea of implementing its resolution.

The M.O.A's Memorandum.

In support of its pleas for a 25% general wage cut the M.O.A. submitted to the Board of Arbitration the memorandum with the following points.

(1) Inspite of the replacement of old machinery by new one wherever possible, improvement in working conditions by the introduction of humidification plants and so on, search for new markets and the introduction of the production of finer and bleached goods with wealth of colour, design and variety, Ahmedabad mills had found it difficult to stand up in competition with the Japanese goods dumped into India. And against net profits after allowing for depreciation and taxation from gross profits of Rs. 12,85,000 in 1932, in the first nine months of the year 1933, it had incurred losses to the extent of Rs. 4,47,000.

(2) Whereas prices of items other than wages figuring in
in the manufacturing cost of cloth had fallen to the level of the year 1913, wages were higher than those in the same year by $2\frac{1}{2}$ times. In the spinning and the weaving sections of Bombay mills, wages were Rs.23-7-8 and 42-2-10 respectively. In Ahmedabad their respective levels were Rs.37-10-3 and Rs.50-0-0.

Wages in the textile industry of Ahmedabad were higher than those in the Japanese textile industry. In Japan a spinner minding 800 spindles got Rs.1-14-0 per day. In Ahmedabad a spinner minding only 200 spindles earned Rs.0-14-6 per day. A Japanese weaver manning eight looms got Rs.2-4-0 per day. But in Ahmedabad by attending to only two looms, a weaver got two rupees a day.

Wages were reduced not only in textile industrial centres directly competing with Ahmedabad, but even in the U.S.A. England, Japan and Germany. In the U.S.A. in the year 1930 with the cost of living index standing at 161 wages were $\$ 13.8$. In 1932 with the reduction in the index to 132 they too were reduced to $\$ 11.78$. " If wages per unit of work done are compared, Ahmedabad would be found to be paying the highest wages in the world."

(3) The cost of living Index (Base 1914 = 100) in Ahmedabad which stood at 167 in 1921 has fallen now to 73 while wages stand nearly at the same level at which they stood in 1921 and that clearly indicates that a reduction in wages was now overdue.

The Memorandum of the T.L.A.

The M.O.A. had agreed to give balance sheets of
twenty one selected sample mills to the T.L.A. in helping it prepare an answer to its own memorandum. As the M.O.A. did not abide by the agreement, on the advice of Gandhiji, on 3-1-1934 the T.L.A. submitted under protest a provisional memorandum with the following points.

(1) The textile industry of Ahmedabad presents an unbroken record of excellent results. Since 1916, the ratio of net profit (after deducting losses) on the paid up capital has never gone below 14% except in one year when it was about 9%. For 1929, 1930 and 1931 the ratios of net profit were 19%, 9.15% and 17.51% respectively. For the year 1932, the year preceding that of the dispute for which latest balance-sheets were available, after deducting depreciation* and managing agency commission*, the ratio of net profit to paid up capital was 16%.

(2) In Ahmedabad in settling disputes the convention is that of considering figures from the latest available balance sheets. In deciding on the T.L.A's demand in 1929 for the annulment of the wage cut, reliance was placed on balance-sheets for the year 1927 which were the latest available.

* The ratios of depreciation to gross profit and capital were fairly high. Respectively they were 33% and 12%. The ratios of managing agency commission to gross profit and paid up capital were respectively 25% and 9%. 
ones then, eventhough it was the T.L.A's belief that the year 1929 was much better for the industry than 1927. And subsequently it did come out that as against 4.43% in 1927 the percentage of net profit to paid up capital was 12.15 in 1929.

(3) According to the statement of the M.O.A. profit for nine months of 1932 in case of twenty one selected mills had been of the order of Rs.12.85 lakhs. And for the same mills according to the statement, for the first nine months of 1933, there are losses to the extent of Rs.14.77 lakhs. No doubt the value of sale proceeds has diminished owing to the decline in price of cloth. But the loss of income due to the reduction in sale proceeds has been set off to a very large extent by the reduction in the cost of production arising out of the fall in the price of cotton and savings in various items of manufacturing cost. Therefore in the first nine months of the year 1933 there can at the most be a reduction in the fortune of mills by six lakhs of rupees i.e. from Rs.15.37 lakhs to Rs.9.37 lakhs. But the change for worse cannot be of the order of 27.62 lakhs as is mentioned in the memorandum of the M.O.A.

If the contention of the M.O.A. were unquestionable how can the rise of 11.2% in the market values of
scripts of the Ahmedabad textile industry in the period January to September 1933 as compared to the corresponding period of 1932, be explained? Further in June 1933 import duty on foreign cloth was raised up. As a result of it, the import of cloth declined from 71 million yards in June 1933 to 53 million yards in October 1933.

Corresponding figures of imports in the year 1932 were respectively 113 million yards and 92 million yards. The sale of cloth is likely to have increased as result of the reduction in its import. Further judging by the figures of piece-goods despatched from Ahmedabad by rail even the stock of cloth with Ahmedabad mills should be lower. Thirdly during the last quarter of 1933 the fall in the price of cotton was much greater than that of cloth. Taking into consideration all these factors there is a reason to believe that the estimated reduction of Rs. 6 lakhs in the fortune of mills in the first nine months of 1933 as compared to that of the year 1932 should have been made up during the last quarter of 1933.
(4) But even if the picture of the fortune of the industry for the first nine months of 1933 drawn up by the M.O.A. corresponds to reality, there is no justification for its proposal for the reduction in wages.

Abnormally high profits are justified on the ground of the exposition of capital to great risks of losses. And further movements in wages are not related to corresponding wide movements in profits. Therefore losses during a brief period cannot be made an adequate ground for a cut in wages as long as owners of capital do not accept a strict limitation to their profits to a reasonable scale.

From 1914 onwards to 1932 the mill industry of Ahmedabad had earned an aggregate net profit of Rs. 16 crores and 69 lakhs which came up annually to about 31.8% on paid up capital. Further these figures are exclusive of the aggregate of agents' remuneration of Rs. 8 crores coming up to 11% annually on paid up capital and the total of depreciation amounting to Rs. 9 crores and 82 lakhs as against the block of Rs. 16 crores and 82 lakhs. As against such an abnormal increase in the yield to participants in the proceeds of the industry, wages have not reached even the living standard. Can a cut in them then be justified?

(5) In the M.O.A's statement Japanese competition and the
reduced purchasing power of masses have been enumerated as causes for the malady of the textile industry. But our textile industry is protected to the extent of 75% against the import of Japanese cloth. How can then the Japanese dumping of the cloth be the true reason for its malady? Further how can the phenomena of new mills coming into existence, extensions of existing mills on a large scale and the starting of night shifts in a considerable and increasing number be reconciled with the continuation of the depression?

In the correct perspective, difficulties with which the industry is faced arise out of the fact that the actual or potential supply of cloth is far in excess of the effective demand for it in the country. Elimination of weak units, scrapping up of old machinery, stern prohibition of night work, adjusting expansion of spindles and looms to the actual requirement of the cloth in the country are necessary expedients for linking supply and demand in a sound and healthy relationship.

(6) Had the wages today been so high as to include a surplus above what is strictly necessary from the point of view of industrial efficiency, the workers could have been asked to part with the surplus to help the industry in the moment of its need. But the wages paid in Ahmedabad today fail to cover even the reasonable maintenance cost of labour. We cannot help mentioning however that it is an insult to humanity to treat the means of livelihood of human beings as simply costs in the same way as cotton, fuel, stores etc. Again in settling the present wages, against the scale of
1913, it is being ignored that efficiency has since then improved to a large extent and wage costs have thus been considerably reduced.

(7) It is certainly not true that in Bombay a ring piecer draws Rs. 17-8-0 and a two loom weaver Rs. 32-0-0 per month. In Bombay monthly wages of a piecer and a weaver are known to be respectively Rs. 25 to 26 and exceeding Rs. 45. The comparison between wages in Ahmedabad and Bombay is further vitiated by the fact that in Ahmedabad a working month consists of 27 days as against about 25 in Bombay. Moreover the number of operatives per thousand spindles is larger and the production per spindle is much less in Bombay than in Ahmedabad.

Further the ring spinner in Bombay is assisted by Tarawallas (followers); such such is not the case in Ahmedabad. On a conservative estimate the Ahmedabad worker would be more efficient than the Bombay worker by about 10 to 12%. Even according to the Report of the Tariff Board of 1927 per spindle and per loom the average manufacturing and overhead charges were respectively 7.68 and 450.29 pies in Ahmedabad and 9.97 and 514.13 pies respectively in Bombay.

(8) As regards wage cuts effected in other centres the memorandum pointed out that, there wage cuts were preceded by a long period of losses but Ahmedabad mills had always made good profits. And further in view of the fact that compared to Ahmedabad these places have fared badly inspite of lower wages, indicates that low wages are inimical to efficiency. Moreover inspite of the Arbitration Award of
1929 partially annuling the wage cut of 1923, in several mills of Ahmedabad the Award has not been given effect to.

(9) The purpose and significance of figures about foreign countries quoted in the M.O.A's statement are not quite clear. The comparison of existing wages in foreign countries with past years goes no further back than 1929. In referring to America, no mention has been made of the large increases in wages, coupled with the substantial reduction in hours given in the textile industry by the National Recovery Administration in the year 1933. Moreover the case of foreign countries differs so widely from ours in respect of methods and conditions of work, living conditions of workers, their environment, physique, stamina, education, upbringing and training, social and political organisation and the general facilities and amenities provided by local bodies or the State that any comparison with them without reference to all those factors is bound to be misleading.

(10) The Ahmedabad cost of living index has been compiled on the basis of the average prices from August 1926 to July 1927 as being equal to 100. The index was 72 in June 1933 as against 100 in 1927 and not in 1914.

(11) A reduction in workers' wages while it may be called for on other grounds also is conceivable only when workers' earnings exceed a living wage standard. This view has prevailed in industrial countries which have set up wage fixing machinery of a judicial character. It is evident above everything else, that a reduction in wages will in the long run spell more harm than good to the industry itself.
The dispute was protracted up to January 1935. Being heavily preoccupied, Gandhi was not able to devote the required time to act as the Arbitrator. Therefore, with the consent of the disputing parties, he was replaced by Mr. Maru Subedar. As arbitrators, Mr. Subedar and Mr. Parekh could not agree and therefore the dispute was referred to the Umpireship of Mr. Patkar who was the retired Judge of the High Court. But before Mr. Patkar could pass his award on the merits of the cases of the M.O.A. and the T.L.A., they reached an agreed understanding and hence the award was passed in terms thereof.

The following is the text of it.

"(1) The increment granted in 1930 be withdrawn and the withdrawal should take the form of a uniform reduction of 6½% (one anna in a rupee) in the earnings of all time and piece-workers including those paid on a monthly basis. It is understood that in case of mills where the average earnings of weavers for six months from June to December 1934 fall below Rs.43/- for a period of twenty six working days or Rs.20/- for a hapta of 12 working days, the reduction will be so applied as not to bring down the said earnings below Rs.41-3-0 for 26 working days on a 10 hours basis provided that the reduction will not apply to the said earnings below the amount of Rs.41-4-0 or Rs.19 per 'hapta' in view of the reduction of earnings likely to be caused by the reduction of hours."

(2) "Earnest efforts should be made to standardise the
wages of piece-workers as soon as possible after 1st January, 1936, and such standardisation should not involve any cut or increase."

(3) "With a view to provide for a prompt settlement of all wage questions on either side in future the parties will meet and try to evolve a scheme for automatic adjustment of wages."

(4) "Mills which do not adopt rationalisation under this agreement may run 10 hours a day entailing one hour's double work. The double work for an hour would be paid at the rate of 45 per cent.

(5) "The principle of rationalisation is accepted subject to the safeguards that the process of rationalisation would be carried out in such a manner as to avoid imperilling the health of the workers and avoid creating unemployment among the existing employees of Ahmedabad Mills except in the directions indicated in clauses below.

Suitable machinery be created for the proper regulations of the process.

(6) "Unemployment incidental to rationalisation will be confined to:

1. Married women whose husbands are benefitted by the rationalisation process.

2. Persons whose connection with the industry is of less than an year's duration.

Any persons in the above category who are thrown out of employment in consequence of
rationalisation will be given preference over new persons in filling vacancies.

(7) "Such of the mills as are desirous of rationalising the work in any section of the spinning department will be entitled to do so by granting the workers for doing double the work, 45% of the wages otherwise due for such additional work provided that for counts below 28s in warp and 32s in weft upto 18s such rates will be 47½% per cent. In the case of Ring Frame spinning the word 'double' means two sides.

(8) "The mill may proceed with rationalisation from and after 1st April 1935, provided it may be started forthwith in the following cases
(1) In counts above 27s warp and 21s weft.
(2) In counts above 18s in mills which start night work or where new machinery is started after 31st December 1934.

(9) "A scheme will be devised so that no new persons can enter the specified group of mills till vacancies are created and for this purpose all the existing employees in such groups of mills and those claim to reemployment is not debarred under clause 6 will be registered before 30th June 1935. This clause will apply only to such mills as are desirous of adopting rationalisation under this agreement.

(10) " A Joint Committee of the Millowners' Association and the Labour Union will be appointed to supervise
and regulate the working of the rationalisation scheme in the Industry.

Any dispute arising in this connection which the Joint Committee has not been able to settle satisfactorily shall be settled finally by arbitration.”

Commenting upon this long drawn out dispute the Annual Report of the T.L.A. aptly points out that “the complexities of the problem of wage adjustment were studied with much greater care and at a much closer range in this case than ever before in the history of the Labour Movement in this Country.”

The Wage Cut Dispute of 1936:

In September 1936, the M.O.A. proposed to the T.L.A. a 20% general Wage cut for operatives. As the T.L.A. did not agree to their proposal, the dispute was referred to the Arbitration Board consisting of Gandhiji and Mr. Kasturbhai Lalbhai. They too could not see eye to eye on the M.O.A’s proposal. Gandhiji was of the opinion that as per the Delhi Agreement the M.O.A. was required to evolve a scheme of the automatic adjustment of wages and standardise wage rates and also to prepare a list of workers likely to lose their jobs on account of rationalisation; since the M.O.A. had done practically nothing to do these things enjoined upon it and failed to help in establishing a sub-arbitration board for the settlement of petty grievances it was not possible or necessary to enter into the merits of its proposal for a wage cut. In Mr. Kasturbhai’s opinion the reduction in wages
agreed upon at Delhi between the M.O.A. and the T.L.A. was not dependent upon the fulfilment of prerequisites by the M.O.A. and therefore the proposal for the 20% reduction in wages should be judged upon its merits. According to Mr. Lalbhai if that was not so, why should the Delhi Agreement have not specified that the wage reduction was conditional? According to him further still, "an examination of the other terms will show that both the parties had realised that the measures for which they were making provisions were such as would take a long time to materialise and the requirement under the Agreement was necessary investigations preparatory to evolving the schemes therein contemplated."

 Arbitrators differing, the dispute was referred to Sir Govind Rao Madgaonkar a retired High Court Judge. The gist of his classic award is this.

 "In substance therefore I agree with the view of Mahatma Gandhi. I am unable to accept the view of Sheth Kastoorbhai that the 6½% cut was a separate and permanent part of the Agreement and standardisation and automatic adjustment a vague matter of the dim distant future for spasmodic efforts by the M.O.A. after January 1st 1936, not necessarily to be carried to a finish. I am clearly of the opinion that both the parties intended that 6½% cut in para 1 (of the Delhi Agreement) should be temporary and should last for about a year, the permanent arrangement being standardisation and automatic adjustment and where mills so desired, rationalisation."

 "I am of the opinion that paras 2, 3 and 9 of the
Delhi Agreement have not been effectively carried out. The responsibility for this failure lies in the main with the M.O.A. In view of such failure it is not open to the M.O.A. to obtain a wage cut and alter the whole basis of standardisation of wages agreed to in the Delhi Agreement."*

The Period 1936-39.

In the year 1936 the constitution of the T.L.A. was amended in order to extend through ward unions its organisation to the localities of workers. They were looked upon by the T.L.A. as "the most important means of guaranteeing the preservation of the solidarity of the working class and the success of the direct action of workers when it may be rendered necessary."

In the year 1936, the Payment of Wages Act was passed and the T.L.A. tried to explain contents and implications of the new Act to workers. The new Act superseded the Award of arbitration that mills should collect subscriptions on behalf of the T.L.A. and required it to collect them (subscriptions) itself. According to the T.L.A's Annual Report for the year 1936 in spite of numerous obstacles it took over the task of collecting subscriptions directly from workers very successfully.

In 1936 the membership of the T.L.A. was 22,000 which was fifty percent of the potential organisable strength of workers of the Ahmedabad textile mill industry. According to the Annual Report of the T.L.A. for the year

*The history of the dispute has been presented on the basis of the history of wage Adjustment in Ahmedabad Vol.IV."
1936, due to the great influx of workers from outside Ahmedabad who did not much mind becoming blacklegs of employers and the coming into existence of rival unions leading workers into unnecessary strikes, the T.L.A. was not able to push up the ratio of the organisation of workers. But possibly another very important factor keeping the degree of unionisation constant might have been the acceptance of 6\% wage cut by the T.L.A. in 1935. To revert to the work of the T.L.A. between 1936-37 the T.L.A. paid victimisation benefits nearing rupees 45,000/- to workers and their representatives. Of the 3,794 complaints lodged by workers with the T.L.A. in 1936 about 24\% remained pending, 50\% were settled successfully, 10\% were compromised and nearly 6\% failed. During the year 1936, there were twenty nine strikes in mills of Ahmedabad, resulting in a loss of 35,231 working days.

In 1938 the T.L.A. was able to achieve the and standardisation of weavers' wage rates, eliminating thereby a perpetual source of industrial strife. The standardisation was arrived at on the basis of pre-existing average levels of earnings and in certain cases might have caused varying inconvenience to sections of workers and employers. But that was inevitable. During the year 1938 the Bombay Textile Labour Enquiry Committee of which Shri Khandubhai was an associate member recommended a nine per cent interim wage increase, the M.O.A. accepted the recommendation and implemented it quickly to the great satisfaction of the T.L.A.
During the year 1938, Ahmedabad was chosen by the Government as the first industrial centre for the application of prohibition and Mr. Nanda was appointed as the Honorary Prohibition Commissioner to carry the scheme through. The T.L.A. therefore helped the Government considerably in the application of its plan of prohibition.

By 1938 an important new institution, namely the Sub-Arbitration Board for the settlement of petty disputes quickly, had come into existence in the industrial relations system of Ahmedabad. On the interpretation of the clause (4) of the Delhi Agreement and the dismissal of a representative to the T.L.A. it gave its awards.

In 1957, under the auspices of the T.L.A. the Hindustan Mazdur Sevak Sangh was established with the purpose of coordinating and guiding the policy and programme followed by the Congressmen in the trade union movement and for providing facilities for their training. Under the active help of the H.M.S.S. the trade union work on the line on which it was being done in Ahmedabad by the T.L.A. was taken up in various other centres in Gujarat, Kathiawar, Baroda, Indore and Bombay by trained persons.

Though the Bombay Industrial Disputes Act came into operation in 1939 the K.O.A. did not apply for registration under it as a representative of the employers in the textile mill industry of Ahmedabad. And therefore even in general matters pertaining to the industry, the T.L.A. was required to negotiate and deal with mills individually. Ultimately

*From the proceedings of the Inaugural Conference of the I.N.T.U.C. at New Delhi.... P.22.
in October 1959, the M.O.A. was registered. Even then there was no love lost between the Ahmedabad Millowners and the T.L.A. to warrant the continuation of the voluntary conciliation and arbitration systems. And they collapsed. Under the B.I.D. Act, the T.L.A. was accepted as the Representative Union for the textile mill industry of Ahmedabad. However, in order to safeguard its interests against a future contingency when by chance or for some reason the T.L.A. might cease to be a representative Union for the industry for the local area, authorities of the T.L.A. decided to get its five Occupational Unions registered under the Act so that each of them could independently function as the representative Union for the concerned occupations.

In September 1959 the T.L.A. passed a resolution that in view of the large increase in the general price level commodities and amenities used by workers should be supplied to them by mills at the pre-war cost and to the extent to which it was not possible to do so, the deficit should be made good by cash allowances and other means in such a way as to neutralise the rise in the cost of living which had occurred and might occur. In the conciliation proceedings on the dispute on its demand, the T.L.A. specified that commodities like wheat, rice etc. should be supplied by mills at pre-war prices and for commodities like tea, mutton and so on, cash allowance equal to 16% of the total wages of each worker should be paid. In the special conciliation proceedings the conciliator wanted the T.L.A. to reduce its
demand for 24% increase in wages to 11.6%. The T.L.A. accepted his formula but the M.O.A. did not do so and therefore the conciliation proceedings failed. Therefore with the consent of 86% of its members the T.L.A. decided to call out a general strike on 26-2-1940 and made elaborate preparations for the same purpose. It is interesting to note that the proposal for the general strike had received the blessings of Gandhiji also. The strike would have commenced on the scheduled day but in the early hours of it, an agreement to submit the dispute to the arbitration of the Industrial Court was arrived at and the strike was averted.

The Industrial Court awarded to the Ahmedabad worker the dearness allowance which neutralised the increase in the cost of living by 66%.

The Dearness Allowance Dispute of 1943.*

Workers of Ahmedabad mills participated very actively in the Quit India Movement launched by Gandhiji in 1942 and struck work for three and a half months. Mr. Nanda, Mr. Desai and Mr. Vasawada of the T.L.A. were arrested during the movement. Within a week of their release from the jail Mr. Desai and Mr. Vasawada were called upon to attend to an appeal of the M.O.A. to the Industrial Court for a reduction in the full neutralisation against the increase in the cost of living granted by the Industrial Court on 15-9-1941. In this historic dispute memory of which is cherished even to this date by its listeners for the combats of wit and intelligence it provided, Mr. M.G. Setalwad and Mr. Bhulabhai Desai appeared from the Annual Report of the T.L.A. for 1943-1944.
respectively for the M.O.A. and the T.L.A.

In this dispute the Attorney General of the Bombay Province appeared specially on behalf of the Government to request the court to reduce the proportion of dearness allowance granted by it to workmen of Ahmedabad. He pointed out that the full neutralisation against the increased cost of living by way of dearness allowance was given only to workers in Ahmedabad mills and if it was continued to be given it would induce workers in other industrial centres to clamour for complete protection against the increased cost of living. And if it were to be given it would augment the pressure of inflation. He therefore urged the Industrial Court to withdraw the additional 33% increase in the dearness allowance granted by it to Ahmedabad mill workmen in 1941.

The Court rejected this request by saying that even if it were within its powers to reduce the proportion of the D.A. given to Ahmedabad workmen, it would be invidious to make "such an attempt at correcting the inflationary process by affecting the workers in one industry only and that too only at one centre in the whole of India."

The substance of Mr. Setalwad's arguments on behalf of the M.O.A. was this.

(1) 11% and 45% of looms in the Ahmedabad industry were under Government orders respectively reserved for defence needs and the production of Standard Cloth. Even on the cloth produced on the remaining 44% looms there were price controls. All these had reduced profits of the industry and rendered it incapable of bearing the burden of giving
the dearness allowance fully neutralising the price rise.

(2) What was costing mills Rs.84 in 1941 cost them Rs.198 in 1943. And as against Rs.100 in 1941 they realised Rs.219 in 1943 by way of prices. Thus a margin of 21 in price over the cost of Rs.198 left a return of 9.70% against 16% in 1941.

Rejecting the appeal of the M.O.A. the Court held that the margin of Rs.21 in 1943 was higher than that of Rs.16 in 1941.

Regarding Mr. Setalwad's argument that as against 16% profit in 1941 (Price Rs.100 - cost Rs.84) the percentage of profit in 1943 was 9.70% - Net profit of Rs.21 to be reckoned against the cost of Rs.198 - and therefore there was a deterioration in the position of the industry which required the repeal of 45% addition to the dearness allowance given in 1941, the Industrial Court pointed out thus: "In our opinion this method of calculation is not correct. Firstly, there is an essential difference between a manufacturer and an ordinary trader. The trader invests a certain sum of money and purchases articles and sells them at a certain profit and the profit is calculated as a percentage of what he spends towards the purchase of these articles. But in the case of the manufacturer he does not purchase the raw materials in order to sell them at a profit. In addition to the actual cost of raw material there is the manufacturing process itself.... therefore, his profit making capacity cannot be gauged in terms of the percentage that
the difference between the price realised and the cost of raw material bears to his working expenditure. Further in the case of mills the expenditure and income account is merely what is included in the profit and loss account of a company. The difference between income and expenditure of a particular company is profit; but the profit cannot be regarded as a percentage of the working expenditure. It must be related not to the working expenditure but to the invested capital of the company."

"But it has been pointed out to us that even assuming that the method of calculation by way of percentage on working expenditure adopted by the Ahmedabad Millowners' Association is correct, the condition at present moment would not be appreciably worse than what it was in the year 1941...... At present, however, the petition must be rejected."

The Establishment of the INTUC:—

Since about 1925 Secretaries of the T.L.A. had been wanting the T.L.A. to project its activities all over India and seek an affiliation with the A.I.T.U.C.: At one stage they had found Gandhiji to be agreeable to their view. But since one of the promoters of the T.L.A. was not agreeable to certain objectives of the A.I.T.U.C., would have severed his connections with the T.L.A. if it were to affiliate itself with the A.I.T.U.C. and for reverence in which they held him, Secretaries of the T.L.A. dropped the idea of affiliating the T.L.A. with the A.I.T.U.C. Ultimately

*Revealed in an interview by Mr. Banker.
finding that the A.I.T.U.C. was repeatedly adopting a course in complete disregard of or even in opposition to the declared policy and advice of the Indian National Congress, the stand taken by the Trade Union Congress with reference to the principle and procedure of arbitration in the settlement of industrial disputes was strongly disapproved by many prominent trade unionists the Congressmen working in the field of labour, it was very difficult to cooperate with the A.I.T.U.C. and that it would militate against the best and most vital interests of the country and jeopardise its peaceful progress on democratic lines if a central organisation of labour was not formed in harmony with the ideas and resolutions of the Indian National Congress, the Hindoostan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh was called in Delhi a meeting of trade unionists under the Chairmanship of Sardar Patel on 3rd and 4th May 1947 to establish the Indian National Trade Union Congress.* Among those who attended the meeting were Mr. J. S. Kripalani, Pandit Nehru, Mr. Shankerrao Dev, Mr. Jagjivanram, Late Mr. B. G. Kher, Mr. Hare Krishna Mehta, Mrs. Aruna Asafali, Mr. Ashoka Mehta, Mr. R. M. Manohar Lohia, Mr. Nanda, Mr. Khandubhai Dessai, Mr. S. R. Vasavada and trade unionists representing about 200 unions with a membership of 5,75,000. Dr. Sureshchandra Banerjee who was three times the President of the A.I.T.U.C. moved the resolution for the establishment of the I.N.T.U.C. and it was passed by the delegates overwhelmingly. Dr. Banerjee was elected the first President of I.N.T.U.C. and Mr. Khandubhai Dessai was elected

*On the basis of the proceedings of the Establishment of I.N.T.U.C.
its first General Secretary. For political reasons later on Dr. Banerjee left the I.N.T.U.C. Today the I.N.T.U.C. is the dominant federation of labour in India. All throughout the fifteen years of its existence, its destiny has been par excellence shaped by the officials of the T.L.A. For the last several years Mr. Vasawada of the T.L.A. has been the General Secretary of the I.N.T.U.C. and as Ornatee correctly put it, in the ultimate analysis everyone in the I.N.T.U.C. rally round the leadership of Mr. Khandubhai Desai. See Ornati; "Jobs and Workers in India."

The membership of the T.L.A. increased from 55,000 in 1944 to 1,04,000 in 1949. In that year unions of
(1) Mixing, blow room, carding frame and combing operatives
(2) Spinners, (3) Reelers, (4) Winners, (5) Warpers,
(6) Weavers and Sizers, (7) Bleachers, Dyers, Foldiers,
Finishers, Printers and Calendermen, (8) Jobbers and Mukadams,
(9) Power Plant Operatives and Mechanics, (10) Clerks and
the Watch and Ward Staff, (11) and General Workers were
affiliated to the T.L.A.

During and after the Second World War the lot of technicians in the industrial relations system of Ahmedabad mills was possibly the worst. Their grades and service conditions were not fixed or standardised, their respect and dignity were not properly maintained by agents, the B.I.F. Act was not applicable to them and they were sandwiched between the powerful union of workers on the one hand and agents indifferent to progress and standards on the other.
hand. After independence technicians wanted to form and run their union under the auspices of the T.L.A. which unfortunately did not respond to their aspirations in a proper perspective. Round about the year 1950 they nevertheless formed their union and handed over its leadership to the Socialist Party. Later on the T.L.A. might have realised that it would be fatal to allow the leadership of technicians to remain in the hands of the Socialist Party and formed their rival union. In course of time the new Union drew to itself the membership of the old union and became powerful. In due course the old union disappeared.

With the contributions of rupees five from each of its members, the T.L.A. built a huge building for itself in 1950 and houses itself in it since then.

The T.L.A. Today.

The Constitution and Organisation:

OBJECTS:

(1) To secure effective and complete organisation of workers of all grades and departments working in local textile mills.

(2) To direct and co-ordinate the activities of the various unions of the textile workers of Ahmedabad.

(3) To foster the spirit of solidarity, service, brotherhood and co-operation among workers.

(4) To raise the status and improve the conditions of life through internal effort.

(5) To develop in the workers a high sense of
responsibility in discharge of their duty to the industry.

(6) To obtain and maintain a fair and adequate scale of wages and reasonable hours of work and generally to ameliorate in every way the position of workers in the industry and in pursuance of this object to provide such trade benefits as funds and conditions may permit.

(7) To secure the redress of grievances of the members to regulate the relations and secure so far as possible, a settlement of disputes between the employers and the employees by mutual consultation and on failure by reference to arbitration so as to avert avoidable stoppages of work.

(8) To make all necessary arrangements for the efficient conduct and satisfactory and speedy conclusion of authorised strikes and to provide against lock-outs by the employers.

(9) To ensure the enforcement of all legislative enactments for the protection of labour.

(10) To promote the civic and political interests of the workpeople.

(11) And lastly, in due course, to secure nationalisation of the textile industry.

Means:- Means to be adopted for the furtherance of objects mentioned shall be always based on truth and non-violence.

Organisation:-

The T.L.A. is a confederation of the Unions of different occupations in the textile mill industry of
Ahmedabad and its Government is based on elected representatives of workers to different occupational unions. The representatives are elected in the proportion of one to first fifty workers and an additional representative is provided for other seventy five workers. They number in all 2,859. The election of representatives takes place every third year. Apart from Occupational Boards of Representatives there exists in the T.L.A. the Joint Board of Representatives which consists of the joint meeting of the Boards of Representatives of all unions or of delegates from each Board in proportion to the number of representatives in each Union or as the Joint meeting of the Boards may decide. Apart from the Executive Committee of each union consisting of not less than three and not more than nine members elected by the members of the Board of Representatives from amongst their number, there exists the Central Executive Committee of the Association consisting of one or more delegates from each Union, provided that the total number of delegates from each union is as far as possible in proportion to the number of representatives to each union. Powers and functions of the Executive Committees and the Central Executive Committee are respectively determined by Occupational Boards of Representatives and the Joint Board of Representatives.

The table below shows the strength of different occupational unions and the number of representatives elected to each of them.
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<td>1</td>
<td>Frame, Card, Blow</td>
<td>13,352</td>
<td>236</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Ring Spinning</td>
<td>21,555</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Reeling</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Winding</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Weaving</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Warping, Sizing etc.</td>
<td>3,553</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Folding &amp; Stamping,</td>
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<td>Calender, Finishing,</td>
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<td>Jobber &amp; Mukadams</td>
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<td>Power Plant &amp; Mechanics</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>3,215</td>
<td>121</td>
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Honorary members............. 28

Total........... 1,04,046

                  2,869
Administrative set up of the T.L.A.AHMEDABAD.

- General Executive Board.
- Occupational Executive Boards
- Joint Board of Representatives.
- Occupational Boards of Representatives
- Members of the Occupational Unions.
- Legal Section.
- Complaint Officers.
- Divisional Officer in charge of educational Activities, Ward Unions, Welfare activities & complaints other than Industrial Disputes.
- Joint Group in charge of officers.
- Inspectors.
- Standing Finance Committee
- Standing Complaints Committee
- Secretary
- Secretary
- Advisory Committee
- Technical Adviser. Develop.
- Rural Accounts
- General Executive Board.

Secretary

Group in charge of
Divisional Officer in
charge of educational
activities & complaints
other than Industrial
Disputes.

Secretary
The Settlement of Grievances and complaints:

First of all grievances of workers are negotiated by their elected representatives with concerned authorities in mills. For complaints not settled through representatives, the worker bearing the grievance comes to the office of the T.L.A. and gets his complaint recorded. In 1960-61, 22,952 complaints were recorded on the counters of the T.L.A. and adding to them 7,628 pending complaints of the past years the total of disposable complaints amounted to 30,680 in 1960-61.

Immediately after the complaint is recorded in the T.L.A., its inspector for the mill to which it (the complaint) pertains investigates it and if it is found bonafide, he negotiates it with the authorities of the mill. If the nature of the complaint is such that it cannot be dealt with by the inspector himself alone, he seeks the advice of his group-in-charge who may in his turn, if necessary, consult the Divisional Officer under whom he is placed. Regarding complaints of a general nature or involving policy matters or in solving which the inspector and the group-in-charge have not succeeded, the Divisional Officer concerned negotiates first with the authorities of the mill concerned. If his negotiations with the authorities do not yield proper results he may be required to negotiate the dispute with the K.O.Al. On important disputes the Divisional Officer seeks advice from the Secretary of the T.L.A..

The Association runs three dispensaries, two of
them being of the Ayurvedic type dealing in indigenous medicines and one of the allopathic type. It also runs a maternity home. During the year 1960-61 1,44,763 cases were treated in these dispensaries. During the year at the Maternity Home with a provision for 24 beds, the indoor and outdoor cases amounted to 9,023 and 88,227 respectively.

During the year 1960-'61, the number of complaints recorded at the T.L.A. from residential areas of workers was 1008. 70 % of them were dealt with successfully, 10 % were closed and nearly 21 % were carried over to be dealt with in the next year. The number of complaints of workers relating to the working of the municipality to be dealt with by the T.L.A. in the year 1960-61 was 928.

With a view to providing an organisation for giving credit to workers at low rates of interest, encouraging thrift and cooperation amongst them and financing their industrial cooperative societies, the T.L.A. started the Majoor Sahkari Bank in the year 1947 with 7000 members. By 1960-61 the bank had made an appreciable progress. The following indices bear out that conclusion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Number of members</td>
<td>32,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Share capital</td>
<td>Rs. 9,27,620/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Deposits</td>
<td>Rs. 29,79,726/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Loans outstanding</td>
<td>Rs. 34,65,518/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Investments</td>
<td>Rs. 5,76,814/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Reserve Funds</td>
<td>Rs. 4,35,865/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Other funds</td>
<td>Rs. 74,714/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Working capital</td>
<td>Rs. 46,46,406/-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The number of different Cooperative Societies attached to the Bank stand at 99.

The Association also runs a shop for selling hand spun, hand woven cloth (khadi) and other hand made goods. Its annual sale amounted to Rs. 9,03,814 in the year 1960-61.

Many workers of Ahmedabad mills hail from nearby villages and places, have problems relating to land, tagavi loans, controlled articles, tenancy, cases under Land Revenue Code and the Mamlatdar's Court Act, legal aid, transfers, copies of Records and Decisions, and wells in places of their migration and look forward to the help from the T.L.A. for their solution. Since 1950, the T.L.A. has been running the Rural Relief Section for the solution of workers' problems in their native places. In 1960-61 it was required to deal with as many as 561 such problems.

An assessment of the Assessments of the T.L.A.

The following remarks of Mr. S. A. Dange now the Chairman of the Communist Party of India on the role of the T.L.A. in the Labour Movement in India are interesting and therefore quoted verbatim.*

"It was the Communist Group in Bombay that brought the labour problem before the National Congress. From 1921 to 1924, the Bombay Provincial Congress, the biggest Congress unit in those days and the AICC were constantly being moved to establish committees to organise the working class.

Committees were established and funds allotted, but never to---

* S. A. Dange: "Indian Trade Union Movement".
work in the working class. The national bourgeoisie did not consider it seriously. They considered it safer not to encourage the worker to become organised, either in T.U.'s or in political parties.

"Not that the bourgeois leadership had no ideas as to what the T.U.'s should be, if they did come up.

"When the Ahmedabad workers struck for wages, Mahatma Gandhi took the lead and established the Mazdoor Mahajan, the union which for all these years since 1920 is being hailed as the 'model' of trade unionism. Why is it a model? Some facts are worth noting in this respect.

"The Mazdoor Mahajan's subscriptions from the workers were realised for it by the millowners at the pay counter. This practice continued till 1936.

"The Ahmedabad Millowners' Association made donations to this union to help its social work.

"The Mazdoor Mahajan preached that the capitalists were their trustees as they were more clever and the workers ignorant. The capitalists were necessary for society. Capital and labour were two wheels of the social chariot on which life moved.

"Hence, it decided to solve all disputes by arbitration and not by strikes. It is recorded in the Mahajan's proceedings that the disputes had been pending in arbitration for 17 years.

"The Mahajan never affiliated to or formed any central all India body of trade unions. Even when Lajpat Rai and C.R.Das were presidents of the A.I.T.U.C. in 1920-22 or
Nehru and Subhash Bose were presidents in 1929-30, the Mahajjan declined to join the A.I.T.U.C.

"It was their principle that the workers should not look beyond their factory or their town.

"The Mahajjan was organised on a craft basis. It was their principle that workers should not unite even on the basis of an industry as a whole. To unite on this an All-India scale was dangerous.

"Naturally the Mahajjan never joined any international organisations. To combine internationally was still more dangerous.

"The Mahajjan would not participate in political actions, or conflict with any Government, not even the British.

"Such were the model principles on which the Laxdoor Mahajjan was built.

"Anyone now looking into the principles on which the I.N.T.U.C. is run will be struck to find that on these essential matters, the I.N.T.U.C. has changed its Mahajjan line."

"The I.N.T.U.C. by its very formation now wants a national central body of trade unions. It now sits in the Anglo-American International, the I.C.F.T.U..It does not oppose forming unions on industrial basis. It puts its unions at the service of a political party and politics, that if of the National Congress.

"Thus Gandhian trade unionism has thrown overboard certain of its principles. Why have they done so? They have
done it because the working class refused to accept their line of division and disruption. Hence the bourgeoisie advises the I.N.T.U.C. to accept the workers' outlook on these matters, in order to disrupt it effectively. It is the communists who adhered to and effectively brought the questions of national central organisation, of international solidarity, of political outlook to the workers. The others now accept it—only to use it against the working class."

Ordinarily such perverted insinuations as quoted at length above would not have warranted as academic answer, but for the misunderstanding that they create on matters elemental to end of policy for the T.L.A.

Details of what the Congress did or did not do for workers, if what Mr. Dange contends at the outset is true, are not fully known to the writer. But Mr. Dange's charge that in its collective or self-interest the national bourgeoisie was positively against the organisation of workers into trade unions does not appear to be correct. For as many as ₹7,000/- saved out of ₹20,000 collected from Bihar for the annual Session of the Gandhi Seva Sangh in 1937 were handed over by Gandhiji, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Mr. Kishorilal Mashruwala and others to the T.L.A., with a suggestion to utilise them for the organisation of workers in Bihar. And that money was so utilised by the T.L.A.". In the chapter on trade union philosophies it has been pointed out that to Gandhiji the only way in which labour, placed as it is, could stand up against the overwhelming and combined strength of employers, 

*Revealed by an important officer of the T.L.A.
was to combine into their organisations. It may be true that as an organisation the Congress might not have done or have been able to do much for workers. That may be so because Gandhiji, who was the Congress before India became independent, did not want to encourage trade unions which were only militant and did not subscribe to constructive work for workers or which were organised per excellence for political interests. And it may be noted that it is not easy to organise unions similar to the T.L.A. A union like the T.L.A. does not thrive on funds. It flourishes at the cost of sustained and selfless work of Nandas, Khandubhaia, Vasawadas and Dave. The question therefore whether the Congress set apart funds for organising workers or not does not appear to be significant. And even in spite of limited funds at its disposal as early as 1927, the T.L.A. had been helping workers outside Ahmedabad to organise themselves, whenever they were in difficulty and expressed a desire for help. And it is at once true that individually congressmen were organising unions of workers in different parts of the country and the Congress did not look askance upon them. If for the congress of preindependence, collective or self interest were higher in the scale of preference over the national interest which Gandhiji used to identify with the interest of millions of poverty striken 'Kisans' (peasants) and 'Mardoors' it would not have hesitated to do so. Even before the T.L.A. came into existence, in 1919, Sardar Patel who was later on considered the spear-head of conservative forces in the Congress, had organised the union of B.B.& C.I.Railway workmen. The Sardar
had also organised a union of postal employees.

Mr. Dange's contention that the check-off system prevailed in Ahmedabad mills is true. But it remained into existence for a period of only eight years between 1928 and 1936. But why it came into being is interesting to know. In 1928, by a resolution, the M.O.A. decided to prevent the representatives of workers to the T.L.A. from collecting subscriptions in mills. On that there arose a dispute between the T.L.A. and the M.O.A. and it was referred to the arbitration which decided that as the collection of subscription in mills was not conducive to the maintenance of order in it, it should be replaced by the check off. The T.L.A. might not have found the decision of arbitrators to its taste. But with its practice of sincerely respecting the decision of arbitration it did not go astray to violate it. But immediately after the enforcement of the Payment of Wages Act in 1936 it reverted to the collection of subscriptions by shop stewards. It has been observed that the big officials of the T.L.A. and small ones as well do not commend the check off. They point out that the collection of subscriptions from workers themselves makes it obligatory for their representatives and through them officials of the T.L.A. to remain in contact with them, to listen to their grievances and redress them as much as is possible. They say that the check-off does not provide for any such obligation and is not acceptable to us.

Prior to the taking over of the responsibility of primary education by the Ahmedabad Municipality, the T.L.A. had been spending a sizeable portion of its income from
subscriptions by workers on educating workers and their children. Since the millowners did not have a scheme of their own for workers' education, Gandhi had persuaded them to hand over to the T.L.A. for workers' education the interest of their contribution of rupees three lakhs to the Tilak Swaraj Fund. And though reprehensibly the M.O.A. had stopped making available the interest on the fund to the T.L.A. for some time, its educational activity did not experience a setback. Because primarily the T.L.A. has stood and even now stands on its own on workers. Apart from the contribution of the interest on the fund, in the knowledge of the writer, once only one mill had voluntarily made available to the T.L.A. a sum of rupees 700 for the education of workers. In these donations by millowners to the T.L.A. for the education of workers there does not appear to be anything unseemly.

The writer who has fairly carefully studied published documents of the T.L.A. has not come across its preaching that "Capitalists were their trustees.... and workers ignorant...." "Broadly the T.L.A.'s philosophy has been what Mr. Khandubhai Dessai enunciated at the Berlin Congress of the I.C.F.T." on 12th July 1962. It runs thus: "The employers on the management, in these days of democracy and freedom are only an appendage of the economic apparatus. As Mahatma Gandhi who was also a great trade unionist, used to tell us and preach us, there is no employer or employee. The principles that we must place before ourselves are that both are co-trustees of society and the community as a whole. In order to create that psychology he
used to tell us that workers should have the sensation and psychology of working as co-owners in industry, while the management or employer should reorient their minds to think that they are co-workers in the field."

Mr. Dange's charge that in deliberation and with a motive repugnant to their interest the T.L.A. did not want the workers to look beyond their factories and therefore it not only did not join any national federation of workers but organised workers craft-wise is wholly at variance with truth. When representatives have the responsibility of redressing grievances of workers primarily of their occupations from which they are elected, they are supposed to discharge it more sincerely and carefully. A union of a certain craft can understand special problems of workers of that craft better. It can also look after the interest of workers of its own craft better than the industrial union. Further the T.L.A. is not a wooly organisation of craft unions. There has been in existence in the T.L.A. the Joint Board of Representatives which attends to workers' problem common to the industry. Understandably the most powerful entity in the T.L.A. is the Central Executive of the Joint Board of Representatives. It sometimes just refuses to understand even the powerful Secretary of the T.L.A. or to accept his line of thinking; it even makes him change his decisions and views.

Mr. Dange's attribution of motives to the T.L.A. for organising workers of the mills of Ahmedabad on a craft wise basis is tantamount to attributing motives to Gandhiji who has
responsible for contemplating and drafting the constitution of the T.L.A. sometime as early as 1920 when the problem of the political misuse of workers and the question whether the worker should or not look beyond the four walls of his factory was non-existent and had not assumed its present political significance. Possibly Mr. Dange's attitude stems from his inheritance of Marx's deep distrust in and disaffection towards British trade unions organised on the craft basis.

As has been pointed out, secretaries of the T.L.A. had been thinking as early as 1925 of building up relations with the A.I.T.U.C. Even Mahatma Gandhi was not opposed to it. And later on he had himself said: "A time, I hope will come when it will be possible for the Trade union Congress to accept the Ahmedabad method and have the Ahmedabad organisation as a part of the All India Union. I am in no hurry. It will come in its own time." But since the A.I.T.U.C. did never subscribe to non-violent non-cooperation in order ultimately to co-operate with employers to build up industries with the national perspective, it would not be correct and prudent to say that the T.L.A. was not justified in not affiliating itself with the A.I.T.U.C. No doubt the A.I.T.U.C. had a handful of Congressmen as its presidents. But basically it was dominated by persons who did not accept the T.L.A. philosophy. The T.L.A. had therefore either to convert the A.I.T.U.C. to its ideology or create a national organisation in accord with its distinct viewpoints. The former being impossible of achievement it accepted the latter alternative. Slowly the T.L.A. created its replica in Bombay, Indore, Baroda and other places,
established a national union of textile workers in 1931, created the Hindoostan (and not Ahmedabad or Gujarat) Mazdoor Sevak Sangh in 1937 and established the I.N.T.U.C. in 1947, when the time for it was ripe i.e. when Gandhiji's philosophy had vindicated itself in his laboratory at Ahmedabad. Possibly the Indian Labour Movement would have stood to gain if the A.I.T.U.C. weak in itself due to fractions and which had to justify its existence, had affiliated itself to the T.L.A.

Another contention of Mr. Dange is that the T.L.A. has kept itself at a distance from politics. I wish and want that Mr. Dange were true. But as it is he is not. From 1927 onwards the T.L.A. has been actively participating in the affairs of the Ahmedabad Municipality and securing from it, by increasing its influence in it, more and more facilities for workers. Today the T.L.A. virtually controls the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation. Long back once Mr. Wanda fought hard in the Ahmedabad Municipality to get his proposal sanctioned by it. When he found that his colleague members in it were not in favour of his proposal of giving some minor amenities to workers he was enraged. And addressing them he said: "Today there is only one Wanda here. But remember a day is bound to come when he will be in fifty." In the current predominance of the T.L.A. in the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, one would feel like perceiving the fulfilment of Mr. Wanda's prophecy.

From 1936 onwards the T.L.A. has been contesting elections to Provincial and State legislations. Mr. Wanda, Mr. Khandubhai Desai, Mr. Vasawada, Mr. Dave, Late Mr. Vaghela and
others have all in their turns represented the T.L.A. in the Provincial or State Legislatures. And looking sadly at the unhealthy power politics in India one cannot but commend several rejections of the State ministership by a Secretary of the T.L.A.

On behalf of the T.L.A. Mr. Khandubhai Desai was a member of the Constituent Assembly, lower house of the Indian Parliament (1952-57), and the Working Committee of the A.I.C.C. At present he is a member of the Upper House of the Parliament. For some years he was also the Central Minister for Labour. Prior to Mr. Khandubhai Desai, Mr. Somnath Dave represented the T.L.A. in the Rajya Sabha. Even today Mr. Vasavada happensto be a member of the A.I.C.C.

One would therefore make bold to ask whether all this is the result of or indicative of the T.L.A’s keeping aloof from politics?

Mr. Dange’s statement that the T.L.A. has always been subservient to the Government in power including the British Government is of questionable validity. In 1922, during the national movement, the Mr. Banker non-co-operated with and agitated against the Government and courted arrest. Irony of fate would have it, Mr. Dange and/or his friends and T.L.A. refused to co-operate with the Royal Commission on Labour. Possibly it might not have been even a happy move and the characterisation of the "Majoorn Sandesh" of the recommendations of the Commission as 'throwing a few crumps here and there to workers in an aristocratic manner' appears in retrospect to be
unjust and uncharitable in view of the fact that in the context of the time and situation then, some of them were extremely useful to workers if not pioneering. It is well known that during the Salt Satyagraha of 1931, and the non-co-operation movement as its sequel, the T.L.A. has been openly and actively hostile to Government. During the quit-India Movement of 1942, the T.L.A. had called out a strike for three and a half months in the mills of Ahmedabad. Can such an action of the T.L.A. of hampering the production cloth when it was needed badly to sustain the British War efforts permit the British Government to look favourably upon it? Could the special appearance of the Advocate General on behalf of the Government of Bombay to urge the Industrial Court of Bombay in 1942 to reduce the neutralisation against the increase in the cost of living given to Ahmedabad mill workmen from 100% to 66 ²/₃ not be by way of a repressive measure by the Government against the T.L.A.?

With India's independence the nature of relations between the T.L.A. (and the I.N.T.U.C.) and Governments has undoubtedly changed and the situation of no love lost between the two does not exist any more. But it is certainly not true that between them there are no tensions and conflicts. Only mostly they are either unknown or below the surface. Generally Governments in a free economy tend to have a soft bias towards employers. Can in that case a 'party union' in Lenin's terminology like the T.L.A. (and the I.N.T.U.C.) pull on with them subserviently or without strife and tensions? Stories of the T.L.A.'s conflicts with Vr. Giri on his approach to
 adjudication when he was the Central Minister for labour and Mr. Deshmukh the Ex-Central Finance Minister on the problem of rationalisation are too well-known to call for repetition. The report in 'Statesman' of 14-6-62 that at the Calcutta I.N.T.U.C. annual session Mr. Nanda wanted the "I.N.T.U.C. to become more assertive with its socialist political faith and work to popularise socialism amongst the working class", by supporting his newly formed Forum For Socialist Action and the opposition to it by Mr. Khandubhai Desai, Mr. Vasawada and others 'subscriptions to economism' does not appear to be prima facie questionable. The report in the 'Statesman' of the same date that "Mr. Fali Mukerjee of the I.V.T.U.C. charged the late Mr. R.C. Roy, the Congress Government's Chief Minister in the West Bengal with following a pro-employer policy and Dr. Roy's consideration that "I.N.T.U.C., general attitude to the State Government deplorable" and the well-known agitation of the Punjab I.N.T.U.C. against its labour Minister Mr. Vidyasankar who was earlier the I.N.T.U.C. chief in the same State and who ultimately resigned labour ministership are effective answers to the charge that the I.N.I.U.C. is the Congress Department for Labour.

Near at home in 1961 there arose a bitter controversy between Mr. Vasawada and the powerful ex-President of the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee on the propriety of the jurisdiction of the later over the determination of the personnel of the Standing Committee of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation in which the Congress members had gained a majority. Mr. Vasawada's contention was that it was upto the Congress
Municipal Members thirty of whom belonged to the T.L.A. and twenty to the Ahmedabad City Congress Party and not the President of the T.P.C.C. to determine who should constitute the Standing Committee. Mr. Vasawada's view was upheld in arbitration by Mr. Khandubhai Desai. Further may be quoted Mr. Vasawada's statement: "We have worked with the Congress for years. But at present no such situation has arisen as would compel us to think of severing our relations with it... so long as all these things exist there is no reason for us to get out of the Congress. But it is true that if Congress gives up its principles and capable leaders mentioned above walk out of it we too may think of doing so." All this may well tempt one to conclude that relations between the Congress and the T.L.A. (and the I.N.T.U.C.) are not as cordial as is generally imagined.

This assessment of the assessments of the T.L.A. may be summed up with an examination of the criticism often made by communists and mentioned by Mr. V.B. Karnik in his 'Indian Trade Unions'. He points out "Another criticism of a more general character is the complaint that in the Association (the T.L.A.) things are not done by workers themselves but are done for them by others, that it is a paternalistic organisation and that there is no democratic functioning or scope for rank and file initiative."

It is a sad fact that there is more misunderstanding than an impartial objective appraisal of the method and the manner in which the T.L.A. works. Not that the T.L.A. has no

shortcomings. For how could it be so long perfection is only an inaccessible ideal? The existing second line of leadership in the T.L.A. has to be more persuasive and dogged; its officials have to understand Gandhian philosophy in its correct perspective and attempt to live up to it to the utmost rather than bank on encashing Gandhiji's name every now and then; its grievance procedure needs to be reoriented in the direction of equipping shop stewards and others with the techniques of marshalling facts of complaints better and applying hundred of agreements and decisions of courts under the S.I.A. Act in a judicious and just manner.

But it is painful to come across the charge that in the working of the T.L.A. there is no scope for rank and file initiative. Constitutionally and practically workers have a supreme position in the T.L.A. We have already pointed out that representatives of the T.L.A. are so strong as to make even the powerful secretary of the T.L.A. change his decisions. T.L.A's budget, candidates for various elections, settlement of each individual complaint and collective disputes have to be effected with the consent of workers' representatives. From an intimate but objective and sympathetic observation of the way in which the T.L.A. works one cannot help concluding that some of its limitations are due to weighty and imbalanced dominance of workers' representatives in it and overdemocratisation in it (the T.L.A.) in relation to their (shop stewards') capacity to live up to democratic ideals and responsibilities.

The Mill Kamdar Union (M.K.U.)

The M.K.U. a Union of Ahmedabad mill workers has been
in existence for pretty long. It is affiliated to the 'I.T.U.C. and guided and controlled by Communists. Before the birth of the M.K.U., in Ahmedabad, Communists were running a union of workers named as the Mazdoor Union. Sometime in 1934 it was declared unlawful. Therefore, in order to fill up the void created by the obligatory winding up of the Mazdoor Union, fellow travellers and Communists established the M.K.U. which in the form and substance of it was possibly only a lawful substitution for the Mazdoor Union. Mr. L. N. Mehta who guides and controls the movements and destinies of the M.K.U. is the chief leader of the Communist Party in Gujarat. He also holds an important place in the C.P.I. According to Mr. Mehta, the membership of the M.K.U. is about 4,000. Communists seem to have inherited from Marx his known antipathy for the (British) craft unions. Communists of India seem to have carried it to the point of hatred. Their vendetta for the T.L.A. can partly be accounted therefor. The M.K.U. is therefore reported to be an industrial union with 200 representatives of its members.

The M.K.U. believes in organizing workers on the principle of class conflict and indoctrinating them into its philosophy and ramifications. Understandably therefore it takes up anything — conceiving it to be a stick — to beat and break the T.L.A. which subscribes to smooth industrial relations and fight only when it is a must, which is too strong a match for the M.K.U. to allow it the scope to achieve its objective of turning Ahmedabad workers and through it the entire Indian
proletariat red, and the leadership of which is far more shrewd compared to that of the C.P.I. not to be able to understand and unearth motives and pretensions of the leaders of the M.K.U. It is the writer's personal experience that in justifying the long existence of the M.K.U. blowing its trumpets and running the T.L.A. down, the leader of the M.K.U. can twist facts of history and current affairs with inimitable tact and dishonesty. The writer was told interalia other misrepresentations that the d.a. given to Ahmedabad mill workers for the first time in 1941 was due to the efforts and influence of the L.K.U. but he was aware of the strenuous fight put by the T.L.A. inside and outside the Industrial Court of Bombay against the M.O.A. in order to get the d.a. for workers. He could therefore easily detect that there was all salt and not merely a pinch of it in the claim of the leader of the M.K.U. that it achieved the d.a. for Ahmedabad workers. Similarly the writer was told that the decision of the Secretary of the T.L.A. to collect ₹.11/- every month from each member of the T.L.A. for the defence needs of India at the time of the Chinese aggression on India in September 1962, was an undemocratic decision in so far as it was never put up before and endorsed by workers' representatives to the T.L.A. The writer was present at the meeting of the representatives of workers to the T.L.A. in which the proposal of the Secretary of the T.L.A. for the collection of ₹.11/- every month was presented. He therefore knew for certain that the said proposal of the Secretary of the T.L.A. was passed with an overwhelming majority and a microscopic dissension. He could therefore without difficulty assess the veracity in the
representative of the leader of the M.K.T. The following song reported to be sung by the wife of the leader of the M.K.U. in a meeting of workers clearly reveals how low it can descend in order to create a disaffection for the T.L.A. amongst workers.

Mukherjee's song, a representative of the leader of the M.K.T.

The tune of P.12 to 14 per every year. They rob Peter to pay their own Paul. The rule of the tyrant prevails and the millowner kicks off whoresoever he likes. The Mahajan (T.L.A.) signs off in the absolute interest of the capitalists. When we of the Hammer and Sickle take up the cudgels, we are squashed down through arbitration. The millowners are their dads and fathers. Together they dig the graves of workers. Together with the cut in the bonus even we are cutt off. If we worship the God Mahajan He will topple us with a kick.

Notwithstanding possibly knowing the falsehood of
their representation leaders of the M.K.U. tell the workers that the top leaders of the T.L.A. draw fabulous salaries. As a matter of fact they are not even enough to warrant a comfortable living and meeting social obligations. Members of the M.K.U. do not have any hesitation in charging leaders particularly the top leaders of the T.L.A. of personal dishonesty as regards matters monetary. The writer had made sure that top leaders of the T.L.A. do not have in certain cases any property other than the houses in which they stay. It has not been possible for the writer to assess the influence of disaffection the M.K.U. creates for the T.L.A. and its leaders amongst the mill workers. But this is what a worker holding the T.L.A. in deep respect and devotion told the writer in analysing why during the last general election the candidate supported by the V.K.U. secured more votes than the candidate of the T.L.A. in the area round the mill in which he is working. "Well Sir, communists spread the story that our leader not only prevented the millowner from lending us three lakhs of rupees for a cause of labour welfare but swallowed them himself. And it was impossible for us to convince the workers of the falsehood of it, though we knew it was a baseless lie."

Whether it is a sign of greater commitment or not the Ahmedabad worker is not prepared to lose even a day's wage and strike work. The writer feels and ventures to record that not even the T.L.A. - much less the M.K.U. - with all its power and resources can in the absence of a very potential cause lead the Ahmedabad mill workmen into a long strike. The M.K.U. which does not even believe in doing anything constructive
for workers therefore prudently does not call out strikes in Ahmedabad mills. It appears to be beyond its power to create virulent unrest in the Ahmedabad mill industry. But as the best available substitute for calling out strikes, on every small or big issue, be it the compulsory deposit scheme or an agreement done by the T.L.A. or the closure of the mill due to mismanagement, it abuses millowners and tries to run the T.L.A. down in the eyes of workers. The leader of the E.K.U. told the writer as follows. It is very significant. "For the T.L.A. we constitute a nuisance. In all its decisions and their implementations the T.L.A. has to keep that in mind. Because the nuisance has by now become too big to be ignored."