CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS
5.1. CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions have emerged from the study, 'Impact of political union leadership on unionism and industrial relations in cement industry in Cuddapah district:

5.1.1. Leadership in trade unions

Trade union movement has undergone a number of changes. The emergence of political union leaders in the trade union movement can be regarded as a very important change. This has become a universal phenomenon. Trade unions have been greatly politicised and during the course of time divided and subdivided into a number of party-based trade unions within the same industry. The Indian situation presents a picture of existence of party-based trade unions in the same industrial unit and also federations at regional and national levels.

In view of the pride of place enjoyed by the political union leaders in the trade union leadership, it is necessary to examine the impact of political union leadership. An exclusive study on the above lines has not so far been made in the country. However a few
studies are available which have generally discussed the aspect of political union leadership. An intensive study at unit level is of crucial importance to understand the effects of political union leadership on the trade unionism as well as the management of industrial relations.

5.1.2. Trade unionism in Cement industry

Cuddapah district is identified as one of the drought prone areas in the country. The people of the district are basically dependent on agriculture. The people suffer from bitter personal and family rivalries and resort to riots and murders very frequently. The district is rich in mineral resources and as a result many small and large scale industries have come into existence. The labour-force is mostly unorganised. In the case of larger units, the labourers have formed unions. With the entry of political people into the trade union leadership, individual and party-based rival unions within the same unit have become a common feature. The trade unions have resorted to violence as frequently as possible and even gone to the extent of killing an industrialist.

The district has provided ample scope with its mineral resources for the development of cement
industry. There are three large cement units. A majority of workmen in these units are drawn from the local area, on the basis of an agreement to provide jobs, if their lands were acquired by the industry. Political leaders have also influenced the managements in getting placement for the local people.

All the trade unions are now led by political union leaders belonging to different political parties. The leaders have strong economic background and are maintaining factions in their areas.

5.1.3. Impact of political union leaders on unionism:

The following are the conclusions drawn from the analysis on the impact of political union leaders on unionism:

i) Social factors such as: faction based rural background of workmen, necessity of securing regular employment and improving of working conditions, and lack of experienced worker union leaders have contributed to the emergence of political leadership in unions.

ii) The Political features of the leaders like: political background, affiliation with certain political
parties, ability to solve complex legal and administrative problems, bargaining skills and even the political as well as factional developments in the area have been responsible for the emergence of political leadership in unions.

iii) The managerial qualities of political leaders such as: liaison, bargaining and leadership skills have also led to the emergence of political leadership in unions.

iv) The union members have a number of expectations on political union leaders. They believe that the political leaders, as union leaders, can: fill the social gap between management and employees, provide better liaison between management and workers, effectively handle the grievances, amalgamate union strength with their political power to protect the interests of workers, threaten managements to achieve workers' demands, face effectively the inter-union rivalries and ensure the support of Government officials in the union affairs.

v) The union members, office bearers and ultimately the unions are substantially politicised. The union office bearers play a very active role at the time of political elections. They perform the duties such as:
collecting donations from the members and spending the amounts, providing transport facilities to electoral voters, capturing of polling booths to cast as many votes as possible as per the directions of political union leaders.

vi) The political leaders have total control in the selection of office bearers of the unions. Though the union office bearers need to be elected by the worker members, in practice, no election takes place. The candidates selected by the political union leaders for the post of office bearers will not face contest from any other members. And, as such, they are deemed to be unanimously elected. Thus, the union office bearers are selected by the political union leaders and not elected by the worker members. The leaders also consider factors such as affiliation to faction groups and political parties, militancy, knowledge of union activities, caste, religion, nativity etc., of prospective union office bearers, with an ulterior motive of making use of the workmen for their political elections and other purposes.

vii) The involvement of political leadership has changed the behaviour of the office bearers from what it should have been normally. A feeling that the office bearers
are opportunistic and not loyal to the worker members, pervades in union circles.

viii) A noticeable change appears in the militancy of office bearers. The union office bearers who associate with larger unions and political parties (particularly of left parties) have been exhibiting high level of militancy.

ix) The political union leaders have caused a definite change in the behaviour of worker members. The worker members have become more opportunistic and disloyal to the union organisations.

x) The political union leaders have promoted militancy among union members. These factional leaders—with their faction culture—thoroughly influenced and changed the attitude and character of the workmen. Gradually, the workmen are not forging into a union of strength but of factions and militancy.

xi) The political union leaders have not promoted harmonious inter-union relations. The unions have become hostile to each other and the outside political rivalries have entered trade unions through political union leaders.
xii) The emergence of political leadership in the trade unions has in no way contributed to the development of internal leadership. The political union leaders have almost monopolised the power and tried to maintain it by resorting to unhealthy practices such as groupism, factionalism etc.

xiii) The involvement of political leaders in many cases has affected the financial conditions of unions. A majority of unions are facing financial problems, as the political union leaders are not serious about the day to day functioning of unions. Whereas, they allowed the unions to raise funds on an ad hoc basis for important union activities and for their political elections.

5.1.4 Impact of political union leaders on industrial relations:

The following are the conclusions that emerged from the analysis on the impact of political union leaders on industrial relations:

i) The industrial unrest in cement industry has been surfacing quite often and it is sometimes taking the form of follow-on serial strikes and demonstrations. The political union leaders uniformly got negative
rating with regard to their role in organising the demonstrations in the interests of members, except in case of IL political union leader. A majority of political union leaders have a tendency to sacrifice the interests of members for their own interests. The managements also have a similar view.

ii) The political union leaders, by and large, have failed to create a positive impact as 'effective negotiators' for the cause of workmen. They have cared neither for the workers nor for the managements and always used every possible opportunity to serve their individual interests in the form of monetary gains and political advancements.

iii) The political union leaders also failed to create any impact on the effective implementation of the results of negotiations. They remained passive and did not force implementation, sometimes for their personal benefits and for gaining supremacy over other rival political union leaders.

iv) In case of improving the bargaining capacity of unions too, the political union leaders have created very poor impact. The popular belief among the workers as well as the management is that the political union leaders siezed every opportunity and converted it to
their own advancement, whereas, the IL political union leader is working for the cause of workmen, hence he created positive opinion among his union members.

v) The political union leaders have created a very low impact on the grievance handling system. The management as well as the workers are not happy with the role of political union leaders in handling the grievances of workmen. Against this, the IL political union leader has created a positive trend, winning the appreciation of his workers, with regard to his role as union leader.

vi) In the initial years of cement industry, the political union leaders (except IL leader) have used the ignorance of workmen for their factional and political ends. They have often divided the workers and encouraged them (workmen) to indulge in violent practices. It is at the instance of political union leaders that large scale industrial violence in the form of damaging property, causing production losses, manhandling officials has often been repeated. Inter-union violence has also been attributed largely to the support of political union leaders. As such, the workers have become increasingly aware of their role in the recent years and are not showing much interest in indulging in violence.
vii) The political union leaders were mostly responsible for the worker indiscipline in the cement industry. The degree of worker indiscipline was more in the past than in the present. It is the political union leaders who have supported the workers' indiscipline for obvious reasons. The managements have also patronised the political union leaders and to a great extent colluded with them and penalised many workmen even for simple things. This kind of practice by political union leaders and industrial managements contributed to the increasing worker awareness and resulted in a remarkable reduction in the incidents of workers' indiscipline.

5.2 SUGGESTIONS

The study has amply demonstrated that the political union leaders have not played the role expected of them. They have contributed to the increase of violent behaviour and division of workmen into hostile groups. They have gone to the extent of colluding with the managements for deriving some benefits at the cost of workers.

The trend is not a desirable one. It must be arrested in the larger interests of workmen and their unity. In order to realise the objectives of
trade union leadership, the following suggestions may be considered:

5.2.1. Delink politics with trade union activity

Workers can always forge themselves into a formidable force to fight for their genuine problems with the managements. However, they lack effective leadership, which in fact allows a politician to come into their midst. The entry of politics into trade union activities has thoroughly changed the very foundation and spirit of trade unionism. The issues were politicised. Party-based rival unions were established within the same unit dividing the workers into different political groups. Workers adopted militant behaviour for political reasons, sacrificing the spirit of worker unity which is the foundation for institution of trade unions. As such, it is all the more desirable to delink politics from trade union activities and promote the real spirit of trade unionism among workmen.

5.2.2. Replace political union leadership with internal leadership

It is high time that the trade unions thought of replacing political union leadership with their own
men. Even though there is dearth of internal leadership, it is advisable to develop gradually internal leadership rather than going in for political union leadership. Political union leadership has proved detrimental to the interests of the workers. Most of the workers have realised this fact. However, they are not in a position to effect the transformation. The political leaders have virtually controlled many workmen in many respects. In order to bring about the change in leadership, worker awareness programmes must be encouraged.

5.2.3. Worker awareness programmes

Workers must be facilitated to understand their rights and duties as members of trade union. Enlightened trade union members will behave with more responsibility. This will help the development of trade unionism on one hand and industrial relations on the other. Hence, the industry managements should also come forward to enlighten the workmen by organising inhouse worker awareness programmes on the topics like: 'trade union leadership', 'workers' rights and responsibilities in the industry', 'need for harmonious industrial relations and discipline for industrial productivity' etc. The Government also must take up
worker awareness programmes on aspects like: 'merits and demerits of political union leadership', 'need and advantage in worker union leadership', 'necessity for worker discipline and harmonious industrial relations', 'evil effects of industrial strikes and other forms of unrest' on a continuous basis.

5.2.4 Change in management outlook

In bringing awareness among workers towards political/outside leadership, the industrial management should have to play its vital role. It should not crave for short range benefits by winning the goodwill of political union leaders. It should win the confidence of workmen and should make workmen realise the need for leadership from within rather than from outside. In this connection, it may need to follow 'open door redressal policy', 'fair discipline procedure', 'system of workers participation in management' etc. In a nutshell, the managements should create an atmosphere, wherein workers have high trust on managements and cooperate with them and work harmoniously.

5.2.5 Amendment in the Trade Unions Act 1926

The Trade Unions Act 1926 allows formation of multiple unions within the same unit. As a result,
the workers are divided into different groups and often develop union rivalry and resort to violence. This is not in the interests of workers. The fragmented rival unions in turn will not come together to fight for the workers' cause. As such even genuine worker problems get delayed and not solved. In fact, the concept that 'multiple and rival unions go in favour of managements', has become true, as the unions cannot forge their collective strength and bargain for worker demands.

Further, the act permits any seven members to form into a union. This may be suitably amended and the willingness of 50 per cent of the workers be made a pre-requisite for the formation of union. This will promote the concept of 'one union for each industry'.

The act also must be suitably amended not to allow non-worker member in the trade union leadership. If this suggestion is not practical, it can allow the political/outside leaders in the advisory capacity as 'honorary presidents' for unions and the workers as 'working presidents' -- as executors of union goals. This will prohibit the political/outside leaders working against the interests of the workers.