CHAPTER VII

TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN LUDHIANA HOSIERY INDUSTRY
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It has been specified in Chapter II that the role of trade unions in the present study is limited to analyse their effectiveness in conducting struggles on economic questions arising out of the working conditions of the workers. The objective is thus explicitly confined to the role of economism of the trade union organizations and does not try to explore the transformation of trade union consciousness to revolutionary consciousness.

This chapter has, thus, two broad focus. The first one relates to analyse the character of the trade union movement and the second to the strength and weaknesses of the trade union movement. It may be mentioned that it would be useful to understand the trade union movement in Ludhiana hosiery industry not only in the context of other industries in Ludhiana but also in the context of the other major industrial centre like Amritsar. This becomes necessary as some of the trade union organizations are not industry specific unions but they simultaneously organize the movements in several industries.

The specific objectives of the present chapter
are the following:

(1) To understand the nature of the trade union movement in Ludhiana industry in general and hosiery industry in particular from mid 30's to mid 50's;

(2) to examine the strength and weaknesses of the trade union movement between the mid 50's to the present with respect to

(a) the factors internal to the trade union organizations i.e. the role of the political affiliations, legal structures, professionalization of trade union etc; and

(b) the structural conditions of production organization of the hosiery industry.

In this context it is hypothesized that the predominance of piece-rate wage payment, prevalence of intermediary system in the process of production, part ownership of the instruments of labour by the workers and the social origins of the workforce would contribute to the weakness rather than the strength of trade union movement in Ludhiana hosiery industry.
The earliest instance of the incipient form of trade union struggles is noticed in Punjab in the New India Embroidery Mills at Amritsar in July 1935, where a handful of workers raised the demand of reducing the working hours from 11 to 9 hours and holiday on Sunday. This demand of the workers was conceded by the employers (Sharma, N.K. 1954: unpublished). The period between 1937 to the beginning of World War II was a period of radicalization of the trade union struggles in Amritsar. In 1937 'Labour Federation' was constituted as an incipient Trade Union organization with a membership of 225 workers. This organization was instrumental in organizing series of strikes in some of the industries in Amritsar between 1937 and 1939 which lasted for several days. The strike organized in 1939 was particularly striking as it spread industrywide in which over 9000 workers participated. They also led a huge demonstration of over 6000 workers. For the first time in the history of the trade union struggles the combined repression of the state and the employers was witnessed. The demands included not only the increase in wages and improvement in working conditions but also consisted of the recognition of their trade union organizations. The struggle resulted in the constitution of a joint board consisting of the representatives of the labour leaders and the employers which decided to pay equal
wage for similar nature of work across the 'factories'.

By the beginning of World War II the membership strength of the Union touched the figures of 25,000. The Post-World War situation again witnessed struggles, launched mainly by the textile mill workers, on the issues such as increase in wage rates, stopping retrenchment, providing dearness allowance, bonus, and the fixation of pay scales. The trade unions had achieved considerable success as the Minimum Wage was increased from Rs. 12/- to Rs. 43/- per month, the Dearness Allowance was increased from 25 to 50 per cent and the bonus was granted equivalent to one month's salary.

Immediately after independence the trade unions in the textile industry was split into two on the lines of the two political parties.

The significant feature of this phase of trade union struggles in Amritsar was that the leadership emerged from the rank and file of the workers. The unions were strong in 'factories' employing sizable number of workers. The affiliation of the trade unions was tied to the specific political parties.

In the hosiery industry of Ludhiana, the first trade union organization was formed in the early 40's known as 'Hosiery workers Association'. During the years preceding
Independence the 'Hosiery Workmen Association' raised such demands as the increase in the wage rates by 25 percent, extension of the scope of the Payment of Wages Act, 1939, to 'Units' employing even less than 20 workers, the depreciation cost of the knitting frames to be borne by the employers and the supply of sewing 'machines' by the employers. The early struggles of the hosiery workers were partially successful in as much as the employers agreed to share 50 percent of the total cost of depreciation, and enhancing piece-rate wages as demanded by the tailoring workers.

Like Amritsar, in Ludhiana also the trade Union struggles were successful in the Units where the workers strength was relatively large, and the leaders were drawn from the ranks of the workers themselves. However, the trade union struggles in Amritsar were stronger than Ludhiana, until Independence. Amritsar was not only the major industrial centre but it had also several mills employing large number of workers. However, the industries at Ludhiana were predominantly constituted by the small-scale units.

The early 50's witnessed a series of struggles in different industries of Ludhiana which included the textile
hosiery and engineering industries. In 1951 the workers from textile industry formed the Textile Workers Union and demanded the increase in piece-rates for weaving from two or three annas per meter. This was a militant strike widely participated by the workers throughout the textile industry. The employers agreed to revise the piece-rates from 2 annas to 2.5 annas per meter.

Similarly, in the same year, that is, in 1951 'Hosiery Workers Union' was founded in Ludhiana. They also organized strikes in 17 defence hosiery units. Each of these units had sizable number of workers. The major demand was that the employers should bear the depreciation cost @ one anna for every one rupee wage (that is, 6.25 per cent of the total wages), for the knitting frames and sewing machines owned by the workers. The employers agreed to bear half anna for every one rupee wage earned (i.e. 3.13 per cent), as the depreciation cost.

Apart from this a famous strike was organized in Pearl Hosiery which was producing hosiery goods for defence purposes. The precipitant was the retrenchment of one of the workers which was instantaneously followed by the stoppage of work and picketing. The strike spread like a wild fire and thousands of workers from other hosiery units also took
out demonstrations to represent their solidarity. It also received support from the Congress and Communist parties and the Ludhiana district Kisan Sabha. Similar worker-peasant alliance was also found among the jute workers of Bengal when the Jute Ordinance was enacted in 1938 (Mitra, 1981). Kisan Sabha at Ludhiana also arranged for the supply of ration to the striking workers. The strike continued for three weeks. During the course of the struggle apart from the reinstatement of the retrenched workers, other issues were also added, like the payment of bonus and wages for the period of strike. The repressive arms of the state was also let loose on the workers. The solidarity and support for this struggle was quite widespread in as much as some material support was extended to the families of the arrested workers. This struggle continued for a period of three months. The determined support of the repressive arms of the state to the capitalists ultimately pinned down the workers who were forced to join back the work with written undertakings. The core activists, however, were a determined and committed lot who were falsely implicated in the cases of dacoity and theft.

In 1952, over 100 workers of the steel rolling industry went on a strike on the issue of wages. It was led by the Ludhiana Steel Rolling Workers Union. The wage
rates increased only nominally in spite of two weeks sustained strike. Subsequently a new union was founded in the year 1954 controlled by the Communists. Under its leadership the workers from engineering industry went on strike for a period of 20 days. The struggle resulted in the grant of seven festival holidays and 8 days casual leave in a year, declaration of every Sunday as holiday and four per cent bonus. The struggle was more successful in the big units like the sewing-machine and cycle 'manufacturing' units and in some of the bigger steel units. The struggle not only demonstrated the solidarity of the engineering workers but was also exemplary in terms of the militant character of the struggle. It helped to expand the membership of the union. The union also commanded a hard core batch of 500 militant workers who could be mobilized at a short notice for any struggle. They were having their insignia with specified uniform of 'Khaki' shirt and trousers, red scarf around the neck and wielding a long stick. The employers had not yet awakened to the situation and were taken unawares. For the first time in the history of trade union struggles in Ludhiana the employers were made to sign a written agreement incorporating the increase in wages, provision of houses for workers and grant of statutory holidays and leaves. This agreement was implemented faithfully for a period of three years after which the employers felt the pangs. They conceived of a strategy to close down the units until such time that the workers were forced to quit the jobs.
by taking away their 'full and final' account. This was also a part allurement to some of the workers who felt that a packet of Rs. 3000 to 4000 would enable them to initiate profitable venture of their own. The factories remained closed for six to twelve months and the workers had to yield. The union became weak and the factories started afresh with new workers sans the earlier benefits.

On the basis of the trade unions' struggles in the two major industrial centres of Punjab, that is, Amritsar and Ludhiana, during the 40's and early 50's certain trends could be evinced. One of the major reasons for the early growth of trade union movement in the textile industry of Amritsar was the larger size of the units. In contrast, the late growth of the unions in Ludhiana industries can be attributed to their relatively smaller size of the units. Another important reason for the weaker growth of trade union movement in Ludhiana was that nearly half of the employers were those who were erstwhile workers. They maintained intimate ties with other workers and in the process weakened the class solidarity. The effective trade unionism in Ludhiana, therefore, was a late starter particularly after Independence. But, once having picked up, it spread very fast in the textile, hosiery and engineering industries. Like Amritsar, even in Ludhiana the unions were successful in launching
struggles initially in the bigger units and only later it could spread to smaller units. However, the success in the economic benefits through the struggles were more perceptable in the textile and engineering industries than hosiery. The period of 40's and early 50's was characterized by complete lack of uniform rules and regulations governing the wages and working conditions. (Also c.f. Joshi, 1981; Mitra, 1981). Under such conditions the leadership at Ludhiana was drawn mostly from the ranks of the workers and the identification between the leaders and the workers was very strong in spite of the lack of experience of the leaders in conducting struggles. The unions also took to strike without advance notice and the resultant agreement were mostly oral. The agreements were also implemented with immediate effect. The strikes were the potential weapons with the workers. Another striking feature was that there was one union in one industry and they were not yet divided on the lines of political parties.

Trends in the Trade Union Movement from mid 50's

The trade union movement in Ludhiana industries from the mid 50's to the present is a distinct departure than the earlier trend. The earlier phase of the trade union struggles in Amritsar and Ludhiana was characterized
by spontaneity, the emergence of incipient trade union organizations for each industry, the leadership arising from the rank and file of the workers and so on. The situation was marked by a significant change from the mid 50's onwards owing to various factors, such as, emergence of trade union organizations affiliated to various political parties, the enactment of several labour legislations creating a legal structure, the emergence of the trade union organizations as an occupation and profession and the role of lumpen repressive structure constituted by the employers. In the interviews of the trade union leaders these factors were adduced as the primary reasons inhibiting the growth of trade union movement in Ludhiana hosiery industry. This is also explicated in the study of Sharma (1978: unpublished).

The other aspects having implications for the trade union movement after mid 50's arise out of the structural conditions of production organizations and the social composition of the workforce. In this section the role of these factors will be analysed in the sustenance or weakening of the trade union movement in Ludhiana industries after mid 50's.
Factors Internal to the Functioning of the Trade Union Organizations

Under this head the role of political affiliations, legal structure, trade union as profession and the lumpen repressive structure in the trade union movement in Ludhiana industries would be discussed.

(a) Political affiliation of Trade Unions

The political affiliations of different trade unions have done immense harm even in the generation of trade union consciousness among the workers. It may be mentioned that by 1955 the figures of membership of various trade unions in Ludhiana industries was limited to 1961. However, from mid 60's onward two trends were witnessed. The strength of trade union membership increased. Simultaneously the trade unions also splitted into several organizations affiliated to different political parties. This could be noticed from the figures in the table - 7.1.
## Table 7.1

The Number of Trade Unions and their Membership in Ludhiana.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Trade</th>
<th>1965</th>
<th>1971</th>
<th>1980</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unions</td>
<td>No. of Member-ship</td>
<td>Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTUC</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1,028</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AITUC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMS</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1,333</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMS</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CITU</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1,669</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4,598</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The division of the trade unions was not only along the political parties, but the splits were also on ideological grounds as also on personal differences. The leading trade union organizations were INTUC, BMS, AITUC, and CITU. Each one of these were affiliated to independent political parties. There were further divisions among some of them. For example, CITU was divided into two unions by 1984, one representing the official union of C.P.M., and the other consisted of expelled trade union activists who constituted the non-official CITU. As a matter of fact after the division the official union had almost lost its base among the workers. This division was not ideological but essentially due to internal factions and propelled by the intervention of the CPM leaders from above. The expelled members continued to exhibit their allegiance to CPM. The trade unions following the broad Marxist ideology were not only represented through AITUC and CITU but also in the three led by CPI(ML) factions. Each one of the communist unions have differences on ideological levels in spite of expressing their commitment to Marxism.

The INTUC was divided into five unions and each one of them were claiming themselves as official union of Congress Party. The divisions in INTUC sprang more
from personal differences rather than on ideological grounds. There were also large number of independent small unions which fragmented the working class. The division of the trade unions into large number of splinter organizations divide the working class. The situation gets exacerbated when they come into loggerheads and try to expand their base at the cost of others. For example, a leading trade union leader of Amritsar had observed that the CITU had set up its parallel unions to those of AITUC even in such textile mills where AITUC had the overwhelming following. There was enough virgin areas where the CITU could have worked independently (Dang, 1981: 132).

The inter-union competition and rivalry sometimes reach such dangerous proportions that even at the cost of self-destruction, they perpetrate such conflict. The trade union struggles in Vardhman Spinning Mills at Ludhiana is a case in point. There were nearly 5000 workers employed in this mill. Under the leadership of B.M.S. the workers in this mill participated in a militant struggle in 1982. The major demands were: the regularization of the workers after 240 days of continuous work in a year, granting of statutory leaves, payment of overtime work at double the rate of normal wages, house rent allowance @ 15 per cent, payment of railway fare @ Rs.150/- per worker to the
migrant workers at the time of their visit to their home states, provision of canteen in the mill and other perks.

B.M.S. initially conducted gate meetings for a number of days to conscientize the workers, particularly, at the time of switching over from one shift to the other. On the 14th April 1982, the management prevented the outgoing workers from one shift to join the gate meetings being attended by the incoming workers to the fresh shift. The inside workers' insistence to join the gate meeting led to the firing by the manager in which one worker died. This was sufficient to infuriate the workers who attacked the management men physically with rods and sticks and other instruments. In this clash three management personnel were killed and several sustained injuries. This was immediately followed by the lock-out of the mill which continued for 95 days. The CITU, AITUC and other Unions recognized the gravity of the situation and also identified it as a good opportunity to forge solidarity amongst the workers of the Vardhaman Mill as also among the workers from the other major industries of Ludhiana. The BMS smacked some evil designs and preferred to go it alone. It ultimately resulted in the retrenchment of 234 workers; 50 workers were implicated on murder charges and some were still behind bars (Indian Express, July 21, 1982, p.6).
It not only diminished the base of B.M.S. in the Vardhman Spinning Mill but was also instrumental in losing a good opportunity in increasing the working class solidarity. What would have been one of the brightest period of growth of trade unionism was allowed to slip out.

BMS is not only villain of the piece. INTUC is rather more equivocal on this question (c.f. Crouch, 1966: 104-16). It had unambiguously taken the stand in their Calcutta session in 1981 not to participate in the United struggles of the Workers. This stand of INTUC was further vindicated when they did not participate in a month long agitation of textile weaving workers in 1982 which was led by a Joint Action Committee of trade unions. Division among the ranks of the workers on the basis of the political affiliations of the different trade unions is caused both by the leftist as well as non-leftist trade unions. The leftist trade unions were also unable to hold a joint rally even on 'May Day'. Nevertheless, whenever the trade unions agreed on some common issues of the workers to launch joint struggles, they have successfully demonstrated the real strength of the workers through their mass participation. Textile industry here is a case in point.

The textile industry has displayed history of militant struggles in the past, both in the country at large and in
Amritsar and Ludhiana as well. One of the salient features of the trade unions' struggle in textile industry at Ludhiana is that mostly it has been conducted industry-wide. In 1965 the textile workers remained on strike continuously for a period of three months. The major initiative for launching the struggle was taken by AITUC which was also joined by other unions. The major demand was to increase the prevailing piece-wage rates. The solid phalanx of the workers paralysed the functioning of the textile industry as a whole. Nearly 200 workers were arrested at Ludhiana. The strike at Ludhiana continued for 80 days. The workers from Amritsar textile industry also went on strike subsequently which continued for a period of 4 months. However, due to the lack of coordination between the workers of two big textile centres of Punjab, the workers at both places could not gain much materially from these struggles. In the subsequent strikes, which were also led by the Joint Action Committees of the various trade unions, the piece-wage rates of the workers improved considerably. On each occasions the struggles were conducted industry-wide and the major issue was the increase in the piece-wage rates. One of the interesting features in the struggles conducted in April 1982 was the pressure exerted by the workers on the trade unions to constitute a Joint Action Committee. The leaders were
initially reluctant but the workers did not wait and they went on strike. The trade unions were left with no option but to participate. The major demand on this occasion was the increase in piece-wage rates by 60 per cent. The strike continued for a month which finally culminated in an agreement between the employers and trade union leaders to increase the piece-rate wages by 14 per cent. The textile industry is a good case to demonstrate the effectiveness of the joint trade union struggles in terms of achieving economic gains for the workers. It also helps to cultivate a culture of broad based collective resistance among the workers.

Hosiery industry in Ludhiana presents a rather weak case of the growth of trade union movement. Between 1962 to 1971 there was no major strike in this industry. The only notable strike was in 1972. The lead was initially taken by the exporters themselves who had locked the export units to protest against the restrictions imposed by the Government of India on the import of 'rags'. They had mobilized thousands of workers on daily wage rates and paraded them through the streets of Delhi. However, it was a short term show. The trade unions awoke from the stupor and launched a joint struggle in which one of the important demands was the lifting of the lock-out. The other demands included the regularization of bulk of the workers who were treated as casual workers, supply of knitting needles, payment
The strike was led by the CITU and AITUC combine and joined by other unions. The methods used in the struggles were picketing, demonstrations, gherao of the ministers etc. While the struggle had come to a stage where the employers had in principle agreed to most of the demands, but the general political conditions of the State acted adversely. It was around this time that there was militant student agitation at Noga in which few students were killed in police firing. 'Law and Order' became a major issue with the government and the hosiery workers' struggle was also included within its framework. Consequently, the hosiery workers were arrested overnight from their homes and imprisoned. It was a blessing in disguise for the employers. The strike failed. This was the only instance of industrywide struggle in the hosiery industry which, because of the overall political situation, could not be successful.

The analysis so far has tried to focus attention on one of the impeding factors for the emergence of strong trade unionism in Ludhiana industries in general and hosiery industry in particular from mid 50's to the present. It has tried to emphasize that the division of trade unions on the lines of political parties and multiplicity of unions have acted against the interests of the working class in general.
This is not peculiar to Ludhiana industry alone but is a strong feature of the trade union history in the country (Punekar, 1978: 47; Myers, 1960: 128; Karnik, 1982: 21), and the third world at large (Pandey, 1970: 56). The only silver lining has been the joint struggles launched from time to time.

**Effects of Legal Structure on Trade Union Movement**

The plethora of labour legislations which were brought into force after Independence started to show their definite impact on the trade union movement in the country at large and in Punjab as well. The very purpose of bringing in the various labour legislations, including the Acts relating to trade Unions was to provide formal channels for venting out the grievances of the workers, and hence containing the class contradictions which may otherwise lead to the radical social transformation. The formal legal structure promoted trade unionism based on purely economic gains for the workers (Kooiman, 1981). The trade unions in India have come to lean heavily on Government support in the form of various labour welfare legislations and the settlement of disputes between workers and employers through formal legal procedure (Crouch, 1966: 40). The trade unions oriented their activities more and more to get the provisions...
of the legal benefits to the workers and the attention was considerably diverted from class struggle. This could also be evinced from the figures in Table 7.2 which would indicate that the number of industrial disputes referred to various Labour Department machinery increased from 1,964 to 10,469 between 1966 and 1983, i.e., an increase by nearly 6 times.

**Table 7.2**

**Industrial disputes in Punjab over the Period**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State of the Dispute</th>
<th>Number of disputes in various years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pending at the beginning of the year</td>
<td>454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raised during the year</td>
<td>1,510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Disputes</td>
<td>1,964</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further, strikes which were the major instrument utilized by the workers to settle their scores with the management was used more sparingly and relegated to the background. This is borne out from the fact that the average number of strikes between 1952-56 was 81 which declined to 22 between 1957 to 1965, and to 27 between 1966 to 1975. The average number of mandays lost per worker who went on strike was 15.12 between 1952-56 which declined to 7.78 and 7.98 between 1957-65 and 1966 -1975. The strikes were used as a potent instrument only when the normal course of settling disputes through legal machinery was ineffective. This is evident from the increase in the average number of strikes to 78 between 1976 to 1980 in Punjab. This is also corroborated from the study of Singh (1980:226) on the trade Union leadership in Punjab where he observes that the trade unions have been reduced to free shops of legal advice.

However, the settlement of disputes consumes a good deal of time. In order to understand this phenomenon two months data on the number of disputes settled was collected from the District Labour Court, Ludhiana. It was found that during January- February 1984, 129 disputes were decided of which 29 per cent were referred six months back. Another 26 per cent was referred between 7 to 12 months, 30 per cent were referred between 13 to 24 months and the
rest 12 percent over two years. In spite of the long duration taken to settle the disputes, only 44 percent of their claims could fructify.

The trade unions are acquiring the character of professionalization and business orientation. Each of the national trade union organizations have at least one practicing lawyer associated with their union and in certain cases the lawyers are also the main leaders of the trade unions. The strong legal orientation of the trade unions have made it imperative for them to have a professionally trained lawyer to complete in the mutual legal battles. Considerable time of trade union leaders was occupied in wandering from the labour office to labour court and were hardly left with any time to organize the workers on class conscious activities. In fact the concept of educating the workers for the non-left trade union organizations consisted in arranging talks through the Productivity Council or through the Labour Department functionaries to the workers. Even the left trade union organizations conduct very few classes to conscientise the workers. The interviews revealed that the AITUC conducted three educative sessions of one day each to 150 workers in 1983 in which the content was the political education on class lines and the pivotal role of the working class in social transformation.
Similarly, CITU had conducted three such sessions of two hours each which was attended by 20-30 workers. These were rather lip service to the real nature of political education which need to be imparted to the workers for generating revolutionary consciousness. The number of workers included in such efforts were the fringe of the total workers in Ludhiana. Besides, the content and method of conscientization was also rather weak. Obviously, the heavy reliance on legalism diverts their attention from this primary work. However, the only trade union organization which had a more sound approach was the Moulder and Steel Workers Union (MSWU) which pursued CPI(ML) line. It had in principle taken less recourse to legalism and had tried to direct its efforts more at conscientising the workers. They were publishing a local journal, called "Mazdoor Jameat" which had circulation among nearly 800 workers. The interviews with the workers revealed that even the national level trade Union organizations such as AITUC and CITU, do not encourage the workers for reading working class literature.

The engagement in legalism has also emerged as an important source of earning for some of the trade unions. It was found during the course of interviews that one of the prominent CITU leaders, who was working in this organization for 11 years, was involved in extra-earnings through legalism owing to which he was expelled. He had an
easy access later on to AITUC but he had to leave this organization also after a year as he continued to practice this on a heightened scale. Now he runs his independent trade union 'shop' in a tea shop. There are a number of 'Basta' Unions in Ludhiana where individuals run their mobile 'shops' by frequenting to Labour Courts, Labour Office and other places where workers are easily accessible. They carry their office in their 'bastas' (bags) which contains where withals like the trade union membership forms, demand notice forms and the documents necessary to file their case on behalf of the worker. Some of the non-left trade Union organizations were rather forthright in emphasizing the practice of their 'business shops' as the very basis of their survival. One of the trade Union leaders of INTUC cited couple of examples to illustrate the business lines on which he operated. In a big cycle factory at Ludhiana the workers were instigated to go on strike. This was initiated by the INTUC leader at the instance of another leading cycle factory to paralyze the production of the competing cycle factory. The strike continued for a few days and finally the employer persuaded the trade Union leaders to withdraw strike by paying them a sum of Rs 30,000. The employer also sought help from the Trade Union leaders in driving out the activists within his factory. It served the interests of both of the trade union leaders as also the employer. He cited also other instances of his business acumen. This aspect also has been observed by Sood (1981), in her study of the Trade Union Leaders in Punjab that 74 per cent
of the State level leaders and 48 per cent of the local level leaders in the Unions think that the life style of some of the Union leaders was not proportionate to their own sources of income.

Though legalism has been responsible for diffusing the class struggle and working class consciousness, yet it can be utilized in the furtherance of class consciousness. This aspect has been utilized as a less potential instrument in Ludhiana though there are certain instances where it has been used to heighten trade Union consciousness.

There were three strikes of this nature in Ludhiana hosiery industry, particularly on the question of piece-rate wages. During February, 1973 a prominent hosiery exporter retrenched three workers. As a result all the workers in the 'Unit' numbering around 80 went on a strike. The exporter had taken the plea with the District Labour Officer that the retrenched workers were the employees of a contractor. The CITU could give evidence based on the Provident Fund records to the effect that the Contractor was in reality the employee of the exporter. This was sufficient evidence to regularize all the 80 workers who were not treated as 'workers' by them. The employer was circumventing the legal benefits accruing to them. Similarly in 1978-79 the question of recognition of workers
was taken up as a major issue of struggle in eight export hosiery units. However, the economic handicaps forced bulk of the workers to join their work after two weeks of strike. Only 22 of the striking workers moved their claims to the District Labour Court and the judgement went in their favour.

There was also another attempt of this sort when in 1980 the trade unions managed a sudden inspection by a Factory Inspector in seven defence hosiery units. Nearly 400 workers were working in these 7 units. All of them had to be entered as 'Workers' in the muster-roll who were subsequently entitled for all the benefits of the labour legislations. Subsequently, the workers in these units also demanded the increase in the piece-rate wages which also ended in success resulting in the average increase of wages by Rs. 150/- per worker. The spurt of the struggle on the question of the recognition of the workers also spread to the units of big exporters. The District Court gave a categorical decision that the workers whether paid on piece-rate or time-rate are deemed as workers within the legal rubric. These are instances to show that even the legal provisions could be suitably utilized for the economic benefits of the workers if the trade unions organize the workers with commitment and determination. The end of 70's provided a favourable climate for the trade unions to take up the issue of the recognition and regularization of workers on an
industry-wide basis but it was a very limited attempt by individual unions. It was a potential issue on which a combined struggle by all the trade unions would have been a decisive one. This opportunity was missed.

The few instances given above shows that even legalism could be utilized as a suitable backgrounds for launching effective economic struggles by the trade unions. Even attempt of these kinds are few and far between.

The analysis on the whole clearly shows that the excessive reliance of the trade unions on legalism and business ethic to take up demands of the workers individually and not collectively has considerably harmed the cause of the trade union movement in Ludhiana. It has also considerably polluted the minds of the workers who have internalized this consciousness strongly in their minds. This is one of the reasons why even such trade union organizations as MSWU who in principle were attuned to pursue the path of conscientization of working class find that the workers run more to such trade unions 'business shops'. The trade union organizations within Ludhiana hosiery industry are also a severe victim to this process and this has been one of the important reasons of the weakness of the growth of trade union movement in Ludhiana hosiery industry.
Attitude of Management towards Trade Unions

In spite of the existence of the prominent national level trade unions and the mushroom growth of independent unions in Ludhiana, the organized strength of the unions is rather weak. The managements have also not yet reconciled to recognize the trade unions as a fact of reality. The policy of "nip in the bud" is very strongly practised, particularly by the managements of bigger units. They have also consciously evolved built-up structures to smother the tendency of the emergence of the unions. The case of Vardhman Spinning Mills would highlight this point.

Vardhman Spinning Mills is one of the relatively large-scale organization in Ludhiana, employing over 5000 workers. Right since its inception in the mid 60's there were attempts to build trade union organizations in this mill which has been consistently thwarted by the management. It may incidently be mentioned that each of the large-scale units in Ludhiana, whether in spinning or hosiery, have a strong security force of their own which is usually headed by a retired experienced military personnel under whom there are a large number of trained security personnel. Apart from this they have also pampered hoodlums and lumpens who are the brutal musclemen mainly employed to observe the recalcitrant element and keep
alive the effective communication link with the management to channelize information to this effect. For instance, between 1971 and 1973 CITU could enrol nearly 500 workers as its members in this mill. In March 1973 the Union demanded a holiday for the 'holi' festival with wages and the following day as leave without pay. They wanted to hold a gate meeting towards the evening shift. The domesticated hirelings of the management assaulted the workers with the soda bottles and further chased them. In this process 55 workers sustained injuries of which several were admitted in the hospital. This was followed by the retrenchment of 60 activists. In this the emergence of the CITU was rooted out. Next year IITUC initiated a relay fast. The hirelings attacked the workers, uprooted their tents and chopped off the fingers of one of the workers. The workers went on strike. The management next day took the assistance of police machinery who opened fire and three workers sustained bullet injuries. The workers showed real resistance and the strike continued for 40 days which resulted in the management agreeing to some of the demands. However, the employer could not swallow the pill and attacked the workers' colonies at midnight and severely injured the sleeping workers. Again in 1982, in the militant struggle led by 3MS the management used not only their hirelings but also the
active intervention of the state apparatus of violence to suppress the workers.

Similarly, in one of the big export hosiery units the flat workers tried to organize trade union during December 1977. The employer could get advance information of this and deprived the activist flat workers from providing yarn and also stopped payment of their wages. The economic sanction was the first repressive measure used by the employers to disarm the workers. When this failed they immediately switched over to brutal form of physical repression. The employer also drove out the activists from the job and through the help of police machinery got them arrested under false implication. They were also deprived of their knitting frames.

The victimisation and harassment of union activists has also been noted in the studies of Singh (1980) and Sood (1981) on the trade union leadership in Punjab.

This section has tried to explore the role of political affiliations of the unions, their reliance on legalism and the attitude of the management on the growth of trade union movement in Ludhiana industries in general and hosiery in particular. The analysis has shown that the affiliations of the unions to political parties have divided the working class solidarity. The intervention of the political parties in the functioning of the unions have also hindered the trade union movement.
The creation of a strong legal structure in the form of labour legislation have bound the trade unions strongly within the limits of legalism and prevented the growth of class struggle as also the trade union movement. It has contributed to the professionalization of the unions and reducing it to the business shops. Thus, it has also strongly polluted the minds of the workers to approach the trade unions' shops with their individual problems instead of organized collective mobilization. In spite of such weaknesses wherever the trade unions have the tendency to emerge, the managements are efficaciously able to suppress them through their lumpen repressive structure as also with the active connivance of the state power of violence.

The Nature of Production Organization and the Growth of Trade Union Movement

(a) Engineering and Textile (Weaving) Industry:

The analysis so far has tried to focus on the role of factors like the political affiliations of the trade unions, legalism and the repressive measures on the growth of trade union movement. The next important factor to be focussed is the role of the nature and structure of production organization in the growth of trade union movement. The production organization covers
such aspects as the size of the units, the nature of the instruments of labour, the mode of employment of the workers (directly by the employer or through the intermediaries), and the mode of wage payment. The nature of production organization invariably influences the nature of working class composition with respect to its social origin and other characteristics like age, sex, etc. The purpose here is to understand the overall effect of the production organization on the growth of trade union movement in industries in Ludhiana in general and the hosiery industry in particular. Attention is focussed initially on the engineering and textile (weaving) industries and later on to hosiery industry in Ludhiana.

In spite of the tremendous growth of engineering industry after Independence it is characterized by mushroom growth of small-units. As a result the major part of the workforce remains scattered which is essentially linked to the lower level of technological application. This is accompanied with the part use of the contractors or piece-rate system of wage payment. For example, in the cycle industry there was a sizeable number of domestic workers constituted by the men, women and children engaged into the contract work like the manufacturing of cycle seats. The workers were scattered and atomised which served as an objective factor to impede the growth of trade union movement.
The experience of the organizing efforts of the Moulder and Steel Workers Union (MSWU) affords another interesting example of the engineering industry in this direction. There were nearly 400 small moulding units at Ludhiana employing workers, ranging from 5 to 15 in each unit. Part of these workers were directly employed and part by the contractors who were responsible for the payment of wages to the workers. The contractors also contributed labour besides supervising the labour. They appropriated around 30 per cent of the total wages contracted through the employers. It was thus profitable to both the employers as also the contractors. The employers were free from the botheration of supervising the workers and the contractors received their pound of flesh. In spite of the long period of the existence of this industry, the MSWU could emerge only in 1972. Under its aegis the workers went on a strike in the same year demanding increase in the piece-rates. One of the important features of this strike was that along with the workers, the contractors also actively participated in the strike as their contract rates had also remained stagnant for the past five years. The strike spread almost to the entire industry and it was a decisive victory. The employers had witnessed such a lightning strike for the first time in the history of this industry. After this strike they also forged an employers organization to collectively prevent further growth of unionism. Even for the union this was a
single major success. Its subsequent efforts to organize the workers did not result in further success. Though the trade union movement spread like a wild fire in 1972, but it could not institutionalize into solid organization in various units. The review reports of the union frankly admits that the small nature of the units is not conducive to the emergence and growth of stable and sustained unions. It could rather be sustained only in larger units. The prevalence of contract system was also underlined as one of the hindering factors to the growth of trade unionism. Another contributory factor to the weakness of trade union movement was identified as the migrant character of large section of the workers who were viewed by the local workers in derogatory terms. They were perceived as the one responsible for depressing wage rates. The migrants lived in crowded barracks separated from the residential locality of local labourers. The one solid experience of the 1972 strike was that the success of trade unionism in industries with scattered nature of workforce consists in organizing the struggle at the level of industry as a whole. The experience of the textile weaving industry also corroborated the experience of the MSWU that the industry-wide spread of a struggle is the cornerstone of the success of trade union struggles in industries characterized
by the small size units. The earlier discussion of the trade union struggles in the textile industry bears ample testimony to the existence of militant struggles in this industry, not only in Punjab but also at all India level. However, the growth of trade union struggles is not followed by the strong organizational growth of the trade unions for which the smallness of the units and the division of the workforce into migrant and locals serves as important structural bases of production organization preventing the emergence of strong trade unions.

(b) Hosiery Industry

So far the role of production organization like the size of the units, the prevalence of contractors, the piece-rate wages, etc. were explored in influencing the trade union movement in engineering and textile (weaving) industry in Ludhiana. Now, the attempt will be focused to examine the nature of production organization of Ludhiana hosiery industry in shaping the trade union movement. The emphasis will be on such aspects of production organization as the size of the hosiery units, 'putting-out' system, piece-rate wages, prevalence of contractors/intermediaries, social origin of the workforce and ownership of instruments of labour. These aspects have been covered exhaustively in Chapter V but the salient features of those aspects will be emphasized here in order to relate them to the growth of trade union movement.
In spite of the enormous growth of Ludhiana hosiery industry after Independence it continues to be characterized by the dominance of small sized units. For example, the report of the District Industrial Survey (1958), shows that only 8 per cent of the total 901 hosiery units employed more than 20 workers, 33 per cent were family based units and the remaining 59 per cent were small units. The smaller size of the units and the 'putting-out' work to the fabricators were important objective conditions which were acting as obstacles to the growth of trade unionism. The trade union movement in hosiery industry have mostly been confined to larger units. For example, in 1962, the strike on the question of payment of bonus, payment of depreciation cost of sewing-machines owned by the workers and granting of statutory leaves were confined to the 17 hosiery units producing for defence purposes which were also relatively larger in size. It could not spread to the hundreds of small units producing for the civil market. This struggle continued for a period of two weeks and part of the demands of the workers in the shape of the depreciation costs and the payment of bonus were conceded. Similarly, in 1972 also the strikes in hosiery units were concentrated in large sized export units. However, the effect of this was more far reaching, as the large sized exporters took to 'putting-out' work to fabricators on large-scale. They even encouraged the loyal workers to initiate fabrication. Through this process the workers who were concentrated in large
sized units were scattered into a large number of fabricating workshops. This has been one of the major reasons for the lack of industrywide strike in hosiery industry after 1972. The importance of fabricating units could be gauged from the fact that at present 45 per cent of the total production is carried out by the fabricators and more than half of the total workers in the hosiery export industry are employed with fabricators. Though the use of machines is on a very low scale in the export hosiery industry, yet as compared to the large scale units, the fabricating workshops are overwhelmingly manually operated. Apart from this, there were large number of domestic workers employed by exporters and fabricators who were scattered over the large part of the city into the individual households. The pre-dominance of fabricating units and domestic workers were instrumental in the scattered character of the workforce and acted as conditions inimical to the concentration of workers under one roof. One of the pre-requisites for the emergence of working class consciousness and strong trade unionism is the concentration of workers under one roof. The problem of organizing hosiery workers was also consistently faced in Britain during 19th century. This problem was more severe during the stage of manufacture form of production in British hosiery (Friedman, 1977: 168).
However, this still leaves one question unanswered. There were 13 large-scale hosiery export units where the trade union movement could have been relatively strong. This also could not emerge because of certain structural factors associated with production organization in these large units.

One such important factor was the non-recognition of workers as the employees of the owners of the units. If the workers went on strikes they faced the predicament of losing the job and also the exporter would choose the option of putting-out more work to the fabricators. Another important reason was the employment of workers through the intermediaries contractors within the premises of the exporters. Nearly 44 per cent of the workforce under exporters were employed through contractors. This aspect blurred the real class contradiction. The contractors recruited these workers and also paid wages to them. So these workers were outside the ambit of exporters and were not treated as 'workers' by them.

Of the rest 56 per cent of the workers who were directly employed by the exporters, 42 per cent were piece-rated and 14 per cent were time-rated workers. The piece-rated workers are also not recognized statutorily as 'workers' by the employers which creates an awful situation for the workers to venture for
participating into struggles. The piece-rate wages was of distinct advantage to the employers. It unleashed competition among the workers which amounted to the self-supervision of their exploitation.

Another hindering factor to the promotion of class consciousness and class solidarity is the pattern of ownership of instruments of labour. In the process of knitting which absorbed nearly 57 per cent of the total workforce in the hosiery industry, most of the workers had their own knitting frames or had rented-in. Same was the situation in the process of tailoring which absorbed around 3 per cent of the total workforce and in this process all the workers had their own sewing-machine. Some of the knitting workers had even three to four knitting flats and this hierarchy of ownership of flats had inculcated a false consciousness. It acted as a major divide within the working class and obliterated the development of a homogeneous working class.

Over and above the structural factors associated with the production organization, the social origin of workers also acted as a major obstacle in the emergence of working class solidarity. The social origins were of local and migrant nature. The migrant workers were from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar who constituted around 41 per cent of the total
workforce in the Ludhiana export hosiery industry. They are generally held in low esteem by the local workers and are perceived as responsible for the depression of wage rates. The migrants not only constitute the rockbottom of the working class in hosiery industry but also maintain their distinct cultural identity. This is also reinforced in their habitation into the separate residential colonies. In the discussion of the trade union movement in the engineering industry it was found that M&U had faced insurmountable problems in forging solidarity of the migrant and local labourers. Similar experience has been faced by the unions in Ludhiana hosiery industry as well. Further, the migrant workers have a higher rate of mobility from one unit to another. Their rural ties also contribute to their mobility rate. It was found from the empirical data that nearly 77 per cent of the total migrant male workers shifted from one unit to another even before the completion of one year. However, the rural ties of the workers contributed to the unstable character of the workforce. This had been a phenomenon all the world over during their early phase of industrialization (Joshi, 1981). Besides this, it was found that there were heterogeneity of the workforce in the hosiery industry based on sex, age, level of literacy and the level of skill which were also process specific.
All these differences discouraged collective resistance. (cf. Friedman, 1977: 54).

Therefore, the hypothesis that the structural conditions of the production organization of the hosiery industry, characterized by the prevalence of 'putting-out' piece-rate wage payment, existence of intermediaries/contractors, part ownership of the instruments of labour by the workers and the heterogeneous character of the workforce, would result into the weak growth of the trade union movement has been substantiated.

**Suggestive Measures to accelerate the Trade Union Movement**

The above analysis provide some insight to accelerate the trade union movement in Ludhiana hosiery. The foremost demand of the trade unions could be the recognition of the workers as the 'employees' of the exporters. This basically affects the interests of all the workers in this industry and on this single issue industrywide militant strike can be organized in which both the workers working with exporters and fabricators can unite. Some of the struggles between 1977 to 1980 were taken up on this issue and also were partially successful in spite of the fragmented struggles conducted by the individual trade unions. The joint actions of the prominent unions would give a boost to the industrywide spread of the militant movement on this issue.
unions need to exert pressure on the government as also on the fabricators to register all those fabricating units under Factories Act where 20 or more workers are employed. The import-export policy of the Government of India directly promotes the enrichment of the handful number of export houses at the cost of the fabricators. It is suggested that part of the export orders should be reserved for the fabricators. The organization of a cooperative society of fabricators could act as direct import-export agency. On this issue a combined struggle could be launched by the fabricators and the workers which would put the exporters on the bay. The industrywide strike of 1972 is a suitable instance in this context. These various measures would not only impart homogeniety into the character of the working class but would also remove the in-built structural constraints in the present production organization of the hosiery industry. This acts as a major barrier to the growth of trade union movement.

The interview of 20 trade union leaders revealed that the major proportions were from the younger and middle aged groups, upper castes and higher level of literacy. Three-fourth of them hailed from Punjab and one-fourth were from other states like, Utter
Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Bihar. Sood (1981) also comes to similar findings in her study. Their occupational background indicated that 45 per cent had agricultural occupation, 30 per cent were in service, 15 per cent in trading and other miscellaneous occupations. Another interesting feature has been that most of the leaders had emerged from the ranks of the workers. Nearly 90 per cent were whole-timers and 10 per cent were part-timers.

Resume

The present chapter seeks to understand the nature of trade union movement in Ludhiana hosiery industry between mid 30's to mid 50's. It also explores the strength and weakness of the trade union movement between mid 50's to the present with respect to the factors internal to the trade unions and those arising out of the structural conditions of the production organization of the Ludhiana hosiery industry.

The experience of the early emergence of the trade unions in Amritsar as also at Ludhiana during pre-Independence period shows that the workers from relatively larger units organized effectively into trade unions and it was rather weak in smaller units. The leadership of the trade unions emerged from the ranks of the workers and it had intimate relations and identity with the workers. The major weapon of the trade Unions was class struggle.
The bureaucratic legal structure in labour relations was yet to emerge. The trade unions' organizational form was not very much institutionalized but the credibility of the leadership was immense. They commanded a mass popularity among the workers. The number of trade unions was also very limited. In Ludhiana, in each of the major industry there was only one effective trade union. This boosted the faith of workers into their unions and also strengthened their collective resistance. Most of the decisions between the trade union leaders and the employers were oral and were immediately implemented. However, the character of trade unions transformed radically after mid 50's. The number of trade unions increased on the basis of their political affiliations and there were also mushroom growth of independent trade unions. It consequently divided the workers as a class. The trade unions relied heavily on the official legal procedure for resolving the disputes of the workers. Class struggle through collective resistance of workers became of secondary importance. The mushroom growth of the independent unions based on crafts, localities, and social origin of workers as also on different political lines degenerated the trade unionism to the business shops. The hostile and repressive attitude of the employers towards the trade unions
accompanied with their lumpen repressive structure have also restricted the growth and spread of the trade union movement at Ludhiana. The only silverlining amidst such a dismal picture is the launching of few joint struggles by various trade unions from time to time. Even the restricted and selective use of the legal machinery has also partially helped to advance the working class struggle as was in the case of hosiery industry.

There were certain in-built structural conditions to the production organization which also inhibited the trade union movement. A large-scale prevalence of 'putting-out' system give rise to a very fluid production structure resulting into the scattering of the workers over large areas of the city employed by 'petty-capitalists'. The physical collectivity of the workers under one roof which is a pre-requisite for strong trade unions had emerged weakly. Depriving bulk of the workforce from the statutory recognition as 'workers' was one of the potential reasons for the weak growth of the trade union movement. The prevalence of intermediaries/contractors and piece-rate wage payment were the added handicaps. The ownership of the instruments of labour by knitting and tailoring workers blurred the class consciousness of the workers and diffused the class contradictions. It also provided obstacles to the emergence of the homogeneous working class. The influx of the migrant workers and their live rural ties with their
respective places of origin added to the unstable and mobile character of the hosiery workforce. All these objective conditions of production organization in the hosiery industry discouraged the growth of a strong trade union movement. However, the experience shows that if the trade unions make united efforts, and also take help from the fabricators by using their contradictions with exporters, the workers from hosiery can be organized into strong trade unions giving rise to an industry-wide trade union movement. However, in spite of the weak growth of the trade-union movement, there are certain positive signs which could be utilized to strengthen trade union movement. The raising of the demands of the recognition of 'workers' on statutory grounds can promote industry-wide militant struggle. Apart from this, the raising of demands like the abolition of piece-rate wage payment, intermediaries, and the formation of a fabricators'-co-operative will go a long-way in strengthening the trade union movement. It would create conditions for the emergence of homogeneous working class, objectively and subjectively.
During 1982, out of the total 473 trade unions in Punjab 143 (30.23%) were independent trade unions. The membership of the independent trade unions was 76,819 (22.20%) out of the total membership of 3,46,049 for all the trade unions in Punjab.

After 1965, the joint struggle in Textile Industry were conducted during 1972, 1975 and 1977, 1980 and 1982. In 1977 the industrywide agitation of the workers was led by the Joint Action Committee constituted by the four national level trade Unions and two local level unions. The increase in piece-wage rates over 1975 were won from 35 to 45 per cent for different processes involved in the textile (weaving). Similarly in 1980, the Joint Action Committee of 10 Unions- 5 national level and 5 local level achieved 20 to 50 per cent increase in the piece-rate wages over 1977.

'Flags' were the old clothes imported from abroad which were to be carded in order to convert them into yarn. This yarn was supposed
to be used as raw material for the hosiery industry. However, the importers of rags, instead of converting it into yarn and knit afresh, started to sell them, directly in the market which was more profitable. It affected the civil market of the hosiery. Government imposed restrictions on such practice of direct selling of the 'rags'.

4. Knitting needles were in short supply and were available to the exporters only against their quota. The quota met only the partial demand of the workers. For the remaining requirement the workers had to procure needles sometimes at double the normal rates in the market. This burden was borne by the workers themselves.

5. The figures for 1951 were not available, that is why in the analysis, the selection of years have been adjusted accordingly.

6. The number of disputes computed, pertained to the 'productive' industries only and all other disputes concerned with the service sector or otherwise were excluded from the figures.