CHAPTER VII

TRADE UNIONISM

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Trade unions are a major component of the modern industrial relations system. A trade union of workers is an organisation formed by workers to protect their interests and improve their working conditions etc. All trade unions have objectives or goals to achieve, which are contained in their constitution, and each has its own strategy to reach those goals.

At the times the terms 'Trade Union' and organised labour are used as synonymous with term 'Labour Movement' but each term carries a somewhat different connotation. According to Encyclopedia of social sciences, labour movement is conceived as "all of the organised activity of wage-earners to better their own conditions either immediate or in more or less distant future." According to G.D.H. Cole, Labour movement implies, in some degree a community of outlook. It is an organisation, or rather many forms of organisations based upon the sense of common status and a common need for mutual help." Thus the labour movement in a country emerges from a common need to serve a common interest. A trade union is thus an essential basis for labour

67 Commons, J.R. Labour Movement' Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences Vol 8, 1939 New York P. 695
movement. The labour movement without trade unions cannot exist. Trade unions are the principal institutions in which the employees learn the lesson of self-reliance and solidarity.

**Trade Union Concept:**

The term 'Trade Union' has been defined in various ways because of wide differences in the use of this term in different countries. Of all the definitions of a trade union, the classic definition of Webbs has been most popular. According to them a trade union is "a continuous association of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives."

Since this definition does not cover all the extensions of trade union activities in modern times, a trade union, with some modification may be redefined as "a continuous association of wage-earners or salaried employees for maintaining the conditions of their working lives and ensuring them a better and healthier status in industry as well as in the society." In the words of Dale Yoder "A union is a continuing, long-term association of employees formed and maintained for the specific purpose of advancing and protecting the interests of members in their working relationships."

The Indian Trade Union Act, 1926 (Section 2-B) defines a trade union as

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69 Webb, Sydney & Webb, Beatrice: History of Trade Unionism (London) 1920, P. 1
70 Yoder, Dale: Personnel Management & Industrial Relations (Prentice Hall) 1970, P. 421
any combination, whether temporary or permanent formed primarily for the purpose of regulating the relations between workmen and employers or between workmen and workmen or between employers and employers or for imposing restrictive conditions on the conduct of any trade or business and includes any federation of two or more trade unions."

These different definitions have highlighted the following essential features of trade union:

(i) A trade union is an association of workers i.e. of wage-earners.

(ii) A trade union is a voluntary association. The workers are free to take two decisions whether to be members of a trade union, and if yes, to choose a union from among the alternatives.

(iii) A trade union is a permanent body. This feature distinguishes a trade union from the other temporary bodies of workers such as strike committees, action groups etc., which are formed for a specific purpose. These committees and groups last only till the purpose for which they are formed, is achieved.

(iv) A trade union is formed for collective action by wage-earners. It is meant for
strengthening the power of workers to bargain collectively with the employers. Trade union is an important instrument for collective bargaining which plays a significant role in making the good industrial relations. It is said that the role of collective bargaining in conflict resolution is very significant. It builds up safety valves, allowing the opposite group's excess steam to escape without blowing the whole mechanism to pieces'.

(v) A trade union is formed to protect and promote the common interest of the workers. It is a collective bargaining agent for its members for negotiating wages, hours of work and terms of service etc.

The Statement "Harmonious industrial relations, based on freedom of association are essential for the smooth working of the process of production", is the basic principle which facilitated the growth and development of trade unions.

The right of workers to form unions has received recognition in every civilized country and it cannot be over emphasized that the principle of collective bargaining has come to stay.

The International Labour Conference at its twenty-sixth session in Philadelphia, declared as one of their fundamental principles that "freedom of expression and of association are essential to sustained progress".

In India, trade union movement is still in its developing stage. The Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926 confers on the workers and employers the right to unite and associations for the purpose of regulation, the relations between workmen and employers or between workmen and workmen or between employers or for imposing restrictive conditions on the conduct of any trade, or dustiness and includes any federation of two more trade unions.

By the promulgation of the Act, the state had assured the industrial workers freedom to organise and adopt lawful means to promote their rights and interests.

Prior to 1924, even in an advanced country like Great Britain, trade unions were treated before the law as "criminal conspiracy". Times have changed and so governments have recognised the need for organized labour.

The Constitution of India guarantees the Right to form Association or Unions as a Fundamental Right under Article 19(c).
**Trade Union Objectives:**

Trade unions are defined in British Law as "Associations of employees or employers whose principal objects are the regulation of the relations between workman and masters or between master and masters or between workmen and workmen or the imposing of restrictive trade conditions".

The primary object of a trade union in the popular sense is to protect and advance the interests of the workers who are its members.

A strong well organized union is an asset to the employer as well as to the employees.

Industrial relations will be weak and lacking in mature growth without genuine and strong industry-wise trade unions.

Labour must organise itself and effectively in order to safeguard the rights of the workers and to co-operate in the progress of industry.

Collective bargaining forms the basis of industrial relations. Industrial efficiency can be increased by "round the table approach".

It is the objective of trade unions to plead for and secure progressive industrial democracy, a path of seeking for the workers a more or less direct share in the management of industries.
Employers must recognise that trade union movement is an absolute necessity for industrial democracy. The right to unite and right of association is one of the pillars of democracy. Organised labour in industry will be far more efficient than disorganised labour.

Trade Unions must be industry-wise. One in one industry must be the aim.

Trade unions should adjust their objectives and objects according to the social and economic environment of the workers.

**Recognition Of Trade Unions:**

A trade union can be registered, if it complies with the provisions of the law, but that does not mean that it must necessarily be recognised by the employer.

"Labour is not the only party that will benefit from a sound development of the trade union movement. While the advantages to be gained from repression are temporary and precarious, those secured from healthy organisation are lack or responsible trade unions of their workers and this suffering extends to community as a whole", observed the Royal Commission on Labour. This shows how useful a good trade union can be to the management.

The Trade Union Act gives legal status to registered trade unions. It provides for the
recognition of registered unions by the employers. It also specifies the rights, privileges and obligations of such unions. It has given a general impetus to the workers.

The employers can recognise registered trade unions of workers by agreements. Progressive employers, who look forward to understanding and co-operation of the workers encourage the workers to form their unions and recognise the same.

In case where the employers are reluctant to recognise the unions, unions can move the labour courts seeking orders for recognition.

Labour Court can pass orders compelling the employers to recognise trade unions, provided all ordinary members of the unions are workman employed in the same industry concerned, the union is representative of all workers, the rules do not proclude any workmen from the membership of the union, rules provide for the procedure to be followed for calling a strike and the union adheres to all the rules of a registered trade union.

**Rights And Privileges Of A Trade Union:**

The executive of a recognised trade union is entitled to negotiate with the management in respect of matters connected with the employment or non-employment or the terms of the conditions of labour of all or any of its members.
A recognised trade union is entitled to display notices of the union in any premise where its members are employed and the employer shall afford reasonable facilities for the purpose.

Trade union Act provides necessary legal protection to union workers from civil court procedure, for trade union activities.

The Act also defines that officials of a recognised trade union, numbering not less than five and not exceeding one hundred at the rate of one per cent of the total number of workmen employed, will be treated as "Protected Men". It provides that the conditions of service of all or any of the protected men should not be altered during pendency of proceedings before a conciliation officer, court or tribunal and/or they should not be discharged or punished by dismissal or otherwise without the express permission of the authority concerned.

The Trade Unions Act stipulates how the funds of a registered union should be spent. Funds of the union can be utilised for administration of union affairs; legal expenses for purpose of securing or protecting the rights of the union or its members; compensation or allowance to members or their dependents on account of death, old age, sickness, accidents or unemployment; educational, social or religious benefits, including funeral or religious ceremonies for members or their dependents' expenses exclusively for the benefit of the workers.
The Act also provides for the constitution of a separate political fund, if registered trade unions so, to make contributions for the promotion of the civic and political interests of its members.

**Functions And Obligations Of Trade Unions:**

The functions of modern trade unions are wide and more comprehensive than those of their forerunners. Generally speaking these functions have been termed as (i) militant or protection functions and (ii) fraternal or positive functions. The former functions aim at securing better conditions of work and employment for members through militant activities such as strikes, gheraos etc, if there is failure of collective bargaining. The latter functions provide benefits to their members and support to them during strikes, lockouts or during periods of temporary unemployment by giving them financial support out of the funds raised with their contributions.

The functions of trade union can be categorised as intra-mural functions and extra-mural functions. "The former includes the welfare schemes of the unions within factory premises to improve workers' conditions of employment; regulation of hours of work, provision of rest intervals, adequate wages, sanitation, safety and security and continuity of employment. For
performing these functions, collective bargaining, negotiations and resort to a strike/lockout may be adopted. The latter includes welfare scheme carried on with a view to help workers when in need of such assistance (medical or financial) during casualties, provision of education, recreational and housing facilities, provision of social and religions benefits, including payment of expenses of funeral or religions ceremonies for the deceased members or their dependents.\textsuperscript{72} All these measures are designed to inculcate the spirit of cooperation among the workers.

The functions of Trade Unions in Various countries have been formulated as per their respective Acts and commissions. The functions of Trade Unions in India have also designed by the Act. As per the Indian Trade Union Act 1926, the primary functions of a Trade union is to protect and promote the interests of the workers and the conditions of their employment. They can also have other objectives which are not inconsistent with this primary purpose or opposed to any law. In India trade unions generally undertake the following functions:

(i) To achieve higher wages and better working and living conditions for the members.

(ii) To acquire control over industry by workers.

\textsuperscript{72} Broughton, Labour in Indian Industries, 1938 pp 181-189
(iii) To minimise the helplessness of the individual workers by making them stand up unitedly and increasing their resistance power through collective bargaining, protecting the members against victimisation and injustice by employers.

(iv) To raise the status of the workers as partners in industry and citizens of society by demanding an increasing share for them in the management of industrial enterprises.

(v) To generate self-confidence among the workers.

(vi) To encourage sincerity and discipline among workers.

(vii) To take up welfare measures for improving the morale of the workers.

Inspite of the functions mentioned above there are certain obligations and responsibilities which should be performed by the trade unions. Some significant obligations are mentioned here:

(i) Trade unions have a great responsibility in educating their members and cultivating in them habits of thrift and good citizenship. If the workers are properly educated and trained, 50 percent of the industrial disputes and labour unrests can be avoided.
(ii) Unions must train its members to accept responsibilities and respect contracts.

(iii) Welfare work offers excellent field for union to cooperate with the management. Welfare activities can also be directly sponsored and conducted by the unions.

(iv) Trade unions must not be shy to accept responsibilities. It is their responsibility to protect members' interests in all respects.

(v) An important role of trade union is to prevent strikes and settle disputes by conciliation. The policy of fighting to redress grievances, strikes and conflicts must be abandoned obligations of employers:

**Obligations Of Employers:**

Management must respect the trade unions of their workers, negotiate with them and consult them on matters relating to labour.

They must recognise and accept trade unions of their workers as an integral part of industry.

They must not do anything which can be interpreted as unfair labour practice.

The Act prohibits employers from interfering with, restraining or coercing the workers in the exercise of their rights to organise, form join or assist a trade union.
Employers must not interfere with the formation or administration of any union or support it financially or otherwise.

Employers must not discharge or discriminate against any officer of a union on account of his union activities as an officer.

Employer is obliged to provide all facilities for which a recognised union is entitled.

**Industrial Peace:**

The trade union plays a great role in promoting industrial relations and industrial peace. Harmony and co-operation will be at its maximum in an industry where there is real understanding and respect between the unions of their workers and employers.

Trade union is the guild or the mouth organ of the workers to speak in one voice with the management on their behalf. Workers' respect and regards for the management will be more if their leaders are recognised and respected. If trade union co-operates with the management in increasing production, in the health, safety and welfare programmes and in the educational and training schemes, a cordial and healthy atmosphere in industry can be created.
Trade Unionism in Hindalco:

Trade unions play a vital role in industrial relations' climate of the company. Recognised trade unions are:

a. Rastriya Shramic Sangh,
b. Hindalco Shramic Sangh,
c. Aluminium Karmchari Sangh, and
d. Pragatisheel Majdoor Sabha. (unrecognised).

All the above trade unions perform their diverse functions to achieve their goals. They worked to safeguard the immediate and long economic interests of their members. Their activities are mainly in pursuit of maintenance and improvement of the economic status of the workers/members in terms of increase in monetary wages and control of working conditions.

Problems Of Trade Unions In Hindalco -

Some of the problems are inherent in the workers and trade union leaders themselves, while some others have cropped up due to the attitude of the management and socio-political environment of the trade unions at national level. The most important problems of trade unions in Hindalco include, trade union recognition, inter and intra-union rivalries, inadequate finances, problems of internal management, outside leadership and political affiliation, lack of effective
participation of the workers, unfavourable attitude of management etc. In order to have better understanding of these problems, an attempt is made here to discuss each of these problems separately.

Recognition Of Unions in Hindalco:

One of the important issues in the field of Indian industrial relations is recognition of unions. The problem of recognition of a union which can represent the workers interests becomes a ticklish one particularly when there are multiple unions in a company. This problem has become a complex exercise due to lack of any clear cut guidelines or procedure suggested by the Trade Union Act 1926. The Trade Union Act, has prescribed the procedure for registration of a union. According to this any seven or more members can form a registered trade union and attain legal status to exist and work in a company. A registered trade union becomes a legal personality and gets certain immunities from civil and criminal liabilities in the conduct of trade disputes. But it is not necessary for a trade union to be registered in order to be recognised by the employer. This legal position, though facilitating their formation and growth, is a source of division and subdivision among the trade unions.

According to section 4 (1) of the Trade Union Act 1926 "Any seven or more members of a trade union may, by subscribing their names, to the rules of the trade union and by otherwise complying with the provisions of the Act with respect to registration, apply for registration of the trade union under the Act".
Unfortunately, the Trade Unions Act, while providing for registration, does not say anything about the procedure for recognition. The employers are legally free to recognise one or more unions of their choice or even not recognise any one at all. As soon as a union secures recognition, rival unions register their protest, thus disturbing the industrial relations. Sometimes the employer is guided by his own interests and by the political affiliation of the union irrespective of its representative character. Very often, the problem of recognition itself leads to bad industrial relations and strikes by rival and unrecognised unions.

The problem of recognition, however, received the attention of the National Labour Commission, 1969. The Commission felt that industrial democracy implies that the majority unions should have the right to representation, that is, it should be entitled to speak and act for all the workers and to enter into collective agreements with the employer. Therefore, it has suggested the following steps for granting recognition to the trade unions.

**Statutory Recognition** :

It is desirable to prescribe the recognition of a union as compulsory under central law, in all undertakings employing 100 or more workers. A trade union seeking recognition as a
bargaining agent from the employer should have a membership of at least 30 percent of the total workers in the establishment.

**Rights Of Recognised Union:**

The rights of the recognised unions are:

1. To raise issues and enter into collective agreements with employers.
2. To collect membership fees and subscriptions.
3. To put up or cause to put up a notice board on the premises of the undertaking in which its members are employed.
4. To hold discussions with the members of the union at a suitable place.
5. To discuss with employers, the grievances of its members employed in the undertaking.
6. To inspect by prior arrangement in a undertaking any place where any member of union is employed.
7. To nominate its representatives on the Grievance Committee in an establishment.
8. To nominate its representatives on statutory or Non-Statutory Bipartite committees, e.g. Works committees, Welfare committees, canteen committees and House Allotment Committees.

As for the right of the minority/ unrecognised union, the National Commission of

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Labour 1969 has recommended that the minority union should be allowed the right to represent the cases of dismissals and discharge of their members before the Labour court.

**Inter And Intra-Union Rivalry:**

Inter union rivalries emerge from the existence of multiple unions. In India, multiple unions are mainly the result of politicians who want to establish unions of their own with a view to increasing their political influence. The existence of different rival organisations would lead to the weakening of collective bargaining, power and thereby to the ineffective functioning of the unions. A constant vexing problem is the intra-union rivalry. It is also referred to as factionalism. This is indicated by the existence of different group within the same union. Defeated in election, a group may challenge the results before a Labour court or a High Court and try to obtain an injunction for preventing the 'elected' group from functioning or it may break away from the union. A dissident leader may also declare his group to be legitimate and run, within the union, a parallel union.

Apart from the mutual accusations, rivalries may go to the extent of even obstructing the normal conduct of union activities on different pleas. A strike proposed by a rival

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union may be opposed on various grounds. Saying that it is not necessary, or it is against the interest of the workers. For it is anti-national etc. Rivalries offer scope for the employers to play one against another. The rival leaders indulge in mutual mud-slinging and wild accusation which may shake the worker's faith in unions.

The phenomenon of inter-union rivalry has been aided and sustained by many factors such as:

1. The pattern of such events which has created an environment of splits and intense inter and intra-union rivalries.

2. The desire of the political parties to have their bases among the industrial workers and lead the labour movement in the direction as deemed right by them.

3. Personal-cum-factional policies of the local union leaders whose low level of tolerance causes frequent conflicts among them.

4. Domination of the union by outside leaders who are primarily interested in accumulating more power and influence both within and outside the labour movement.

5. Attitude of the management who are often unwilling to grant recognition to a representative union as defined in the code of discipline and who have often encouraged the formation of rival unions.
6. The legal framework which offers no incentives for the development of a strong and united trade organisation, and

7. The nature of the labour force whose low level of participation in union activities lead to frustration and discontent and offer a favourable climate for the self centered outside leaders to indulge in militant rival unionism.

These factors are, however, not independent of each other and, in combination, their relative importance may vary from industry to industry and from centre to centre.

Some efforts have been made in India to lay down certain basic principles to curb rival unionism in industry. The four Central Labour Organisations. (The INTUC, The AITUC, The HMS and The UTUC) voluntarily agreed to abide by a common inter-union Code of Conduct on May 21, 1958 to observe the following basic principles for the maintenance of harmonious inter-union relations:

1. Every employee in industry or unit shall have the freedom and right to join a union of his choice. No coercion shall be exercised in this matter.

2. There shall be no dual membership of unions.
3. There shall be unreserved acceptance of and respect for the democratic elections of executive bodies.

4. There shall be regular and democratic elections of executive bodies.

5. Ignorance and/or backwardness of workers shall not be exploited by any organisation. No organisation shall make excessive or extravagant demands.

6. Casteism, communalism and provincialism shall be eschewed by all unions.

7. There shall be no violence, coercion, intimidation, or personal vilification in inter-union dealings.

8. All Central unions shall combat the formation or continuance of company unions.

Though this code placed some restraint on inter-union techniques of combat, yet, since then, the Code has been honoured more in the breach than in the observance. Oftn, every clause of the Code has been violated on a large-scale by practically every union. As one writer has put it: "It now has all the dignity and grace of a monument erected in honour of the Gandhian philosophy of trade union behaviour, a monument which is already crumbling." In this connection, the N.C.L. has observed: "The signatories to the Code themselves had no faith in its effectiveness. The causes of inter-union

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rivalries were more deep-rooted and could not be removed by a Code which had only moral sanctions."\textsuperscript{77}

In the same manner, the 20\textsuperscript{th} session of Indian Labour Conference, 1962 prescribed the rights of a recognised union to put an end to union rivalry on some issues. But these measures, though well intended, have, in practice, failed to achieve desired results owing to their inherent weaknesses. In this regard, it is necessary to find ways and means of securing inter-union cooperation to the possible extent. The National Commission on Labour\textsuperscript{78} recommended the following guide lines to deal with the issues and to reduce inter-union rivalries:

1. Elimination of party politics created by outsiders who often seek to build up of internal leadership,

2. Promotion of collective bargaining through recognition of sole bargaining agents,

3. Improvement of the system of union recognition,

4. Encouragement of union security,

5. Encouragement of settlement of disputes by trade union if they are not settled with the organisation.

\textsuperscript{77} Report of the National Commission on Labour P. 292
It is regrettable that these recommendations have not yet been implemented by the government.

Inter Union And Intra – Union Rivalries In Hindalco:

In HINDALCO the problem of inter-union and intra-union rivalry is growing with passage of time and also with expansion of activity. It is generally found that the differences among the leaders of trade unions and the political influence on trade unions are the main reasons for breaking of unions and emergence of multiple unions. As a result of existence of multiple unions and inter-union rivalry, workers are not able to find a strong union which can effectively represent their interests. Discussions with the workers revealed that due to the existence of multiple unions and the pressure applied by rival union leaders, most of the workers have become the members in more than one union. This gives rise to the problem of claiming majority following by every union. The confusion and lack of direction created by the multiple unions is adversely affecting the industrial relations system in Hindalco.

Intra-union rivalry is a serious problem almost in every union. Due to personal conflicts, leadership struggle and selfish motives, a number of differences are found among the members of the same union. The problem of intra-union rivalry has
given rise to factionalism among the worker in the same union. As a result of this, even the strong unions are not able to take commonly acceptable descions. As a result of intra-union rivalry, it is found that most of the trade union leaders are wasting time in playing all kinds of tricks to win over their rivals instead of fighting with the management on workers' issues.

**Reasons For Union Rivalries**:

With a view to identifying the main reasons for union rivalries the following points were noted after survey reports:

AS regards Inter-Union rivalries are concerned it was observed that trade union leadership is the most important reason for inter-union rivalry. The employees were of the views that ineffective and strong leadership in some of the unions is another important reason for the emergence of multiple unions which in turn lead to inter union rivalries. The other reasons of inter rivalries include selfish motives of trade union leaders, political influence and caste conflicts. On the whole it can be concluded that leadership problems are the major factor influencing the emergence of inter-union rivalries in Hindalco.

With regard to intra-union rivalries it was noted that selfish motives of the union
leaders and struggle for leadership are the main reasons. The other reasons include political influence and local pressures, personal difference and caste conflicts. On the whole and also from the viewpoint of all the categories of employees and unions, it can be concluded that inefficient, selfish and undemocratic attitude of leaders and sectional interests of the workers are main reasons for intra-union rivalries.

**Suggestions For Reducing Union Rivalries**

On the basis of discussions and survey report the following suggestions can be made to reduce the union-rivalries in Hindalco:

(i) Sincere attempts must be made by all concerned parties to implement 'one union for one industry principle', though it is not an easy task.

(ii) Attempts should be made to reduce the number of unions by way of merger or consolidation.

(iii) Other suggestions include introduction of check of clause, increasing statutory limit of minimum members to form a union non-association of unions with political parties and non-interference of management in union activities etc.
(iv) 'There is need for developing common understanding at least on some of crucial issues.

(v) It was also suggested by the employees that management should stop influencing the activities of workers' unions directly or indirectly.

Problem Of Finances:

The important characteristic of trade unions is that they are not in a sound financial position. Due to poor financial condition, the bargaining power of the trade unions becomes weak and therefore it can not take up welfare activities for their members. Financially, weak trade unions are not effective in organising strikes or disputes or publishing journals or organising their publicity material. With weak financial position, they can neither undertake any bold organisational drives nor can they withstand any serious strains caused on account of industrial disputes. Further, they cannot afford to employ full-time competent and adequate salaried staff also.

Trade unions require funds like all other institutions or undertakings. The primary source of income of the union is the membership fees. Most of the income of the unions is derived from the subscription of their members. But, the
present subscribed rates are very low. The trade unions have failed to collect dues in time from the members, as a result of which there are often vast amounts of unpaid subscriptions. Obviously, the reasons for this state of affairs are the poverty, low wages, indebtedness of the workers, lack of staff and inefficient organisation of trade unions to collect dues in time and the indifferent attitude of an average member in trade union affairs. The other sources of funds of the trade unions are donations, sale proceeds of periodicals and other literature, interest on investments and special collections.

With a view to regulating and controlling trade unions finances, the Trade union Act has specified certain purposes for which the expenditure may be incurred from trade union funds. The most important item of expenditure in case of trade unions has been salaries and allowances of the staff. However, sizable amounts have been spent on disputes including legal expenses. The expenditure on welfare activities, however, remained low in case of trade unions.

Financial Position Of Trade Unions In Hindalco:

The financial position of almost all the unions of Hindalco may be considered poor. Like other unions in India, the major source of income of trade unions in Hindalco is derived from membership fee. The membership fee charged by
different unions in Hincalco is ranged between Rs. 5 to Rs. 15. But on account of several deficiencies membership fee is not collected regularly. As such the financial position of unions in Hindalco can be treated as poor.

In addition to the income and fund of union mentioned above, on the expenditure side payment of salaries to the office bearers and staff is major item of recurring nature. It is found in the informal discussions that the president, secretary and other full time office bearers are paid a meagre amount of monthly honourarium. In addition to this, payment should be made to the clerical and contingent staff also. As such the financial status of the unions are not satisfactory and attempts should be made to make the financial position of unions satisfactory for the purpose of attaining the objectives of the unions.

**Political Affiliation**

Political affiliation has been an important feature of trade unionism in India. It is partly, due to the fact that the Indian trade union movement was nurtured and developed by the political leaders of the country as a part of the national movement for independence. Even after the attainment of independence, the factors that brought about close affinity between trade unions and political parties have not disappeared.
Different political parties have maintained close contact and control over working class as a part of their achievement of political objectives. As a result, most of the important political parties in the country are maintaining their affiliations with unions in most of the organisations in the country. Now the major National Level Trade Unions like AITUC, INTUC, CITU, BMS are respectively affiliated to the Communist party of India, the Indian National congress, the Communist party of India (Marxist) and Bharatiya Janta Party.

The political affiliation proved to be both a boon and a bane for the Indian trade union movement. Political affiliation has fostered and nursed trade unions, but at the same time have prevented them from developing an independent personality of their own; they have united some of the unions by providing a common thread of political ideology but have also divided the movement in the process. They have made it strong on the political front but weakened it on the economic front and they have imparted to it a liberal outlook but restricted its internal effectiveness.79

Political Affiliation In The Trade Unions Of Hindalco:

The trade union movement of Hindalco is inseparable from the political affiliation. In

fact the first union established in Hindalco was at the instance of AITUC which was affiliated to communist party of India. This union has actually borne the brunt of initial problems in organising workers movement in Hindalco. But with the passage of time, different unions sponsored by different political parties emerged in Hindalco. At present, the unions in Hindalco are affiliated to different political parties like communist party of India, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Indian National Congress (I), Bharatiya Janta Party, Janata Party, Communist Party of India (Marxist Lenist) and Telugu Desam. Political affiliation, sometimes brought positive developments like focusing the workers' issues at macro level, influencing the Government and management through political leaders and gaining general sympathy for the workers' movement. However, it is generally felt that political affiliation has brought more bane than boon. It is a fact that political affiliation has caused split of major unions into small unions and lead to inter union rivalry for political reasons. Political affiliations often lead to internal fights and struggles among the workers themselves without achieving any positive gain. As a result of political links, workers are compelled to attend political meetings and observe political bandhs. This is resulting in absenteeism, work stoppages and strikes for the reasons beyond the interests of the workers. However, there seems to be no solution for this problem as political affiliation is influenced by
the socio-political environment prevailing in the society at large. Until the internal leadership is developed, the problems besetting political affiliation would continue to haunt the workers' movements in the Hindalco.

**Trade Union Leadership**

Leadership in Hindalco is a critical factor behind the growth, strength and effectiveness of the unions. The union leaders pursue the goals that are derived from members interests and since the unions are characterised by heterogeneous members, diverse goals derived from their interest, at times, come into conflict with one another. This makes the job of the leader, though as any attempt on his part to satisfy one group invites the dissatisfaction of another group.

In theory, one can conceive of trade union leaders as persons who can achieve results for their members with the help of their personal reputation or charisma. However, in most cases the ability of union leaders to perform their role and achieve union objectives would depend upon their ability to adopt the union structure to the demands made on it by the members and the outside forces, such as political parties, government and employers.

Leadership as analysed by the National commission on Labour are:

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1. It has undermined the purpose of the unions and has weakened their authority as more weight is usually attached to political considerations rather than to the economic and social objectives of the workers.

2. It has been responsible for the slow growth of internal leadership and has thus prevented the trade union movement in the country from being self-reliant and truly democratic.

3. As most of the leaders of the trade unions are not from the rank and file and lack industrial background and technological knowledge, they have failed to put forth labour viewpoint effectively.

4. Generally, an outsider may not have commitment towards the industrial organisation, and therefore, he may cause disturbance to the industrial peace, unlike an insider.

5. The splinter groups within the political parties may create intra union rivalries and spoil the environment.

**Trade Union Leadership In Hindalco:**

Like the other trade unions in India, leadership is prevalent in the trade unions of Hindalco also. But, the interesting feature is that most of the leaders of all the trade unions are the ex-workers or employees of the company. Therefore, the trade union leaders have the
required knowledge of the nature of work, the working conditions and the feelings of the workers. However, it is generally observed that it is the political commitment of a worker which makes him a trade union leader rather than the commitment of a worker to the cause of working class. This has been true for all the trade unions affiliated to different political parties. As a result, in many cases the trade union leaders in actual practice attach more importance to political considerations rather than workers interests. It is observed in Hindalco that an average worker does not take much interest, nor does he aspire for leadership in the trade unions. In the same manner the union leaders also do not encourage an average worker to actively involve himself in the management of trade unions.

**Workers Participation In Union Activities:**

For the effective functioning of a trade union, active involvement of its members is an essential perquisite. If every worker actively participates in the processes of decision making and implementation, the union can successfully carry out its activities and do justice to the workers. On the other hand, if the workers are indifferent, the union activities do not receive the whole hearted acceptance of its members. If workers have to take active part, there should be democratic leadership in the trade union which
allows freedom of expression. Another influencing factor for the active participation of the worker is that there should be awareness and interest of the workers in union activities.

With a view to assessing the workers participation in union activities the discussion was made with workers in this context. It was observed that majority of the workers take active interest in the union activities from the view point of workers, whereas the union leaders felt that majority of the workers don't have interest in the trade union activities. Regarding the reasons for not taking active interest, the discussion was made on the various points as (i) inadequate leisure (ii) indifferent attitude towards unions (iii) unions are advocating political ideology (iv) fear of victimisation (v) union does not do anything substantial and (vi) lack of commitment. In this context it was observed that the most important reason from the view point of the workers, was that they have inadequate leisure to participate in union activities. Other reasons given by the workers include fear of victimisation by management, lack of interest in the political ideology of the unions and lack of confidence in the unions regarding their capacity. On the whole it was concluded that workers are not actively involved in union activities.
Suggestions For Strengthening Trade Unions:

The National Commission on labour (N.C.L.) has made a large number of recommendations on different aspects of trade unions. These have been given below:

1. **Enlargement of Function**

The N.C.L. has stated that the "unions must pay greater attention to the basic needs of its members, which are:

(i) To secure fair wages for the workers;
(ii) To safeguard security of tenure and improved conditions of service;
(iii) To enlarge opportunities for promotion and training;
(iv) To improve working and living conditions;
(v) To provide for educational, cultural and recreational facilities;
(vi) To cooperate in and facilitate technological advance by, broadening the understanding of workers of its underlying issues;
(vii) To promote identity of interests of the workers with their industry;
(viii) To offer responsible cooperation in improving levels of production and
productivity, discipline, and a high standard of quality, and generally,

(ix) To promote individual and collective welfare."

In addition, "unions should also undertake social responsibilities, such as:

(a) Promotion of national integration;

(b) Influencing the socio-economic policies of the community through active participation in the formulation of these policies, and

(c) Instilling in their members a sense of responsibility towards industry and community."81

The main objective should be to draw trade unions as closely as possible into the entire development process.

2. Leadership:

In this respect the N.C.L. has recommended that "(i) There should be no ban on non-employees holding a position in the executive of the union, (ii) steps should be taken to promote internal leadership and give it a more responsible role; (iii) internal leadership should be kept outside the pale of victimization; (iv) permissible limit of

outsiders in the executive of the unions should
be reduced to 25 percent and (v) ex-employees
should not be treated as outsiders.\footnote{Report of National Commission on Labour P. 328}

3. Union Rivalries:

In regard to union rivalries, the
commission was of the opinion that its
recommendations regarding recognition of unions,
building up of internal leadership, shift to
collective bargaining and institution of an
independent authority for union recognition would
reduce them. Intra-union rivalries should be left
for settlement to the central organisation
concerned, and if it is unable to resolve the
dispute, a labour court should be set up at the
request of either group or on a motion by the
government.

4. Registration:

The commission has recommended that
registration should be cancelled if: (a) its
membership fell below the minimum prescribed for
registration; (b) the union failed to submit its
annual return; (c) Its submitted defective returns
and defects were not rectified within the
prescribed time. It has also recommended that an
application for re-registration should not be
entertained within six months of the date of
cancellation of registration.
5. Improvement of Financial Condition:

To improve the financial conditions of the unions, the Commission recommended that membership fees should be raised to Rs. 1 per month. It did not favour the existing arrangement of collecting one percent or even more by way of membership fee on the ground that it would mean different amounts within each slab for the same group of workers.  

6. Verification of Membership:

The Industrial relations commission should decide the representative character of a union, either by an examination of membership record or, if it considers that necessary, by holding an election by secret ballot open to all employees,

7. Recognition of the unions:

The N.C.L. was of the opinion that "it would be desirable to make recognition compulsory under a Central law in all undertakings employing 100 or more workers or where the capital invested is above a stipulated size. A trade union seeking recognition as a bargaining agent from an individual employer should have a membership of at least 30 percent of workers in that establishment. The minimum membership should be 25 percent, if recognition is sought for an industry in a local

83 Report of National Commission on Labour P. 331
area. Where more unions than one contend for recognition, the unions having the larger following should be recognised.\textsuperscript{84}

To sum up the trade unionism in Indian industries suffers from a variety of problems, such as politicalisation of the unions, multiplicity of unions, inter and intra-union rivalry, small size and low membership, financial weakness and lack of welfare facilities for the members, weak bargaining power, reliance on litigation and strikes and independence on outside leadership. This vicious circle has adversely affected their status and bargaining power and must be broken at as many points as possible.

\textsuperscript{84} Report of National Commission on Labour P. 332