CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT
No doubt modern industry in India was set up in about the middle of the last century. For nearly half a century no strike of importance took place. In 1859-60 there was some dispute between the railway European Contractors and their Indian workers. In 1877 there was also a strike in Nagpur over the question of wages. Between 1882-90 as many as 25 strikes were recorded in Bombay and Madras Presidencies. The strikes were only sporadic up to the end of the first World War. Then there was a great unrest among workers which provoked a series of strikes in 1918-19 in different parts of India. The Russian Revolution created a revolutionary wave throughout the world, and reorganisation of the I.L.O. gave stimulus to trade union movement. Hence the end of 1918 saw the first great strike in the Bombay Cotton Mills. The year 1919 witnessed the out-break of Industrial strikes on an organised scale.

Statistical information regarding strikes is available after 1921. In that very year, Labour Office of Bombay started functioning, and they collected statistics systematically. The table given below will depict the number of strikes, the number of

workers involved and the number of mandays lost.

Table No. 2.1

INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES IN INDIA (1921-50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of strikes</th>
<th>No. of workers involved (in 1000)</th>
<th>No. of mandays lost (in lacs)</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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<td>396</td>
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<td>278</td>
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<td>81.31</td>
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<td>1950</td>
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<td>719.8</td>
<td>128.06</td>
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Source: Indian Labour-Year Books.
INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES IN INDIA

(1921—50)

No. of Strikes
No. of Workers involved (in 1000)
No. of Man-days lost (in lacs)

1921 to 1925
1926 to 1930
1931 to 1935
1936 to 1940
1941 to 1945
1946 to 1950

No. of Workers involved (in 1000)
The table shows rather an unstable trend in all the three aspects.

HISTORY OF INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES

General

The history of industrial disputes during the period, 1921-1950, can be better traced, firstly in relation to time, i.e., yearwise, detailing their intensity, issues involved and their resolution, and secondly according to the place where the strike took place.

In 1922, the employees of the E.I. Railway went on strike. In 1923 there were 213 strikes in all involving 3 lakhs of workers and a loss of 5 million mandays. In 1924 there was a general industrial strike in Bombay city which was bigger in proportion than any previous strike in India involving about 160,000 workers. This was followed in the next year by another general strike in Bombay which was even more serious than the former. The two years 1926 and 1927 were relatively calm, in spite of a steady growth consciousness among workers. In 1928 a big wave of industrial conflicts swept the country. The most notable strike in this year was a big strike in Bombay against the introduction of rationalisation. In 1929 another general strike occurred in Bombay on account of victimisation by the employers. It was in this strike that the communist group made its influence felt among the Indian workers, and this strike paved the way for
the passage of the Trade Disputes Act of 1929. There were also a number of strikes in the Bengal Jute Mills due to increase in the working hours, and a huge strike at Jamshedpur.

After that, the period between 1930 and 1937 was one of relative industrial peace, though there were some short-lived strikes in Bombay Cotton Mills and a semi-general strike of the workers in Bombay which could not succeed. The prosecution of the extreme labour leaders in this period brought a fall in their activities. Moreover the fall in the general price level deterred workers from taking resort to strikes. The revival of prosperity in the economic conditions since 1935, the passing of the Government of India Act, and the formation of popular Ministries in the Provinces in 1937 brought great hopes to the workers who demanded restoration of the cut in wages introduced during the depression period, and redress of other grievances. However, they proved hollow, and a wave of strikes swept the country. During 1937, 379 strikes occurred followed by 399 strikes in the next year. One of the biggest general strikes in 1938 was in the Jute Mills of Bengal.

In 1939, there were 406 strikes, affecting more than 4 lakh workers and the loss of nearly five million mandays. During the war, the Government of India promulgated Rule 81 of the Defence of India Rules which empowered the Government to prohibit strikes and lock-outs, and to compel employers and employees to observe certain terms and conditions of service. Rule 81 of the D.I.R.
also authorised the State Governments to refer all disputes, which
could not be settled otherwise, for adjudication. A number of
disputes was referred to the arbitration of Industrial Courts and
Boards. The average duration of the disputes, therefore, came
down from about 10-12 days during the thirties to 4-5 days during
the war. Demands of the operatives mostly related to increase
in wages, bonus and dearness allowance, to compensate the workers
for rise in the cost of living, which were promptly conceded by
the employers for fear of loss of production and profits, due to
strikes. The loss of mandays in cotton, woollen and silk mills
formed 51.3% of the total loss in all industries. This percentage
rose to 73.5 in 1940. Then there ensued a period of peace due to
the D.I.R. 81. However, the industrial unrest was at its peak
during 1947. In 1947 alone 16.5 million days were lost in 1811
disputes. It was no surprise, as the reaction against forced peace
brought about by the D.I.R. 81 was inevitable.

The Industrial Truce Resolution passed at that time
created a favourable climate for the improvement of industrial
relations. At the same time the effect of the newly-enacted
Industrial Disputes Act was at once visible. After all, strikes
were waged for attaining certain objectives, and if the latter could
be achieved by other means, there would be no point in resorting to
strikes. Workers soon discovered that tribunals awarded invariably
a good part, if not the whole, of their demands. This did not
mean that tribunals were partial to labour. Wages and other
conditions of service were often so inadequate that tribunals found
no difficulty in agreeing to a part of the demands without compromising their conscience. That was so in the early days of adjudication, when tribunals were manned by high-level personnel.

The number of mandays lost in 1948 was no doubt considerably less than the figures for 1946 and 1947 but was still quite high, being about 7.8 millions. This was due to a prolonged strike in the cotton mills of Coimbatore over the recommendations of a standardisation committee prescribing a higher work-load and necessitating some retrenchment. The strike went on nearly for three months and accounted for a loss of 1.9 million mandays.

In 1950 the number of man-days lost rose to 12.8 millions. Of these the loss of 9.4 millions was due to the general strike in the cotton textile industry in Bombay which was started on 14th August, 1950, and lasted for over two months. The strike was over the question of payment of three month's wages as bonus for 1949 as against two months' wages as bonus for that year, as awarded by the Bombay Industrial Court. The decision of the Court was eventually taken to the newly established Labour Appellate Tribunal which laid down sound principles for calculation of bonus in industry generally and in the textile industry in particular.

BOMBAY

A general strike in the mills of Bombay took place in 1920, the issue being increase demanded in wages. In 1924 there was a strike in all the cotton mills in Bombay over the withdrawal
of bonus which the textiles workers had been enjoying for the past five years. Employers had earlier declared that owing to fall in prices, and consequent depression in trade, the industry would not be able to pay any bonus. Thereupon, the Bombay Government set up a Committee of Enquiry with Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court as Chairman. The committee came to the conclusion that the workers had not established any claim to a bonus, that the profits made by the mill-owners were not sufficient to justify payment of bonus. In 1925 a general strike broke out in the cotton mills in Bombay city and Kurla. It had its origin in the decision arrived at by the Bombay Mill-owners Association in July 1925 to reduce wages by 11.5% with effect from 1st September, 1925. The mill-owners pleaded that there had been a trade depression on account of (a) high prices of cotton, (b) increased cost of production due to high wages and increased prices of coal, stores, etc., (c) Japanese competition, (d) excise duty of 3.5% on cotton products, (e) unprecedented accumulation of cloth. There were discussions on the situation in the Central Legislative Assembly and in the Bombay Legislative Council. There appeared to be unanimity of opinion on the need for withdrawal of excise duty. The employers said that if this was done they would restore the old rates of wages. Thereupon the Government of India suspended the collection of excise duty. The strike came to an end as a result of this gesture.

There was a record-breaking general strike in the cotton mills in Bombay which lasted from 16th April to 6th October, 1928.
and involved 147,644 workers and accounted for a loss of 22 million mandays. The loss in wages to workers was calculated at approximately 3.5 crores of rupees. No doubt there were substantial reasons for the strike but the emergence of rival trade unions aggravated the situation. The economic justification for the strike was the general introduction of new systems of work and standardisation of wages in accordance with the recommendations of the Indian Tariff Board. According to the Tariff Board, each weaver was to handle three looms in place of two, as before, and each spinner two sides of the spinning frame instead of one, at an increase of 50% in wages. This resulted in retrenchment of operatives. The hours of work of certain operatives were increased and additional wages in the form of bonus was curtailed. These reforms had been started in the middle of 1927 and strikes had already taken place, chiefly in the 9 cotton mills of M/s. E.D. Sassoon and Co., Bombay, in the beginning of 1928. The moderates belonging to Bombay Textile Labour Union were opposed to a general strike but the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union established in March, 1928 with the support of the workers and peasants party, a communist organisation, forced a general strike. The strike took an alarming turn, the Governor of Bombay intervened, but the mill-owners would not negotiate with unregistered unions. All the unregistered unions then got themselves registered immediately, viz., the Bombay mill workers union, the Girni Kamgar Mahamandal and the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union. The extremist and moderate labour leaders joined hands and formed a Joint Strike Committee which put forward 17 demands.
including (1) that the wage rates that were enforced in 1925 be restored, (2) that the hours of work of any class of workers should not be increased without the approval of workers, (3) that the new systems of work should not be introduced without the free consent of the workers, (4) that standard rules for all mills be framed, (5) that no member of the Association should be allowed to change the conditions of service to the disadvantage of the workers. The strike was called off on 6th October, 1928, on the setting up of an Enquiry Committee with Sir Charles Fawcett a judge of the Bombay High Court, as Chairman.

The situation in the cotton textile industry of Bombay did not improve after the publication of the Fawcett Committee report. The Girni Kamgar Union complained against: (a) the victimisation of its members, (b) the hurdles to union activities placed by managements and (c) the objection of mill-owners to the collection of subscriptions inside mills. The Girni Kamgar Union called a general strike of textile workers in Bombay city. The strike was only partial, the Bombay Textile Labour Union having refused to support it. Thereupon the Bombay Government appointed a court of enquiry to ascertain the causes of the strike. The court of enquiry gave the main causes as follows: (a) the aggressive and mischievous propaganda of the officials of the Girni Kamgar Union and the inflammatory speeches made by them to workers (b) the picketing and intimidation by the strikers leading to acts of violence.
In 1929 again the Girni Kamgar Union called a general strike of the textile labours of Bombay city on 25th April, due to victimisation of workers by the mill owners in the trade union activities. It was in this strike that the communists group among the Indian labour leaders first made their influence strongly felt among the Indian workers who began to get into touch with the communist doctrine. This strike is responsible for the passing of Trade Disputes Act of 1929 and its machinery was used for the first time to settle the dispute. The strike lasted for six months and all the workers of Bombay Cotton Mills participated in it.

The years that followed the enactment of the Trade Disputes Act were of comparative peace. For four years till 1933 there was no major strike. In 1934 a strike took place in the cotton mills of Bombay, as a protest against wage cuts and the introduction of rationalised methods of work which lasted for nearly two months. Cases of assault, intimidation and stone throwing were common. It ended in failure to the workers. The country was granted provincial autonomy in 1937. The changes in the political sphere automatically raised the aspirations of workers. In 1937 when the popular ministries took charge in the provinces, industrial strikes were again in evidence. There were a number of strikes in 1938 in the spinning and weaving mills of Bombay. With the commencement of the World War II a new wave of strikes began. Prices began to rise and the cost of living went up. This created difficulty and a demand for dearness allowance was first made in December, 1939.
In March, 1940, 1,75,000 textile workers of Bombay went on strike which lasted for 40 days inspite of the arrest of the leaders and beating up of the workers by the police. All the workers in sympathy went on a one day strike on March 10. The Government of India had to devise ways and means to check this unrest in the interest of successful prosecution of the war. It came forward with the Defence of India Rules under which strikes and lock-outs without a previous 14 days' notice were declared illegal. The result of all these restrictions was that the period between 1942-46 was free from large scale strikes and lockouts though the number of small disputes here and there greatly increased. There was no increase in the wages of workers except a small percentage of dearness allowance but due to restrictions they could not protest. The result was that as soon as the war came to an end and the restrictions imposed on the workers were relaxed, there was a talk of strikes in Bombay industries. In September 1947 there was a general strike in 58 cotton mills involving over one lakh of workers. From the point of view of regional distribution, Bombay again tops the list. There were 650 disputes in 1947 as against 542 in 1946. In July 1948, there was a general strike in the silk mills of Bombay by about 9000 workers, demanding higher wages and dearness allowance on the scales given to cotton mill workers. The strike was called off when the dispute was referred to a tribunal for conciliation. Later in August workers again went on strike as a protest against the delay in conciliation proceedings. In 1949 there were lockouts in the textile mills of Bombay. An important strike took
place in Bombay in August, 1950, over the question of bonus payment in the textile mills. This is said to be one of the biggest strikes ever held in the country. It involved about 2 lakh of textile workers, and lasted for 63 days, and resulted in a loss of 94 lakhs of mandays.

**AHMEDABAD**

In 1918 a major strike occurred in the cotton mills of Ahmedabad. The decision of the Mill-owners Association to reduce the daily attendance bonus which had reached 70% of the wages to 20% when the influence epidemic subsided and the labour scarcity ceased, brought the opposition of labour. The latter demanded at least 35% of their wages as bonus. The strike was declared on 2nd February, 1918 and continued till 20th March when the matter was settled by arbitration which upheld the workers' demand. The strike received the moral and active support of Mahatma Gandhi who declared a vow to fast till the matter was settled. The immediate post-war first years of 1919 and 1920 witnessed a wave of severe strikes in Ahmedabad. The main demands of the workers related to increase in wages and a ten-hour day. A substantial increase in wages was given as a result of the decisions of the mill-owners Association or the Awards of the arbitrators or umpires. During 1922-27 there was a continued decline in the number of strikes but in 1923 a major strike occurred in the cotton mills on the issue of the decision of the Mill-owners Association to reduce wages by 20% and the non-observance of the terms of the payment of bonus by
the employers, as awarded by the arbitrators earlier. It lasted for over 2 months and affected 56 cotton mills involving 43,113 workers and resulted in a loss of 23,70,933 mandays. The compromise provided for a reduction of 15% in wages instead of 20% and an assurance of no further reduction for at least 6 months.

A fresh wave of industrial disputes arose in 1928-29. The depression in the cotton textile industry increased to a great extent. The reasons responsible for industrial strikes were (a) introduction of rationalised systems of work with a view to reducing cost of production, and (b) the infiltration of communists. As a result of this a trouble arose at this centre. The workers demanded restoration of the wage cut of 1923 on the ground of mills' making high profits as compared to those in 1923 and the workers' inability to live comfortably. The permanent arbitrators disagreed, but the umpire, the retired Chief Judge of Bombay, awarded, on December 1929, increases in wages of 5% and 8% respectively to weavers and spinners with effect from January, 1930.

With the arrest of communist labour leaders in 1928 and their trial in the famous Meerut conspiracy case and the failure of general strike in 1929, a declining trend ensued in the number of strikes, and up to 1936 there was no major strike in Ahmedabad mills. With the formation of Congress ministries in 1937 in the provinces, a fresh wave of strike broke out in Ahmedabad. A number of lightning strikes took place over matters arising out of the
non-standardisation of weavers' wages and the indirect cuts in wages by some of the mills. The Central Strike Committee formulated its 18 demands. The Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association was opposed to any strike at this time when the Textile Labour Enquiry Committee was examining the whole issue of wages. The millowners Association agreed, among other things, to restore the cut and raise the wages to 1935 level. The strike lasted for over 10 days.

During the world war II demands mostly related to increase in wages, bonus and dearness allowance, to compensate the workers for the rise in their cost of living, which were mostly accepted by the employers for the fear of loss of production and profits due to strikes. In 1942 a major and prolonged hartal took place in the mills of Ahmedabad. The causes of the hartal were political and economic hardships of the workers. The closing down of 100 textile mills in Ahmedabad for more than 3 months was indeed a unique feature in the history of industrial relations and political struggle. In the period after the Second World War no important strike took place in Ahmedabad. In the post-independence period, i.e., after 1947, an industrial dispute in the Ahmedabad textile mills was referred to the Industrial Court. The demands of the workers included abolition of the system of contract labour, a minimum monthly wage of rupees 30, consolidation of allowances with basic wages and the revision of the wage scales. The Textile Mills in Ahmedabad remained closed for 10 days in January, 1948, over the demand for admission of Harijans to Swami Narayan Temple. This
resulted in a loss of about 3 lakhs of mandays. 48 cotton mills of Ahmedabad again stopped work on February 3, 1948, to mourn the death of Mahatma Gandhi.

In the year 1950, a dispute arose between the Ahmedabad Millowners Association and the Textile Labour Association relating to the standardisation of musters for different occupations, definition of duties of workers in each category, standard load of each category etc. and it was referred to the wage board for decision.

CALCUTTA

The workers of Calcutta resorted to strikes in the early years of 20th century. In 1905 there occurred a strike in the Government of India Press, Calcutta. Strikes in the real sense began in the period after World War I. A number of stoppages of short duration took place in mills not collectively but individually. The success of these strikes led to a general outbreak. There were 97 strikes in the latter half of 1920, of which 31 ended in complete failure to the workers. Such was the incidence of strikes in Calcutta. Thereupon the Government of Bengal appointed the Bengal Industrial Unrest Committee to examine the situation created by the strikes. The Committee recommended the setting up of joint works committees. After that there ensued a declining trend in the number of strikes, consequent on the increase in real
wage position of the workers. Upto 1927, the number of work stoppages, workers involved and the mandays lost fell considerably, i.e., 11,34,000 workers were involved and 2.3 lakh of mandays were actually lost.

The jute mills strikes took place in 1928 and 1929. In 1928 in some jute mills of Calcutta strikes occurred spreading over a period of nearly four months. The worst strike of this year was in Fort Gloster Jute Mills. The main cause was the adoption of single shift instead of multiple shifts prevalent in the mill. As a result of the strike and misbehaviour towards Superintendents belonging to foreign countries by the operatives, the management declared a lockout in the mills, and subsequently the services of a few workers were terminated by the management. Violence was resorted to by the workers and that followed police firing. In sympathy with the workers of Fort Gloster Jute Mills, the operatives of Barina Cotton Mills, a sister concern of the same group of industries, went on strike involving 12000 workers. The loss of mandays was of the order of 11.3 lakhs. The Indian Jute Mills Association decided in 1929 to raise the weekly working hours in all mills from 54 to 60. Thereupon a serious strike took place in all the jute mills of Calcutta. This strike was sponsored by two unions, namely, Bengal Jute Workers Union and Kankinnah Labour Union. A settlement was reached by the workers and the management on some points namely (a) to pay, in proportion to total wages, for the extra hours of work, (b) to pay 'Khoraki' (allowance)
as before, (c) the scales of bonus were to remain the same as before and (d) the evolution of suitable arrangements for the prompt settlement of grievances put forward by workers. Inspite of the agreement a general strike and individual strikes broke out, the total number of workers involved was 2,72,000, the mandays lost 28,96,000 and the total number of looms closed down was 42,700 out of a total of 51,000 in Bengal.

There was peace in the jute mills of Calcutta from 1930 to 1936. The number of mandays lost fell from 32 lakhs in 1930 to 7 lakhs in 1935 and only about 73,500 working days were lost in the eight strikes. This period was characterised by the adoption of devices of rationalisation, wage-sequeeze and retrenchment of workers. The biggest strike of this period took place in the Hastings Jute Mills, Hoogly, as a protest against a 10% cut in wages. It affected 53,000 workers and 2.17 lakhs of working days were actually lost.

In 1937 and 1938 two major general strikes took place. The general strike in 1937, which was the result of a strike in the Dudge Budge Jute Mills in protest against the dismissal of four workers for inefficiency, lasted for nearly three months and resulted in a loss of Rs. 35.5 lakhs in wages. The strike was ended as a result of the intervention of the Chief Minister of Bengal. In 1938, the Bengal Government promulgated the Bengal Jute Ordinance which became the major point of strikes in Bengal. On a call by the Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union to protest against the ordinance, the
operatives, numbering 10,000 workers, struck work on 30th November. The workers called off their agitation on 7th December, 1938.

During the Second War period strikes were checked by the Government of Bengal under the Defence of India rules. A few strikes took place but they were of short duration and related to enhancement of emoluments, supply of bad quality of rice in rations and demand for allowance, popularly known as 'Khoraki' by workers.

In the post-war period, strikes were natural owing to an increase in the cost of living index in Calcutta. It rose from 100 in 1939 to 283 in 1945. The earnings of workers remained the same throughout the war period excepting a daily grain concession of Rs. 1.11 which would not amount to cent per cent of the basic wage. Thus there was a wide difference between the living cost and wages. All this resulted in enormous increase in strikes and lockouts, owing to inadequacy of wages, work and employment. The number of strikes reached a peak figure of 95. They involved 3.1 lakhs of workers causing a loss of 18.8 lakhs of mandays. There were 376 disputes in Bengal in 1947 as against 369 in 1946. Some of the important strikes of 1947 were: (a) the Fort Gloster Jute Mills strike from 17th March to 21st March in which all workers numbering 35,000 took part as a protest against decrease in wages owing to decrease in production, and the dispute was resolved by direct negotiations, (b) about 600 workers of the Indian Jute Mills went on strike consequent on the dismissal of some of the workers. They resumed work on July 8, when an assurance was given to them
that the stir would be referred to a Tribunal for adjudication, (c) another strike broke out in the Hukum Jute Mills on 8th August and continued upto 22nd September over the question of wages for involuntary employment. The strike ended on the intervention of Labour Department, (d) a lockout was declared by the management in the New Central Jute Mills and for William Mills when the workers decided to damage the mill property on 24th and 26th December respectively. The lockouts were lifted by the managements of the mills, following a settlement between capital and labour. 14,000 workers were involved in these lockouts and they resulted in a loss of 2.5 lakhs of mandays. In the post-war period of 1946 and 1947, owing to a large number of strikes and lockouts, the Government set up a tribunal under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947. The Tribunal gave its award on 31st August, 1948, which the Government made binding on the employers and workers for two years. During the adjudication proceedings the workers went on illegal strikes as a result of instigation by the leftists of the trade unions. A number of work stoppages took place over the terms of the implementation of the award by the Industrial Tribunal. There were several important strikes during 1948. 20,000 workers belonging to the Calcutta Jute Baler's Association went on strike demanding higher wages. The strike was successful, and 3.4 lakhs of mandays were lost. A strike arose in the Hastings Jute Mills on the adoption of two looms system, lasted for one month and inflicted a loss of 99,000 mandays.
Due to the enforcement of compulsory award and compliance with the Industrial Truce Resolution of 1947 there was comparative peace in Calcutta, and so the number of strikes, workers involved and mandays lost halved in 1949. There was a great difficulty in procuring raw jute from Pakistan and the trouble further deepened due to devaluation of Indian Rupee which was responsible for the enhancement of the price of raw jute. A number of strikes took place over the various demands of the workers, viz., quantum of work load, guaranteed minimum wages to piece workers, higher rates of wages for special categories of workers and rivalry for power among different trade unions. These demands of the workers resulted in a number of strikes during 1949.

There was further improvement in the industrial relations in 1950 though the number of strikes increased slightly. Considerable fall in labour supply was felt due to migration of muslim spinners and weavers to Pakistan. New hands were recruited but they proved to be 'white elephants' to the industry and their services were terminated, which led to strikes. On the expiry of the award of the Tribunal of 1947 on September 1949, fresh strikes arose. Leave and hours of work were the main causes of the stir in the member concerns of Indian Jute Mills Association. An other cause of the strikes was the refusal of the mills to grant holiday for the festival of Holi to the operatives on 3rd March, 1950. The workers resorted to violence, and firing by the police also took place. As a result of this the management declared lockout in the mills which was lifted on 25th April. 2.8 lakh mandays were lost.
Upto the first World War the employers in Kanpur had an upper hand in dealing with the labourers whose condition was very deplorable. For the first time the operatives raised their voice against the employers in 1919, and the credit for holding the first meeting of the workers to protest against the behaviour of the employers goes to one Vidyorthi, employed in the Elgin Mills. The meeting was held at Phaironghat. A deduction of Re. 1/- every month from their wages was the chief cause of discontent. Vidyorthi was dismissed and the iniquities of the employers were mounting and all this culminated in a strike in the Elgin Mills. This was soon followed by a general strike in all the major mills of Kanpur, known as 'The Strike in the twelve mills.' The main demands of the workers were: doubling of wages, reduction of hours of work to ten; monthly payment of wages, Sunday as a holiday, abolition of corruption, human treatment and stopping of beating and abusing workers, abolition of the ticket system while going to bath room, and payment of bonus. This strike was a tremendous success. The role of the then political leaders. M/s Ganesh Shanker Vidyorthi, Pt. Kamdutt and Shiva Chulam was commendable, and the labour movement in Kanpur attained success after success. The Government of Uttar Pradesh luckily intervened in the strike and most of the demands of workers were accepted by the employers. After a short time, however, they stopped the facilities to which they had agreed earlier and there was a strike
in the Lal Imlī, Cooper Allen, and New Victoria Mills. This strike failed, and this was a great set-back to the workers in general.

In 1928 there were two strikes in the Elgin Mills in the latter of which there was some 'marpeet' as well, but due to the efforts of Shri H.N. Shastri and the D.M. an agreement was reached between the parties. During the non-cooperation movement the consciousness among the labourers was increasing. In 1929 there was a strike in the Kanpur Textile Mills conducted and controlled by the Mazdoor Sabha but with little success as the Government tightened its hand on the workers owing to political reasons. Meanwhile the labour movement in Kanpur was gaining momentum side by side with the alertness on the part of the employers who formed in 1937 the Northern India Employers Association, Kanpur. Thus, for the first time a polarisation was established between the employers and the employees in industries in Kanpur.

II
(Upto 1939)

The use of the weapon of strikes and lockouts in the industries of U.P. is a new phenomenon. Until the outbreak of the World War II, in spite of greater consciousness among operatives and growth of trade union activities, strikes were not very common. A resort to go on strike was looked down upon. Even where a strike was successful, the captains of industry did not fail to punish and
victimise the active organisers after the industry had resumed normal working. Since the beginning of the World War II, the number of strikes and lockouts has increased. By far the most important industrial trouble arose in Kanpur on the assumption of power by the Congress in July, 1937. There were complaints during the last few years of wage cuts, abolition or curtailment of bonus and allowances, victimisation and retrenchment due to rationalisation. The newly appointed Government Labour Officer tried to conciliate but he failed on account of the refusal of the Employers Association of Northern India to recognise the Kanpur Mazdoor Sabha. A general strike thereupon broke out in all the textile mills of Kanpur. On August 9, 1937, a settlement was arrived at on the Government's appointing an Enquiry Committee to go into the demands of the workers. The committee submitted its final report in April, 1938. The Employers Association rejected the recommendations of the Committee. The Kanpur Mazdoor Sabha thereupon declared a general strike on May 16, 1938. It involved 40000 workers of Kanpur, and the loss in wages amounted to rupees 5 lakhs. After a keen struggle for 50 days, the strike was settled only on the intervention of Minister Pant of U.P., after a prolonged negotiation of 17 hours, and an agreement was reached on the following points:

1. The Mazdoor Sabha shall be recognised by the millowners as the duly constituted body to represent the factory workers of Kanpur.

2. There shall be no victimisation of workers for active participation in the strike or in normal trade union activities.
(3) The mill owners shall continue to prevent bribery, mal-treatment, and dismissal by jobbers.

(4) Wage rates shall be displayed and rates of each variety and count shall be made known.

(5) Each worker shall be supplied with a wage and rate card.

(6) Wages shall be distributed to workers one by one.

(7) There shall be no over-time work without payment.

(8) All workers joining within 5 days shall be reinstated.

(9) The existing practice according to which wages are distributed on one or two days fortnightly shall be maintained wherever it obtains at present; as regards other mills wages will be paid on not more than three consecutive days every fortnight.

(10) All notices issued by the company shall be written.

(11) There shall be no work on Sundays during the pendency of an inquiry.

(12) The question of short shifts and the proposal that every worker shall be continuously employed for ten hours, with one hour of rest interval, shall be referred to the committee of inquiry.

(13) Dismissed workers during the last 2 months shall be reinstated.

(14) No wage cuts, direct or indirect, shall take place, pending the enquiry.

(15) If disputes arise, they will be referred to an enquiry committee to be appointed by the Government.

(16) There shall be no strike without due notice and none during the pendency of the enquiry.
(17) Millowners shall not make any rule prejudicial to the general conditions of labour, without reasonable notice to the Mazdoor Sabha. An inquiry committee consisting of one representative each of the Mazdoor Sabha and the employers and three other members to be nominated by the Government shall be appointed to enquire into the questions of wage cuts, percentage of increase in wages to be effected in case wage cuts are established, increase of wages in case they are found too low, whether there have been wage cut or not, schemes of intensification introduced and emergency leave with pay of 15 days. The report was to be submitted in 2 months.

(18) The strike shall be called off and the workers will return to work on Tuesday August 10.

The Employers Association agreed to give the raise in wages as recommended by the Enquiry Committee and to recognise the Kanpur Mazdoor Sabha on its reorganisation in accordance with the recommended terms of the committee.
III

SECOND WORLD WAR AND AFTER.

Since the beginning of the world war II, the number of strikes and lock-outs in Uttar Pradesh increased, as would be evident from the table given below:

Table No. 2.2

INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES IN UTTAR PRADESH
(1940-50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of strikes and lock-outs</th>
<th>No. of mandays lost</th>
<th>Mandays lost per 1000 workers</th>
<th>Mandays lost per strikes/lockouts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>245420</td>
<td>1359</td>
<td>12272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>281992</td>
<td>1257</td>
<td>6558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>190483</td>
<td>819</td>
<td>3968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>113115</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>2693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>179777</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>160502</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>2548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>1119580</td>
<td>4354</td>
<td>10271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>1060565</td>
<td>4412</td>
<td>8485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>312584</td>
<td>1291</td>
<td>3126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>403388</td>
<td>1727</td>
<td>7479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>232450</td>
<td>999</td>
<td>3819</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Annual Review of Activities, Labour Department, Uttar Pradesh.
### Table No. 2.3

**INDEX OF U.P. AND KANPUR INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES.**

( in '000s )

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>WORKERS INVOLVED</th>
<th>MANDAYS LOST</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>U.P.</td>
<td>KANPUR</td>
<td>U.P.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td>4.6 = (100)</td>
<td>2.3 = (100)</td>
<td>62.8 = (100)</td>
<td>6.1 = (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td>29.3 (647.82)</td>
<td>29.3 (1273.90)</td>
<td>240 (382.16)</td>
<td>239.2 (3921.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942-43</td>
<td>18.8 (408.69)</td>
<td>18.8 (817.39)</td>
<td>100.3 (159.7)</td>
<td>100.3 (1644.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>4.4 (191.30)</td>
<td>4.4 (191.30)</td>
<td>106.8 (170.06)</td>
<td>24.3 (398.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944-45</td>
<td>8.2 (356.51)</td>
<td>8.2 (356.51)</td>
<td>105.8 (168.47)</td>
<td>18.3 (29.99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-46</td>
<td>88.1 (4186.43)</td>
<td>88.1 (4186.43)</td>
<td>168.9 (1065.12)</td>
<td>495.2 (8117.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>77.4 (3365.19)</td>
<td>77.4 (3365.19)</td>
<td>1013 (1613.05)</td>
<td>960 (15737.28)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 11th Annual Report of the Employer's Association of Northern India.

In 1940, there were 20 strikes and lockouts in U.P. resulting in a loss of 2,42,420 mandays. The second World War broke out in September, 1939. The economic condition of workers was deteriorating with every rise in the cost of living index. The economic and political discontent converged and an anti-war atmosphere developed with increasing intensity. The workers of U.P. and notably of Kanpur were in a triumphant mood. The Kanpur Mazdoor Sabha declared a general strike on 2nd October, 1940, with a view to forcing a solution of the dispute in New Victoria Mills which related to restoration of wages and re-employment of the workers who had struck work previously. It affected 30,000 workers. As a result of the intervention by the Provincial Government the strike
was called off un-conditionally.

The number of strikes and lockouts rose to 43 in 1941 but the loss in mandays was 281,992 in that year. Till 1941, the Kanpur labour scene was marred by discontentment, partial strikes and various other forms of protest. No doubt the number of strikes increased to 48 in 1942 but the loss in mandays decreased from 2,81,992 to 1,90,483 in 1942. The mandays lost per strike and lockout showed a downward trend. It was 6558 in 1941 and came down to 3968 in 1942. With the Quit India Movement in 1942, the differences between the various trade unions became sharper. The trade unions under the influence of communists did not go on strike, whereas the others did. So far as Kanpur industries are concerned with the exception of the strike in Elgin Mills, there was no political strike. This is not to deny the occurrence of isolated strikes due to a variety of causes, but on the whole the mandays lost were progressively decreasing after 1942 both in U.P. and in Kanpur and continued to decrease up to 1945. In a nutshell, employers in U.P. in general and in Kanpur in particular conceded several demands of workers leading to better relations between them.
The second World War came to an end in 1945 and the Government subsequently withdrew the Defence of India Rules. During 1946 and 1947 the number of strikes and lockouts rose very high and the figures of mandays lost reached as high as 111958 and 1060565 respectively in U.P. The position was still worse in Kanpur industries where 4,95,200 and 9,60,000 mandays were lost in 1946 and 1947 respectively. The loss of mandays due to strikes and lockouts attained its peak in 1947. However, the number of strikes and lockouts and mandays lost came down to 60 and 2,32,450 respectively in 1950. This was due to the passage of the Industrial Disputes Acts both by the Central and State Governments in 1947. The Factory Act of 1948 conferred several benefits on the workers and last but not least, the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, guaranteed minimum wages to them.

In 1947 the workers of Kanpur demanded increases in wages to bring them on a par with those fixed by the Industrial Court for textile mills of Bombay. Several strike notices were received by the mills. To meet the demand, the Employers Association of Northern India granted 12.5% increase in basic wages from July, 1947. The strike in Kanpur Textiles Ltd., Kanpur, was an important strike in 1948. It commenced on 20th January, 1948, as a protest against the cut in the dearness food allowance. It ended on 8th February, 1948, when the workers returned to work
unconditionally. 3.5 lakh mandays were lost due to this strike. There were, however, major lockouts in the textile mills of U.P. in the last quarter of 1949. A lockout following a strike in the Muir Mills, Kanpur, took place over the question of the re-instatement of a dismissed worker, and lasted from 20th October to 8th November, 1949. Another lockout, in the New Victoria Mills, was declared by the management due to the refusal of the operatives to work on four looms. These two stoppages taken together took a toll of 3 lakh mandays. During 1950 there were 165 cases of closures of mills affecting about 25,000 workers. Besides this, over 98,000 workers were played off and about 1300 retrenched in various industries in U.P. These events were responsible for a number of strikes in Kanpur Mills in 1950. This account brings us to the end of the period under study in relation to industrial relations in Kanpur.

This opening chapter makes a survey of the industrial climate in the country during the first half of the present century. It is designed to serve as a necessary introduction to this study, viz., industrial relations in the large-scale industries of Kanpur since 1951. It is divided into several sections as follows:

(1) Historical developments - introductory; (2) History of Industrial disputes - General; (3) in Bombay; (4) in Ahmedabad; (5) in Calcutta and (6) in Kanpur (in greater detail). Strikes and lockouts have been mainly studied as they are the most significant indicators of industrial relations. The lesser the number of strikes and lockouts, the better is the industrial climate, and
the larger number of such economic sanctions, the worse is the industrial climate. Certain common features in all the industrial centres selected for review of strikes and lockouts are as follows:

(1) Upto 1918 or so, i.e., upto the first World War, the employers had an upper hand and labour agitations were more or less sporadic in character; (2) since 1919 the labour force became more potent due to the influences at home and from abroad e.g., the Russian revolution of 1917, the reorganisation of the I.L.O. and the nationalist movement in India; (3) with the induction of popular ministries in 1937 the labour force acquired a definitely pronounced and powerful outlook, partly as a reaction to the period of lull in their activities consequent on the great depression that commenced in 1931; (4) the wave of enthusiasm of the earlier period was short-lived and full of despair, as soon after it the Defence of India Rule 81 was enforced by the British Government which sought to curb all activities likely to hinder war efforts; (5) with the conclusion of the second World War in 1945, a new chapter and a very important one opened in the history of labour agitation, embracing the attainment of Independence in 1947, and the enactment of some of the most important pieces of labour legislation, e.g., the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946, the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, the Factory Act, 1948, The Minimum Wages Act, 1948 etc.; (6) the matters at issue in industrial strikes and lockouts related to wages, bonus, allowance, victimisation partly due to participation in union activities, and
rationalisation and (7) several epoch-making strikes occurred at all the industrial centres during 1921-1950, exhibiting the powerfulness of the labour force and attracting the attention of the state and the community to satisfy its aspirations.