CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

The history of the working class in colonial India still remains unwritten and many stereotypes surround the study of the working class. One of these stereotypes about the Indian working class was the inability of the working class to organize themselves and the lack of "firmness of purpose and unity of actions".¹ The Secretary of State for India Montagu described the "placid and pathetic contentment of the masses".² It is doubtful if this notion of an inert and placid mass over bore any relation to reality. In the years following the World War I the stereotype came to be increasingly questioned. Quoting the same phrase, B. Shiva Rao, one of the foremost leaders of the Madras Labour Union wrote that "the placid and pathetic contentment of the masses was disappearing particularly in the urban areas at a more rapid pace than the British officials perhaps appreciated. The industrial worker emerged definitely as one of the most significant symbols of post-war India".³


³ Ibid.
The existing literature on the social history of the working class is exiguous. There are a few early works which throw light on the activities, social life and the character of the working class in the colonial period. Mention may be made of the works of B.P. Wadia: *The Aims of the Labour Movement in India*⁴ and *Labour in Madras*⁵. The former has details about the origin and aims of the labour movement in the city of Madras and the latter is a collection of speeches delivered by B.P. Wadia at the meetings held over the period of three years from 1918 to 1920 of the Buckingham and Carnatic Mill hands in Madras. These reflect the condition of the workers in the post-war period and also the thinking of the union leadership.

B. Shiva Rao's work, *The Industrial Workers in India*⁶ is a study of the life of the working class of India in general. His details about the origin of the labour movement in the colonial Madras is a substantial contribution to our understanding of the labour awakening in

⁴ *The Aims of the Labour Movement in India* (Madras, n.d.).
⁵ *Labour in Madras* (Madras, 1921).
Madras City. What is more revealing about these works is the fact that they are a species of the middle-of-the-road approach to labour problems, maintaining as much aloofness from the Congress as from radicalising the working class movement. Nevertheless they represent a catalogue raisonné of the workers' problems and the struggles that became the part of the workers in that period.

As regards the social life of the Indian working class, the existing literatures are still more fewer. However, Rajni Kanta Das's *Labour in India* and Radha Kamal Mukherjee's *The Indian Working Class* are more useful, the

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7. B. Shiva Rao gives details of the difficulties the workers faced and of their initiative to form a union for themselves with the assistance of outside leaders. *Ibid.*, pp.14-15. However, R.P. Dutt attributes the foundation of the Madras Labour Union in 1918 to the "accidental personal character". He writes that "the Madras Labour Union was certainly the first systematic attempt at trade union organisation, with regular membership and dues, of the mass of Indian workers in an industrial centre. For this initiative all credits must be paid to its founders. But the appearance of this initiative in a relatively weak industrial centre (during the whole period 1921-33 the number of strike days in Madras was 2.8 million against 20 million in Bengal and 60 million in Bombay; reveals its accidental personal character..." R.P. Dutt, *India Today* (Calcutta, 1979), p.407


former dealing with the pre and post-war period working class and the latter with the working class of India since 20's in detail. Radha Kamal Mukherjee's is the only detailed study of the whole Indian working classes in various employments with tables of wages and working hours and standard of living.

The post-Independence period saw a plethora of literature mainly on the Trade Union Movement in India. These tended to be general accounts or surveys of the growth of the labour movement covering the colonial and post-colonial India. To this category belong the works of V.V. Giri and V.B. Karnik. These works suffer from two disadvantages. First, they criticise the penetration of politics into the labour movement in its early phase without considering the colonial context as in the case of V.V. Giri, and secondly, they reduce the struggle of the working class in the colonial period to the confines of Economism.

10. Labour Problems in Indian Industry (Delhi, 1965).
11. Indian Labour: Problems and Prospects (Calcutta, 1974); Indian Trade Union - A Survey (Bombay, 1966); Strikes in India (Bombay, 1972).
12. V.V. Giri, op. cit., p.9.
13. V.B. Karnik, Strikes in India, p.374.
The role of the colonial government in capital and labour relations has been described in general, as a "passive regulator" of capital-labour relations. This is the view of Charles A. Myers who considers that besides the government's preoccupation with the law and order maintenance, the colonial government had passed "protective" legislation to check the "flagrant abuses" in the work environment. Another goes even further and states "the failure of effective voluntary industrial relations" in third world countries including India which he attributes to the various political groups' fights for working class solidarity. What is missing in their analyses is the fact that the Trade Unions faced an outright hostility from the employers who refused even to negotiate with them on minor questions.

The Government's policy since the outbreak of labour unrest in the post-war period, till 1937 was solidly based on the rock of laissez-faire philosophy with minor deviations from it occasioned by the pressures of the workers' organisations. The gist of the Government's aloofness from internal management of factory life can be seen from following


15. Morris D. Morris states further that despite the encouragement given to trade unions by the government, "they (trade unions) become an essentially dependent feature of a state dominated and state defined system of Industrial relations." See his article "Labour Problems: Developing Countries" in *International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*, Vol. 8 (1968), p. 515.
quotation of the department concerned with the interests of labour. "This Department has however no authority to interfere in matters like this which affect the internal management of a factory as long as the actual fixing of the shifts are arranged in accordance with the health section of the Act. It seems to one this is a question to be settled by friendly negotiations between the employer and the employee." This was in spite of the Factory Act.

What the Madras Government and the employers wanted was a system of voluntary method with as much minimum role as possible reserved for the government. This assumed equality of position between the employers and the workers.

However a recent work by Sukomal Sen, The Working Class of India: The History of Emergence and Movement places the role of the Indian working class in broader perspective in the context of the colonial state and of the anti-colonial movement in India. Nevertheless these

17. This is discussed in Chapter VII.
works are institutional studies and have ignored the aims and self-activity of the working class in broader perspective. In this connection the incisive comments of two historians concerned with labour history may be noted. According to Sumit Sarkar:

labour history in our country as well as the history of the left political movements in general tends to get reduced to a catalogue of strikes and unions, to collection of reminiscenses about top leaders, or to endless and often sterile ideological controversies concerning the correctness or otherwise of a particular political line. A history from below in this largely unexplored field would probably lead to a greater emphasis on the forms of consciousness and self-activity of the working class, without belittling of course the indispensable and often heroic role of pioneer labour organisers. 19

And in the view of Sabyasachi Bhattacharya,

although some of the works 20 purport to cover 'labour movement' actually it is a species of Institutional history disarticulated from the deep-structure of its socio-economic context. Finally, some of

19. Sumit Sarkar, Popular Movements and Middle Class Leadership in Late Colonial India, Perspectives and Problems of a 'History from Below' (Calcutta, 1983).

these trade union histories also appear to merit Hobsbawm's criticism of a similar tradition in British labour history: "it tended to identify class and movement, movement and organisation or leadership of organisation, thus by-passing actual social realities."21

In the recent, past, most of the studies concentrated on the main classes of workers and paid little attention to those unorganized urban poor. And even those studies which were only a few, used caste and community idiom or "paradigm"22 to analyse the workers behaviour and social life. In particular, this approach is a marked feature of the regional studies on the working class in colonial India. Morris D. Morris who studied the Bombay industrial workers of the 19th and 20th century opines that caste was a least "factor inhibiting the development of trade unions because in his view, "the size and scope of many strikes from the end of the nineteenth century required the cooperation of all occupational groups in a mill or the industry, including the untouchables" and does not consider on the basis of the lack of evidence that "caste served as overt bar to trade union development in the Bombay textile mills".23

21. Ibid.

22. For a critique of inadequacy of Paradigms used in social history writing, see Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, "Paradigms Lost:Notes on Social History" in Economic and Political Weekly (hereafter EPW), Vol17, Nos.14-16 April 1982.

23. Morris D. Morris, The Emergence of An Industrial Labour
This view is, however, questioned by Chitra Joshi, who on the basis of the study of the Kanpur textile workers in the twentieth century argues that a sense of caste and community persisted among the textile workers and loyalty to caste and community was reinforced by a sense of insecurity. However, while caste and community continued to manifest themselves, the "class unity" of the workers was being constituted in the process of struggle.

Yet the crucial question remains as to the role of "primordial loyalties" of the Indian working class such as caste and community loyalties which are considered as potential disruptive forces of class formation. The communal manifestation arising out of primordial loyalties

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among the textile workers of Madras in 1921 and those of Bombay in 1929 were cited as illustrative in this context. But a recent study shows that the communal flareup in 1929 among the Bombay textile workers was the outcome of the deliberate steps taken by the communal organisations such as the Akhadas and the Suddhi movement to persuade their community members to act as strike breakers.

Similarly the causes of the communal divide among the textile workers of Madras in 1921 lay in the machinations of the Labour Board, the Government of Madras and in the efforts of the communal leaders and the management of the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills. Although an identity with one's community is part of the consciousness of the average member


27. This question is discussed in section II of Chapter IV.
of the Madras working class, its explicit manifestation in the form of "communalism" - i.e., a political identity and a means of mobilisation - was by and large the consequence of the managerial and bureaucratic intervention. In this respect the thesis of Dr. Murphy is mistaken in that he tends to overlook the external interventions that generate communal and casteist tendencies in their explicitly political form.

As far as the question of caste is concerned, the working class of Madras city as opposed to other parts of Tamil Nadu seem to have suffered little from its ugly manifestations in terms of conflicts/riots or arson. Except the 1921 conflagration of the caste riots in which the Buckingham and Carnatic Mill successfully divided the employees on caste lines, there was hardly any other evidence which shows the emergence of caste as disruptive force in the working class formation. This could very well be due to certain factors. The industrial backwardness with its attendant low percentage workforce to the total population did not attract a large number of migrants from minority communities such as the Muslims or the depressed castes; in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills alone there were a large percentage of depressed class workers, next to the upper caste Hindus, in particular the Naidus and the Mudaliars. The absence of jobbers (whose recruitment of labour was often through caste network in other regions) to some extent eliminated the caste factor. The small industrial units employed on an average 100 to 200 workers. Except a few large firms like WIMCO, Buckingham and Carnatic Mills or the Burma Oil Company, the other employers - small units employing a few hundred each - recruited members directly after
some initial training.

To some extent, the ideological position of some moderate leaders like Tiru. Vi. Ka and G. Selvapathy Chetti played a crucial role in keeping casteism in the ranks of labour under control, although in many ways these labour leaders sympathised with the Self-Respect Movement. The communists came on the labour scene actively from the middle of the 1930s after the initial start of Singaravelu from the early 1920s. Their methods of mobilisation on class lines rather than on caste lines added much to reduce potential caste tension in the Madras city work force.

"Community consciousness" instead of "class consciousness" is posited as characteristics of the Indian working class. On the other hand, class consciousness which is characteristic of the mature working class had not taken deep roots in the minds of the Indian working class who, were inchoate were in the process of formation. Hence the proper method of looking at this question in the Indian context is by, as Sabyasachi Bhattacharya points out, analysing the specificities of the class structure and of the class formation process in the economy in colonial India. 28

But in recent writings of Dipesh Chakraborty there has been a shift in analysis away from the colonial context to the pre-colonial period which is emphasised as conditioning the

character of the Trade Union movement in India. The premise on which this view is founded is as follows:

general aspect of the pre-capitalist relationship between the rich and the poor would thus appear to have constituted an important strand in the tradition that moulded the culture of trade unionism in colonial Calcutta. In the absence of a better name let us call this the babu-coolie relationship in so far as it would be seen to exist in practice of trade unionism.29

This extreme view on the formation of the working class shaped by the pre-capitalist relations rather than the colonial conjuncture has come under criticism. Amiya Bagchi contends that the relations between the babu-coolie are the upshoot of the colonial period rather than of the pre-capitalist period since requirements of colonial capital constituted that relationship.30 In the writings of Chakrabarty there is, as Sabyasachi Bhattacharya points out, an ahistoric assumption of changelessness and as if the entire period of 1890-1940 witnessed no change in "the culture of the factory, the nature of industrial discipline, the quality of militancy and solidarity".31 Moreover, 'Pre-capitalist' culture is evidently used by Chakrabarty as an explanation without any attempt to subject that to historical analysis.

The study of the industrial work force in Madras city reveals certain distinct features of "master-servant" relations which had sanctity in the Workmen's Breach of Contract, 1859. Questions of debt and credit, payment of compensation to victims under the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923 and the Workmen's Breach of Contract, 1859 came to be interpreted in terms of "master and servant" relations. The legal judgements which are nevertheless a few, clarified, within the framework of restricted provisions of various Acts, definitions of workmen and put limits on the employers' tyranny.\textsuperscript{33} The relations at work-place itself, between the employer and the workers were based on master-servant relations which gave the employer unlimited power over the worker regulating his employment and domesticating him according to needs of capital. Though the Indian Trade Union Act, 1926 conferred legal immunity on trade unions from criminal conspiracy proceedings, certain flaws in the working of the Act and weakness of the workers' organisations became evident as the years passed. Settlement of labour disputes under the Indian Trade Disputes Act, 1929 was not free from laissez-faire philosophy which permeated the mind of the colonial bureaucrat and the intransigent European employer who insisted on his "prerogative" in terms of hiring and firing.

\textsuperscript{32} This is discussed in Chapter II.

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{All India Reporter}, Madras, 1924, Vol. II, p. 352.
There has also been a tendency in some of the early writings on the labour movement towards criticising unduly the early leaders of the Trade Union Movement. A new approach to analyse the role of the early leaders, in the arena of labour movement will, one hopes, emerge in the detailed study of the following pages and must expose the inadequacy of stereotyped snap judgements on labour leadership. For the present it suffices to say the following:

The labour leaders who engaged in labour problems in the post-war period from diverse backgrounds but commonly origins alien to working class background. Examples are B.P. Wadia (a vakil); Thiru.Vi. Kalyana Sundara Mudaliar (a school teacher by profession); V.O. Chidamparam Pillai (a vakil); Singaravelu Chetty (a vakil) and G. Chelvapathy Chetty (a merchant). Many of them maintained links with the Congress. Some of the labour leaders did not have however any identifiable occupation, e.g. Chakarai Chetti and Harisharvatham Rao, both of them considered as "extremist" for their participation in the nationalist movement by the colonial administration. Besides these leaders we also come across leaders such as B. Shiva Rao who was a Home ruler and P.R.K. Sarma, the former maintaining till 1935 distance from the Congress and the latter shifting his loyalty from one party to another. But it may be noted here that except


35. This question and related matter is discussed in Chapter VI.
communists such as Singaravelu and later his lieutenants like Jeevanandam and A.S.K. Ayyangar, other leaders did not have any coherent ideology towards labour interests.

There are some specific micro studies which focus attention on the role of the jobbers in the Bombay textile industry and on the influence of the Gandhian ideology among the Ahmedabad textile workers. What these studies along with Dipesh Chakrabarty's work reveal is that there are certain organisational variations in the evolution and development of the working class movements in different metropolitan centres and these variations themselves are the upshot of the specific historical conditions which left their stamp on the workers organisations. In this period the role of the state itself was discriminatory. New state structures and policies were created to meet the rising challenge of labour movement in 1920's and 30's. Their purpose was less to protect the interests of workers than to defend the world of capital. This was sought to be accomplished by establishing

36. R. Newman, op. cit. The jobbers' role as recruiters and supervisors of factory labour for Bombay textile industries was unique to the Bombay Presidency on the large scale, though their role was no less significant in Kanpur and other centres. For plantation labour, see Ranajit Das Gupta, "From Peasants and Tribesmen to Plantation Workers: Colonial Capitalism, Reproduction of Labour Power and Proletarianisation in North East India, 1850's to 1947", EPW, Vol. XXI, Jan 25, 1986.

new mechanisms to settle labour disputes without undermining the strength of the capitalists. In the 1920's and 30's the government got involved in labour issues not in order to help workers, but rather in an attempt to defuse widespread strike action. 38

Thus from this brief review of the recent trends in the field of labour historiography it is clear that there is much to be done in the labour history and that a new approach is called for to analyse and understand some of the structural weaknesses of the Indian working class some of which are the outcome of the colonial rule. However to understand the Indian working class, regional micro studies based on this broader framework are imperative. Most of the studies including that of Sukomal Sen made broad generalisations on the Indian working class on all India basis. A major shortfall of such method is that it tends to underplay, if not ignore, the crucial aspects of the working class movement: Specific political culture in a particular region; caste and community linkages; spatial development of a region; special characteristics of a certain class of employers, etc. An indepth micro-study of a locality has the advantage of capturing these aspects which are given otherwise casual treatment in the macro-studies.

In this context the underdeveloped city of Madras where one of the strongest working class movements emerged in the

38. Chapter IV and last section of Chapter VII are devoted to discussion of these questions.
The post-war period provides the scope for analysis of the emergence of working class movement in the complex socio-economic milieu and for analysis of some of the structural weaknesses which had accompanied the working class movement in this city.

The study of the working class and their movement in Madras is important in that vague generalisations have been made about the proletariat on the basis of the study of the workers employed in textile mills.\textsuperscript{39} That is to say, emphasis has been placed on the study of the textile mill workers of the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills, ignoring the condition of other categories of workers employed in various factories. Moreover, the condition of a particular company's work force is used as a surrogate for the condition of the other categories of employees. This approach overlooks the distinctions between the various categories of employees. The range and scope of strikes that took place in various firms varied from firm to firm. Strikes in the period from 1918 to 1939 reveal moreover levels of workers solidarity and militancy which ranged between weak organisation and strong organisations of workers involved in strikes. Issues as well

\textsuperscript{39} The only monograph available on the working class of the Madras Presidency in particular Tamil Nadu is E.D. Murphy's work *Unions in Conflict - A comparative study of Four South Indian Textile Centres, 1918-1939* (New Delhi, 1980). But it covers only the textile workers with little reference to the workers employed elsewhere. Similar view can also be true of the monograph by C.S. Krishna. See his *Labour Movement in Tamil Nadu, 1918-1933* (Calcutta, 1989).
were different in strikes; economic strikes were clubbed with the survival of trade union itself. These required well articulated leadership and strong commitment from workers themselves to trade unionism. Hence concentration is laid in this thesis on the study of heterogeneous composition of the proletariat in this colonial city.

Objectives and Organization of the Thesis:

While studying the whole work force of Madras city, in particular, the industrial workers in various establishments of European capitalists and the government, a few fundamental questions are raised in the thesis. How far did the under-developed economy of Madras city and its environs affect and aggravate the working class discontent and unrest in Madras? What were the attitudes of the Government of Madras and the British owned establishments towards the strikes? and What type of industrial relations system was evolved to deal with industrial disputes? How far did the evolved system of industrial relations affect the working class movement? What sort of linkages were established between anti-colonial movement and labour movement? What kind of ideology did the leadership of the labour movement profess and practise? And equally our aim is to explore how far the colonial state and the conditions it created impinged on the growth of labour and the labour movement in Madras city.

40. Strikes in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills, Choolai Mills, Madras and Pressmen's Strike and Burma Oil Company strikes are a few of the many strikes which are discussed in Chapters III, VI and VII.
The Thesis has been structured as follows: Chapter I takes a bird's eye-view of the existing literature on the working class organisations and points out some of the recent developments in which certain regional studies focussed on labour in colonial India.

Chapter II has two sections: Section I is devoted to discussion of the Indian and Madras governments industrial policy and resulting industrial backwardness of the Madras Presidency. Its corresponding results such as low wages, poor working conditions, indebtedness and housing problems are part of section II in the same chapter.

The post-War period sparked off a spate of strikes some of which were intensive and violent. The government was forced to intervene in some of the strikes though its preoccupation was still with maintenance of law and order. Attempt is made to discuss the discriminatory role of the Government in relation to labour disputes in European owned firms. Focus is also laid on the employers' offensive and the bureaucrats' reaction to labour unrest in the period from 1918 to 1921. All these form part of Chapter III.

While on one side the Government took sometimes discriminatory role and at times abstentionist role born out of laisse-faire, on the legislative front, it introduced legislative measures with restrictive procedures. Contrary to the colonial officials' claim that the legislative measures were initiated by the government out of its own concern to mitigate the evils of industrialisation, an attempt is made
in Chapter IV to place the legislative measures such as the Indian Trade Union Act, the Workmen's Compensation Act and the Industrial Dispute Act in their context—viz., the pressure from below and the influence of outside leaders exerting pressure on the government to act and initiate legislative measures for labour welfare.

In the absence of collective agreements between capital and labour in colonial India, the domain of employer's "prerogative" became one of the contested areas. The employers' right to 'hire and fire' the workers at their own discretion did not remain uncontested. In fact, from 1918 onwards their right increasingly came to be contested by strikes and certain rights were won by the workers. But the regulation of workplace relations in terms of introduction of new machinery or framing of new workplace regulations often took the dimension of "conflicts of interests." Though there was no clearly demarcated line between these two, in times of strikes, the managements stuck to their right to employ or fire the workers. This question is discussed in Chapter V taking cases of Burma Oil Company which introduced machinery without any consultation with the workers' union setting off one of the most violent strikes in the Company's history. Other strikes as well are discussed in the Depression period which is characterised by weak resistance by workers.

One of the problematics of the labour ideology was the distance that it maintained from the start from the nationalist movement. While the fear of state repression and the employers' offensive threatened the working class...
organisations in the beginning, forcing it to be distant from political parties, the same causes could not be attributed to the continued isolation from the Congress organisation as the unions came to exist as representatives of workers. Reformist hold on the unions partially explains the workers' isolation from the Congress organisation. But a significant factor is the perception entertained by a section of trade unionists about the Congress as class based organisation which had no interest to serve the labourers. This was reinforced by the absence of trade union leaders from the Congress organisation, even though the Congress passed resolutions at the Karchi Session on labour. The communists' late arrival with a distinct class ideology, to a large extent, furthered a distance between labour and the Congress ideology. Despite all these ideological differences, nevertheless, the United Front formed in 1937 was a remarkable achievement against the colonial government. Attempt is made in Chapter VI to see all these aspects of labour politics in the colonial Madras city.

Chapter VII has three sections: Section I discusses the methods used to resolve strikes in particular in firms where the communists were able to maintain their hold. That conciliation machinery on which the government relied as internal means to resolve any dispute between capital and labour was ineffective was evident in the Choolai Mills case. Attempt is made to see limitations of conciliation machinery. Section II focusses on employers' influence when the government was planning to introduce certain welfare measures.
Section III is mainly concerned with the wider question of picketing which often enlisted repression from the government. Discussion on picketing between various organisations of capital and labour and the government is placed in the overall context of capital pressures and the government's inclination to tighten its control over workers' activities.

Chapter IV and Chapter VI have been written thematically. Every legislative measure attempted by the government of India was restrictive and this required the discussion of all legislative measures in one chapter. Similar is the case with the moderate unions and the other unions controlled by the communists discussed in Chapter VI. They were too disorganised and ill-equipped to be treated in phases. They came together under the slogan of the United Front to fight against the colonial government in the 1937 elections. That was the occasion when the organisation of working class took a definite shape and continued to exist as a class organisation.

Other chapters are organised in a chronological frame, but focus is laid on significant shifts in the organisation of strikes and also on issues which created dead-lock. In certain parts of the thesis, detailed description has been used since many details of workers' activities are revealing and the workers' problems and their sufferings are described in their own words as they convey the richness of their experience with workplace relations.
Note on Sources

For the period 1918-39 I have mainly relied upon the unpublished government sources both printed and manuscripts and the contemporary newspapers. In the Tamil Nadu Archives (formerly Public Record Office) documents relating to labour unrest are classified under two Departments. From the early 1900s down to 1935 files on labour are kept under the Department of Public and from 1936 to 1939 in the Department of Development. Strike files are very bulky containing strike reports sent from the Deputy Magistrate in the Mofussil to the Police Commissioner in the Madras city, to the Commissioner of Labour. Since these reports were written and sent by various hands, these do not follow any set pattern. They contain, on the other hand, the hotch-potch of details on the workers' self activity, the leaders' role, the managements' position etc. Besides these, we have files in the Departments, Judicial, Legislative and Local and Municipal. The judicial files and legislative department files are mostly concerned with procedural side of the various Acts, but one can glean from them the bureaucrat's approach to questions of wider labour interest. The files in the Local and Municipal Department are a good source for discussion of elections to the Madras Corporation Council and the Madras Legislative Assembly, as far as the labour

41. No mention is made above of published documents such as the Census Reports or the Reports on the Administration of the Madras Presidency or various commissions and their reports which are available in libraries in the Madras University library.
constituencies are concerned. Despite the biases which go with the bureaucrats accounts of the strikes, we can still be in a position to get a balanced picture of the workers' interests by checking up the letters exchanged between the management and the commissioner of labour on one side and the trade unions on the other.

The National Archives has Home (political), Judicial and files directly related to Labour in the Department of Industry and Labour. The Home (political) files, though exaggerated in tone on the communist activities in the Madras Presidency can be useful, if used with caution, on the communists in the strike movements in the Madras city, particularly from the middle of the '30s onwards. The files in the Department of Industry and Labour are not many since most of the files are not yet transferred from the Tamilnadu State Archives. Printed and unpublished government files are available on the Workmen's Compensation Act and the Trade Union Registration Act. Annual reports on the working of the Factory Act contain factual data on the number of factories and the number of casualities due to various accidents.

On the employers' side we do not have anything special from the Madras Chamber of Commerce, which shed a new light on the workers' or their own side. But we can get a fairly good picture on the employers' reaction to various legislative initiatives of the Government of India and the Government of Madras. The responses sent in letters to the Madras Government on the Workmen's Compensation Act, the Trade Union Registration Act, the Industrial Dispute Act, etc. can be read along with the
proceedings on these specific legislative measures. Though these reflected mainly the employers' opinion which was well organised and articulated, for labour's response we have to fall back once again on the files which contain the letters sent by the various trade unions in the Madras Presidency.

As far as the newspapers, both vernaculars and the English dailies, are concerned, I have made use of them selectively and intensively. For the earlier period, that is, 1918-21, I have consulted the Swadesamitran and the Desabhaktan very intensively. These two papers projected more than any other vernaculars in that period the sufferings of the workers. The reports given in these two papers are corroborated by the government's reportage of strikes and workers' sufferings. But immediately after 1920, Thiru. Vi. Ka left the Desabhaktan and the Swadesamitran though continued to come out in print till late '50s had not opened its columns to the labour interests. The other vernacular papers such as the Kudi Arasu (Republic), the organ of the Self Respect Movement, focussed on social questions such as caste but there is little in their columns on labour. Nevertheless they proved quite useful for the study of early communist activities since some of the articles in them were written by the communist, Singaravelu.

Among the English newspapers, I have made intensive use of The Hindu, the Mail and the New India for the early period. For later period I have consulted besides these, the Indian Express selectively. The Hindu for the early period is
useful but does not prove useful for the later period. The Mail, being the organ of the European groups, continued to express European interests. It is also useful for the elections of 1937 since it puts the whole election episode in terms of caste combinations in Madras city. The New India run by the Theosophical Society members continued to project workers' interests from the post-war period onwards and its columns were wide open to B. Shiva Rao. The Indian Express for the period 1937-39 reports the course of various strikes in Madras city and the mofussil areas. Sometimes, its editorial comments by reason of harshness on the role of the government and the strike leaders are interesting pieces in themselves, but can be balanced by cross-checking with the Hindu.

I have consulted selectively the All-India Congress Committee Papers at the NMML but I have found for the period 1937-39 correspondences between the Premier C. Rajagopalachari and the All-India Congress Working Committee concerned with more administrative questions, rather than labour. C. Rajagopalachari's personal papers, though he was considered a 'communist' in the late '20s by the colonial government, did not contain anything new, despite the fact that V.V. Giri's correspondence with C.R. showed that the administration might have to keep under constant surveillance communists such as Jeevananda. Sathyamurthy's papers as well failed to do justice to labour problems inspite of the fact that the
British Labour Party spokesman called him 'comrade' in his correspondences with him. Jeevanandam's personal papers pertain to the 1940s. The memoirs of a communist, K. Murugesan who participated in various strikes are of limited use from the labour history point of view.