"A Trade Union may be considered to have been politicalized only if the majority of its members support a particular political programme over a period of time."¹

In this definition it is clear that if the majority members of a Trade Union Organisation are inclined towards the programme of a particular political party, the organisation becomes political. A Central Trade Union Organisation may profess the programme of a certain political party and a trade union organisation of an industry which is affiliated to a Central Trade Union Organisation may follow the programme of the latter. The leaders who profess the programme, try to infuse it among the members. The majority of the members follow the leaders and ultimately comply with the political line.

In India as well as in Assam initially trade unions were formed not only to protect the rights of the working people but also to organise the workers to fight against British Imperialist rulers to achieve independence. B.P. Wadia, Mrs. Annie Besant’s Colleague in

¹ Pattabhi Raman, N. "Political Involvement of India’s Trade Unions", Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1967, pp. 43.
her Home Rule Movement, who was also the founder of Madras Labour Union observed:

"It is very necessary to recognise the Labour Movement as an integral part of the national movement. The latter will not succeed in the right direction if the Indian working classes are not enabled to organise their forces and come into their own."\(^2\)

Political leaders took keen interest in labour problems and labour movement in India as well as in Assam. The labour movement was closely associated with the freedom movement. Leaders of the Independence Movement were the leaders of the Labour Movement and had done pioneering work for organising trade unions. This was the basic character of trade unions in pre-independent India. The first all India organisation of labour came from political quarters.

At the Amritsar Congress of 1919 a resolution was passed urging the provincial committees and other affiliated unions to promote labour unions throughout the country with a view to improving social, economic and political conditions of the labouring classes and securing for them a fair standard of living and a proper place in body politic of India. Resolutions to this effect were passed at successive

2. Ibid, pp. 29.
congress. The need for a central All India Trade Union Organisation was felt. The Congress appointed a Committee to assist the All India Trade Union Congress in the organisation of labour in India, when it was formed in 1920. In its initial years, the AITUC was closely associated with the Indian National Congress. The leaders of the Indian National Congress under whose leadership Independence Movement was fought, did the pioneering work for organising labour.

7.1 EMERGENCE OF DIFFERENT POLITICAL PARTIES AND ORGANISATIONS UNDER THEM:

After the withdrawal of the Non-cooperation Movement, a new political force basing itself on the working class took shape in the Indian scene. In December 1925, the Communist Party of India formally set up. In 1924, AITUC had already passed a resolution stating that a Free India should be a socialist republic. Communists took up trade union work in right earnest, carrying the rising proletarian ideology of scientific socialism among the mass of workers. Congress-Socialists also went in large numbers to work among them.


Under the leadership of S.A. Dange and M.N. Roy Communist ideology began to influence the working class movement. By 1926 several States saw the emergence of the Communist Party. This period witnessed the emergence of leftist ideology in Trade Unions. Trade Unions were organised as class organisations of working class aiming at establishment of socialism by overthrowing capitalism through class struggle.  

Gradually different political parties with their different ideologies emerged and influenced the Trade Union Movement.

In the year 1927 at the annual session of Trade Union Congress it became apparent that the labour in the country was going in two directions - one Communist and the other moderate. In 1929 at Nagpur Session the split into two sections in AITUC took place. The moderate section under the leadership of N.M. Joshi, V.V. Giri, B. Shiva Ram, R. R. Bakhle and Dewan Chamanlal seceded from the Congress and set up a separate organisation under the name of National Trade Union Federation.

At the eleventh Session, held in July 1931 at Calcutta, a second split overtook the AITUC. The extreme left wing under the leadership of S.V. Despande and B.T. Ranadive came out from the party and formed another union under the name of All India Red Trade Union Congress.

However, the economic crisis, and the burden imposed on the workers posed the question of trade union reunification. The communists were the first to appreciate this need. The Red Trade Union was dissolved and merged again with the AITUC. This was consummated at the 14th Session of the AITUC in April, 1935.

A joint Labour Board was set up in 1936 for joint actions by the AITUC and NTUF. In the 18th Session of the AITUC in 1940 the said two were merged.

After the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, different political groups started defining their attitude to war to their own political predilections. One political group of Trade union leaders headed by M.N. Roy, the leader and philosopher of the Communist Party in 1920 and at that time the leader of the Radical Democratic Party, strongly advocated India's participation in war against Axis powers.

It was, therefore, at the Bombay Session of the AITUC in 1940 the Royists seceded from the AITUC and formed the Indian Federation of Labour which was short lived.

Initiation of trade unions by political groups and parties became most obvious after the 2nd World War. The first major move in this direction was made by the Indian National Congress. At the end of the
The Congress found that its members had little influence in the AITUC which was then in the hands of the Communists. The continued dominance of Communists in AITUC made many Congress leaders uncomfortable. So INTUC was born in early 1947 with the support of Congress and nationalist employers.

Gulzarilal Nanda, the then Minister, frankly stated in his speech at the founding Session of the Indian National Trade Union Congress, convened by the Congress Mazdoor Sevak Sangh, in May, 1947 - "The urgent need of the moment is to provide machinery for co-ordinating the scattered forces of workers who are in fundamental opposition to the Communists."  

With the advent of new political party known as Socialist Party of India, another labour organisation, the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) was started in December, 1948 and the Indian Federation of Labour merged into this body. In 1949 another labour organisation known as the United Trade Union Congress was also formed by same leaders who were not satisfied with the policies of HMS. The UTUC is closely identified with the Revolutionary Socialist Party.

The rising political ambitions of the Jan Sangh (BJP) cast its eyes towards the workers. Thereupon, it set up the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS).


Finally, the split in the Indian Communist movement in 196- created strains within the AITUC and by 1970 a new central organisation called the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) was set up by the CPI(M).

From the above discussion, it becomes clear that the principal national political parties namely, the Indian National Congress, the Communist Party of India, the Praja Socialist Party, CPI(M), Bharatiya Jana Sangh are known to be closely associated with the various Central trade union organisations, e.g. the Congress with the INTUC, the Communist Party of India with the AITUC, the CPI(M) with CITU, the Praja Socialist Party (now Janata Party) with H.M.S., Jana Sangh (now Bharatiya Janata Party) with the Rashtriya Mazdoor Sangha (now Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh), and UTUC with the Revolutionary Socialist Party.

Ralph James, an American Professor observed that labour federations in India were largely the instrument of political party with which they are identified.  

7.2 INITIATION OF TRADE UNIONS BY POLITICAL PARTIES IN ASSAM:

Each of the above mentioned political parties associated with its own federation of trade unions has been maintaining its office in Assam also.

The Communist influence began among the labourers of Assam from 1936-37. In 1935-36 the workers of the Match Factory of Dhubri went on for 57 days strike against wage cut and retrenchment of labour. This strike was said to have been inspired by the Labour Party of Bengal of which Bipin Chakravarty, a Communist leader, was a member. He was deputed to Dhubri to study the labour condition of this factory.

On reaching Dhubri, Bipin Chakravarty held a number of meetings of the aggrieved workers. He was organised a labour conference in Dhubri and utilised the opportunity in propagating Marxist philosophy amongst the workers. The Superintendent of Police of Goalpara even informed the Government that through Bipin Chakravarty Communist influence is working under the cloak of the Bengal Labour Association.

After this a good chunk of leftist workers were functioning actively in the year 1938 to take up the cause of peasants and workers. This also influenced Assam Pradesh Congress to draw a socialist programme. It adopted a mass contact programme and formed a committee in 1938 to go through the labour and agrarian conditions. This programme helped the Communists and Socialists inside Congress Party to get direct contact with the working class. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's earlier visit to Assam in 1937 could give a foundation for the Communists and the

10. Ibid, pp. 262.
Socialists to propagate their cause. He held public meetings at Moran, Khowang, Chabua, Tinsukia, Makum, Doom Dooma, Digboi, etc. of Upper Assam, and he influenced the workers by his forceful speech to organize themselves. Communists and Socialists under the cover of Congress organisation became active in 1938 in probing grievances of workers in Oil fields, collieries, tea gardens as well as of peasants. In 1938, Sudhindra Pramanik, who belonged to the Socialist group, organised the Assam Oil Company Labour Union.

"On 29/30 January, 1940, under the active initiative of Dhire Dutta, a provincial socialist party was formed at Misamara (Golaghat with Sriman Prafulla Goswami as its General Secretary. A secret Communist Cell was also formed inside the provincial socialist party which began to function actively since that time."  

In 1943 the Communist Party of India organised a training course for trade union leaders. Gaurisankar Bhattacharyya joined that course at Bow Bazar, Calcutta with Jyoti Basu, Kamal Basu, Md. Ismile and others. Md. Ismile, Jyoti Basu and Gaurisankar Bhattacharyya were deputed to take up trade unionism among the railwaymen of Bengal and Assam. Some of the Communist activists namely Surya Sen, Ananta Sen, Kalpana Dutta and others came to Assam and contacted immediately with Gaurisankar Bhattacharyya and with their help and assistance the latter could organise militant railmens' group at Guwahati, Pandu, Chaparmukh.

Lumding, Mariani, Tinsukia and Dibrugarh and enrolled them as members of Bengal and Assam Rail Road Workers Union. Nilamani Borthakur, Ajijuddin Biswas, Dr. Binoy Chakravarty, Narayan Ghose and others were his colleagues. Barin Choudhury, a whole time Communist worker, who was working at Fensuganj was also brought to Assam. Thus hard working Communist trade unionists were placed in all vital railway centres of Assam. Within a few months the Bengal and Assam Rail Road Workers' Union developed into a very powerful trade union organisation formed by the Communists. Not only in Railway but also in other industries and establishments they started organising trade unions.

In 1946, union in the Post and Telegraph was formed. Late Fakaruddin Ali Ahmed was the President, Sriman Prafulla Goswami was the Vice-President and Gaurisankar Bhattacharyya was the General Secretary of the Assam Branch of the said union. After 15th August, 1947 Fakaruddin Ali Ahmed relinquished the Presidentship of the Union of Post and Telegraph, Assam Branch and Debeswar Sarma, M.P. took over his place.

Congress Party also took initiative to form trade union. Under the leadership of Dibrugarh District Congress President, Kedar Goswami, workers of ART Company, Port workers got organised in the year 1930. Workers of Assam Oil Company of Digboi went on strike in 1938. Congress activists, viz., Jadunath Bhuyan, Dalbir Singh Lohar, Parashuram Dutta, Bairam Singh Lohar were involved in this strike and were externed from Dibrugarh District.
Late Amiya Kr. Das was fighting for the cause of the workers. He brought a bill in the Assam Assembly in the year 1938 in the name of 'The Assam Tea Garden Labourer Freedom Movement' to establish the human right of the garden workers.

Frequent meetings were held in Congress to discuss the influence of Communists among the tea labourers on one hand and the influence of reactionary independent leader Professor Sarwan on the other hand. A Committee consisting of Amiya Kr. Das, Rabin Kakati, Bijoy Chandra Bhagawati, Jadunath Bhuyan, etc. was formed to tackle these forces. Rabin Kakati made a hectic tour of Nowgong, Golaghat, Jorhat, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia and formed a sub-committee in each district with the Congress workers. Bijoy Chandra Bhagawati organised Darrang district workers. In Surama Valley Late Suresh Dev and Rabindra Aditya formed Surama valley Tea Labour organisation.

Congress leaders like Bijoy Chandra Bhagawati, Kamakhya Prasad Tripathy, Rabin Kakati and others worked hard for the formation of INTUC, Assam Branch. In the year, 1946 Congress won victory in the election. Congress victory in this election brought hope to the Assam Pradesh Committee the need for regular political and welfare work among the workers, particularly those of plantations. Being the ruling party, the Congress had the advantage of organising labourers in tea gardens.
Robin Kakaty was made the sole organiser and instructions to this effect was issued by the Government that only Congress would be allowed to organise trade unions among tea garden labourers.

It was with this end Babu Robin Kakaty of Sibsagar was granted permission vide Indian Tea Association letter No. L.D./600 dated 27th July 1947 to organise tea garden labourers in Assam and only those trade union organisers who held a letter of authority from Babu Robin Kakaty would be allowed to enter into the labour lines. This act of the Congress helped in organising the tea garden labourers under the banner of INTUC and to spread their ideology among the labourers.

Besides Rabin Kakaty and Bijoy Chandra Bhagawati a number of prominent Congress leaders were associated with the INTUC. Kamakhya Prasad Tripathy, Ex-Cabinet Minister for Labour and Finance, Assam, was also the General Secretary of the INTUC, Assam Branch from 1954 to 1957 and President of the Indian National Plantation Workers Federation till his death. Amongst the other prominent Congress leaders mention may be made of Amiya Kr. Das, Ex-Minister for Labour, Late Mohendra Nath Sarmah, Late Dalbir Singha Lohar, Ex-M.L.A. etc. One of the tea labour organisers Smti Lily Sengupta, started her work in fifties and entered into active politics in the year 1962 by contesting Assembly Election as a Congress candidate. Even if she was twice elected

to Assam Assembly in 1962 and 1967 from Lahoal Constituency, Dibrugarth, she was popularly known as a trade union organiser. She was the President of INTUC, Assam Branch, from 1971 to 1973.

The Congress leaders formed organisations not only in plantation; but also in oil, motor transport, plywood, engineering works, collieries etc.

Not only the Congress and the Communist that worked for the formation of trade unions and their improvement on all aspects but also the socialist party plunged into the labour cause. "The CSP gradually emerged in the province as an important political force challenging the congress and the Communist Party, and this impressed many including Nibaran Chandra Borah, who joined the party in March 1947. Since 1947, the CSP has begun to work independently in the peasant and labour fronts."13

Marxist tried to organise the workers to raise class and political consciousness. They worked under the banner of CITU.

Thus we have seen that politicians and parties have played a great role in organising trade unions. They were dominated by outsiders and political leaders, because most of the workers of India as well as in Assam were illiterate. Helpless and ignorant as the workers were.

they were not in a position to build up by themselves any organisations. These workers were afraid of victimization by the employers. It was therefore, inevitable for them to depend on the outside help. Sir Percival Giffiths in his book "The History of the Indian Tea Industry" has expressed the helpless conditions of tea industry in the following words:

"It is doubtful if illiterate labourers could indeed have organised unions at all without outside help. The trade union movement in Britain received much help in its infancy from outsiders, with a political axe to grind genuinely interested in the welfare of labour. No such class of individuals appear to have existed in the tea district of North-East India, and the outsiders who came to organise unions were in nearly all cases minor politicians seeking a means to better their positions. The unions, therefore, became linked with particular political parties."

7.3 SELF ORGANISATION:

But it is not correct to say that all the organisations in the province were formed by the political leaders. The organisation of workers into unions followed two broad patterns. One was organisation by the political leaders and other was self-organisation. Self organisation is essentially a post-independence phenomenon. It has

been inevidence mainly in banking and insurance industries as well as in shops and commercial establishments. A few self-organised unions are also found in engineering and printing industries.

7.4 POLITICAL OBJECTS OF TRADE UNION:

The Indian Trade Union Act, 1926, clearly makes distinction between the general object of a trade union and its political objects.

Section 16 of the Indian Trade Union Act laid stress on the formation of a separate fund for the promotion of the political interests of its members.

It may also be spent towards the "holding of political meetings of any kind, or the distribution of political literature or political documents of any kind." ¹⁵

The Constitution of Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha also points out the political objectives of trade unions. In Section 13 of the Constitution of A.C.M.S. it is found that amongst the objectives of Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha one is to try the enactment of law to ensure protection and development of its members through the labour leaders elected to Assembly or Parliament. "Sangha" or "Branch Sangha" can decide to collect separate fund for the election of Parliament and

¹⁵. Section 16 of Indian Trade Union Act, 1926, pp.10.
Assembly subject to prior approval from the Central organisation. But under no circumstances this fund can be mingled with general fund and no amount from the general fund can be spent for the purpose of political election. Moreover, none of such members who does not contribute to such special fund can be debarred from his usual rights.

Clause 3.2 of the Constitution and Rules of the Refinery Workers Union says that one of the objectives of the union is to secure social, economic and political upliftment of the workers.

In the Secretarial report of the Silver Jubilee Conference of All Assam Veneer Plywood and Saw Mill Workers' Union held at Ledo on 7th and 8th November, 1981, it was stated in respect of political duties of workers as follows:-

"If the workers are only running after economic demands without political consciousness, then this union can not exist for long like many other unions. This is the common duty of the unions to see whether the industrywise agreements are fully implemented in respective industries or not. It is the duty of the trade unions to protect the rights of the workers ensured by law and to attend the day to day business of the union and secondly to determine the process of educating the workers about the political duties of unions."16

From above it is clear that the trade unions have a political aim though it cannot compel its members to involve in politics totally.

7.5 ROLE OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN DIFFERENT AGITATIONAL PROGRAMMES OF THE WORKERS:

The news of agitation and peoples' upsurge against British Rule in other parts of the country could raise the tea and other labourers of Assam and hitherto the struggle against the labour exploitation became the part of the anti-imperialist and pro-nationalist struggle. Workers of the Assam Bengal Railway went on strike in 1920. Freedom fighter Late Jiten Mohan Sengupta gave the leadership of this strike. This strike could also influence the tea labourers. He also propagate against the repression of garden labourers by holding meetings at various places.

When the different political parties emerged, they from time to time have given help or support in different agitational programmes of the workers. In 1944, the local Communists headed by the organising secretary of the Sylhet Labour Party, brought the municipal workers to the agitational path. Their main demands were that rice should be supplied at concessional rates and that the supply of Kerosine and matches should be adequate. In May, 1944 Jyoti Basu, a prominent Communist leader, visited Lakhimpur district. Later in July, a pamphlet was found to be in circulation which demanded Rs. 30/- as dearness
allowance per month as well as rice rations of good quality at concessional rates. It was believed in the official circle that Jyoti Basu was the author of this pamphlet.  

In 1949 the All India Railwaymens' Federation gave a notice of strike. Railwaymen were not satisfied with the recommendations of the First Pay Commission. Particularly the Class III employees were not benefitted by the recommendations. They showed their resentment against government policy in the form of strike. Some of the political parties specially the communists gave support to this strike. In this connection V.B. Karnik in his book "Strikes in India" he said, "Communists were happy at this step taken by the Federation as they wanted at that time a strike on the railways in support of their campaign against Nehru Government." 

Again, all the major political parties other than the Congress gave support in 1974 Railway strike which could make an impact on Indian politics. Subsequently, a political chaos arose and as a result of which emergency was declared in 1975. Most of the trade union leaders along with the opposition political leaders were arrested and kept under jail till the lifting of emergency in the year, 1977. 

The Communists, the Congressmen and other political parties also had given support in different agitational programmes launched by the workers themselves.

The trade unions in order to show their resentment against Government economic and fiscal policy, against rising prices, etc. call for strikes or take other agitational programmes. Sometimes the political parties support the programmes taken up by the trade unions or sometimes they themselves call for general strike. It clearly reveals that there is a close association of trade union movement and political parties.

7.6 ROLE OF THE TRADE UNION LEADERS IN GENERAL ELECTION IN ASSAM:

In 1937 politics began to impinge more regularly on workers' lives particularly on tea garden life. Under the Government of Indian Act 1935, which came into force in 1937, tea garden labourers were allotted four seats in the Legislative Assembly of Assam.

The Election Manifesto of All India Congress Committee (AICC) 1936, attracted the labourers which paid attention on industrial labour. "In regard to industrial workers, the policy of the Congress is to secure for them a decent standard of living, hours of work and conditions of labour in conformity, as far as the economic conditions
in the country permit, with international standards, suitable machinery for the settlement of disputes between employers and workmen, protection against the economic consequences of old age, sickness and unemployment and the right of workers to form unions and to strike for the protection of their interests."^{19}

The election of 1936-37 made the labourers more conscious. Sir Percival Griffiths in his book The History of the Indian Tea Industry has said that those elections (1936-37) not only made the labourers more conscious of their rights than before, but they also gave the political leaders of Assam and Bengal a vested interest in the development of the unions.^{20}

During the 1946 General Election candidates from All India Trade Union Congress contested in three out of four seats of Assam Legislative Assembly reserved for tea garden labourers. These three seats were Nazira, Tinsukia and Silchar and lost in all of them. Congress victory in the labour constituencies in this election helped them for taking up trade union activities.

Communists on the other hand did not give up their efforts to organise labours. A trade union leader of AITUC, Gaurisankar


Bhattacharyya successfully contested the 1952 General Election from Guwahati Constituency and elected to Assam Legislative Assembly. The present researcher took personal interview with Gaurisankar Bhattacharyya and he said that this was not his individual victory but victory of the organised workers and peasants of and around Guwahati.

Language movement of 1960 launched by the students of Assam was a setback for the leftist trade unionists. Another blow to the leftist trade unions came in the year 1962 due to the Indo-China War. Many leftist leaders were imprisoned for a long period and as a result the leftist fought the 1962 general election with a very low profile and miserably failed to attract votes. Even Gaurisankar Bhattacharyya was defeated in Guwahati.

There was an anti-Congress wave in the country in the 1962 general election. Opposition in large numbers could win the assembly election. Dhireswar Kalita, a leftist trade unionist wrested the Guwahati seat for Parliament. Late Bishnu Rabha, a leftist could win the Tezpur Assembly constituency, who subsequently became the President of Akhil Bharatiya Chah Mazdoor Sangha, Rangapara. In such reverse position of the Congress in this election, however, the Congress candidates connected with the trade unions were elected to the Assembly. They were Kamakhya Prasad Tripathy, Biswadev Sharma, Jadu Bhuyan, etc. Bijoy Chandra Bhagawati, a veteran trade unionist elected to Parliament from Tezpur Constituency.
1972 General Election was swept by the Congress wave. Rabin Kakaty, a veteran leader of INTUC was elected to Parliament from Dibrugarh Constituency. But Promod Gogoi, a leftist trade unionist connected with Oil and National Gas Commission Workers' Union President elected to Assam Assembly from Sibsagar Constituency.

1974 was the remarkable year for Indian Trade Union history. The nationwide Railway strike which lasted for twenty days shook Indian Politics. Police repression was let loose on the Railway employees. This strike had far reaching consequences in Indian politics. The political chaos began with this strike and was culminated in the proclamation of emergency by the then Prime Minister Smti Indira Gandhi on 26th June, 1975. After the lifting of emergency, election was held. The Congress fared poorly in both the Parliament election of 1977 and Assembly election of 1978. Congress trade unionist like Bijoy Chand Bhagawati who also happened to be the All India President of INTUC had to concede defeat to an independent trade unionist, Purna Narayan Sinha in the Parliament Election from Tezpur Constituency. Sri Golay Borborah, a trade unionist connected with Hind Mazdoor Sabha of Assam Branch was elected from Tinsukia to Assam Assembly and became the first non-Congress Chief Minister of Assam in 1978. For the first time eleven members of CPI(M) were elected to Assam Assembly and most of them were connected with trade union movement by virtue of their relation with centre of Indian Trade unions. Trade union offices started functioning with a new vigour. Many trade union activities including strike in support of the various demands were started vigorously.
The organisations spear-heading the Assam Movement on foreigners' issue opposed holding of election in Assam in the year, 1980 along with rest of the country until foreigners' issue could be settled. Election could not be hold in 1980. Assam remained unrepresented in Parliament.

The necessity of holding Assembly election arose due to the fall of Taimur Ministry and dissolution of the Assembly by imposing President's Rule. Government of India had decided to hold assembly election in 1983 despite the fact that Movement leaders vehemently opposed the election.

Election for Parliament and the State legislature were held and the entire State Branch of INTUC campaigned for the success of the Congress (I) Party. The violent disturbances created by the secessionist elements during the electioneering took a heavy toll of lives and one among them was the life of S.N.Ram, Secretary of the Biswanath Branch (Sonitpur District) of Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha, who was a Congress candidate. He was brutally murdered. 21

Besides Congress (I) and Congress (S), all other left parties had decided to participate in the election to maintain the democratic process. Janata Party and other local parties which contested the 1983 elections.

election opted out. The Movement leaders gave call to stall the election. But the election was held amid tensions and large scale violence. Results showed that Congress (I) swept the election by winning 20 percent seats. Since leftist parties contested the election, the left oriented trade unions viz. CITU, AITUC, UTUC (L) tried their best to make the left candidates victorious. Most trade union leaders who contested the election except those of Congress (I) got defeated. Veteran trade union leaders like Promod Gogoi of AITUC from Sibsagar Constituency, Dhaniram Khosla from Rangapara and Sasadhar Handique from Nahakatia, both were connected with CITU, were defeated.

7.7 PATTERN OF INITIATION BY THE POLITICAL PARTIES:

Though most of the political leaders are connected with trade union movement and formed organisations, trade unions in India as well as in Assam have remained free of formal organisational ties with political parties. The trade union centres work according to their own constitutions. They are governed by executive bodies which are elected or appointed by their members in accordance with their respective constitutions. They are directly responsible only to their members. They are neither affiliated to nor bound formally by the ideology or the programmes of any political parties.

It is a fact that congressmen were involved in the formation of INTUC. In the case of the Congress Party, the understanding is that
its members should channelise their labour activities through the INTUC.
The All India Congress Committees' proposal includes the following significant points -

[1] The Congress organisation and Congress workman could work in the labour field only through the INTUC.

[2] It should be the duty of the Congress to help the INTUC workers, similarly it was desirable that INTUC workers should do their best to strengthen the Congress.22

Though the Congress Party was responsible for the formation of trade unions and was involved in the trade unions and was involved in the trade union activities; there is no such binding on the part of the members that they must be the members of the Congress Party. INTUC Constitution has no such clauses to prevent a member from joining other parties than Congress. Even Office bearers can shift their party loyalty remaining in INTUC. For example, Smti Renuka Devi Barkataki joined Janata Party and became a Central Minister in Morarji Desai Government, despite the fact that she was treasurer of INTUC, Assam Branch during the period 1975-76. Late Atul Chandra Saikia was elected to Assam Legislative Assembly from East Guwahati Constituency as a Congress candidate in 1972. He joined Janata Party in 1978 and since

then to 1982 he had served as General Secretary of INTUC, Assam branch.

Another notable thing is that in 1978 Kamakhya Prasad Tripathy joined the Janata Party. Though defeated, he took ticket of Janata Party in the 1978 election against the Congress official candidate Bishnulal Upadhyaya. Tripathy was the President of INTUC, Assam Branch and Vice President of INTUC, India till then.

As there are no such restriction for the members of having one particular party they can change their sides for the differences of ideology or opinion. Protesting against the collaborationist policies, the workers of all the tea gardens in Goalpara district and a few gardens in Kamrup district left INTUC affiliated unions and joined in Akhil Bharatiya Chah Mazdoor Sangha (CITU) in the year 1977-78 and movements were organised on the basis of just demands. On the other hand INTUC affiliated Chah Karmachari Sangha of Goalpara district joined Janata Party.

From the above discussions it becomes clear that though there is no formal organisational ties between the trade union organisations and the political parties, the political leaders directly or indirectly.

help in organising trade unions and in achieving the rights of the workers. At present, although some inside leadership has emerged, yet a majority of the unions continued to be dominated by outsiders who are more often the political workers. On the other hand, every trade union appears to be well organised and strong enough to protect the interest of and resist any attack on its members, but most of the members support the ideology of the political party concerned or members of it.