INTRODUCTION

SCOPE OF RESEARCH WORK:

The term 'Trade Union Movement' is used here to designate all of the organised activities of labour or workers and employees to better their conditions either immediately or in the more or less distant future.

Labour means a person who gives efforts physically or mentally to get a thing done and in return earns his or her livelihood. Labour is defined by S. E. Thomas as "Labour consists of all human efforts of body or of mind, which is undertaken in the expectation of reward."¹

The term "Labour" thus connotes the working person and also the physical and mental efforts exerted by such person.

Trade union organisations are formed usually to deal with the employers in organised form to get a good deal in all respects for labourers and employees from the employers. When there is shortcomings in expectations of either side the conflict arises which may lead to various agitational programmes from the labour side.

Trade Union in Assam, as in other countries, has been the product of industrial development. With the growth of the industries a distinct class known as working class has arisen.

Britishers established a few such industries in this province, as oil, coal, tea etc. and to carry these industrial products railway lines and highways were constructed by them. After independence many new industries have been set up in this province. To give financial assistance to various industries, commercial establishments, i.e. Bank. Insurance companies have been opened.

Production process in our country is labour intensive. With the growth of the industries the labour force was also increased. One of the characteristic features of the modern industrial system is the conflict between the workers and the employers. The workers and employers have distinct and sometimes quite opposite interests. "Under the conditions of large scale industries workers have to depend on others for their livelihood and they may have to accept wages which are not enough for their average way of living".\(^2\) In other words, we may say that the workers may have to face with so many problems. The problem of wages and the issues connected therewith, conditions of work, social security are the main problems. The workers get themselves

\(^2\) Ibid, p.1
organised to fulfil their various demands. In various industries, the various organisations, are formed. They have come forward to take group actions in the form of agitations like strikes, token strike demonstration, cease work, etc.

The basic objectives of the proposed research work "Post-Independence Trade Union Movement in Assam from 1947 to 1987", are to outline the basic features of relations between the workers and the employers, character and growth of trade union movement in Assam, role of the Government, politicians and the employers concerned.

To begin with the research work, it is deemed necessary to give a picture of industrial development of the State as because trade union movement is related to labour and employees engaged mainly in the industries. The first chapter deals with industrial growth i.e. number of industries established, number of labour engaged, its products and above all the way it has influenced the State economy.

Chapter II deals with the policies pursued by the Union and the State Governments towards labour and employees. The Central and State Governments have enacted many acts and amendments applicable to the labour and employees.

In the Third Chapter it is proposed to discuss the various definitions of trade unions, factors that led to the formation of organisations and the growth of Trade Union organisations in Assam.
The Industrial organisations and their movement gave impetus to the Government employees, to the employees of the commercial establishments, educational institutions, etc. Therefore, the organisations of the above mentioned employees are also discussed here.

In the absence of the studies of the various problems of the workers, the root cause of their grievances cannot be highlighted. Therefore, Chapter IV will deal with the various issues on which workers and the employees are organising and agitating.

The next Chapter will deal with the labour agitation. Agitations in various forms, viz., demonstration, cease work, hunger strike, token strike or continuous strikes are being launched by trade union organisations from time to time.

In the Post-Independence period the trade unions are confined not only to fulfil the economic demands but also involve themselves with socio-political issues that come in their way of life.

The most significant development in the Post-Independence period is that various methods have been taken for the settlement of the various issues to bring industrial peace. In the Sixth Chapter it is proposed to discuss the settlement on issues of agitations. Though the various methods have been adopted for the settlement, a large
number of issues remain unsettled. In this Chapter both settled and unsettled issues are dealt with.

In the Seventh Chapter it is proposed to discuss the political side of the movement, i.e. organisations under the direct or indirect influence of the political parties, the work of the frontal labour wings of the political parties, the extent of influence upon the labour force of the State and the stage of political consciousness of the labour and the role of labour organisations in the State politics.

The study on Trade Union Movement of all the industries in Assam would be a voluminous work. So the Trade Union Movement in some small industries has been less emphasised. Some of the major industries are selected for specific studies.

For a proper understanding of the development of the trade union in the Post-Independence period, it is essential to study the conditions prevailing on the eve of independence. Therefore, although special attention has been given to the Post-Independence period, study has also been made regarding the Pre-Independence period to understand the present better.

METHODOLOGY:

The data presented in the present thesis are pertaining to the Pre-Independence, Post-Independence as well as divided Assam.
Both the primary and the secondary sources are used to study the several aspects.

Primary data are collected by interviews taken from the veteran trade union and political leaders with the help of scheduled forms. Questionnaire is also prepared for the employers and the workers to collect materials.

The present researchers have consulted the records available in the state record room, Dispur, Guwahati, Assam and the published official records available in the Labour Commissioner office, Guwahati, Assam, Inspector of Factories, Assam, Guwahati, State Secretariat Library, Dispur, Indian Council of World Affairs Library, New Delhi, National Labour Institute, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi and the State Central Library at Guwahati, Assam.

Resolutions, policies, activities recorded in the documents of the trade union organisations are also consulted.

The methods of data collection also involve field study, verbal discussion with concerned authorities. Assembly proceedings have also been consulted to collect the material for research work.

The secondary sources including published and unpublished books and papers on the relevant subject available in English, Assamese, Bengali and Hindi languages have also been consulted.